

[The Bill Walton Show](#)

“The Politics of Nostalgia” with Yuval Levin and Arnold Kling

Crew member:

Okay, so let's leave this for sync. It's the ... Walton Show! So, if everyone [inaudible 00:00:20]?

Bill Walton:

I do. Yeah, I've got it, I've got my watch here, but that's still a good idea.

Crew member:

We're missing ... let's just grab some things.

Bill Walton:

Okay.

Bill Walton:

So we've gone from zero likes to 8500 likes in eight weeks.

Yuval Levin:

Nice.

Bill Walton:

It's interesting how we're ... a lot of people like, like this.

Bill Walton:

How pleasant is that?

Crew member:

Okay everybody. Okay Bill, we can get the camera!

Bill Walton:

Okay, great.

Crew member:

Some energy guys? Keep it lively!

Bill Walton:

Oh no. No, no trouble with this group.

Crew member:

All right! When you're ready.

Bill Walton:

Welcome! I want to talk with you today about politics and policy at the 35000 foot level. If you're like me, you're finding where we are pretty confusing, about our politics, which seem to be quite fractured, and our economic policies, which also seem to be up in the air. With me today to talk about this are two brilliant, wise men, Yuval Levin, and Arnold Kling.

Bill Walton:

Yuval is editor of National Affairs, the Hertog Fellow with the Ethics and Public Policy Center. He's a senior editor at the New Atlantis, and a contributing editor to National Review and the Weekly Standard. He also served in the White House domestic policy staff. He's the author, most recently of, The Fractured Republic, topic much on my mind today, which is about renewing America's social contract in the age of individualism. He holds a PhD from the University of Chicago. Yuval? Welcome.

Yuval Levin:

Thank you very much.

Bill Walton:

Arnold Kling, is an independent scholar who received his PhD in Economics from MIT. Previously, he was a researcher at the Congressional Budget Office, an economist at the federal reserve board, and Freddie Mac. He also founded the internet startup, HomeFair.com. He is the author of many books, most recently, Specialization In Trade, and The Three Languages Of Politics, which is going to be part of our conversation today. Welcome Arnold.

Arnold Kling:

Thanks Bill.

Bill Walton:

Welcome Yuval. Arnold, you want to kick this off? Where are we with the ... well let me just frame this a little bit. You've written, in a very interesting way about the three languages of politics-

Arnold Kling:

Sure.

Bill Walton:

And I'll let you describe that, which is one of the reasons why it's so hard for us to communicate with each other about solutions, because we occupy separate moral universes, or-

Arnold Kling:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

-people in those camps do. And, Yuval, you've written extremely interestingly about how we're living in ... amidst the politics of nostalgia.

Yuval Levin:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton:

In both the left and right, are dreaming of bygone days, which, in your view, and I think I share the view, are likely not to return. Arnold, tell us about the three languages. We talked about this in a previous show, but a quick Reader's Digest summary before we dive in would be helpful.

Arnold Kling:

Okay, so I wrote this at a time when there was a lot of anger in politics, and now that anger has turned into outrage, and it describes the way each of three political tribes express outrage. The tribes I had were progressives who express outrage at the people that they believe side with oppressors, against the oppressed; and then there are conservatives who express outrage at people they believe side with the barbarians against civilization; and then the libertarians who express outrage at the people that they believe support the coercion of the state against the freedom of individuals.

Arnold Kling:

So I wrote that at ... it's a reasonable description. I think politics has been somewhat upended by the more recent outbreaks, not just the United States, but in other countries of, sort of anti-elitism. I was thinking actually, that, if the United States were a parliamentary democracy, I think, just as a lot of the major parties in Europe have seen a collapse in popularity, we'd probably see the same thing here. I think the center-left might be collapsing, I think the center-right might be collapsing. I was asking if Yuval would be ... consider himself part of the collapse of the center-right, and you denied that you would be-

Yuval Levin:

Well it feels like collapse, I just don't know about center-right, but, but yes, I mean, I agree with you. I think we're in a sense, lucky to have a two-party system at this point, because otherwise, things would seem even more out of control, than they do.

Arnold Kling:

We'll see what's like when the far-left takes over the democratic party and they win. You may not be quite as happy with the two-party system at that point.

Bill Walton:

Well, the guys in the house say ... the Republicans in the House say they're basically two parties in the House. You've got the hardcore Tea Party-ers and then you've got the people that like it pretty much the way it is, and want to keep that job, and the House gym.

Bill Walton:

I suppose we've got the same things on the left. Talk about the ... let's introduce the idea of the politics of nostalgia.

Yuval Levin:

Yeah, well, so, in a sense I start from a certain place, from a sense that there's enormous frustration now in our politics. That's unavoidable. And the question is, "Why have we gotten into a place where both parties really are expressing different forms of frustrations with our political circumstances."

Yuval Levin:

And I think one way to understand that kind of moment is to step back and think about how people express themselves in politics. We do that now, we do that really over the last decade and more. What you find is an enormous amount of nostalgia on both sides. And it's nostalgia for a similar kind of time; maybe for different reasons, where if you were just told that Politician X gave a speech about how people used to go downtown and get a factory job and keep it for life, and maybe their kids could work at the same place, and that was the simpler time, and we've lost a lot since that time, you know, it would actually be pretty hard to say if that politician was a Republican or a Democrat, or which kind of Republican, which kind of Democrat.

Yuval Levin:

It's what everybody says, and there is an implicit nostalgia for, especially the United States of the post-WWII era, that in different ways the right and the left really exhibit.

Yuval Levin:

And you know, we've just had a Presidential election where two 70 year olds ran against each other. It's hard to think of a better example of a country that thinks about the future by thinking about the past. And the idea of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump arguing about who could more effectively bring steel back to Pittsburgh. It's a strange way to think about the purpose of our politics.

Bill Walton:

And you wrote that both Rick Santorum and Barack Obama who don't exactly exist in the same political universe gave essentially the same speech-

Yuval Levin:

That's right.

Bill Walton:

-about how great thing used to be.

Yuval Levin:

Yeah. And looking to many of the same kind of points of example, now the right tends to emphasize the cultural side of the 1950s and 60s; the cultural, the moral consensus, the high marriage rates, the high birth rates. The left tends to emphasize the economic cohesion of that time; the low inequality, the strong unions, the confidence in large institutions, these are different things, but they're both forms of nostalgia for an America made possible by a very peculiar kind of post-war moment. It is not how the country has usually been. And it's not how the country has been for quite a long time. And so, the question for us is really, how do we come to terms with the ways America has changed since then, some of which are good, and some of which are bad, and you have to use the good to address the bad.

Bill Walton:

Well, the best year for the left was the Great Society Year of 1965.

Yuval Levin:

Right.

Bill Walton:

When they'd just launched all the good stuff that Lyndon Johnson-

Yuval Levin:

Yeah. And no results were in yet, so no real-

Bill Walton:

(Laughs)

Yuval Levin:

You could still believe in the promise of it though.

Bill Walton:

But they're in now!

Yuval Levin:

Yeah!

Bill Walton:

And the pinnacle for the right was in 1981, right.

Yuval Levin:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

The Reagan Revolution.

Yuval Levin:

Yeah.

Arnold Kling:

And again, probably results more mixed than people are willing to admit.

Bill Walton:

Absolutely. Yeah.

Arnold Kling:

It's certainly broke down one of the most important cultural norms, which was the norm around heading toward a balanced budget. And we don't know how that's going to play out. Some of us are quite nervous about where that's headed.

Yuval Levin:

Yup. But you know, every election in the 21st century has been about, do you prefer 1965 or 1981. Over and over, we've basically had an argument about which of those years was the best year. So it's like the old joke in *The Simpsons*, about soccer tournaments being about which is the best country, Portugal or Mexico. I don't know!

Bill Walton:

(Laughs)

Arnold Kling:

(Laughs)

Yuval Levin:

That's really not the question! Our politics for a long time now has been which is the best year, '65 or '81, and in the meantime, the country has been living in the 21st century. And we don't have enough of our politics geared to the challenges we actually confront in this time. And to the strengths we have, which we shouldn't underestimate.

Bill Walton:

So we have the Three Languages, maybe more languages, depending on where you are in the, in Arnold's world, and if you got the 1965 people, the 1981 people, and then the other division, which we pointed out as the elites versus the rest of the country, and that seems to split in an entirely ... that's not necessarily politically partisan, that's just people feeling left out of the 21st century.

Yuval Levin:

Well, I think it's very much connected to this politics of nostalgia, because there's a sense that's, again, been growing since the beginning of this century and before, that our governing elites are disconnected from the realities of people's lives, in a way that makes our politics have less and less to do with the real circumstances. And that frustration bubbles up. And it happens on the left and on the right. And it's gotten to a place where our political leaders, you know, 15 years after the beginning of the 21st century, when it should have been reasonably clear that the politics of this century were not going to be about how to govern after the end of history, but were going to be about some discrete challenges and difficulties. The best the two parties could come up with in 2016 was running Bill Clinton's wife and George W. Bush's brother for President. And the country looks at that and thinks, "There's gotta be a better way." I think that's behind a fair amount of the dissatisfaction of people of their own leadership.

Bill Walton:

Well, those are the politics ... but there's also the economics, which is the subject that I'm interested in as anything is, what do we think we have now, versus what people are nostalgic for. And if you look at America after WWII, you point out I think, Arnold you've written on this as well, we had a United States economy which was the only surviving economy after WWII. Japan and Europe were flattened. And so

we had really, two, three decades of a world where we were very insulated from the forces at work, that are at work now.

Arnold Kling:

Yeah, I'm struck by, and I keep trying to emphasize to people, just how much we have a different economy now than we did in 1960. 1960, we're still coming out of an era where there were heavy industries, what dominates. You know, WWII was one won by heavy industry, our ability to produce more steel, more tanks, more airplanes, and so on.

Arnold Kling:

We don't have that now. We have, the world of intangible goods and services being most prominent; things that we see in Google, Facebook and so on. So it's very different. One of my lines is, the economy is something that evolves at the speed of culture. And we know that our culture is evolving rapidly, we just ... some of it, Yuval, might be very disappointed at the way it's evolving. But the ... because it's embedded in culture, it evolves more rapidly than the physical world, and that's why economists have a hard time keeping up with it.

Arnold Kling:

And economists are still trying to look at the economy as if it were 1960, and we were allocating capital and labor, it just ... it isn't that way anymore, and I think we've got a long way to go to catch up to understand what's going on, to understand the ... why divergence is in the economy, the difference between what's going on in San Francisco versus Akron. The difference in different ... in prices shooting up in certain areas of real estate, in health care and higher education. Prices coming down for consumer electronics.

Arnold Kling:

We used to have a much more homogenous economy, now it's much more divergent. And I don't know that we have the tools yet to understand it. And I think we're actually having a hard ... we're kind of falling further behind in our understanding of it.

Yuval Levin:

You know, I would say that that's connected to a broader set of trends that I would describe as fragmentation, more broadly, if you think about, what's happened to American life since the 1960s, fragmentation is not a bad way to think about it. We went from an unusually consolidated form of American life, after the war, after the Depression, and in every way we became more diverse culturally, we became more diverse economically, politically. And we have had a hard time coming to terms with some of what that means. What really strikes me about what Arnold says in a lot his writing about this question is that the sheer fact of that diversity means that a lot of the tools we have for understanding our situation are out of date. And I think that really strikes you when you think about the intersection of the work that academic economists do and the work that policy makers do. Academic economics right now is unusually useless to policy makers. And you know, you read the minutes of the Fed, and they just kind of sit around thinking like-

Bill Walton:

"Unusually useless."

Yuval Levin:

Yeah!

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Yuval Levin:

Most of the social sciences are generally not useful to policy makers, right? But I think if you were to look at exceptions, you would look to economics, and you would look to foreign policy within political science; two areas where academic work has often been very directly linked to the work of policy makers.

Yuval Levin:

In both of those cases now, the work being done in the academy is largely useless to policy makers, and policy makers feel a drift; they feel like they don't have any guidance, they don't have the right theories, so in economics, if you read the Fed minutes, they just don't know what's going on. And the tools they have, you know, they're reasonably happy with what's going on, it's not a disaster at all. But, the idea that you have low unemployment and low inflation at the same time as fairly low growth, and what's going to happen next, they don't feel like they have theory that really gives them guidance.

Yuval Levin:

And if you look at people who are charged with making foreign policy for a country, left or right, there used to be these debates between big schools of thought in foreign policy, where there was a clear distinct difference of opinion about the purpose of American foreign policy, how to think about the behavior of other countries, none of that really exists now. There's purely ad hoc policy-making. Ask somebody at the State Department, "What do we actually want out of our relationship with China," you're not going to get a very good answer. And it is I think, an unusual moment in that sense.

Bill Walton:

Well, is that because the consensus about promoting American interest is no longer there? If you look at what Trump said in foreign policy, or in trade, it's America first, and you know, "This is about America," and we've had-

Yuval Levin:

I think this precedes Trump, you know, it's-

Bill Walton:

-people who were perceived in real globalists.

Yuval Levin:

I think that this is a matter of kind of, running on fumes, since the end of the Cold war, where we've tried to keep using the same frameworks that were useful during the Cold War, after it. Instead of coming to think about how the world now might be different, what would be unleashed by the lifting of this very powerful framework of East versus West.

Yuval Levin:

I think what's been unleashed is something like nationalism and populism, and ethnic tensions, and economic uncertainty, but we don't have a theoretical framework that lets us understand that. And look, theory has to follow practice, it's not as if we can't function without it. But it is strange, how long we've continued to run on these fumes, and so in that sense, how long our policy makers have been left out to hang by the people who might otherwise help them think about the world and understand it.

Bill Walton:

And you worked at coming back to your notions of economic academic work. I think it's very interesting, that as John Allison said at BB&T, that the Feds, PhDs and economics have missed every single one of the market meltdowns in the last hundred years.

Arnold Kling:

Well, especially the one ten years ago. And I've railed about this, I've recently received pushback, somebody said, "Have you read the Diamond and Dybvig model," and this is a, you know, somebody wrote down some-

Bill Walton:

Diamond and Dybvig.

Arnold Kling:

Yeah, it's-

Bill Walton:

Well, we'll curl up with that-

Arnold Kling:

Yeah, right. Anyway, they, so, and I had read it. It actually is probably better than other stuff, because it includes the possibility of bank runs. And so, people say, "Wow, we've had a model that allows for bank runs. Isn't that great?" Well, it's wonderful, except you know nothing about credit default swaps, CDOs, any of the financial instruments that actually were involved in the financial crisis, and of course you didn't see it coming, because you didn't even know what any of these things existed. So, again, that's to me, a dramatic illustration of the economy evolving in much more complex ways than economists were prepared to look at. So that's ... I won't rant about that anymore.

Bill Walton:

So, to come back where we've been right, I think what I hear you saying is that, in most of these academic disciplines, in most of the disciplines that have guided leaders in the country, we're unmoored from the certainties we had in the 60s, both in terms of where we stand ... who our enemies are in the world, and also in terms of the economic lovers, we don't have the big corporations that are going to be doing the bidding of the-

Arnold Kling:

It's not what's good for General Motors is good for the country, and what's good for the country is good for General Motors. General Motors almost doesn't matter. Certainly not as much as it did in 1956.

Bill Walton:

So we're unmoored from the big ideas or ... or people ... got some guidance here, about where we think we can take this, I mean we've-

Yuval Levin:

I think the ... well in a sense Arnold's work points in this direction. I think the fact of fragmentation needs to be a place to start for social science, and the social science of fragmentation in different fields is not well developed. And if the-

Arnold Kling:

So, so, so-

Bill Walton:

By fragmentation, we mean-

Arnold Kling:

But-

Yuval Levin:

I mean the breakdown of consolidated institutions and structures of society-

Arnold Kling:

But let's give an example-

Yuval Levin:

Yeah.

Arnold Kling:

We still use the term, "working class", "labor market"; there's no working class anymore. If somebody came down from Mars, and looked at our economy from ... fresh, they would never come up with the idea of working class. They would see this huge divergence in occupations, this extreme specialization, different people with different skill sets; there's not this big homogenous mass of people walking into assembly lines every morning. And, so that's a clear example of, you call it fragmentation, I call it disaggregation. Just, we have many different economies. We have different economies in different cities, different economies by different education classes, different economies by different industries, different economies even within industries by ... sort of well-run forward-thinking companies versus companies that are trying to hang on to older ways of doing things.

Bill Walton:

Well, since I come from the libertarian part of your Three Languages, sounds to me like it's a recipe for just, stop trying to guide things from Washington, shut most of it down, and let the private sector in civil society do its job. And civil society is something we ought to touch on.

Arnold Kling:

Yup. Yup.

Bill Walton:

Because, I think, as you talk about it, the subsidiarity idea of getting problems solved closest to the ... where they exist, you're likely to end up with a better outcome.

Yuval Levin:

A multitude of circumstances should suggest a multitude of problem-solvers, rather than hoping that we finally find just the right MIT professor to figure out the health care system.

Bill Walton:

We have Arnold!

Yuval Levin:

Yeah.

Arnold Kling:

(Laughs)

Bill Walton:

(Laughs)

Yuval Levin:

Maybe the answer really is that this requires different kinds of solutions, and different kind of places. So, to me, absolutely, the challenge of fragmentation or disaggregation points in the direction of less aggregated solutions.

Arnold Kling:

Well, but let me push back because, I think the subsidiarity story is in some ways a form of nostalgia for when, sort of we had this Tocquevillian world of religious institutions, and clubs that incorporated in-

Bill Walton:

[communitarian 00:22:43], were barn-raising together, were-

Arnold Kling:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

Yeah.

Arnold Kling:

So why isn't that just another form of nostalgia?

Yuval Levin:

Well, in some ways, America is more like that than it was in the mid-20th century, so there is some reason to look for ways in which we've dealt with immense diversity before. America in the 19th century, was very fractured and fragmented; its politics looked a lot like our politics. So there are reasons to look to that time, but I also think, looking to something more like subsidiarity from here, means looking to how we move forward from here to there, not backward. That is, it's about, it's more post-industrial than industrial, and the question is, how do we make our politics more like what works in our economic life and in other parts of our life, and in the 21st century what works tends to be customized and tends to operate by giving people choices and options rather than by giving them pre-fabricated solutions. And so it seems to me that this is a way of thinking about how to modernize our politics as much as it is a way of learning from our past.

Bill Walton:

From my world of investing and business, particularly private equity venture capital, the businesses you want to invest in are the ones that are the most focused, highly specialized, in dealing with a specific problem, either good or service. And those are the ones that create little monopolies in their niche, because nobody else can do it better, faster, cheaper than they can. But that comes from intense specialization.

Bill Walton:

And yet, when we talk about these other ideas about not having a cohesive foreign policy or this sort of thing, I kind of lose where that would fit into our model here, but in economics in any case, I think you're arguing for radical disaggregation, decentralization of things.

Yuval Levin:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

Letting people solve these problems.

Arnold Kling:

Yeah, but it's-

Yuval Levin:

Or it's possible, you know, the idea of subsidiarity is not just going down to the lowest level, but-

Bill Walton:

Real, quick, for those of us that don't-

Yuval Levin:

-the lowest level is practical.

Bill Walton:

-that are new to that word.

Yuval Levin:

Yeah, so-

Bill Walton:

Define subsidiarity.

Yuval Levin:

Subsidiarity is really a word that's imported from Catholic social teaching more or less, but the idea is basically the power should reside as close to the level of the community as reasonable. So, it's not always go down to the lowest possible level, but, when confronted with the problem, think, "Could this be solved locally?" If it could be then it should be. If it can't be, then we have to think about higher levels of government or higher levels of solutions. But to have a preference for the local.

Bill Walton:

Can we come back to the polarization, to the Three Languages, the issues that Arnold raised?

Bill Walton:

I live in a rural county in Virginia. We have six thousand people. And we are divided pretty much in half, right and left. And there's some hard right and there's some hard left. And if you get people together at lunch, pretty quickly they'll start talking national politics, and then they hate each other. But then if you start talking about whether we need a bike trail or not, you really can't tell what their politics are, because they're into the local solution mode. And, is that what we're talking about?

Yuval Levin:

Yeah, there are ways in which dealing with problems locally means being more practical about them. Ideology doesn't go away, and political differences don't go away, but you're forced to think about questions a little bit less abstractly, and you're forced to deal with people as human beings in front of you. And that does help some. Some of the problems we have with polarization, are about abstracting away from human beings, to these sorts of broad general ideas we have about other people. It's not always avoidable, but where it is avoidable, it's worth trying to avoid.

Arnold Kling:

Just a random concern, we're thinking that it would be nice if politics would be more like other forms of life. And it seems like we're going in the other direction with people telling ... asking corporations to, you know, say what ... announce which side you're on on political issues. It's just ... I don't know. There's some-

Yuval Levin:

I'm not saying things are going well Arnold, don't get me wrong.

Arnold Kling:

(Laughs)

Bill Walton:

(Laughs)

Arnold Kling:

Well, how did we get-

Bill Walton:

I think we know the what. What we'd like ... I think what we might agree on is this decentralization, disaggregation solving ... how do we get there?

Yuval Levin:

Yeah.

Arnold Kling:

And how do we tamp down on the ... on this tendency to make things so political and get so wound up over it. I hope that we're just going through a period of learning how to deal with our new media. And people see something on Facebook, and they say, "Oh, I've got to jump on that, I've got to participate in that, I've got to ... sort of, like that or hate that." So, somehow, adjusting away from being sort of social media addicts to being like, community-oriented, would be a helpful change. But I don't know how we get from here to there.

Bill Walton:

Speaking of living in a rural county, we had a massive windstorm blew down trees. We were without internet for, I don't know, three, four days.

Arnold Kling:

Oh.

Yuval Levin:

Sounds great.

Bill Walton:

It was great! (Laughs)

Yuval Levin:

(Laughs)

Arnold Kling:

(Laughs) yeah.

Yuval Levin:

Yeah. I do think, putting it in terms of adjusting to this new reality is probably right, or at least is the hopeful way to think about it. Which is to say, we're ... getting used to dealing with new tools and with new media. And, at this point, we have not found quite the right balance, and quite the right way, and we're letting the tools we have distract us, or misshape our interactions with one another. And among other things, we're mistaking the expression of opinion for engagement and activity, so that, you just kind of put something out there and people respond with a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down, or you know,

somebody sends around some statement of outrage about something that happened, and you like it on Facebook and you feel like you've done something. That's just a mistake about whether you've done something or not. But it channels the energy that might go into actual civic activity, into something that's a lot less than civic activity. I hope that that's something that we, kind of learn our way out of over time, but obviously it's hard to say.

Bill Walton:

When we say, "we," who do we mean by "we"? I mean, that's the ... as a public policy guy, explain to me who the "we" is. It's [crosstalk 00:28:59] bring this about.

Yuval Levin:

Well, look, it ... first and foremost, it's just each of us as a citizen.

Bill Walton:

It dawns on us that we've got to change.

Yuval Levin:

It dawns on us that we're not happy with the status quo. I don't think any of us are too far from that realization. People are not happy with the status quo. And so the question is, "What can be done that's different, and how can it help us get out of the frustration that we're feeling?" It would take some leadership, it would take someone saying, "Maybe if we try to address this problem at the state level, at the local level," or maybe just saying you're angry on Twitter isn't actually anything. But, you know, who is it that ought to change? I think in a free country, it's you. It's me.

Arnold Kling:

Yeah, I'd say the same thing, that you start with yourself and look at what you're doing. Is it constructive, are you ... do you feel like you're solving the problems in your own life, and if you're not even solving the problems in your own life, then probably you're not going to be solving other people's.

Bill Walton:

Well, I've written on my website that I don't believe my view is 95% of the problems we face in life cannot be solved through politics.

Yuval Levin:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

It's got to be solved through everything else; family, vocation, taking care of your health, things like that. Yet, we seem to spend 95% of our time on the 5% thing that we can't really do much about anyway.

Yuval Levin:

Yeah. Well, I hope most people don't spend as much time on politics as I do, but-

Arnold Kling:

I was just looking at-

Yuval Levin:

Yeah! I know right! It's hard for me to make this complaint because I kind of chose to be here, I don't really-

Arnold Kling:

Yeah.

Yuval Levin:

Look, I agree. I think that it is in some ways also a function of our kind of, media environment that we are constantly flooded with news that demands our attention and reaction about national politics. That's not everybody's experience. But it is a lot of people's experience, and especially in this kind of moment. Again, I think the sheer fact that people are not simply satisfied with how this is going, suggests that there's at least an opening for different ways of thinking about how to solve both our own problems, our community's problems, ultimately our country's problems, that aren't simply politics broadly understood. I think there is an openness for that. There's a demand, but there is a shortage of supply, and that should look like an opportunity to people in public life.

Arnold Kling:

I guess one vision I have, is that, is a media that is not advertising-driven. Because I think that creates a lot of pathologies, because they ... in order to get ... because you're advertising-driven, you need to get people to pay attention, and in order to get people to pay attention, you've got to feed outrage. And so maybe if ... business models evolved differently, and I think for a variety of reasons, people are getting a little, or more than a little frustrated with the advertising model that's behind Google and Facebook, that they ... that they see that the adverse incentives that that creates, and that may at some point create an opportunity for somebody to come into that ... to use the term, "space," to go into those businesses with a different model, and appeal to people and draw some people away from that, and get away from those.

Yuval Levin:

It is worth saying, we're early in the kind of, new-media world. And it may be that this just isn't how things settle down, and that this is not the sustainable model. We are adjusting to a new set of arrangements.

Yuval Levin:

I can see, I mean, you know, I hire people out of college just about every year to work at National Affairs, and I can just tell you, over the last few years, that what you find when you look at people's social media presence when you're considering them for a job, has changed for the better dramatically in the last few years, as people have become aware that what they put out there is ultimately going to be looked at by other people when they're adults. And it's something that ... as if they just didn't know ten years ago, and now they do. And that's the kind of social learning that I would like to think happens on a broader scale in our society.

Yuval Levin:

There are all kinds of things that ... ways that we use social media and other new media now, that, you know, if they don't work for us, we may just end up changing them.

Bill Walton:

Well, I worked in the Trump transition, and watched people try to get jobs in the Trump administration, and not surprisingly, our President who does understand tweeting, first thing they looked at was the social media history of every single wannabe, and in many cases it wasn't a good record, and they didn't end up with a job. But then-

Yuval Levin:

Yeah.

Bill Walton:

You know.

Yuval Levin:

I think college kids are more aware of that now than they used to be, because they're just told it. They, you know, it wasn't as obvious a few years back.

Bill Walton:

Well, we're wandering into ... we could go ... you guys, we could probably cover every topic on the planet. Let's bring this back to where we started with the languages and the fractured republic. Give me some reason for optimism about where we can start communicating with each other.

Yuval Levin:

Well, so optimism, I don't really quite believe in optimism, I believe in hope. You know, optimism is just expecting good things to happen, and it's ... I wouldn't do that. But, hope is the belief that the resources are there for good things to happen. Hope drives you to act, and I think there are a lot of reasons for hope.

Yuval Levin:

I think first of all, all the things we complain about, about how America's changed over the past half century or so, are the opposite sides of the coin of things that have been good, and how America's changed. We are a more dynamic country, we have more options in every realm of life. It gives us a lot of strengths. And we should be grateful for those.

Yuval Levin:

And, I also think, again, the sheer fact that we are not satisfied with how things are going in our politics, means that there is a demand out there for ways of doing better. So, I don't think that we just remain in this phase of dissatisfied frustration. I think we're going to see various kinds of ideas get thrown up against the wall; some of them are going to be very bad, but they're not all going to be very bad. This is a country that is inventive in times of trouble, and I don't think that's changed. So I am hopeful.

Arnold Kling:

And I-

Bill Walton:

And we're going to read about these in National Affairs.

Yuval Levin:

Absolutely.

Bill Walton:

Okay. Arnold?

Yuval Levin:

I think, my hope for optimism comes from some of the feedback I've been getting for the Three Languages book, which is, I think there are a lot of people, I'd almost call them the silent majority, who are not as polarized, who are not as ideologically committed, and who are willing to see the other side. So I think there is a demand out there for some people with ... for some moderation. And it'll be interesting to see whether that manages to manifest itself in politics, or whether the primary system in the other things keep it from happening. But, I think there are a lot of people who want peace and not civil war, and sometimes ... and I think that's true in places that even have wars. Most of the people don't really want them. So, you can't count on the fact that most people are ... want peace, to generate peace, but it does give you hope.

Bill Walton:

I agree. And I can't recommend enough that everyone ... er, you, you my audience, pick up a copy of The Three Languages Of Politics, and The Fractured Republic, because what they both do, they're both very interesting in terms of breaking down paradigms, and breaking down how you think about things, and I think that's the first step to the kind of things that we're ... we want to achieve. So thank you. Both of you.

Yuval Levin:

Thank you.

Arnold Kling:

Thank you.

Bill Walton:

Arnold, where can you be reached? arnoldkling.com?

Arnold Kling:

That's the best place. You start there.

Bill Walton:

Yuval?

Arnold Kling:

I'm at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, so eppc.org is a good place to find me.

Bill Walton:

eppc...?

Arnold Kling:

-c.org

Bill Walton:

-.org okay, we got it. All right, thanks everyone, and we'll see you next time to continue the conversation. So thank you.

Yuval Levin:

Thanks.

Arnold Kling:

Thanks.

Crew member:

Okay, excellent. Fantastic, guys!