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## 2012 Academic Symposium

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# 2012 Academic Symposium Transcript

Participants: Shannon E. French, David Suzuki,  
Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, and David Orr

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**FRENCH:** To begin our conversation, David Suzuki, you recently released a depressingly titled Op Ed piece that was called “The Fundamental Failure of Environmentalism.” Has the environmentalist movement failed? In what sense?

**SUZUKI:** Well, this is not to denigrate in any way the history of the environmental movement. When Rachel Carlson published her book *Silent Spring*, there wasn't a single Department of the Environment in any government on the planet. That book began the movement that put the environment on the map, and think of the enormous growth in only ten years—the first global conference on the environment was held in Stockholm in 1972. At that time, the United Nations Environment Program was set up. We saw the rapid growth in interest and laws that were passed in many countries to protect air and water, limitations on pollution, protection of endangered species, and protection of millions of hectares of land around the world as parks or reserves. So this is not to deny the important role that the environmental movement has played, but I think that we failed to grapple with the underlying root cause of the destructive path that we are on. We fought against dams, mega dams, we fought against dangers of drilling for oil offshore, we fought against destruction of forests, but we never focused our message on the reason why we oppose such development, that we had to come to some kind of balance with the natural world that sustains us. We had to see ourselves as a part of a much bigger system rather than the species in charge, able to take it all over and manage it for our own purposes. This is often referred to as a paradigm shift. We must see ourselves in a different way, as part of the biosphere and we didn't succeed in that.

**FRENCH:** Jeremy, would you care to comment on that as well?

**BENDIK-KEYMER:** Yes, I mean, this came up in the radio show this morning, so apologies if this is the second time around. I was struck by how the very word environment involves this problem. The environment means the world

around us, that's what it means in Latin or from Latin. In German, *umwelt*, it means the world surrounding us. So there's a picture there already of the duality, right? We're separate from the environment like a disembodied mind. The question is how do we relate to it? So I mean at some fundamental level we're not even thinking of our home—Earth—in the right way. We think of it already as something separate from us. So I do agree with that point.

**SUZUKI:** Sorry, David [Orr], but another aspect is that we think of environmentalism or the environmental movement as something special, so that we celebrate if there is a Green Party, and I'm saying what does it mean to have a Green Party? In Canada—until last year—we never had a Green Party in office in Parliament, so whenever there was a public debate, only the leaders of political parties in Ottawa were allowed to take part. So the Green Party leader wasn't there and all of the journalists acted as if, since the Greens weren't there, they didn't have to talk about the environment. So we have to get away from the idea that the environment is somehow a political football.

**FRENCH:** Or a separate issue as opposed to everyone's issue, we're all on the planet.

**SUZUKI:** Yes.

**FRENCH:** David, please, go ahead.

**ORR:** Humans are slow learners, [this] case notwithstanding. You know, Jesus, Moses, Buddha, Confucius, and so forth, lived thousands of years ago and we're still trying to figure out what they meant and what that means for how we live, and if you date the environmental movement from 1962 or whatever the [year of] Rachel Carlson's *Silent Spring*, that's a short period of time and I agree with David [Suzuki], we're still trying to mull this over. The problem we have is the timing. There is this remorseless working of big numbers. Carbon in the atmosphere and heat-trapping gases don't care a bit about any of us. They just do their work. We put them up there and we set in motion these effects that will occur, and if somebody were just saying before, if somebody says you don't believe in climate change, that is the wrong word. Nobody says you don't believe in the laws of gravity, and if they do there's a simple test for that: come to the top of the building and let's check it out. You know, you jump first. But we're still trying to mull this over. And one other comment here. I think that the environmental movement as a phrase in some ways is too big a phrase. If I break it up into the component parts, the green building movement is doing extremely well. My friend Gene Matthews here at Case has help to spearhead

the movement here and elsewhere. Gene, is there anything else you wanted me to say? But the green building movement is doing extremely well. Jeremy is part of the environmental philosophy movement that is doing extremely well. David Suzuki has been a leader for years in getting us to think through all of the ramifications of this. So in some ways there are parts of this movement that are doing extremely well, but I agree with David's overall point that we have a long way to go.

**FRENCH:** Now let me ask what do you say to the optimistic person who says, "Well yes, I recognize the threat and the danger, but technology will save us. There will be some amazing innovation that will come up and they will figure out how to change the carbon or suck it out of the air or something, and we'll all be fine. We just need to let that happen."

**SUZUKI:** The problem with these technologies, powerful as they are, is that we don't know enough to recognize what the bigger implications are within the biosphere. So we opt for the immediate benefit of a new technology, for example, DDT. Great—kills bugs. Lots of studies done in labs and growth chambers show when you spray it on an insect and a plant, the [plant] flourishes and the insect dies. Oh, this is great. But the lab is not the real world. In the real world it rains, the wind blows, water flows, and you spray to kill insects on a field and you end up affecting fish and birds and human beings. I want to remind you, we didn't know that when you spray at very low concentrations of parts per million, then small organisms absorb that and are not killed, so at each level up the food chain you concentrate it. By the time you get to the fatty tissue in the shell glands of birds and the breasts of women, you have concentrated DDT hundreds of thousands of times. We didn't know about this phenomenon of biomagnification until eagles began to disappear and scientists tracked it down and discovered this. And this happens over and over again. CFC's: No one knew that CFC's would waft up into the upper atmosphere where chlorine-free radicals would be cleaved by ultraviolet light and break down ozone. I didn't even know there was an ozone layer up there when scientists began to say, "CFC's are destroying the ozone layer." When nuclear bombs were dropped on Japan, we didn't even know there was a thing called radioactive fallout that was found in the Bikini [Atoll]. So now that we have created the problem of climate change, we think we'll geo-engineer the planet in order to avoid the consequences—is madness. One of the things in Canada we are trying to do with excessive carbon is to simply capture it and put it back in the ground.

**FRENCH:** Carbon sequestration?

**SUZUKI:** Carbon sequestration. We have invested billions of dollars in this, but, you know, until a few years ago, it was assumed that life stopped at bedrock, that organisms went down a few yards and then it was sterile from that point on. But they kept getting drills that were going further and further down, contaminated with bacteria, and now we know there are bacteria that exist up to seven miles underground. These creatures are so different from any life forms we know on the surface of Earth, we have to create new phyla to define them. So they are very bizarre. They have been down there for millions and millions of years, and it's now estimated the weight of protoplasm underground is greater than the weight of protoplasm above ground. That's more than all the trees and birds and whales, because life goes down seven miles. And we have no idea what those organisms are doing down there. Are they involved in heat transfer, water movement, nutrient flow? We don't know anything about that. And we now want to pump millions of tons of carbon into the ground. I just think it's madness. We don't know enough.

**FRENCH:** So we can't fix the system if we don't know how it works?

**SUZUKI:** Exactly.

**FRENCH:** You wanted to jump in.

**ORR:** Well, in your question here, the word optimism appears, and since 1954 I have been a Cleveland Indians fan. And you know, the problem here is if you're optimistic in a way, because of what David [Suzuki] just said, you don't know enough. If you're in despair, that's a sin; you don't want to go there. And in between those two poles is something called hope. And the only legitimate position for us now is to be hopeful. And that is to believe you can change the odds that the optimist relies on, but hope in this case is a verb with its sleeves rolled up. It means if you're hopeful, you can't—as an optimist can or someone in despair—put your feet up on the table and have another beer, or whatever you drink, and you don't have to do anything. But if you're hopeful, you have to do something, you have to act, and I'm still a Cleveland Indians fan. It's been a long year.

**SUZUKI:** You know, this is not a Pollyanna hope. I think it's what we cling to in order to empower us to carry on. Many of our colleagues are now saying it's too late, that we have passed too many tipping points and can't reverse or restore things. I have followed their papers and I agree with what they say, but hope is what you have to cling to; if we can pull back and give

nature a chance, she may be far more generous than we deserve. Let me give you an example of what can surprise us. The most prized species of salmon in the world is the Sockeye salmon. It's got that bright red flesh that we prize. The largest run of Sockeye salmon in the world is in the Fraser River in British Columbia. After white people arrived in BC, populations of salmon dropped—but now traditionally a 30 to 35 million run of Sockeye salmon was a good run. Three years ago, just over 1 million Sockeye salmon returned to spawn and I thought, "That's it. That's just not enough to sustain the species." One year later we got the biggest run of Sockeye salmon in a hundred years. Now that doesn't prove how stupid I am, because nobody knows what happened. Nature shocked us. And my hope rests on the fact we don't know enough to know whether or not nature has more surprises, but if we can give her a chance, I think all kinds of things are still possible.

**FRENCH:** Would you care to comment on hope, Jeremy?

**BENDIK-KEYMER:** I would like to go back to the techno-optimism, but that is a kind of Hail Mary pass hope. That's different than if you earn your hope by conscientiously doing what you know you're supposed to do, and you think, "you know, I need hope to go on to be able to do this." I mean, the thing that strikes me about the techno-optimistic line is it seems morally corrupt to me and for this reason: let's say my child wants to go into some area of the woods where there has recently been a landslide, and the question is about whether or not it's possible for engineers to get in there and to rebuttress the cliff. I don't send my child out into the woods expecting that there's a possibility that the engineers, who look like they may be able to do this, will just happen to get around to do this, let's say, by the end of the summer. Right? I need a *reasonable expectation*, and the techno-optimism you're talking about is not concrete yet. So what you'd really expect someone to say, who isn't corrupt mentally, would be to say, "Look, I really hope this singularity is coming, the moment where nanotechnology, genetic technology, biotechnology and information technology give us an entirely new, different fabric of being, but right now here are the real risks that we are facing, here are the real limitations we have, and here are the kinds of things that need to be in place if we're going to be responsible about this." And if the optimism comes to pass, great. But in the meantime, I have to be responsible for the risks that could happen. So the entire line of reasoning just seems morally corrupt to me. It doesn't seem conscientious.

**FRENCH:** Morally negligent.

**BENDIK–KEYMER:** Yeah, it sounds absolute to say that, but I really do think when you look at ordinary people who are conscientious, that isn't the way they think about things that are really serious coming down the pipeline.

**FRENCH:** And your example with your own child, you would never stake your own child's safety on this chance.

**BENDIK–KEYMER:** Not at all.

**FRENCH:** Do you want to jump in again?

**ORR:** I agree with that. I think there's an issue here of how we handle these questions. There are only so many options. One is you can go deep into denial. People can go into denial and countries can go into denial. We just don't want to see what is right in front of us. Staying out of denial, if you want to deal with this, then you have to confront hard possibilities. And that's tough for us as humans. We like optimistic people. And the way the US culture [is], it's hard for us to reckon with anything that might have a tragic outcome. It's easier in say, Europe and the Far East, where you have ruins that are testimony to human fallibility. We are a more ignorant species than we are smart for all the reasons that David [Suzuki] has said so well. So it's how do we handle tragic possibility. E. F. Schumacher, the great British economist, at the end of his books, he said if we pose the question, "Can humans survive?" And the answer comes back, "No," well then it's eat, drink, and be merry. If the answer comes back, "Yes," then it leads to complacency. His advice was better not even to pose the question, just get down to what's in front of you, what you can do here and now, and I think there's some real virtue in that.

**FRENCH:** I keep thinking of the mythology—that when they opened Pandora's box, all these terrible vices came out, but at the bottom of the box was hope, but you still had to deal with all the vices and the hope was just to give you the strength to address them one by one. And again, not to be complacent—I think you've all echoed that theme. I want to bring up a slightly different point; it's certainly related to everything we have been discussing. Jeremy, in your book *The Ecological Life*, you discuss what it means to be human. And you stress the importance of relatedness. And also in *Ethical Adaptation of Climate Change*, you talk about the importance of recognizing our ethical obligations to future generations. So I was thinking about that, and I'm wondering what is the obstacle here? Why is it difficult for people to take future generations into consideration in a meaningful way, and I think the work of all three of you relates to this, certainly Dr. Suzuki—you have

talked about the importance of intergenerational work in this area, and I wonder if you could all comment on this aspect of the issue.

**SUZUKI:** Well, traditionally in Canada the aboriginal people speak of seven generations. When decisions were made by the tribes—major decisions—they would remember seven generations of their ancestors in the past, and on seven generations into the future, and what the repercussions might be. That's long-term thinking. We have become a very impatient animal. We want everything now. And from the political standpoint, children don't vote. So it's not because politicians are evil or stupid, but the nature of their game is that when you're elected, your primary concern is getting reelected and that means appeal to those people who are going to vote. Young people don't vote. For that matter can you imagine a politician in the United States saying, "I want to commit \$10 billion to greenhouse gas reduction because of future generations." I mean, they'd be laughed out of the room because they aren't even born. In looking at long-term potential costs the economic system discounts the impact of what we do now on future generations. So we write them off or we consider them worth less, or our costs left to them are less. It all goes against the rights of future generations. So I'm trying to come up with legal means of holding our so-called leaders to account. I attended the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, the largest gathering of heads of state ever in human history. I went back again this year on the twentieth anniversary. None of the leaders that were there in 1992 were there twenty years later. So they can sign all kinds of documents but they don't have to worry about whether they are followed through. We have to hold them to account. There's a group in Germany that's looking at a legal means to hold people to account for intergenerational crimes. There is a legal category called "willful blindness." If you're responsible for an area and deliberately avoid being informed of something vital to that field, you can be sued for that. I certainly think that politicians ought to be held accountable for their willful blindness.

**FRENCH:** Jeremy.

**BENDIK-KEYMER:** I agree with the basic point, right. Whether or not we can be oriented toward the future morally depends on our institutional structure, depends on our political systems and the way that they shape our economy. There is some evidence anthropologically that we have various kinds of short-term decision biases. There is a sense in which we have evolved to be somewhat near-term thinkers, but the other amazing thing about



human beings is that we're capable—we're political animals, right?—we're capable of complex organization and of extending our minds beyond our communities through technology to vastly counteract our limitations. So it doesn't have to be very fancy, right? A seventh generation matriarch is a thousand-year-old thing up in upstate New York in the Onondaga nation, you know. So it's a question of political organization. So all I would add to what David [Suzuki] said is I just think first of all, politically, I do not understand how future children are not on the national political agenda in my country, which is this country. I mean this boggles my mind. We're supposed to be concerned with family values and we're not talking about putting our junk onto future kids, and it's not just junk, really, it's the risk of incapacitating them horribly. And usually the least powerful, right? The problem is what I call *presentism*. Like racism, presentism is caring more about yourself than about the equal and rightful demands of the future, more about your own generation than the future. The problem with presentism is it's a magnifier. It magnifies the effects on all the other forms of "isms." Right? Because usually the people who are subject to racism or sexism, in particular, are vulnerable. But presentism magnifies the situation so that in the future those vulnerable people who don't have access to power, resources, and so on, are more likely to get hurt as a result of what we're doing. So the first thing I would say, and then I'll just end it so David [Orr] can talk, is that this just has to be on the national political agenda and part of it should be an attempt to put, not just in law, but in institutions some way of hearing the voice or giving place to the voice of the future. I don't mean this in a fantastic way. I mean it has to be done through some thinking of rights and legality and internalization of economic burdens.

**FRENCH:** That you could, for example, bring a suit saying you have harmed future generations.

**BENDIK-KEYMER:** And that there's something like the State Department, some institution—boom!—that is tasked with doing that.

**FRENCH:** That has that focus. Yes, David Orr.

**ORR:** I don't have a lot to add to this. David Suzuki is the great spokesperson for future generations and Jeremy is one of the leading scholarly voices on this, but my training was in political science. If you read the US Constitution, the word posterity only appears one time and it's in the preamble. And there's no case law. Now if you go back, that was about seven generations ago, so if you go back those seven generations and you ask, "What would

they have us do for the next seven generations from our time going forward?” They had no idea of what we could do to the planet, that we could unravel the biosphere the way that David has described so eloquently, with the implications that Jeremy has explained so clearly. So, now we know that our behavior can deprive future generations of life and liberty and property without due process, and that is a violation of the Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution and the Fourteenth Amendment, and so now we need to think of a legal movement. And I totally agree with my colleagues on the panel that this needs to be an issue morally driven of law. And then the perplexities begin. You say, “How do you represent the rights of future generations?” Well, in the case of—let’s say brain-damaged people or people who are otherwise disabled—you appoint a court custodian, some representative that represents their interests as best they can be known, and so this is not an impossibility; it is a complicated thing. The last thing I would say is this. We hear a lot, aside from the original intent of the US Constitution, we hear a lot about the right to life. And if we take the right to life seriously, it isn’t just about fetuses, whatever your opinion on abortion, it isn’t just about that. It’s about the people who live now, it’s about the people and all the web of life who will exist in the future, and in a philosophy you can’t pick and choose. Philosophies are not cafeterias, you pick a little of this and a little of that, then ignore the rest. You have to take the whole thing. And if life really is the oriented principal, then you have to take it seriously across the full range. That includes all life now, all life that could exist if we don’t deprive it of its existence and property and freedom to live.

**FRENCH:** I’d like to stick with you for a moment, David Orr. You’ve been quoted as saying, “Sustainable development cannot happen in classrooms; it has to happen in the streets.” And I was wondering, in what ways can we implement sustainable practices in urban communities without backlash or unintended ill effects? Can you comment on that?

**ORR:** Well, first is I didn’t mean it when I said it. No, I think—I’m an educator and I teach at Oberlin College—and I think the issue for us is that we’re visual creatures. We believe what we can see, touch, feel, experience. And we live in this realm where people like us talk about sustainability and so forth, and that’s an abstraction, and abstractions don’t move people. Well, they move people like us, maybe, ideologues and professors, but they really don’t move the world very far. And so what you’re doing here, and my colleague and friend David Beach, and so forth around Cleveland, it is to begin

to make these ideas real so it becomes a main street reality. Just very quickly, in Oberlin we're trying to take a model in a city of ten thousand—we're thirty-five miles from downtown Cleveland—trying to take our assets as a community of ten thousand and bundle that together so that what we're calling The Oberlin Project includes food, law, policy, green building, green development, economic renewal, and so forth, and put them together into a package where the parts reinforce the whole thing. We've never done that before. That's never happened in the United States before, but it ought to begin to happen in little places like Oberlin and taking it viral throughout this particular region. There's a different economy trying to be born here. Many of you in the room are working seriously on this as educators and as city people and so forth, but this is where education becomes real, because mostly what we do, and back to the word "hope," to embody hope and to make, let's say the Cleveland metropolitan area or Northeast Ohio a laboratory of 'here's what you can do when the chips are down' and this 'rust belt region' began to go through a renaissance and did it sustainably, that's hopeful. And that begins to attract more people to begin to do that elsewhere. So, Shannon, the point here for me as an educator is to take these ideas and give them main street reality. You can talk about renewable energy, but the wind power and the full arrays that you're involved with here, that begins to be hope. People can see that and say, "Now I understand that," and begin to build the green jobs and green employment, that's something that people can begin to get their minds around at a scale that is comprehensible.

**FRENCH:** From the abstract to the concrete.

**ORR:** That's right, the concrete. You bet.

**FRENCH:** Would either of you like to comment on this further?

**SUZUKI:** Well, I'm not sure I'm going to answer the question but I became involved in environmental issues after Rachel Carlson's book, and basically we were fighting against things, fighting a dam, fighting the destruction of a forest, fighting pollution of the ocean.

**FRENCH:** Much a conservationist movement in some ways, too? Trying to conserve what was being destroyed?

**SUZUKI:** Of course. But what I feel now is that we can't afford to fight any longer because when you win there is always a loser, and we can't afford to have losers anymore. In British Columbia where I live, two of the big issues are fisheries and forests. And we have had all of these long battles so now

we're trying to come together at a round table where all of the "stakeholders," people with different vested interests, come together and try to work something out. But what happens is that people come in and they have their turf; "I'm a commercial fisherman and I'm going to fight for my share," "I'm an aboriginal and this is my tradition," and you end up coming out with a compromise that's not really focused on the issue of genuine sustainability. So what I ask is, can we come together and forget our vested interest and start from a platform of what we agree. Because if we don't start with what we agree, then we're just arguing for our own special stakes. So my position is this: Can we not all agree that the absolute, most fundamental need is air? The minute we were born, we had to take a breath of air and from that point on fifteen to forty times a minute until the last breath before we die, we need air. So surely our highest priority as a species should be protecting air. That means when someone wants to dump something into it, you go, "Wait a minute now, that's the life-giving substance that maintains all terrestrial creatures." Air should be sacred so we deal with it in a different way. If you don't have water for more than a few days, you're dead. If you have polluted water, you're sick. So surely everybody has to agree, water is a fundamental need that we have to treat in a special way. And then every bit of our food was once alive and most of it was grown in the soil. So soil should be protected. Every bit of the energy in our body is sunlight fixed by photosynthesis, so photosynthesis is a priority. Can we not construct a platform of our most basic needs, biological, social, and spiritual? If we agree on that, then we ask, "How do we make a living?" or "How do we live?"

**FRENCH:** We have some violent agreement going on—yes.

**ORR:** And I agree with that. The perplexity, the difficulty, is how do you take those ideas—this is one for our whole generation—and then render that into an economy that works. And how we provision ourselves with food, energy, water, livelihood, health care, all of these things, in celebration in a way that we don't contaminate the fundamentals of life that David [Suzuki] describes so well. And I think for our generation, let me just leave this as a question for you young people in the audience, the most important task you can have is how do we begin to take all of the things that we want—clean air, clean water, and so forth—and begin to build an economy around that, and an economy, maybe small 'E' hints to a society of capital 'S,' so this seems to me to be the challenge of our time. How do we make this work? At two political conventions, economic growth is a huge item for both parties. And the

question is, how do you grow the economy more? And I think the question for us is not one of growth but one of quality, and how do you ensure fair distribution of what there is, provide for long-term sustainability for future generations? But I don't want to gloss over this point, I think this is THE challenge. That is the heart of the challenge ahead of us.

**FRENCH:** Jeremy, I'd like you to comment, but before you do, I want to give a heads up. In just a moment I'm going to open the floor to questions from any of you. You will notice in the aisles we have microphones set up. I'm afraid because of the taping we can only take your question if you proceed to the microphone because otherwise the audio will be—we won't be able to hear it. So if you have a question in mind and would like to actually start to line up at the microphones, I will be doing that in just a moment. Jeremy, would you care to comment on this train of thought?

**BENDIK-KEYMER:** There is so much to say. I think it has been so eloquently said. I'd rather hear what the floor has to say, and I'll weave something in. The only thing briefly I would say is about David's initial comment, sorry, David Orr's initial comment—look you're talking about sustainability, and [it] is such an abstract word. You're talking about not just a new set of habits, but a new experience of tinkering and reexploring what it is to be practical. So I just think the very nature of it requires that you think of education as a kind of externship, as a kind of lab, as a kind of socially, community-embedded experiment, and that means breaking the—you know in theater you talk about breaking the fourth wall—well, you need to break the walls of the classroom. I don't want to say too much more because I don't think it's as impassioned as what was just said, but that's the logical implication of it. The university needs to be rethought around these interdisciplinary problems that are fundamentally practical and political, and so it needs to get—any kind of school—needs to get the students out in the community and also tinkering and working with stuff so that it's possible to see what a different kind of life is like, and what a political life is like. So yes, I agree with these points.

**FRENCH:** Well, it looks like we do have folks lined up, so I'm going to start over here, and if you could please, if you don't mind stating your name and then your question and then if you have a particular panelist that you'd like to direct it to, or if you'd just like the panel in general to respond.

**AUDIENCE:** Thanks. I'm Joe Conan from Cleveland. I was interested in your comments, any of you, on the net effect of religion on the future of this whole movement that you're talking about in our future. It seems on the one

hand we have some religious people who are very impassioned about the future of the planet and I think on the other hand we see religion sometimes buttressing kind of a blindness that maybe we were talking about earlier.

**FRENCH:** Who would like to take that?

**ORR:** Thanks for the question. If you ask what the word environment implies, bringing a wholeness and so forth, and the root for the word religion means “to bind together.” And so I think you can make a very good case that if you’re concerned about wholeness or religion, wholeness, whole, holy, there’s more than an ethnologic similarity here. There’s the attempt to try to build a civilization where the parts do in fact hang together, in a way that’s fair, decent, and just, and honors the sacredness of the creation, whatever your denomination or religious affiliation might be. Thanks for the question. I think that’s a really good question.

**FRENCH:** Would either of you like to comment on religion and the environment?

**SUZUKI:** I’m an atheist. I don’t have much comment about religion, I’m afraid, but I’ll go with David [Orr].

**FRENCH:** Jeremy, do you have anything to say on this topic?

**BENDIK–KEYMER:** Yes, just two brief things. The one is that the core of piety—or if you don’t call it piety you may call it whatever that relation is that binds you to the beings of your religion, or the being of your religion, or the nothingness of your religion—is a form of devotion, right? It engages the capacity inside the human being to be more than cynical and to be willing to give for something that’s just not your egotistical self. So to the extent that religion really speaks thoughtfully to that, I think it has a very intimate connection with being able of thinking about future generations and the continuum of life. But the second thing to say is that the way that religion gets used in the public sphere I don’t think is truly religious, because religion becomes hardened as a way of creating divisions or as a way of moving a platform around. But real religiousness involves a kind of attention to the meaning in front of you, whether it’s a person you’re talking to, something with which you vehemently disagree, or something that you have to do. It’s not hardened. And so I think one has to distinguish between the use of religion, which is a false god or idol, and genuine religiousness, and I think genuine religiousness is a very powerful thing.

**FRENCH:** Okay, let’s go over here now.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi. My name is Drake. Earlier, David, you said something about a project that you were working on in Oberlin involving a community and making this abstract idea more concrete in terms of a community. I'm sure a lot of individuals outside of Oberlin would love to be involved projects like this. How would you suggest individuals go about making this abstract ideal more concrete, more personal, rather than just pertaining to a community that they may or may not live in?

**ORR:** Let me link that question with the previous question. There is a joke some of you may have heard about a little girl—actually it was a true story I'm told—who decided to draw a picture of God, and her mother said, “Well, honey, nobody knows what God looks like.” And she says, “Well, they will now.” And I think in some ways, back on your question, to take this word ‘sustainability,’ it's the same kind of thing. What is it we are attempting to build? And so our intention in Oberlin is a joint enterprise with both the city and the college, we're a little city of ten thousand, the first college to accept African Americans and women and graduate them back in the 1830s and so forth, this is going to sound like an admissions pitch, it probably is, but the attempt is to give, to attempt to flush out this word ‘sustainability’ that gives it, you know, when you want to see what sustainability is, you go there, you see how food, the downtown redevelopment and education, the law and policy and these things hang together in very much the way that David [Suzuki] has described in terms of environment.

**FRENCH:** Here at Case Western we have The Fowler Center of Sustainability.

**ORR:** Yes, and Roger Saillant may be here, you already are embedded in this. The Cleveland metropolitan area, Northeast Ohio has become a hotbed of some awfully important innovation in terms of sustainability. The goal is to make this real. So the longer term goal here, long-term meaning a year or two, is to link up a network across the country and start our version of a grassroots movement, eventually trying to change the political dialogue at the very top, so we've got an office in Denver, we've opened an office in Washington, D.C., in cooperation with the New America Foundation, we have board of directors, and we're trying to feel our way toward that network, but contact me afterward or just email me at [David.Orr@oberlin.edu](mailto:David.Orr@oberlin.edu) and I'd be happy to pull you into the effort.

**AUDIENCE:** Can you repeat that email please?

**ORR:** It's just [David.Orr@oberlin.edu](mailto:David.Orr@oberlin.edu).

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

FRENCH: And thank you for your question. Let's go now over to here.

AUDIENCE: My name is Zoe Conrose from Montessori High School, and I just had a question relating to a personal story that I had. I grew up in a town where there were radioactive materials located in a certain area. This generated a large portion of the people living in this certain area having cancer of various different types. I was closely related to some of them. I was wondering if you, I mean we're so interconnected, the earth and us, because it not only harms the environment but it harms ourselves to have this happen to us. How do you even justify that? I mean, how do you I don't know, I'm sorry. I just wanted to ask your thoughts on that. Thank you.

FRENCH: Go right ahead, Jeremy.

BENDIK-KEYMER: I'm sorry you had to ..., it sounds like there was real loss involved, and I'm sorry to hear that. If I understand your question right, it's, "how can people put themselves in such a position that they—to use David [Suzuki]'s expression from a little while ago about the air—that they can just throw their garbage into the air that they breathe?" Is this the thought? Yes, so look, there are various different levels of explaining this, right? From thinking of humans as being shortsighted or errant or so on, but I think I agree that most of us are saying that the main problem has to do with the political structure of the society you're in and whether or not the citizens in the society we are in make our businesses and make our government be accountable to *humanity* and not just to *humankind*. To humanity—the virtue—where we understand that humans are just part of a continuum of life [alongside other living beings]. And ...ultimately I think that's the simple one-line answer. [The pollution of our biosphere is] possible because citizenship has waned and because we're not empowered in the right way through knowledge, through educational systems, through a media that is generally helpful, and through business leaders who decide that over their dead body they're going to let business interests get underneath the citizens. That's where I would come at this issue.

SUZUKI: I think that politics simply reflects, that is how politicians act, will reflect the underlying values of society. I have spent a lot of my life when I was still an active scientist, lobbying every new minister of state for science and technology. They didn't know anything. They come in, we have to educate them, they get up to a certain point and then they get moved out and I start



all over again. In order to deal profoundly with science and technology, we must have a society that is scientifically literate. In terms of the ecological issues we're talking about now, politicians will simply reflect society's values, and that affects the way that we treat the rest of the world. So we need to have a fundamental understanding that we are animals, and as animals, our biological nature dictates our most fundamental needs. I once gave a talk at the first Green Building conference in Austin, Texas, and there were a lot of children in the audience so I said, "Now kids, if you remember one lesson from my talk today, please remember we are animals." Man did their parents get pissed off at me! "Don't call my daughter an animal! We're human beings." You can see we think somehow we're different from the rest of life. If you call someone a snake or a worm or a rat or a pig or a chicken, these are all insults because we think that we are superior to them. We haven't come to grips with our basic biological nature which dictates our most fundamental needs. Politics is not going to be able to deal with that unless it's one of our basic cultural values. And we don't have that right now.

**ORR:** Your question is a really good question, and the points you make behind the question is really good, and I agree with my colleagues on the platform. Ultimately this comes down to a political system that can protect the least among us, and future generations, and that is a political revolution that we have not yet experienced. Another Texan, Sanford Levinson, who is a constitutional lawyer, is proposing another constitutional convention in this country to deal with issues like this, but this eventually is a matter of power and politics. And one last comment is, I worked for the last five or six years or longer with people in West Virginia where mountaintops have been cut off so we can get cheap coal. So of course that means the coal is not cheap at all. It just means that the costs are never fully paid for the damage you've done, and they're suffering all kinds of illnesses and so forth, and I think the issue in part is also one that Nelson Mandela had to wrestle with in his memoirs. He was imprisoned in South Africa and the wrongs were egregious, and yet he came out of that process without hatred, and led the revolution then in South Africa. I think there's a good bit of that attitude we've got to build into this because we have some suffering and pain and some egregious wrongs that are going to go on before we fix this, but thanks very much for the points you have made.

**FRENCH:** Yes, thank you for sharing your personal story. We appreciate that. I'm going to come back over here.

**AUDIENCE:** William Carter. I'm an emeritus professor of Environmental Health and Safety at the University of Findley. In all due respect to our sponsors, I would like to ask the question is capitalism as currently emphasizing growth antithetical to permaculture and sustainability?

**FRENCH:** Dr. Suzuki, would you care to comment on this?

**SUZUKI:** Yes. The problem we face is that we've come to think we're so smart and so important that we're going to dictate the conditions of the biosphere. I'm going to say this in my talk tonight, but we know that we live in a world that is shaped by laws of nature. In physics as David [Orr] says, we accept there is a law of gravity, there are limits to how fast a rocket can go, we accept that entropy is a reality. Chemistry determines the kind of chemical reactions and molecules you can create. We understand those are laws of nature. In biology it's the same. Our biological nature dictates that we have an absolute need for clean air, clean water, clean soil, sunlight, and so on. Other things like capitalism, currency, markets, economics, corporations, these aren't forces of nature, we invented them. But what do we try to do? Look at Copenhagen, where three years ago 192 nations met to deal with the atmosphere that doesn't belong to anyone. But they had 192 national boundaries and 192 economic agendas that they negotiated by trying to shoe horn nature into. Well it can't work that way. We think we're so important we can make the air conform to our country or our economic demands? That's what we're trying to do.

**FRENCH:** David?

**ORR:** Yes, I agree with that.

**AUDIENCE:** So far you've agreed with everything that David [Suzuki] said.

**ORR:** Yes, we were told to be agreeable, just stay away from controversy. You know, the issue here with capitalism is in part the laws of capitalism, if you start that with Adam Smith and *The Wealth of Nations*. That was 237 years ago. So the laws we take to be the laws of capitalism are 237 years old. The problem is they were trying to shoe horn those into a planet where it has evolved into 3.8 billion years, and that's kind of a tough assignment. And without getting in details, if I'm optimistic, I'm optimistic in part because of people like Ray Anderson, a friend of mine who died last year of cancer. But he started a company called Interface Carpet Corporation. And Ray decided that he wanted his supply to start with his supply chain, not Saudi Arabian crude, and then he wanted to give the customers a product that he would own, he would lease it and then get it back, remake it into new carpet,

which meant he had to assemble the molecules in the way that he wanted, he could disassemble them and rearrange them, and then give it back, so you cut off the crude oil supply over here, it never went to a landfill where it otherwise would have stayed for 40,000 years. Jean Benyus, who will be here in several weeks, has developed a field called biomimicry. And to think of biomimicry, how, for example, she says spiders take dead flies and sunshine, and they make materials stronger than steel by five times, tougher than Kevlar, which makes bulletproof vests, ambient temperature, no fossil fuels made at or near of the body, biodegradable, no heat, beat, or treat, as she describes it: biomimicry. And nature does things, nature manufactures things, ceramics and so forth, much more intelligently than anything we can make. So there is a way here to begin to calibrate the way nature works with the way this human institution, capitalism, works. And then in the meantime, I think we have to figure out how to regulate capitalism for the good of the whole community. So no more deregulation of—let’s say the banking industry and collapsing the global economy, as we had in 2008. And that was because of the repeal of legislation passed in The New Deal that had regulated banks and kept them out of certain kinds of activity. So I don’t think we have an alternative to capitalism. I think we have a choice of whether we have a good capitalism and begin to encourage innovation in the way we make things and the way we provide livelihood or not, and on that I can be optimistic on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday I’m not; and on Sunday I don’t think about it.

**FRENCH:** And Ray Anderson was successful with his sustainable carpet model, it was not as though he gave up on profits and so forth, it was at both ends, correct?

**ORR:** He decided he was going to make it so that there was to be no waste product and to be powered by sunshine and so he began to make a company that was sustainable in every way you can think of at this point. And I think that there are other companies beginning to move in that direction, but it’s called, it’s a different kind of capitalism, that in the business world, the business school here, to where they had school courses in triple bottom line, and you have some of the leading thinkers and how you begin to shift corporations into this kind of mindset. And it turns out it’s really weird. Because what appears to be just do-gooderism actually is pretty good for the bottom line. And so it’s one of these ironic convergences of doing the right thing and doing the smart thing converge on the same kind of business enterprise.

**SUZUKI:** Well, the weird thing about current economic agenda, and I don't think it's inherent (it may be, I'm not an economist) is this drive for constant growth. What is growth? Why is growth suddenly an end in itself? In my country we hear we have to dig up the tar sands because that's going to be the economic engine of the country—we have to keep the economy growing. But nobody asks, "Wait a minute, what's an economy for? Are there no limits? How much is enough? Are we happier with all of this growth?" We are among the richest people on the planet. How much do we need? Why do we have to have more? We live in a finite world, the biosphere, the zone of air, water, and land, where all life exists. Carl Sagan told us if you shrink the earth to the size of a basketball, the biosphere will be thinner than a layer of Saran wrap, and that's it. Not just for us, but 30 million other species that share that space, and we think that we can grow our economy forever? Steady growth is called exponential growth, and anything growing exponentially will double in a predictable time. So if it's growing at 1 percent a year it will double in 70 years, 2 percent a year in 35, 3 percent in 24. We can predict the growth rate. Art Barlett, a physicist at Colorado, gave this story to me. I'm going to give you a system that is going to grow exponentially. We have a test tube full of food for bacteria, put in one bacterial cell which is going to divide every minute, that's exponential growth. So at the beginning there is one bacterium, in one minute there are two, two minutes there are four, three minutes, eight, four minutes sixteen, that's exponential growth. And at 60 minutes, the test tube is completely full of bacteria and there's no food left. So when is a test tube only half full? Well, of course the answer is at 59 minutes. So at 58 minutes it's 25 percent full, 57 minutes 12.5 percent full. At 55 minutes of a 60 minute cycle, it's 3 percent full. If at 55 minutes one of the bacteria says, "Hey guys, we've got a population problem," the other bacteria would say, "what have you been smoking? 97 percent of the test tube is empty and we have been around for 55 minutes." So at 59 minutes, they realize, "we gotta do something, Jack was right. We have one minute left." So what do you do? Suppose those bacterial scientists invent three test tubes full of food. So they're saved, right? They have quadrupled the amount of food and space! So at 60 minutes the first tube is full, at 61 minutes the second is full, and 62 minutes all four are full. So even if we found three more planets to live on immediately, it would only buy us two extra minutes. Every scientist I've talked to agrees with me, we're already past the 59th minute! People say, "How dare you say that. Look at our stores. We're living longer and healthier." Yes, we have created the illusion that everything is fine by

using up the rightful legacy of our children and our grandchildren. That's how we're doing it.

**FRENCH:** I apologize for this, but I need to make a practical announcement. There are some Case Western students who may have to step out at this moment because they have classes, and I just want to give them one moment to do so discretely, and we appreciate them coming and attending for as long as they could, but we need them to continue their education, and so we will let them step out for one moment. Jeremy, did you want to comment on this? David Orr? Yes.

**ORR:** Let me get this straight. You went to Texas and said they were animals, you came here and compared us to bacteria. You know, one thought that comes to mind and it fits Case Western. You have some amazing capabilities here. David Cooperrider has been the leading scholar in something called appreciative inquiry. And as David Suzuki is talking, it strikes me that we need a national dialogue of that kind of tough stuff. And we need to get to the bottom of a lot of things very quickly, and Case has been a leader in that field, and I just want to point that out. There is a dialogue here that needs to be managed and there are some rules to carry out those kinds of dialogues. Just a thought.

**BENDIK-KEYMER:** I do want to say one thing. Growth is growth of an abstraction. I just think that's important to say. I have a colleague in Colorado who works on this problem philosophically, and I always think he's making this mistake. It does not necessarily mean growth of things, physical things; it means growth of value. Value can be *intensified* if it is regulated properly, right? So this is what costs are supposed to reflect. But the problem is, I mean I appreciate hearing stories of businesses that are starting to turn the corner on this issue, but the issue frankly is *macroeconomic*. The great business that does it [i.e. is environmentally respectful], that's great. Perhaps it will catch on, but it will not do anything if the incentives in the system say, "free ride and push it off onto the future"—if the incentives say, "I don't have to pay anything for taking away what the future deserves." So I mean, I agree with the general gist of [the turn to environmental business] but I wouldn't get too hung up on this growth thing. The issue is, are we regulating the economy properly? This is what David Orr was saying. We need to internalize externalities. Every economy, no matter how libertarian you are, has regulation for contract. We've decided it's not okay to sell human beings. These things can be done. We need the right kind of legal instruments to frame in the generation of wealth so that when

wealth comes out and is registered as growth, it's quality, it's a quality that we can live with and hold up to ourselves in the morning as human beings and say, "You know what? This is all right." So I mean, I wouldn't emphasize too much the issue about growth but rather the issue that [what we have now is] a macroeconomic mess that we've let get out of our hands, and that's a *citizenship* issue. That's what I'm trying to say with the politics.

**FRENCH:** First of all, I want to just extend thanks to those of you who are waiting with the questions and standing there, but I mean, how can I interrupt this conversation. But you, sir, are next.

**AUDIENCE:** My name is Peter Hart. I'm a biologist here at Case Western. I was at the first Earth Day in 1970 when I was a sophomore in college, and I want to thank you all for making this one of the most stimulating discussions that I've heard since then. I think we need a lot more of this. We all try to think over the course of our lives how we can best invest our time in these issues, and I mean we're going back and forth about a lot of different issues, you know, we all do recycling because it maybe reaffirms our daily commitment, even though we may feel like it's a drop in the bucket, but I think certainly in my life I've tried to think about what are the most significant actors on the planet for the problems that we have, and if I might perhaps revisit the comment of my friend from Finland without raising the whole issue about capitalism per se, I'd just like to hear your comments on the implications of what I think is the most significant actors, and that is the emergence of certain multinational corporations, and particularly those, for example, those proposing extracting oil from tar sands, the current frenzy in the United States over using new fracking technology to extract natural gas, we're seeing a real boom of that around here. I can't help but think that these corporations, who have—despite the opinion of our Supreme Court that they're individuals—have largely outflanked the ability of government. We like to talk theoretically about ourselves as citizens and individuals, but in fact there are actors that are much larger than us who have successfully and persistently pursued the ability to outflank nations, states, governments, making it increasingly difficult to be optimistic about our political impact on these issues and making us increasingly discouraged about where do we act, in what arena do we act, in order to deal with these problems. Thanks.

**FRENCH:** Thank you for your question. Who would like to go first?

**ORR:** Corporations are nowhere mentioned in the US Constitution, so for people who like to talk about original intent, corporations do not appear

in that document. Second thing, both Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln worried a great deal about corporations. In 1864, Abraham Lincoln assumed—just from what he had seen in the Civil War and corporations supplying guns and blankets to the Union armies—that corporations would eventually amass all the power and the public would be destroyed, and that was 1864, and he was a Republican. The issue in 1886 was that the Supreme Court was said to have given the legal rights of a person to corporations. In fact, the case shows that they didn't really do that, that was misreading of a portion called the Head notes to that decision. But it's a moot point because corporations have been assumed to have the same protections of due process that people have by the Fourteenth Amendment. Now you and I are people, we are mortal, we can be in one place at one time, our assets are limited, we die, we are ethical people in between, but corporations stand oddly against this backdrop of democracy. We don't know quite what to do with them, and that's going to be one of the huge issues: Are corporations persons, legal persons? You and I are legal persons. Are corporations entitled to the same rights you and I have? That is going to be one big issue. Mitt Romney raised it several months [ago] and the issue has been kind of inflammatory, but this is going to be a tough issue. How do we provision ourselves with all of the things that we need and corporations stand astride international politics in many ways beyond the reach of law in any given country, and so it is an issue, and I don't propose a solution for it. It is going to be a very tough political issue. They have corrupted, I think, American politics in some very fundamental ways and so forth, but you know the story as well or better than I do, so thanks for raising the issue. But I can't think of anything politically that would be more important than beginning to reorient corporate behavior to long-term public purposes and rather like corporations were at the start of this country at the writing of the Constitution in 1787. It is a tough issue because it's so legally embedded and it's going to be hard to disentangle all the issues and come to an equitable and fair solution that coincides with a decent long-term future.

**FRENCH:** You know, I have been letting all of the panelists comment on each question but I see the rows stacked up on each side, so I actually would like to see if we can fit in a few more questions before we run out of time here.

**SUZUKI:** Can I just make a partly tongue-in-cheek comment, but it would help be a big beginning if all corporate leaders would read Mr. Inamori's books.

**FRENCH:** Yes, well we agree with that here at Case Western Reserve. For any of you who are not familiar, the Kyocera motto is, "Respect the divine and love people." How's that for a corporate motto? Now I'd like to take this question please.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi. I'm Lee Batdorf from Cleveland Heights. This is for David Suzuki, but you're all welcome to speak to it unless she stops you.

**FRENCH:** Which I might!

**AUDIENCE:** My question is how are we going to find our way? As any environmental activist knows, it's a complicated thing to deal with environmental issues and talking with the public about it. In the last decade, I've noticed schisms developing what you could call the environmental movement, and I've noticed that Stewart Brand of Whole Earth fame has come out for nuclear power, among other technologies, and then I've read in a recent issue of *Wired* magazine about how not only is renewable energy not going to do the job, but nuclear of course is very expensive to do, and the solution is in fracked natural gas. And where do we go to find a coherent direction to pursue as individuals to make decisions of how to treat the environment in a way that seven generations from now there might be something left?

**FRENCH:** Thank you, and I think to continue as I was suggesting, David Suzuki, if you could reply and we'll take another question, we'll take one reply to each response to try to get a few more folks in.

**SUZUKI:** I wish I knew the answer. I think what we need is diversity of thought within the movement and certainly a lot of my colleagues are now looking to nukes as the answer. It doesn't make any sense to me. It makes no economic sense and we have major problems with the technology, even when it's in place, and Fukushima ought to be a big reminder of that. So we have to constantly be listening and open to the issues in environmentalism. Nobody has the absolute truth. But I think the most important issue is how do we stay in the game? We have to have sustainable activism and so many of my colleagues have just burned out, gotten involved in an issue and flamed out. I hate to say it, but a number of them have committed suicide because it is so very serious. We need to have sustainable activism, as well. For me the greatest gift that I received was one day, I would ignore my family, I was in the office working saying I have to do this, I have to finish a project, and one day I looked in the mirror and thought, "Who the hell do you think you are? You're one person out of 6.5 billion people, 7 billion now. You think



you're so important you're going to make a difference?" We're all just one human being and we do the best we can and hope there are enough people to add together so that collectively we will have an impact. Don't flame out is the important thing.

**FRENCH:** I've just been cautioned that we have time for two more questions. So, over here please, and apologies to those of you who have been waiting so patiently, and I hope that perhaps you can join us for some of our other events.

**AUDIENCE:** My name is Eric Schreiber. I am on the staff of the Cleveland Clinic, and you've almost answered the question with your great discussion about growth, Dr. Suzuki. I wish you could amplify on one thing Dr. Bartlett also mentioned in his talk on this the oxymoron of sustainable growth. We have heard from both conventions, as was pointed out—growth, economic models are based on growth. What's this going to look like? Any mathematician will tell you that all growth stops. What do you think the prognosis is for making a transition from economic models based on growth to different economic models that are not? Thank you.

**SUZUKI:** I'm not a futurist. I don't know, but I think you can look at Clive Hamilton, an eco-philosopher from Australia. His book is *Requiem for a Species* and we're the species the requiem is for. He simply traces what we've been talking about over the last forty years, and what has actually been done politically and it's pretty depressing. So the reality is we work as hard as we can in whatever areas, but I think it's going to take a crisis of monumental proportions. I thought when thirty thousand people died in Europe of heat one summer, that was it. I remember six hundred or seven hundred people died in Chicago of heat. I thought Katrina might be it, but it looks like there's going to have to be a massive crisis. I thought the 2008 economic meltdown might be it, but it's not going to move us the way we should be going.

**BENDIK-KEYMER:** Just real short, I've been trying to hold over the past questions; so I'll be short, again. I'm a gradualist about these things. I don't think you get the solution like this. You get bridge concepts to start hinging [what we're working on] toward something different. So again, growth is just an abstraction. I would suggest a phrase something like *intensification of value* as a hinge concept, and the real issue then is not the semantics of it, although maybe the semantics help. The issue is, is the macroeconomic system regulated properly in a way that is in line with justice, in the way that we no longer sell human beings because it is unjust to sell human beings? It's unjust to sell the future, it's unjust to externalize our costs on the future, so the issue, I mean you

can change the language and talk about intensification of value, but the core issue is about *the macroeconomic frame*. So then, just to the last question, again in practical judgment, the issue is not always what's going to keep [our life] going forever or what's going to solve the whole problem [of our unsustainability], but *what's the first most important thing [to bring about]*, and then if we can get that thing in place, maybe we can see how the terrain looks different after it. So I do think there's one very simple important thing: The United States has to have a serious role in signing up for a binding global climate treaty, post Kyoto. It's a complete travesty that we have inhibited climate regulation, but if we could get behind climate regulation, China would have to start taking it more seriously, India would have to start taking it more seriously, and most importantly there would be a legal frame to start modeling for other sorts of ecological regulations that can only happen at the global level. So I think you know, as an environmentalist, if you have to recycle to keep your integrity going and to imagine a different lifestyle, go for it. But the main, number one thing is getting a global compact that has some enforceable power and that the United States and other major polluters are behind, and as citizens we need to say to every single one of our representatives, "Why aren't you talking about this?" So I think that's *the* thing. That starts [working on] the macroeconomic frame, and then you can start thinking about what the system would look like differently.

**FRENCH:** Please, if you could state your name.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi! I'm Hope Gerald from Shaker Heights High School, where I'm a junior and candidate of the IB—International Baccalaureate program. I had a question constructed for Jeremy, like no favoritism involved, but earlier you mentioned we have evolved into near-term thinkers as a society, but what specific factors, examples, areas of knowledge, or even ways of knowing do you have to back up your knowledge claim?

**BENDIK-KEYMER:** That's a great critical comment. You know what, there's a book by a guy named Matthew Ridley called *The Origins of Virtue*. It gives you the anthropological evidence on the extent to which we are near-term and to the extent to which we can counteract it. But I want to turn it over to my colleagues because they made some claims about how our economy now has made us short-term, and maybe they can fill that out a little bit.

**FRENCH:** Very briefly, if you would, gentleman.

**ORR:** One comment very quickly. Going back to the last point, if you were to go back to say the year 1750 in Western society and say, "Let's go out and

watch the enlightenment happen,” remember your history? Where would you go? The enlightenment was a letter from Montesquieu to Diderot and Thomas Jefferson in a hotel room in Philadelphia, and so forth. There was no place you could go to see it. And if you run the film forward by two hundred years and look back at our time, I think there’s something like an ecological enlightenment beginning to emerge. You all are here because of it. A lot of the activity in Cleveland and Case and Oberlin and all over the world now is part of a global enlightenment and it is possible, it is just possible that we are further along in this process than we think or that we would be able to see from right now, in the same way that nobody in 1750 could have foreseen Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence and so forth and so on. It’s hard to see good things unfolding when you’re right in the middle of it. This prize and the work of all of you in the room and my colleagues and so forth, may be an indication, could be, just perhaps, maybe, possibly further along than it otherwise would look. Maybe.

**FRENCH:** May I give you the last word?

**SUZUKI:** No, that’s fine for me.

**FRENCH:** Well, I want to thank you all for a wonderful discussion. I think everyone in the room is saying, “Don’t make them stop.” But it is my job to make it stop. But this is not the end of our events and I’m very sorry that we could not get to all of your questions, but I hope you will continue your engagement with us. As soon as we conclude here, our panelists will be walking over to our first ever Eco Showcase at the Kelvin Smith Library Oval, where they will be selling and signing copies of some of their more recent books, and the Eco Showcase is a wonderful opportunity for you to network and learn about environmental and sustainability work in our region. I also invite you all to join us this evening back right here in Severance Hall at 6:00 p.m. for the 2012 Inamori Ethics Prize ceremony, when we will actually put the medal around your neck, Dr. Suzuki, and we will hear David Suzuki’s lecture, “The Challenge of the Twenty-First Century: Setting the Real Bottom Line.” Now if you will, please join me in thanking our panelists for an amazing discussion.

On behalf of President Snyder and Provost Baeslack, I declare this academic symposium closed, and I thank you all for joining us.