Episode 734: How to Start at Zero and Reach Libertarianism

Guest: Steve Patterson

WOODS: I've known you for a while, and I was very glad to see that you had started a podcast. And it's a great podcast. I mean, you talk about all kinds of different things with all different kinds of extremely interesting people. Normally with something like this, I say a little bit about the person's podcast or whatever the thing is, and then at the end I say, tell us about what it is that you're doing, and all that. But I actually want to start this off with you talking about *Patterson in Pursuit*, because people are just going to love this.

PATTERSON: Sure, thanks. I could talk all day about it. So —

WOODS: But don't.

PATTERSON: (laughing) Okay.

WOODS: (laughing)

PATTERSON: My wife and I are currently traveling the world, and I am conducting interviews with intellectuals of all stripes about really big ideas that I care about. So two-second background on me: about a decade ago I got really interested in the world of ideas, and I went to college, and I kind of had my bubble burst, where I thought I was going to learn a bunch of amazing things in college, and I realized that's actually not what college is about. And so my desire for intellectual conversation never really materialized, and I decided about two years ago, okay, I'm just going to go solo. I'm going to be a solo philosopher. I'm going to try to sort out how the world works by myself; forget academia.

And part of that has included doing my own research, doing my own writing, but it's also starting up this podcast, where I've spoken with people so far from five different countries about everything from political theory to epistemology and logic to religious ideas — pretty much everything I find interesting — mathematics. And so far the conversations have been very stimulating, very exciting. Some of my suspicion has been confirmed, that I think there's not a whole lot of really deep critical thinking going on in academia. I've focused most of my interviews with academicians, and I've been fairly unimpressed. On the other hand, I also think there's a great idea of human experience which is not satisfactorily explored, and that's what you might call the

religious or the spiritual side of things, that I don't have personally sorted out in my own worldview, and so I'm asking a bunch of people what their ideas on the topic are, and I've gotten some really interesting answers. So that's *Patterson in Pursuit* in a nutshell.

WOODS: Yeah, it's great, and that sums up really what I was trying to say about it, that it's not like you're just going around talking about libertarianism to a lot of people. It's a lot of different things. It's hardly libertarianism. I mean, it is; it is, but you're talking about questions like scientific materialism, and you're looking at religious questions. It's all over the place, the kinds of things you'd want to talk about when trying to figure out your own worldview. So fun, fun, fun.

PATTERSON: Yes. I want to say one more thing on it. This your listeners might find very interesting: I have found that in our culture there is something like a culture of irrationalism, this idea that the world is unknowable, somehow we can't have access to objective truth, that maybe logical contradictions exist. And I've explored this a little bit. I want to know why people believe that, because I think it's fundamentally mistaken, and I've discovered just in the past year or so I think three different areas where you get irrationalism from. One, interestingly enough, is mathematics, which we don't have to get into now. But also there's an idea in physics; people resort to talking about crazy things in quantum physics, and therefore reality is unknowable. And another is religious or spiritual ideas, where they think you can experience contradictions. That's another area, which, if that sounds like something you can sympathize with, why is there irrationalism in the world, I think I have some pretty compelling answers on that topic. So if anybody is curious about my ideas on irrationalism, I've got a site, Steve-Patterson.com, and you can see if you find what I say compelling.

WOODS: I think I want to talk about that now. Is that okay?

PATTERSON: (laughing) Yeah, certainly.

WOODS: I told you this was a *Magical Mystery Tour* episode. You don't know what you're going to find driving through England, and apparently you find irrationalism. Well, interestingly, by the way, there is this — I know this isn't necessarily what you had in mind, but you know the whole argument about "could God create a mountain so high he couldn't climb over it?" —

PATTERSON: Right.

WOODS: — and people think, oh, gosh, these are just such puzzles and conundrums. They're not, because the answer is no. The answer is He could not do that.

PATTERSON: Right.

WOODS: But that's not a limitation on the power of an omnipotent being. It's like you're saying "could God make a square circle?" Answer: no.

PATTERSON: Exactly.

WOODS: No, God could not make a square circle, because as soon as you say "square" you're asking for one thing, but when you say "circle" you're asking for something else. So you're not really asking for anything. So if you're asking for a mountain, that's one thing, but then you're suddenly asking for infinite height — I mean, it would have to be so high it would be inconceivable — I mean, these are dumb problems, and the thing is that, I don't think people realize, but certainly within the Catholic tradition, overwhelmingly — I mean, *very*, very few exceptions — I think — oh, now I can't even remember the one guy I know who disagrees on this, but all through the Catholic intellectual tradition, they all would say, no, he couldn't build that mountain. They have no problem saying that, and they don't believe that this contradicts the idea of God being all-powerful, because you have to ask him something coherent.

PATTERSON: So you say that, Tom; however, there's two things on that topic.

WOODS: Oh, wait a minute. Hold on. Are you actually going to contradict me on this?

PATTERSON: No, no, no, I'm going to agree with you, but you give too much credit to common sense. So —

WOODS: That's my big problem.

PATTERSON: You are correct to say that packed into the concept of omnipotence is — what that means is being able to do anything that can be done.

WOODS: Right.

PATTERSON: Now, that does not include things which cannot be done. So the reason that if God exists and he is omnipotent, then he cannot create a square circle, that's no contradiction, because a square circle cannot be created. That idea is internally incoherent. However, it is not the case that a great deal of professional academics would in fact agree with you on this topic about square circles, and in fact, I just had a conversation with a professor at Columbia who is
a philosopher/professor, philosopher of mathematics, who was, I would say, an irrationalist, that argued that actually, yes, logical contradictions can exist. And his example was infinite sets and even square circles.

He said, yes, well — he said, Steve, yes, I understand your concept of "square" and "circle" are something that's mutually exclusive, but the question is can we put them together, are there such things that we'll call "squircles"? And they have the properties of being square and they have the properties of being circle. And I said, well, that's not actually something that's possible. That's not even coherent. He said, well, no, actually you'll notice you can talk meaningfully about squircles. You know that square circles, for example, are square. It's a true story. So that might flabbergast people who hear it who aren't aware of the state of what I call irrationalism in academia and

in the world of philosophy, but that argument is out there, that square circles have some property we can meaningfully talk about, which is that they're square.

WOODS: All right, look, I want to carry on with the square circle thing, but I actually really want to carry on with your — I kind of sidetracked us a bit on your point about irrationality because you happened to mention people who were arguing that contradictions were possible and they were arguing from a religious standpoint. And I just wanted to make note —

PATTERSON: (laughing) Yes.

WOODS: — that at least this argument about the mountain was settled like 1,000 years ago and nobody even thinks about it. And the guy I was thinking of, by the way, is Peter Damian, but it turns out that just a quick glance at it reveals that he's probably being treated a little bit unfairly, that even he probably wouldn't believe in the "God could create a mountain so high that He couldn't — ". You know, that even he probably is being treated unfairly. Basically everybody is of the opinion that, no, you're asking God to do a no-thing, a thing that really isn't there, so you're not asking him really to do anything, so it's not a challenge to his omnipotence.

PATTERSON: Exactly, and in fact, this is a really interesting area, talking about contradictions and religious experience, because what I've found is, why do so many people claims things like "the only thing that exists is nothing"? We hear this a lot of times in Eastern ideas or in Hinduism, Buddhism, and they talk about the self being and not being at the same time. And I find this really fascinating, because so many people argue that that's true, and they're very passionate about it.

So I've investigated this topic, and I think there's actually something very profound going on here. You have what I call the Californization of paradoxes, which is your stereotypical California guy, like, yeah, man, the universe exists and it doesn't at the same time. Whoa. And that's the extent of the rational understanding. It's just a strict logical contradiction that they accept and think that that's okay.

However, there's a really interesting tradition, especially in Eastern philosophy, that uses logical contradiction not in a literal way but in a way to say something very profound, that if you're interested in trying to understand Eastern worldviews and Eastern ideas, it's essentially saying this: their argument is that truth is something that can only be discovered by experience. It's not something that is rationally comprehended. So when you are trying to sort out the truth this your rational faculty, you're going to find dead ends. So what is the sound of one hand clapping? Well, if you meditate on that then you realize you're supposed to quiet your mind. You're supposed to stop the rationalization, stop the question-asking, stop that left-side-of-the-brain pursuit of truth, just be. Just quiet your mind and be. And in that state of just being then you will realize the truth. Which, whether or not that's true or false, is a very interesting idea, and it certainly has nothing to do with the existence of actual paradoxes in the world.

WOODS: Let's move over to libertarianism, though, because I do want to have you back and let's just have a total free-for-all on all kinds of interesting topics

PATTERSON: Okay.

WOODS: I've got several lined up that I actually want to talk about —

PATTERSON: Okay.

WOODS: — but for now as I'm introducing you to the audience, let's stick to this frankly less interesting stuff (laughing). People are tired of hearing about it.

PATTERSON: Okay.

WOODS: All right, you're a libertarian; you've been a libertarian for a long time. I knew you back when you were at FEE. And at the time I met you, I didn't know that you had all these different interests, intellectually. I didn't realize that about you. But when you originally became a libertarian, I would suspect it was not because you sat down or you went around the world and you talked to people about their different perspectives and you sorted it all out.

PATTERSON: Right.

WOODS: You probably came at it from a more mundane set of circumstances. Am I right?

PATTERSON: Yes, actually my conversion to libertarianism was this guy you might have heard of, Ron Paul?

WOODS: Oh, you were a Ron Paul guy! How about that? So yeah, so it was just the way like so many other people did. Great.

PATTERSON: Yes, yes. I stumbled across a video on YouTube of Ron Paul talking, and I thought, who is this funny old guy saying all these things that all of the fellow Republicans onstage disagree with. And that just led me down the rabbit hole. He kept talking about Austrian economics, and so I looked that up, and I discovered the Mises Institute and FEE, and I just kept consuming information until I wound up a libertarian. And then shortly thereafter I went to Mises University one year, and I was talking after the seminars to a gentleman who asked me a couple of basic questions, and he turned me into an anarchist kind of on the spot. So yeah, my pursuit is like so many other people, that Ron Paul — fortunately I actually got to intern with Ron Paul in his DC office, so I got to meet him in person, and just my perspective of Ron went up even higher. But yes, that's my own journey towards libertarianism.

Since then, though, I have been very interested in philosophy, and I have found that clear thinking about philosophy will also lead you towards the direction of libertarianism.

WOODS: Okay, that's what I wanted to jump in with, that now that you've reached this intellectual endpoint, you then stepped back and looked at it critically and tried to see, well, suppose there hadn't been a video of Ron Paul.

PATTERSON: Right.

WOODS: What's another more ethereal way I might have reached these conclusions? So talk to me about that. Now, by the way, I wonder if philosophers working in universities look upon philosophers who don't work in universities the same way university historians look upon historians working on their own. Right? They despise these people.

PATTERSON: Yes.

WOODS: How dare they encroach upon our august profession that requires all kinds of particular training and all that? Well, I used to teach college, so I mean, I was in there for a while, but I knew there was that contempt, and I assume you've run into the same thing with philosophy?

PATTERSON: Yeah, that would be an understatement.

WOODS: (laughing)

PATTERSON: I'm hated. I am considered king of all cranks, because in my own pursuit of truth I am not satisfied with the intellectual caliber of academia, so I've decided I've got to do my own thing. And people take that as an affront. They think I'm out of my mind. I'm completely crazy. My ideas are so terrible as to not even mention with a straight face. What I've talked about was resolved 1500 years ago. So yes, it is exactly as you would expect as an outsider criticizing an entire established profession.

WOODS: And of all people, to be so little self aware that academic philosophers of all people would call other people cranks.

PATTERSON: (laughing)

WOODS: It's like Bill Clinton calling you a womanizer. I mean, how about a little self-reflection?

PATTERSON: (laughing) Right, exactly.

WOODS: All right, but the thing is, let me give voice here to a little bit of skepticism.

PATTERSON: Sure.

WOODS: It does seem to some people that with philosophy, yeah, in theory I'm starting off by just dispassionately looking for truth, but in practice I already know what my

conclusions are, so I'm going to formulate the philosophy to get me to the endpoint I already want to reach. Now what, am I too cynical?

PATTERSON: I would say that is not philosophy. Philosophy is a very, very difficult process of trying to discover your own presuppositions and figure out whether or not those presuppositions are accurate or justified. So I agree in practice what philosophy is is precisely as you say; it's just people searching for justification for the beliefs that they have. But the philosophy I'm interested in, and I'm sure a lot of other people out there are interested in, though they may not be professional philosophers, is simply trying to grasp at truth with the most effective tools that they have available for them. Now, in practice, not only is it the case that you get kind of after-the-fact rationalization of one's ideas, you get a bunch of really terrible crap coming out of philosophers' mouths. So philosophy has a bad rap, and unfortunately I think that's kind of for good reason. The last century of philosophy there's been a great deal of nonsense that's produced. But I figure — if there's another word I can use other than philosophy then maybe I'll use that word, but it's such an important task to try to really discover these foundational presuppositions and know whether or not they're accurate that it's something I'm just fanatically obsessed with and devoted to. And if that means I'm a crank, you know, in how the establishment looks at me, then so be it. I'll wear that as a badge.

WOODS: Well, I've been wearing that badge for quite some time now, as a matter of fact, and haven't suffered in any way as a result of it. Not in any way. All right, so tell me now, let's walk through the process by which you start with a blank slate and you wind up a libertarian. What's step one?

PATTERSON: Well, when you're trying to start from step one, you have to start with epistemology. And unfortunately that's a very deep rabbit hole that will never get to libertarianism, so I'll give you a reasonable starting point, and that just has to do with thinking about metaphysics. Metaphysics is the area of philosophy that deals with thinking about what types of things are out there in the world. And this is an area where if you don't actually examine your concepts, you're going to have a very confused and mistaken worldview. You're going to have errors throughout your worldview.

An excellent example in political theory is talking about government. We talk about government all the time. Well, what is government? When you use that word, what is packed into the concept of government? If you think that government is some entity that's out there in the world, that's operating, that's somehow a collective that's doing things in the world, that's a mistake. That's not actually the case. That's not actually what exists in the world. All that exists in the world when we're talking about political theory is individuals. Just individuals. Now if that's true, then government is a word we use to reference a particular group of individuals, that we give certain permissions to do things that we wouldn't do ourselves.

So already if you have a clear metaphysical worldview about what types of things exist in the world, what I consider that is a default anarchism (laughing). A lot of people

think — they have this kind of naive notion that government is out there as some overseeing, actual entity out there, and so they develop this theory about how governments act, and it's all mistaken. The only acting things in the world as we understand them are individuals, which I think is a metaphysical anarchism.

So from there, if your default perspective is it's just individuals, then immediately the question arises, well, why is it then that we allow some individuals to do things that the rest of us aren't allowed to do? So governments, as we meaningfully reference them, those individuals in government, can tax other individuals. What does that mean? Well, it means they can forcefully extort money from them for services that those individuals don't want provided. Well, does that seem like a good idea, if all existing acting individuals are fundamentally — let me rephrase that part. If all that exists are the acting individuals, then doesn't it seem at least questionable that we would say, oh, I have an idea of how society should be structured. Let's let one little group of people walk around and extort all the others against their will? So at the very least, when you think clearly about metaphysics, it at the very least makes you question some seemingly obvious things about what we've been taught about how government should operate.

WOODS: But on the other hand, I could still understand the nature of the world correctly and saying I'm fearful of these individuals, and I see two possibilities here of how do I deal with my fear of them: one is that we're all on an equal playing field vis a vis each other, and we're all just independent actors contracting with other people, including for things like defense and security, or I could say, look, I'm going to roll the dice and take a chance that if I let some people monopolize security that that'll be better for everybody. Why does looking — why couldn't I just look at it from a purely utilitarian standpoint and say I don't really know which way is the best, but I am inclined to think, given that at least I have some experience with a bunch of people running things, that I'm going to go with the devil I know. Does that mean I'm defying philosophy?

PATTERSON: No, no, that's an excellent question. So what this question will help you do is orient yourself to trying to answer what you've just asked. So if our perspective is, okay, it's just individuals, what do we do? Do we just contract amongst ourselves, or do we say, yes, let's have this one group of individuals that has monopoly power? Well, now we're talking about economics. So if you're taking the utilitarian calculus, now you have to dive into how does the world work in the sense of when we are engage in private enterprise, what are the results that we get and why do we get them.

So immediately when the question is put on the table, which is a huge first step, whether or not the question is even on the table of should we have private contractors provide the services that governments provide, now you have to dive into economics. And unfortunately what you see is philosophers, political theorists don't take the time to dive into economics. They come up with all kinds of scary scenarios to which we're supposed to say, oh, surely the market couldn't provide for that, which is an economic

claim. And then they say, therefore, this is where you get the justification for the existence of government.

But in my mind, my own personal — I am an anarchist, and the way that I originally arrived at those conclusions was just through economics. So when you're talking about monopolies, we need to have a certain monopoly that is providing these services — well, is that true? I mean, is it the case that people actually have explored how the economics of monopolies works? And I would say that once you understand sound economics, you could make a very, very compelling case for the nonexistence of monopolies or the complete unnecessariness of monopolies.

There's also another philosophic angle you could use to approach this, which is the epistemological question. So epistemology is the study of knowledge in the abstract. What is the nature of knowledge? Can we know things? How can we know things? And this is one of the areas where I think Friedrich Hayek contributed a great deal, where he said, look, knowledge in society is fragmented, it's splintered up amongst, in our case, hundreds of millions of people. And the idea that one central group is going to have enough accurate knowledge in society to make plans for the rest of the 300 million is kind of preposterous. That's just not how knowledge works. So if you sit and you think about the nature of epistemology or even the metaphysics of epistemology, what knowledge is, I think again it pushes you towards libertarianism or an individualism, that knowledge is not a thing that can be centralized en masse in one gigantic — the Politburo, for example.

WOODS: All right, so you've talked about epistemology, but it seems to me that another relevant field obviously when talking about something like libertarianism is ethics, because really at heart libertarianism is dealing with the question of how people ought to interact with other people, how do we treat other people. And of course related to that is is there a special class of people who get to treat other people in a way that no one else would be allowed to treat them.

PATTERSON: Yes, exactly. So again, this is just studying ethics, just in pure philosophy. What kind of conclusions do you come to? Well, I have a very unique perspective on ethics; however, just the standard treatment and ethical considerations I think is a satisfactory one, which is, yeah — the question is, how should man interact with man. Is it the case that we should live in a world where anybody can take anybody else's property or harm anybody else and hit them over the head because they don't like what shirt they're wearing? How should man interact with man?

Well, I think when you study that, I think what you discover is peace is probably a good rule of thumb for ethical considerations. In other words, I'm not going to act in a way where I'm going to hurt you, I'm going to aggress against you, as long as that treatment is given to me in return. Now, I think libertarians sometimes use the nonaggression principle as a bludgeon, but I think at the very least what the nonaggression principle is is an incredibly powerful rule of thumb for understanding ethical considerations. So if an individual values peace, if they value cooperation, if

they value not hurting one another, then again, it pushes you in the libertarian direction.

And in fact, you get a very robust theory of natural rights, regardless of your perspective on natural rights, whether or not you're a deontologist or not. The theory is absolutely beautiful, and it's profound. And my own position on this — I'm sure your listeners are familiar with argumentation ethics, which is the idea that you can get rationalist ethics, that self-ownership is something like an axiom that's necessarily inescapable. I actually disagree with argumentation ethics. However, I disagree for one reason, that I don't think you actually get to the first step. I don't think argumentation ethics is inescapable. However, I do think it's incredibly powerful, and I would choose to live in accordance with the ethical theory that the people like Hans Hoppe — I would choose to live in accordance with that, because I find that a very beautiful ethical theory, and very sensible too when you incorporate economics. It all kind of blends together in one very powerful worldview that points in the direction of individualist libertarianism.

WOODS: Is one of the attractions to libertarianism that you have as a thinker that it's a universalizable principle, that I can imagine everybody living in this way? Whereas it's not universalizable to say my particular group of people can dominate your particular group of people.

PATTERSON: So I would put it this way: I think about things in terms of systems. What types of ideas emerge when you have underlying principles? What types of societies emerge when you have underlying ideas? When you flesh them out, what is the system that's developed? And I think by far the category of distinction between libertarianism and the rest of the competition, the underlying principles of libertarianism, from the ethical perspective, from the epistemological, from the economic perspective, it just blows the competition out of the water.

And in fact, if you take kind of the systems analyst approach of trying to justify the existence of government, of monopolies, or of that group of individuals that can bonk everybody else on the head and that's somehow justified, I think you run into all kinds of errors. I think what you would expect to see in a world filled with governments, filled with monopolies is precisely what we see, which is massive levels of corruption, massive levels of death and devastation that's caused by the central planners. Now, what you would expect to see if you understand the principles of what you might call statism or you understand the principles of the "we need to have a strong government," you get something which ultimately looks like Venezuela right now. It's a long process, but it's understandable just by understanding the principles involved that, as Hayek put it, you go down the road to serfdom and eventually you end up with a catastrophe. The Soviet Union would be another great example.

WOODS: If you're going to try to argue for libertarianism in this way, do you find that it ultimately comes down to some degree to the first principles held by the person you're talking to? In other words, if I were to say, look, you believe in fair play for everybody and you have this sense of justice that is fairly widely shared. Well, if you

really are going to follow that to its logical conclusion, you have to be a libertarian. Because I could easily imagine myself running into somebody who says I don't care about mankind. I really don't. I care only about myself, and at least I have the honesty to say that. And so I don't care about some ethic that preserves the integrity of the physical bodies of other people. Who cares about that? I want what I want.
Can philosophy ever reach that person?

PATTERSON: Well, it depends on the individual. There are certainly some people where the most effective technique is to use their own principles and help them flesh out where their principles lead, and I think that's very effective for a lot of people, and I think it pushes them in the direction of libertarianism. When you understand the principle of what government is, I think most people don't actually like that idea.

But there are certainly some people you might call sociopathic, and I wouldn't go so far as to say that philosophy can't reach them — I mean, philosophy is a huge body of knowledge about all kinds of disparate things. But I would say no, ethical arguments would certainly not reach people who don't have a strong sense of ethics outside themselves. So if their ethical worldview is I'm the only thing that matters, nobody else matters, then I certainly wouldn't try to convince them by talking about the nonaggression principle.

Where I would try to talk to them is about something like metaphysics. Okay, let's talk about things that actually exist in the world, and I don't think you'll find governments. And also the economics. So if they only care about themselves I think there's still an argument for anarchism or libertarianism, which is that's the society that creates the most wealth. Now unfortunately, you could also say to the sociopath, if all you care about yourself and then the rest of humanity be damned, well, you could actually be a totalitarian, in which case you'll live like a king and everybody else will live in poverty under you. You could also make that argument, unfortunately. But you know, because I don't have that ethical consideration, that's not the route that I'm going to be taking.

WOODS: Well, how do you answer then someone who says I'm with you on a lot of what you say and I very much admire your commitment to emphasizing the individual, but look, the outcomes are just horrific? The outcomes, yeah, there's a lot of wealth, but look, there's tremendous inequality, so I don't really care about the absolute amount of wealth; I care that some people are in grinding poverty and others are extremely wealthy. And so we can't deal in absolutes. The world is a series of shades of gray, and so there are times that we have to — I mean, you know the argument. We have to limit what any one individual can do. What kind of error is that person making?

PATTERSON: Well, it's not necessarily that they're making an error. What I would say is they're overlooking economics. This is why my own beliefs are so much informed by economics. How does the world actually work? So if somebody's considered about the absolute state of poverty — in the sense that we're not talking about relative inequality; we're talking about absolute poverty — then there's pretty much no question that free markets are the solution to absolute poverty or abject poverty. And

if somebody doesn't think that's the case, it's just a reflection of I think their lack of understanding of the subject, so I would stick with economics in that circumstance.

If they're talking about inequality as being a bad thing — we have to have government to take some of the wealth from some of the super rich and give it to the poor so that we can levelize things — well, then that's a stickier issue. And in fact, I think a huge amount of libertarians overlook the persuasive or rhetorical power of arguing for the existence of government, for the existence of regulation for purely equalizing results. And what I'd say is it takes a great deal of conversation to explore whether or not inequality is something that is fundamentally bad.

So we think of inequality as being this self-evidently bad thing: well, we can't have people that are in financially equal states. But in fact, I don't think that's true. I don't think that inequality is something — I know this sounds crazy and I won't be able to give it its full due here, but inequality is probably a good thing, because what inequality means is that some people at the very least escaped levels of poverty. If the default state of mankind is poverty, then that means that if we have some inequality, that some people are not in poverty, well, that's a good thing. So I don't think inequality by itself is anything to be concerned with.

And again, what happens just for purely economic reasons is as you have capital accumulation, well, now rich people don't just sit on their wealth; they invest it. They create jobs for other people. They bring everybody else up with them. So if you really explore the theory of what inequality is and what happens in practice when it's in a kind of market society, I don't think it's anything to worry about.

WOODS: What about somebody who says your basic premise actually is fundamentally egalitarian, in that you are saying that we can't just automatically assume that a group of people, whether or not they've been elected or something, has authority to do things to other people that nobody else has the authority to do? That there's no reason to think that there's one group that is born with the power to do this to other people. So there's kind of an implicit egalitarianism there, at least functionally —

PATTERSON: Yes.

WOODS: — that we're equal in that sense. So couldn't an egalitarian say, okay, you're starting off really well, but you're just not — they would say why do you arbitrarily stop your egalitarianism there?

PATTERSON: Well, so the egalitarianism would have no connection to people's financial status. So the egalitarianism would be what is the nature of human equality. Is it something that is their comfort level, or is it something that's in their inherent nature, they're fundamentally equal under the law or they're fundamentally equal in terms of they shouldn't be allowed to somehow act in ways that the rest of us can't. I think if you have radical egalitarianism, where you think all humans are equal in terms of worth, that in no way translates into they're equal in terms of net worth. There's a very big difference between the two. And in fact, what I think you might call an

egalitarian principle is to say I would love to live in a society, whereby people who are the best entrepreneurs, who can best satisfy the demands of the rest of us, are financially rewarded for their competent behavior. So what that means is, yes, their bank account is going to grow. In a sense their net worth is not going to be equal to the rest of us, but I don't view that as anything but being equalitarian if everybody has that opportunity.

WOODS: All right, tell me how people can listen to *Patterson in Pursuit*.

PATTERSON: I have a website, Steve-Patterson.com. You can see all of my writing that's there. It also has a link to my podcast, *Patterson in Pursuit*. I for the next few weeks, maybe the next couple of months, am going to be back stateside conducting interviews with people. I have some upcoming interviews at Harvard. But hopefully by the end of the year I'm going to be out in the wild, across the Pacific this time, conducting interviews over there. So if you want to follow me — I also have a YouTube channel, where I upload all the podcasts that I do. I also upload videos that I do, of just talking about philosophy. But you can find all of it at Steve-Patterson.com.

WOODS: All right, well, it's great. I like the way it's laid out, and it's right in your face. It's simple and basic and good. And I know people are going to like the content there as well. I mean, it's easy to listen to because you've got the YouTube version staring them in the face as soon as they get there. Very well done. Well listen, obviously there's a lot more we have to talk about, but I wanted to just give you a chance to talk, have people get to know you, to maybe whet their appetites, get them over to Steve-Patterson.com and follow you. And then we've got to have you back on to talk about more out-there kinds of topics, and I'll really prepare, and we'll have a really juicy chitchat. So in the meantime, Steve-Patterson.com is where to go. I'm going to link to that of course at TomWoods.com/734. All right, thanks, Steve. Good luck.

PATTERSON: Thanks, Tom.