
II. A World Without Empire

Creating a Renaissance Out of the Depths of a Dark Age

by Megan Beets

The following is an edited transcript of a presentation by Megan Beets at the [Dec. 23, 2018 La-Rouche PAC Manhattan meeting](#).

I want to take up the question of culture, and as we get into it, you'll see what I mean. I'll open with a quote from Lyndon La-Rouche, from a [discussion about music](#) to set the scene and set the stage on which I'd like you to consider what we're discussing today:

The future is: You're all going to die. And what is the passion which corresponds, therefore, to mankind? Since everybody is going to die, what's the meaning of human life? Is it a fact? Not exactly. It's the creation of a more powerful capability of mankind, by purging mankind of its own corruption. Extracting mankind into the freedom from corruption. And all practical measures to craft and approve a quality of art are crap, because it's not sincere. It doesn't correspond to the principle of the matter.

And this is true. . . . You see it in drama, on the musical stage, in performance of all



NASA

Apollo 8 crew (left to right): William Anders, Frank Borman and Jim Lovell on the USS Yorktown, after their splashdown recovery on Dec. 27, 1968.

kinds. The beauty is creativity, *per se*. It's also the measure of what creativity is. So, you take any composition, it's a sacred business. If you really want to do it, you're attempting a sacred work. And it's a sense of man's immortality. Even people, when they die, if they live well, they can contribute a memory of beauty, and that's rarely done these days.

Now, with that on your mind, conjure up in your imagination an image of Jim Lovell, Frank Borman, and Bill Anders, sitting together in the command module of Apollo 8—which fifty years ago



NASA/William Anders

Earthrise, the first color photo of Earth taken by a human in lunar orbit, aboard the Apollo 8, Dec. 24, 1968.

yesterday, launched into Earth orbit, and fifty years ago today, was somewhere in between the Earth and the Moon. These three individuals were the first human beings to ever leave Earth orbit, to ever travel to another celestial body. They were the first ones to ever see the globe of the Earth as a whole. They were the first ones to see with their human eyes, the surface of the Moon. These three men, on Christmas Eve 1968, read the first part of Genesis to the people of Earth in a [live television broadcast](#) from lunar orbit. In that moment, mankind as a whole changed; and it changed as embodied in these three individuals.

Compare in your mind—some of you might be able to remember—but compare that state of mind of people living in the United States of today. Compare what may have been occupying the thoughts of the people of the United States fifty years ago on that day, versus today. When you do that, don't just think of your neighbor, or your annoying roommate, or the professor that you really hate; I want you to really examine yourself. What occupies your mind on a day-to-day basis? What thoughts are in your head in your moments of relaxation?

Let's now go to a clip of LaRouche. This is a [web-cast speech that he gave April 7, 2005](#). George W. Bush had just been elected and inaugurated for a second term, and the United States and the trans-Atlantic nations were headed for what would become the crash of 2007-2008, a crash much like—although much smaller than—what we are headed for today.

Lyndon LaRouche: Now we're at the moment, in which the United States is gripped by the greatest financial-monetary crisis in modern history; at least since the beginning of the creation of our republic.

Now, although the United States has been in a process of decline from its former greatness as an economy, over more than three decades, the majority of our citizens, including leading figures in government, other leading circles, have been, for recent times, in a state of denial about the



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Lyndon LaRouche, speaking on April 7, 2005 in Washington D.C.

reality of the way this present crisis came into being. . . .

And this destruction has been going on for at least three decades. It was made conspicuous, beginning the process of the U.S. entry into the war in Vietnam. And it became acute with the entry of an extreme right-wing government—actually a government with fascist intentions—that of President Richard M. Nixon. And since that time, especially since the events of August 1971, the United States has been destroying itself, not inch by inch, but yard by yard.

There has been no recovery, from the ongoing, deep collapse of the U.S. economy, at any time, during the recent three decades. There has been no successful Presidency,

no successful Congress, in power in the United States on the record in the past three decades. We have been destroying ourselves inch by inch: That destruction is caused by the consent of a majority of the people, to cultural and



NATO Photos

Former U.S. President George W. Bush.

other changes in policy which destroyed, bit by bit, everything that had been built up in our history, including during the immediate periods following the war.

So therefore, the blame for the problem, does not lie with George W. Bush. George W. Bush is the thing that prevents the cure; but it is not the disease. The disease is the disease which was carried by previous governments of the United States, and by the behavior of a majority of the citizens who did vote, or could have voted, in the past three decades.

And therefore, the problem we have to cure today, is to correct the mistakes not only of this President, and his mistakes are grand in scale—“monstrous” I think is a better term than “grand,” isn’t it? But, to *induce the people*, at least a majority of the people, and a majority of leading influences among Democratic and Republican Party leaders in the United States, to recognize that *they* have been complicit in the crime of the destruction of the United States, its economy, and the destruction of the security of global civilization: Because we are truly, at this point, on the verge of a new Dark Age.

Will We Be a Little People?

In the late 18th, early 19th century, the Poet of Freedom, Friedrich Schiller, like all the supporters of the American Revolution in Europe, was watching the events of the French Revolution. He was watching at first with great optimism and hope that France would become the first of many republics on the continent of Europe. That hope turned to horror with the events of the Jacobin revolution. In 1795, Schiller wrote in his *Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man*, of the events of the French Revolution, “The moral possibility is wanting, and a great moment finds a little people.” Now think about that for a moment. “The moral possibility” was wanting; the people weren’t moral enough to fulfill the chance that was presented



Painting, The Storming of the Bastille on the 14th of July 1789.

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before them on the stage of history. These people took action; they were out on the streets. They weren’t sitting at home; they overthrew their corrupt government to seize their inalienable rights. And yet, that great potential to actually seat the inalienable rights of man on the throne of government died on the guillotine.

As LaRouche went through in the clip that you just heard, the cause of the problem we face today is not the leadership of the country. It’s not the Congress—and I know everybody loves to blame the Congress and complain about the Congress and talk about term limits. That’s not the cause of this crisis. The cause lies in what we have tolerated for forty years. The cause is our own beliefs, our own kowtowing to popular opinion. How many of you have heard, or said yourself, “Oh, that’s just the way things are. You can’t change it, you can’t change things. That’s just the way things go. You have to go along to get along.” Most people have been going along to get along with a rotten popular opinion even though most people will say they disagree with it. They’ve been doing that for forty years, and that is what has engineered the situation in the United States and the world today.

What I want to take up in discussion here with you is: Will we remain little people? Must we remain little people? Must we fail to realize the great moment before us today? That is the real issue facing us today; and

that's what should be keeping you up at night, not "Does my neighbor know all of LaRouche's Four Laws to Save the U.S.A. Now? Does my postman know what's really behind the Russia-gate crisis?" Those things are important; however, without the ennoblement of our own character and that of our fellow citizens, unless we take on the mission to make people better people, none of these policy changes will work. Even if we get the restoration of FDR's Glass-Steagall banking law, none of this will work or succeed for any length of time. A political victory can only come if it's accompanied by a change in culture.

I'd like to ask all of you a question: When I say we have to change the culture, when Helga LaRouche says that we need a cultural renaissance—What is culture? What do we mean by culture? What is its purpose? I'd actually like to ask you; some of you should come up to the microphone and give your definition of culture.

Participant: Culture, in my estimation, is what you are in; the society that you're in. What you do, what you learn, how you project yourself in the culture you live in; because you have different cultures around the world that run on the way they see things in their culture, in their environment. That's culture to me. Cultures are all around the world, and they're all of them different. It would be great if they all were one, but it's not going to be like that because you're in different hemispheres and different locations on the planet, and you govern yourself by the culture that you're in. That's my understanding.

Beets: Good. Anyone else?

Participant: Culture is what people do in their leisure hours, that would incline them to concentrate on a problem and incline them to have the concentration span to think about bigger things than the day's news or what they're enraged about, as opposed to the video game culture of "We have to get that guy" or the ten-year old child that has to stare at the pretty lights all day in his cell phone and doesn't really think about what he's looking at.

Beets: OK, good. Anyone else?

Participant: Culture is what we as individuals and then also as groups actually do, as we gather together; what we find important, and how we incorporate this

into our daily life. And especially translate this to something meaningful for our children and those who we are in contact with. I think that is the meaning of culture to me.

Beets: OK. It's difficult to give it some definition that's not unsatisfactory, that doesn't seem to be missing something. But I think all of you expressed something—a certain shared system of beliefs and a shared milieu of ideas that we operate in that can help us communicate with each other, that can help us pass on a certain way of acting and thinking to the next generations. H— expressed an optimistic idea, which is that culture can incline you to think of things higher than day-to-day life. I think these are all good things to think about. Keep considering this question as I go through the rest of this presentation, while also offering some ideas from Schiller.

Ennobling the Individual

Consider today's popular culture, today's popular entertainment—which is 100 percent degenerate, 100 percent depraved. Much of it is very depraved and getting worse, frankly. Think about this. Think of the movies that people go to; the movies *you* might go to. Think about the TV programming that people watch in their leisure hours. "Binge watching" has become a popular term today, which is really awful. Think about this. What is it? What's it like? It's full of violence; that's probably the biggest characteristic of today's popular culture. Sometimes terrible violence, which people choose to watch for hours as "entertainment." It's full of drugs; it's full of sensational special effects which mesmerize the senses. Think about "popular music" today. I don't care what genre you pick, the popular music today, or, frankly, the lives of most of the people who produce that "popular music." A great majority of it glorifies drugs, murder, sex, death, rape—all catering to the most animalistic characteristics of our nature, which is really not worth the name "human being"; it glorifies these. Go into your children's schools; this is the culture our children—even young children—are exposed to, listening to; and since they don't really know better, are learning to live up to.

As I was going through all this, some of you might have thought to yourselves, "Well, OK, but I don't listen to that kind of music, and I don't go to those movies, and I don't let my kids listen to that." And you

might say, “Well, I listen to classic rock,” or “I listen to easy-listening, country,” or something like that. But, the problem is, that none of this is art. None of this rises to the level of art. All of it is the same, in the sense that it appeals and nurtures the lowest level of man’s nature. Some of it does that because it’s violent and animalistic, and much of it does that because it’s empty. It’s banal or nonsensical.

Let me present two quick examples. Here is the first verse from a “song” that was one of the top songs of 2018:

I’ve been feelin’ kind of cooped up, cooped up.
I’m tryin’ to get some fresh air.
Hey, why you got the roof off, roof off?
You know it never rains here.
And you ain’t gotta flash when you’re takin’
 your picture.
You ain’t gotta drown or waste your potential.
Paparazzi want to shoot ya.

Another that may appeal to the older or more nostalgic crowd, falls on the side of the banal:

Hey, Jude! Don’t make it bad.
Take a sad song and make it better.
Remember to let her into your heart.
Then you can start to make it better.
...
And anytime you feel the pain, hey Jude,
 refrain.
Don’t carry the world upon your shoulders.
For well you know that it’s a fool who plays it
 cool
By making his world a little colder.
Nah, nah, nah, na-na-nah, nah, na-na-nah, nah,
 nah nah.

I think this makes the point. With these two very mild samples of what we as a people are steeped in on a day-to-day basis, the question that I put before you is, “Where can an uplifting, where can an ennoblement come from?” If people are depraved, and if leadership is corrupt, where is the source of betterment? What source is there for uplifting of the individual?

This is something that Friedrich Schiller thought very deeply about, and as Helga LaRouche, the founder of the Schiller Institute, has said many times: of all of

the poets and thinkers that she knows, Schiller probably had the most noble and the most elevated view of what mankind could be, and what mankind must become. Despite what was, even at his time, a depraved state of the population, Schiller saw the possibility and the necessity of elevating the individual toward the ideal. That we ought to try and uplift our fellow citizens toward the ideal, is a controversial notion

In his *Aesthetical Letters*, Schiller wrote:

It can be said that every individual carries a pure ideal man in himself . . . and it is the great task of his existence, during all his changes, to harmonize with this unchanging unity.

Think about that for a moment. Where does this ideal man exist? To the question, where can the ennoblement of the individual come from in a condition such as ours?— Schiller and Lyndon LaRouche both have concluded that it can only come from *Classical art*.

In *The Aesthetical Letters*, Schiller says this of art: “Art, like science, is free from everything that is practical and is established by human convention, and both rejoice in an absolute immunity from human lawlessness.”

This is surely an incredible idea. Listen to Schiller more fully:

Art, like science, is free from everything that is practical and is established by human convention, and both rejoice in an absolute immunity from human lawlessness. The political legislator can enclose their territory, but he cannot govern within it. He can outlaw the friend of truth, but the truth exists; he can humiliate the artist, but he cannot degrade art. . . .

For entire centuries philosophers and artists have been occupied in plunging truth and beauty into the depths of vulgar humanity; the philosophers and artists are submerged there, but truth and beauty struggle triumphantly to the surface with their own indestructible vitality.

Educating One’s Emotions

Now contrast that with what people might think today, when you say “art.” Contrast that with what might pop into your own head, when somebody *asks*

you, “What is Art?” For most people today, “art” means self-expression: “I have to express my feelings. I have to express the condition that I’m in. I have to express my mood. I’m surrounded by ugliness, I have to express that.”

The problem is that what most people have inside of themselves and are feeling, probably should not be shared as public expression. It probably should not be spread to others. But the idea that anything which is self-expression qualifies as art goes back to the beginning of the 20th century; it goes even further back to the Romantics that Schiller and his successors battled in the 19th century. It finds its root all the way back in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Schiller had a much different idea of art, and the role of the artist. Schiller said that art can, and must, elevate the individual above the depraved, above his or her circumstances; and can elevate the individual to the ideal. If it doesn’t do that, it doesn’t qualify as art.

Schiller said that the role of the artist is to free his or her audience from the limitations of the lower faculties; to ennoble the members of the audience toward the ideal and toward the universal. In order to do this, the artist carries a certain responsibility:

In order to be certain that he is indeed addressing the pure species within the individual, he himself must have already extinguished the individual within himself, and must have elevated himself to species-being.

In order to be sure that the artist is playing that role, he or she must have extinguished the individual within himself and risen to the universal. Let us continue further with Schiller.

Only when he no longer experiences emotion as belonging to this or that specific person (in whom the notion of species would always remain limited), ... but rather as belonging to



Painting by Gerhard von Kügelgen
Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805)

man as a universal, can he then be certain that the emotions of the entire human species will follow his own; indeed, he is just as entitled to strive for this effect, as he is to demand pure humanity from each human individual.

For Schiller, before the artist dare attempt to move his audience, he or she must become—at least in that moment—an ideal person, a universal person. If you’re not in that condition, you have no business trying to move or impart an artistic conception to your audience, because it won’t uplift them; it won’t play the role that art

must play.

This brings us to the notion of the Aesthetical Education. Schiller, as did others before him, believed that it’s possible to educate one’s intellect and learn new things, and take oneself from a state of ignorance to a state of knowledge to be more in line with reason. Schiller believed that one can also educate one’s emotions. This is a controversial idea nowadays, because people defend their emotions as truth; and most people assume that there is an inherent validity in their emotions—their feelings. Schiller insisted that everyone has the capability of training his or her emotions, to make one’s own emotions more coherent with reason, and to move from being dominated by infantile emotions to living, instead, with more and more noble emotions.

In many of his writings, Schiller discusses the idea of the “beautiful soul” as a condition to which all human beings can aspire and toward which they can develop. The beautiful soul is the person for whom the emotional impulses, the desires, the instincts, are not in contradiction with what’s right and what is good and reasonable. For this person, for the beautiful soul, that person is free. This idea of Schiller is in explicit opposition to the Aristotelian ideas which were promoted especially by Immanuel Kant, whom LaRouche many times has called “I Kan’t.” Kant said that in order to have a civi-

lized society, people must suppress their bestial impulses that we all have. You have to suppress your true terrible bad desires, and you do that with a rigid structure of morals and laws and rules.

For Schiller, this was terrible, because the freedom of mankind, the dignity of mankind, was suppressed—was limited. If you were always condemned to suppress what you really want, where is your freedom? If that's your view of man, what are you really saying? You're really saying that mankind is nothing but a bad animal on the inside, who can never truly be elevated to the divine. So, we control him or her with laws, with rules.

Schiller completely rejects such an idea. He puts forward that the way we educate the emotions and train them is through great art, through great drama, through music, poetry, painting. It's through that, in that forum, that mankind can experience the universal. Mankind can experience the state of mind of "creative play," which is what brings us close to the divine. In that state of mind, that state of being lifted out of the day-to-day to consider the universal, even in art—especially when it's in the form of experiencing art—these are real experiences, with lasting effects. When someone walks out of the theater after a great drama, they don't go back to being exactly who they were before. Schiller insists, that over time, this kind of training of the emotional character of the human being through beauty and through great art, can tame the barbaric impulses and can overcome them.

Mankind Is a Unique Species

Let's turn again to Lyndon LaRouche, and his [2015 discussion about music](#) again and some of his thoughts on the role of art, and on the role of the artist.

Interestingly, although it's quite lawful, LaRouche developed many of the same ideas as Schiller, although independently; it was through his own pathways of discovery in the science of physical economy, and also through his own inner conviction of his own feeling of creativity and his own love of the beautiful. LaRouche says about the nature of mankind:



Painting by Carle Vernet
Immanuel Kant
(1724-1804)

Mankind is a unique species! There is nothing like it, there's no animal that's like it. There's no animal which produces mankind. Mankind is a unique phenomenon. And the characteristic of mankind is creativity! And therefore, what you want to do in life, you want to accompany your life with things like great music. Because they perpetuate your existence by perpetuating what you're capable of doing for mankind.

That's why you want to do a good performance, because immortality is looking at you—and raising questions. Here we're talking now about music, but the point is that's what the reason of music is. The meaning is not based on music, it's based on the soul of mankind.

Think about that: What is the meaning of music? Most people today say, "Well, it's the message, it's the message." Right? But what LaRouche said is that the meaning of music is "perpetuating immortality," uplifting the soul, perpetuating the soul of mankind—that's the *purpose* of music. Think back to what Schiller said on the role of art and the necessity of great art in the culture.

What this means implicitly about music—and LaRouche discusses this again and again in his writings—is that music is not sound. There is a beautiful line in John Keats' poem, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter. . . .

That can be read carelessly as just a nice-sounding idea, but consider it carefully. LaRouche in that same discussion said:

The music lies not in the music. It lies in the motive for the music. Otherwise, what does the music mean? It's just a form of noise-making. You don't want to make noise, you want to capture the mind of the people. Not their ears. And the result should come through mind, not the



Drawing by Joseph Severn

John Keats (1795-1821)



Drawing by John Keats

A Grecian urn, as sketched by Keats.

ears. You interpret the thing not as heard—the ‘heard sounds,’ . . .

What you should hear is the brilliant music of the unheard performance. But you don’t have to hear it because you’re already captured by it. You are a property of it.

Ninety-nine point ninety-nine percent of most music composed today is not worth performing. LaRouche continued, speaking about the artist:

If you want to compose something actually worth performing, and if you want to perform it in a way that does not butcher it, or butchers its intention, you have to give way to the meaning of your life. And the difference is, the average person thinks that they’re born, and they die, and they organize their lives on the basis of this idea. ‘I’m going to live until I die.’ And that’s the end for them. That’s their goal. Their goal is, perversely, implicitly to die. Because they assume that everything that they do that’s valuable is going to end with their death.

That’s not the case with Wilhelm Furtwängler. This is not the case with the greatest composers and the greatest singers. It’s not! The purpose is to achieve a quality of immortality, which is not mechanical, which is not a routine, but which creates an image by the performer, by the

person who’s hearing it, who is experiencing it, to have a premonition of immortality.

I realize I’ve thrown a lot at you, but I want you to think back on the challenge that’s really before us today. Our task is to present a clear vision of the future, of the necessary future for mankind. How will you qualify yourself to do that? How will you qualify yourself to elevate the identity and the souls of our fellow-citizens toward the creative? We *can* create a Renaissance. It *is* possible to make 350 million Americans out there better people. This isn’t some far-flung fantasy, this is not something that is out of the realm of all possibility. This is a necessary mission.

It is in deciding to do that, that you *create* a Renaissance out of a dark age. All of the previous renaissances in human history were *intentional*. They came about intentionally, because a certain grouping of leading people decided to reject the depravity of their current culture and decided to produce something better.

That’s our mission today. And it might mean giving up your bad music; it might mean giving up the depraved entertainment that fills your leisure time. But you’re not denying anybody anything. What it means is replacing that with participation in truly beautiful art, deciding to ennoble your soul, deciding to fill your leisure time with that which is beautiful.

That’s our political mission today. It’s not separate; it’s actually primary. And I’d like to end by echoing the appeal of Helga Zepp-LaRouche in her [December 20 webcast](#). She said, look, most people have a little extra time over the holiday break, and I challenge you and give you the assignment to use that extra time to study—study great art, study great poetry, great writings, read the writings of Lyndon LaRouche, which are great art. Read the poetry of Keats, of Shelley, of Shakespeare. Read the works of Schiller.

Do these things. Do the work, join the chorus. Decide, if you haven’t already, to participate in a social process of the creation of beautiful works of art. So, do this work, which is a process which never really stops, this kind of development, and take on the responsibility of qualifying yourself to lead in this political crisis. Let us make sure that we, in the United States, are no longer a “little people.”