

Fighting the Politics of Empire: America's Tradition

Last week, we began our coverage of the Schiller Institute's Jan. 26 conference in New York City, on the theme "A New Paradigm To Save Mankind," with the keynote speech by Helga Zepp-LaRouche. We continue in this issue with three presentations on the ideology of British imperialism, American patriots' historical fight against it, and the struggle today to reverse the crisis and prevent a new dark age.

The speakers are constitutional lawyer Bruce Fein, historian Cliff Kiracofe, and filmmaker Sean Stone.

The conference, attended by about 300 people, continues a process of international dialogue begun in Germany in November 2012, where leaders from many countries put forward proposals for economic development that would provide the basis for lasting peace and cooperation. The dialogue is taking up the axioms underlying the current world financial crisis and the danger of global war, and the necessary shift in the conception of man required to launch a new renaissance.

Audio files for all speeches and musical performances at the conference are currently posted at the [Schiller Institute](#) website, and videos will be posted there as they become available. The Institute's multilingual [website](#) also provides ongoing coverage of this and other Schiller Institute conferences on both sides of the Atlantic.

Bruce Fein

What Is Mankind As a Species?

Bruce Fein is a constitutional lawyer and civil libertarian who served as an associate deputy attorney general under President Ronald Reagan (1981-82). He drafted an article of impeachment against President Obama, which appeared in [EIR](#), March 23, 2012. The following is the transcript of his speech to the Jan. 26 Schiller Institute conference in New York City.

Thank you for attending this important session. As Henry V said before Agincourt: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers."

Now our task, I think, is more challenging than the one that confronted Henry V, but before we get into the details, I want to warn the audience that all of the effusions that hosts make toward speakers are not made under oath. So, you need to put that calculation in.

The issue that we have, it seems to me, to address first, is what is mankind? What distinguishes the human species from other animal species? And of course, the

issue is obvious for anyone who has devoted even 10 seconds to watching Snooki or Honey Boo Boo, because that is at the Cro-Magnon stage of Darwinian reverse evolution, or something of that sort.

My definition of mankind, that distinguishes the species from any other, is the thrill of the search for truth, without ulterior motives. And I repeat that: It's the search for truth without ulterior motives. And truth here is not like searching for Newton's laws of motion, but truth in determining what, between ashes to ashes, and dust to dust, is virtue? What makes life worth living? What gives it dignity? What we could call tolerance, acknowledgement, and honoring due process, restraining our ambition to dominate others, to satisfy our appetites, as opposed to living an adult existence, where virtue and knowledge and restraint are the *summum bonum* of life. Not wealth, sex, money, domination, and power—creature comforts.

So that, in my sense, is the critical question that confronts mankind. It's have we forfeited a characterization of being men and women, as opposed to a subhuman species that craves the thrills of killing other members of the species or animals, that devotes most of their time to envying those like Lady Gaga, or Mike Tyson, and other wretches that are icons in the popular culture?

Remember, this is not a new question. Mark Twain wrote, over a century ago: The main difference between a dog and a man is that if you rescue a dog and feed it, it does not bite your hand.¹

And moreover, I think it's misplaced to think that the challenge of maintaining mankind's human element, as opposed to permitting it to surrender to the appetites, is at all novel to this generation. I take you back to Ecclesiastes: "What has been, will be again; what has been done, will be done again; there is nothing new under the Sun."

I think all of our investigations alert us to the fact that the DNA in the species has remained unaltered



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Bruce Fein

from the beginning of time. It knows no geographic boundaries, it knows no religious boundaries, it knows no gender boundaries, or gender-orientation boundaries. And so, this quest that, in my judgment, is the essence of life, to subordinate the appetites to the higher virtues of wisdom, knowledge, and restraint, has confronted every generation from the beginning.

Socrates and the American Revolution

Now, in terms of full disclosure, I think that I'll give you an alert to my background. I was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and my first

acquaintance with the outside world was with Lexington and Concord, Old North Bridge, Paul Revere's ride, William Longfellow's "Listen, my children, and you shall hear/ Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere./ On the eighteenth of April in '75;/ Hardly a man is now alive/ Who remembers that famous day and year."

I've never played or wanted to examine a video game. I've never smoked marijuana, taken wine. I get a thrill out of reading Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Concord Bridge": "By the rude bridge that arched the flood,/"



Paul Revere's midnight ride: "Hardly a man is now alive who remembers that famous day and year."

1. From "Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar," in Mark Twain's novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson*: "If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man"—ed.

Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,/ Here once the embattled farmers stood,/ And fired the shot heard round the world."

That gives me a thrill. And the guiding force in my life, and what I suggest is the answer to whether we can save mankind, was really reading at a very early age "The Trial of Socrates," where he subordinated life itself to defending the idea of a free mind, searching for truth: What is virtue, what is moral, and what is not?—by taking the hemlock, as opposed to confessing and yielding that defense of freedom. *That* is what, to my mind, is thrill. *That* is the high-water mark of life.

As opposed to, today you walk around Washington, D.C.—it's not unique to the Capital of the United States—who are the people that are celebrated and honored on the statues in Lafayette Park, across from where President Obama sits in the White House? Lawyers, right? And people who have achieved fame by killing other people. You won't find Rodin's "The Thinker" any place displayed in the corridors of powers in Washington, D.C. If we read back to the Greek-Trojan war, what were they fighting over? Not morality—they're fighting over a woman, Helen of Troy. That's what drove the conflict.

And the persons who are celebrated, and the heroes, even in the Iliad and the Odyssey—Hector, Odysseus, Agamemnon—these are warriors. Achilles. These are warriors. Nestor is sort of in the background. The thinker is not given respect, is not given honor amongst all these other heroic figures who are on pedestals.

And that, in my judgment, is the greatest danger to mankind. Because if a species is thrilled by dominating and killing others, it does not have a long shelf-life. And this problem has existed from the moment mankind began to traipse around the world. You can read the Old Testament, the New Testament. I've read 20,000 books—every political history since the beginning of time—and the narrative always is the same: You have a culture, because of the DNA, that instinctively is thrilled, the kind of chemistry, the kind of excitement, that we are hard-wired for, is the excitement that comes out of domination, control. Go to the Moon, climb the



U.S. National Archives

The first battle of the American Revolution, at Lexington, Massachusetts, April 19, 1775.

mountains, kill somebody, dominate others. We have to be *big*. We have to look at the whole world. We can't let anything happen without our ability to control or manipulate it.

And that example occurs more prominently in countries that have empire status, the ability, because of military power, to intervene elsewhere, with relative impunity. It's less pronounced in places that are tiny, and don't have the ability to coerce and dominate others. And that's why it was at the outset of the United States, when we were a small country, 13 states—we didn't have a huge military, maybe six frigates; the British had 845, sailing all around the world, and fighting wars everywhere, like we are today; the Boer War, the three Afghan wars, the wars in Burma and elsewhere—where we displayed, in my judgment, a proper humility.

The fighting creed was one addressed by John Quincy Adams, sixth President, but then Secretary of State, in 1821, in his [address](#) to Congress: We "do not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy." The glory of a republic is liberty. The glory of an empire is domination and control.

And he said, we could become, if we wished, the dictatress of the world, but our policy then would migrate from a policy of freedom, to a policy of domination and conflict. And he thought that would be the *end* of the American experiment. Whereas we could be different than other nations, through separation of powers.

Due Process—Out the Window

And today, that idea, of course, has been lost. Even the killing of Osama bin Laden—you have foolish



We don't put philosophers on pedestals in the United States, but "people who achieved fame by killing other people." Shown are a statue in Washington, D.C. of sometime Union Gen. George B. McClellan (above), who sabotaged the Union war effort, prolonging the war; Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee in Richmond, Va. (inset).

cheers, like we'd won a football game at the Superbowl or something. Not that Osama bin Laden is someone who should be emulated, but it's a tragedy, not a source of celebration, that a man could turn into such an evil creature.

And also with the failure to even ask the question, have *we* done anything that has provoked this kind of terrible, horrible, repugnant response? Maybe *we* are provoking other people to react, because we have troops in 180 countries, 200,000 troops stationed abroad, and we intervene wherever we wish. We promulgate the doctrine that might makes right. Therefore, if we wish to use a predator drone to target anyone for assassina-

tion, and even our own citizens, we can do it in secret; we can do it without accountability; we can play judge, jury, prosecutor, executioner, and that satisfies due process.

In *our* eyes it may, or in the White House, but nowhere else in the world, is that viewed as a satisfaction of due process of law.

And why does that matter? Why do our floutings of due process of law, so insouciantly, create a threat to mankind?

In the history of civilization, due process has been the most important single idea dominating everything else, including Newton's laws of motion, the force of gravity, the Heisenberg uncertainty principle—all the physical understandings of the universe. Because due process is the first time that the human species has recognized: *I* could be wrong. I need to listen to the other side. That's what due process is about. Events are multi-dimensional,

not uni-dimensional. Other people may see them differently. We need an impartial decision-maker to decide how to resolve competing ambitions and tensions. We can't trust ourselves with a conflict of interest.

That humility—I could be wrong. The most important idea in the history of mankind, because it is the fanaticism that believes the world is all prime colors, there's no *chiaroscuro*, no grayness—that's what leads to combat, and fighting. People simply believe that they have ultimately discovered the truth, and anyone who disagrees then, is the enemy. Instead of thinking, no, in mankind, we're all in it together.

Remember John Donne: "send not to know/ For whom the bell tolls,/ It tolls for thee." We are all part of mankind, and we want *everyone* to be a winner. We don't want to divide up the world into geographic boundaries, into sects and sexes, and wish that some are subordinated, and some are superior: we want *everyone* to win. *Everyone* to have a fair chance in life. *Everyone* to enjoy justice and due process of law. We



don't gloat. We don't taunt people because they've fallen down, or they were born into circumstances that are less advantaged than our own.

And this idea among the species, that we're all tribes—and it's like I say, the metaphors that are used, the metaphors of a game, a football game in the United States, the blue team and the red team; the quarterback or the line backer. Is this for kids playing in a sandbox, and deciding whose castle gets to survive the other? That's infantile, juvenile thinking, that the species should grow out of it at about age 12, just before the teen age. And now, people aged 50, 60, 70, still revel in this idea that politics and life is like a game.

No, it isn't. It's higher, if it's to have any more meaning than simply survival for the sake of survival.

Are We Still Mankind?

And so, when we ask, what is needed to save mankind, it's not a question of whether or not the species can survive in the sense that we have respiratory functions. It's not extinct in the sense that the dinosaurs became extinct. We still have the species that looks like human beings; but if it doesn't move and be motivated by the adult virtues of knowledge, wisdom, and restraint, it isn't mankind anymore. The name may remain the same, but the substance has been removed of all meaning.

And, I think that, as we examine our own lives, the destiny of the species, the destiny of the country, it's wrong to believe that there's some kind of end point, there's some kind of problem, there's some kind of single silver bullet that will solve the miseries, the deficiencies, infirmities, ailments, pathologies, of mankind.

Because it's my judgment that the entire exercise is one where *process* is more important, the process is the result. It's the way in which we look at life itself. How we treat other people. With dignity, thoughtfulness, standing up for our principles, disagreeing but not being disagreeable, treasuring due process, having certain things that we will fight and die for, including self-defense, if they go against fundamental principles. But largely recognizing we could be wrong.

Our way of life may not be quite as agreeable to others as it is to ourselves. We permit other people then to go their separate ways. The spirit of charity, forgiveness, self-criticism, restraint—we could be wrong. Not the kind of arrogance and sanctimony that

we see every day in the United States, more prominently than elsewhere, because we can get away with it, without feedback, or the deterrence that other countries that are smaller could not.

And it's that process of life which is the heart and soul of mankind.

Do you remember the famous words of Hamlet, Shakespeare? "What is a man/ If his chief good and market of his time/ Be but to sleep and feed?/ A beast, no more./ Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,/ Looking before and after, gave us not/ That capability and godlike reason/ To fust in us unused." And that's perhaps Shakespeare's most famous play. And he's asking there: What *is* the purpose of our time on Earth, before we go to our afterlife?

And that, it seems to me, is what mankind is all about.

Well, how then do we at least ameliorate what we can see in our daily lives, all the huge subtractions, what are called the sub-optimal lives, that the masses exist, and live, and thrive, and thrill in? You know, Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, the masses of people live lives of quiet desperation. I'm not sure they're lives of quiet desperation, but I do think you all, in this audience, and we at the podium here, have an obligation as leaders, to try to encourage and inculcate in those, the large majority who are, I think, by nature, inclined more to follow their appetites than be thrilled by Socrates taking the hemlock to defend freedom of the mind; by leadership and example, and living lives that are irreproachable, to extract or excite the better angels of their nature, so that they can join and raise this country to its republican status, that it enjoyed at the outset, despite its many deficiencies.

No More Acephalous Leaders

And here I want to examine one, in my view, of the paradoxes, if you will, of certainly the United States, and some other countries, that now I describe as acephalous—leaderless. Non-leader leaders.

And that is, as I examine the audience today, in some respects, it represents a triumph of the idea of equality, far superior to that that existed in 1776, when the shot fired was heard round the world. Because people of different color are here, people of both genders are here—that wasn't true in 1776. If we held a meeting like this, it would all be white male, probably Anglo-Saxon Protestants, in the room. Others would be in some kind of subjugated status.

And the idea of equality under the law has made enormous strides, from centuries ago. It made enormous strides despite the fact that at the outset of the quest, it looked as daunting as someone standing at the foot of Mount Everest, and saying, “My Gosh, it’s a long way up. Will I ever get there?”

Boston, near Cambridge, Massachusetts, was the place where William Lloyd Garrison, in 1831, began his *Liberator* magazine. Mr. Garrison was called an abolitionist—that was called an extremist position then, because all of the economic forces and the political forces were in favor of slavery; at least certainly in the South, it wasn’t going to be eliminated. He maligned slavery as a covenant with Hell. And initially, he was tarred and feathered, and driven out of Boston; but he persisted. And I don’t need to recite every step along the way, but the last publication of the *Liberator* was in 1865, when the 13th Amendment, which you may be acquainted with if you watched the movie “Lincoln,” was ratified, and eliminated slavery.

But I can tell you that, when he began, he was ridiculed as a hopeless dreamer. “You’ll *never* get there, Mr. Garrison.”

And for you women in the audience, you may recall 1848, Seneca Falls. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and others: We really need to get the vote. Which was something that Abigail Adams had urged on John early on, when the Declaration of Independence was under consideration, but it was with futility at the time. And it was almost 70 years before the 19th Amendment was ratified, and enfranchised women. Along the way, Susan B. Anthony was arrested for the audacious crime of seeking to vote. My, what a challenge that was to orthodoxy.

And similarly, the initial quest to end religious persecutions began when it looked totally and completely futile. And many lost their lives at the stake, Bruno



Creative Commons/Jonathan Steffens

Our metaphors are all about football! “Is this for kids playing in a sandbox, and deciding whose castle gets to survive the other? That’s infantile, juvenile thinking!”

being one, but only one, of those who perished in the quest for religious toleration.

So, we cannot be daunted by what is obvious to all of us who have not been sleeping like Ichabod Crane, that we confront a crisis, like all generations, as to vindicating our identity as human beings, not as animals and savages, who find thrills in satisfying and gratifying our appetites, in an instinctive quest for domination and control and creature comforts.

So, what does that mean? It seems to me, we have to get away, in the United States, from this idea of the superfluity of leaders, in order to lead mankind away from the precipice of destruction. We don’t have a long shelf-life if we don’t change. Because the ability to destroy ourselves is much more potent today than it was at the outset, when slaughters were limited, simply by the primitive nature of the weapons. Whereas today, a crazed, fanatical political system that keeps people at the top who crave domination, can destroy the whole world very quickly.

We in the United States have this paradox. As these commendable things occurred, in the destroying of those elements or vestiges of a caste, that kept women, certain religious, ethnic, racial groups, in subjugation—we now have a much more equal society, under the law, than ever before.

We have also developed what I call a culture of the lowest common denominator. It was thoroughly expectable. Because ideas and talent generally are rallied to those places that are the source of economic wealth and political power. And then, in order to obtain wealth and political power today, it's generally viewed as very prescient to appeal to the lowest common denominator. And without wanting to sound elitist, which is viewed as something like a curse-word today, like the n-word—even though Thomas Jefferson, centuries ago, could speak of an aristocracy of merit, and not be laughed at—if you use the word aristocracy today, ugh, gosh! This is somebody who wants to take us back to pre-Biblical times!

The Majority Is Usually Wrong

But the fact is, and it's a truth that can be extrapolated from observing all political societies for 4,000 years, that there are only a relative few outside the bell-shaped curve, who have that talent of leadership, to appeal to the better angels of our nature. But today, because we have such an egalitarian culture, there's an implicit, if not even a subconscious belief that, well, wisdom and correctness will emerge by spontaneous combustion from the majority—like the majority can vote what the speed of light is, or the majority could vote on Newtonian physics.

But that's simply wrong. Simply because the majority believes in something, or insists on something, that probably is a good earmark that it's *wrong*. At the one time, the majority believed in witches, the Salem witch trials. For centuries, the majority believed in the geocentric theory of the universe, and Galileo went to house arrest because he had the audacity to suggest that was wrong. But today, the majoritarian culture brings to the fore people who appeal and seek to gratify the idea, “Well, I'm a hockey mom,” “I'm Joe the Plumber,” “I'm just like you, so you should elect me to office. I don't really need to know anything. In fact, it's dangerous to know anything.” Ask Rick Perry—you should get D students, that's what we really want. Or Sarah Palin—we don't need newspapers. Thinking is bad! Only elitists think.

Socrates wouldn't have had a second before Mr. Perry and Sarah Palin!

They're unfortunately just the tip of the iceberg. It's something that pervades our entire political culture. We need to get a people who will respect and honor leadership for what it is. People who actually

would vote for George Washington, or would vote for Socrates, to be the leader, and recognize that they need tutelage. Not because they're less equal under the law, but again, because of the bell-shaped curve. Most people are not equipped to be leaders, who inspire others to follow their highest principles, to get a thrill out of the search for knowledge, truth, without ulterior motives. That's not something that's hard-wired into our system.

And if you survey the world today—and I suggest it's been true from the outset, and calculate what I call a Human Misery Index: oppression, privations, and otherwise—the vast majority of the Human Misery Index is composed of human beings slaughtering, oppressing, killing, subjugating, intimidating other human beings. A tiny, tiny percentage is caused by tsunamis, asteroids, hurricanes; and though we don't want to rule them out completely, they're tiny.

And that's what we need to change, if we're to rescue mankind. And I say, it's not like there will be an end point where we'll say, “Aha, we've achieved the promised land,” and let's hope we don't have to wait 40 years like Moses. But it is the process, the knowledge, and struggle. Yes, we may fail in our lifetimes, but that's the only kind of life that's worth living. That's how I want to live, because of what it says about us as a people, and we as individuals, about what we will be remembered for.

And I want to close by making a reference to Thucydides' speech upon Pericles' death. He was exhorting people not to crave the highest and best sepulchre, some Napoleonic mausoleum, some Lenin-like mausoleum that will sit in Red Square forever. He says the sepulchre we all ought to crave, is to live in the lives and hearts forever, of those living, and those yet to be born.

And that's what is needed in order save mankind. *That* thrill of what life is about, needs to be inculcated in the children, in the teenagers, in the adults. And if that is done, in my judgment, all the ills of mankind will soon fade.

And even with regard to poverty, what Seneca said, a man who covets more wealth, even if he's Mike Bloomberg, is very poor. A man who's satisfied with meager possessions, is very rich. That's what King Lear discovered, when he lost his kingdom and castle to Goneril and Regan, and discovered Cordelia. He became rich, even as he lost all his possessions.

Thank you.