

25:00 Japanese singers. The greatest interpreters of Bach.

wisdom=freedom  
liberty=america

I'll never forget when I was in Tokyo in my 20's, I went to hear Beethoven's Ninth, Tokyo Symphony Orchestra. And I was there. I was traveling alone, which was the way I traveled prior to getting married. That's a great way to travel; you really are forced to interact with people. Anyway, I went to the guy, and obviously I don't speak Japanese and he spoke a little English. Said, "Any tickets for ...?" "How many?" I said, "One." He looks at me, "We have wone; you are very wuckie." And I'll never forget that, how wuckie I was to get the last seat for Beethoven's Ninth. And the people went crazy! They're crazy about Beethoven.

None of them argued that Japanese classical music is as good as Western classical music. It's no insult. Would I argue that Jewish music is as good as Western music? I'd have to be deaf [audience chuckle] to make such an argument.

26:00 But you can't say this in any university. There is no better! There is no better! Wealth. Only the West has produced wealth.

baby with the bathwater

Modern science came from the West.

A universal God. Came from the West.

Basically, everything good came from the West.

There were horrible people in the West; there were beautiful people in the East and in the South. But that's a fact!

And we are dismissing Western culture despite everything that I have listed, all the good stuff. It comes from the West.

why? living the tension?

Now, here is where I am sort of lonely. And it was the subject of my last column, which got good play in National Review and elsewhere. I'm always

27:00 curious to see how many shares and how many comments; it's all very interesting.

I wrote an open letter as it were to my fellow conservatives who are secular. And I said, "I don't care if you're secular or religious. But I do care if you dismiss the indispensable significance of God and Judeo-Christian religion to America's possible survival."

There are many secular conservative and they are terrific. I remember—I won't say his name; the only thing you will know about him is that it is a he. This happened many years ... about twenty-five years ago at a plush apartment in Manhattan. I had dinner with this people, who had one of the leading ... he's a name every one of you will know. Don't try to guess; it's a silly game. But, it's just a very very important person. I'm sure you really wouldn't care; he's now deceased. I'm sure he wouldn't care if I said it, because I'm saying anything bad. But I'm very ... very, ah ... serious about people's dignity. So it's not important. But he's huge. He made a great impact, morally great impact on the country.

28:00 But I was a little stunned when we had a debate ... I don't know how it happened. Maybe he said, "What do you talk about, write about," I don't remember how it happened. And we got into a debate about whether or not you could have objective good or evil if there was no god. And every atheist ... I've debated this at Oxford, and the atheists I'd debated, the first thing he said was, "Mr. Prager is right. If there is no God, there is no objective good or evil. It's all subjective." And I remember—it's in print this debate—and I said, "I just want to say, it's just such a joy and honor to debate an intellectually honest person with whom I differ." And I meant this sincerely.

29:00 Virtually every atheist philosopher acknowledges if there is no God that ethics

**Prager: a private person?** Forced to interact; willing to be challenged, to learn from others; but also to share his own preoccupations with wisdom. **Wisdom** comes from interacting with others? Or wisdom relates to how we interact with others? Or with God?

**Third level of the human good?** Personal encounters with others as a means of improving one's orientation and hence enhancing human freedom and liberty.

**Tension between transcended and transcending.** "There is something better", i.e., that transcends current practice. Concerned with discernment? Encountering the living terminal values of other human beings? This tension underlies Western society grounded in Judeo-Christian tensions between human beings and a universal god.

**Universities are no longer centers of learning**, focused on brilliance rather than wisdom. PC language combined with liming the questions that can be asked acts to limit the kinds of personal encounters operative at the third level of the human good. It is not thinking that is constrained; it is the capacity for having a truly open encounter with another person. No safe spaces; no triggering warnings.

Prager's foundational stance includes the importance of **individual human dignity** combine with the idea that **each person is morally responsible** for his or her actions. No collective! No subordinate to group identity! Instead, free will.

**Prager's foundational stance leads to a confluence of the Judeo-Christian God and the founding of the United States.** The primary icon of America (32:00), the core meta-narrative, is God's deliverance of the Jews people from Egyptian slavery. Hence Prager's "**American Trinity**": e pluribus unum, liberty, and In God We Trust. Through the actions of God, human beings are set free. These echo the fundamentals of Judaic faith, extending God's offering to mankind through the founding of America as an historical event comparable in part, or an extension of, that of the Exodus.

**A fundamental dialectic?** The answer to **the question of the existence of God** is not a matter of collecting evidence and making a judgment; rather it is a process of **making a decision** of value: do you want to live in a world where whoever has the biggest club gets to tell you what is real, or God whose **Universal Perspective** sits above all human standards. (Reason follows faith: the decision to believe supersedes the gathering of intelligence.) **Naive realism** simply sees the truth "out there", only to be seen; to such intellectually unconverted, critical judgment is set aside—and a fundamental dialectic is set in place at the experiential level. N.B., Western logic doesn't admit to a middle state between "is" and "is not"; **the excluded middle** makes this a dialectic fundamental—at least in Western societies. For Prager's stance, this excluded middle would **deal non-Western societies out of the picture**, out of this tension between God and man.

are subjective. What you think is good is good for you; what I think is good is good for me. But he didn't admit that. "You don't need God to have objective good and evil." And I thought, "This is one of the most important conservatives in America and he's arguing that?"

That was my first realization that a lot of secular conservatives don't understand how significant the God issue is. I don't care if they believe. I care if they understand how important God is. I don't care if you're an atheist; that's your business. I care if you understand that the founders were not idiots and understood that America cannot survive godlessness.

Just as Western Europe cannot survive godlessness. It is a dead place; it is soulless. I have been to ... how many are there? Forty, fifty, European countries? I've been to everyone except four, and I'm visiting those four this year.

By the way, this is my one brag. The only time I ever brag. I've been to 115 countries. I just had to say that. It is irrelevant to any point that I'm about to make, but I'm so proud of it that I just have to get it into every speech. That's it; that's the end of that subject.

And yes I did ... by the way, people say, because there was this Prager ... in the bio it says lectured on seven continents. "You lectured in Antarctica?" Well, I did. But I have to say for the record, I was on a ship in which I lectured right off Antarctica. But in order to say "on Antarctica" I did go out. And there's a picture on my website of me speaking to about 150 penguins. [Light laugh] And it's one of the great moments. I spoke to them about ethical monotheism, and I ... [laugh] and they were as attentive as some of my other audiences have been, actually now that I think about it.

So ... I don't care, again, if you're atheist. But the founders knew. Let me just review one perfect example: John Adams. OK, John Adams.

*Because we have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passion unbridled by morality and religion ...*

By the way, you see they understood people were not basically good. That's the point. Human passions unbridled. They were afraid of human passion. Something has to control human passion. Either the government will, or what will? Answer: religion.

*... our constitution was made only ...*

Only!

*... for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.*

A secular conservative who does not understand that differs with the founders, every one of whom—every single one of whom—spoke of the critical nature of God, and religion, and bible.

Not all were orthodox Christians. That is true. Not all believed in the Trinity. All believed, however, in this God. Even Jefferson. Jefferson and Franklin designed, or had designed—had someone design—the Great Seal of the United States. Do you know what it was? The Jews leaving Egypt. Two guys who were considered—quote unquote—deists.

Incidentally, reading Franklin's autobiography I realized—and I remember when I read this to my wife—Franklin and I have identical theologies. Identical.

Prager's foundational stance makes this idea **nearly incomprehensible?**

**God and the transcendental realm of meaning lies outside the horizon** of truly secular individuals. Prager's stance either seems limiting to them, or their stance seems limited to Prager. Yet there's historical evidence for making such a case that doesn't depend on religious conversion. "**Not idiots**", i.e., take them and their religious beliefs seriously. **Lose God and you lose the American constitution**; lose the constitution and you lose the "American Trinity"; lose the "Trinity" and there is no longer one people but a cluster of competing individuals and groups over who is or is not in power. **Identity politics?**

**Brag: all too human!** But this suggests an awareness that there is little that a person can brag about, given the reality of God in the world.

**Europe: a dead place full of zombies?** Zombies move but cannot be considered alive. Why? **They go through the motions but without any consideration of the past or future**, only pure "need." So no children, no parenting, no families, no living culture or civilization. Evidence? Low fertility rate below replacement; emphasis on physical pleasures; loss of any heroic mentality buried in a bureaucratic non-democratic EU; and the rise of an anti-religious secularism. **No future? Casting aside the past?** True or not, this seems to be Prager's personal experience of Europe.

**To Prager, and the founders, believe that if human passions are not regulated than these drives for whatever captivates a person or a group will destroy the fabric of civilization.** The drive for power, for self-aggrandizement, for wealth and prestige, et al. would pit one person, one group, against another. **Post-modernism is grounded in Rousseau's belief in personal power** based on the idea that civilization corrupts the natural good of the "savage." Within this foundational stance, passions and the individual drive for power (Nietzsche's "superman") made real through Stalin, Mao, and Hitler, are perfect expressions of what it means to be human in the face of a "God is dead" world. *Rousseau—712-1778; U.S. constitution—1776.*

**Control of human passions.** If government, then coercion; if religious, then **internalized morality**. Prager's stance favors an ethical monotheism, personal dignity, and individual responsibility. Seeking power for the "greater good" is still a rationalization of personal passions. Passions and delusions have plagued human history. **A government of checks and balances that downplay human passions cannot function** when the populace at large seeks to exercise their own will over all others according to the emotional waves that often flood the public sphere. **If you cannot deny yourself, then you are a hazard to all around you.**

**A necessary tension between a transcended and transcending self guided by God?** Prager seems to live this tension (wisdom, rationality), for transcendence has a specific meaning relating to the Jew's exodus from Egyptian slavery. **One has to be free before one can be a moral person**, otherwise human passions dominate. From this perspective, passions enslave.

zombies?  
dead place?

30:00

powerful image

31:00

who is in control?

32:00