



I would like to thank Michael W. Grebe, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, and the board members and officers of this most-unique foundation. It is a great honor to receive one of this year's Bradley Prizes -- and especially to share that distinction with three fellow recipients whose careers I have followed, and whose achievements I have learned from as much as I have admired.

I was the lucky recipient of two great inheritances in my life. The first, from my parents -- and their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents -- was the chance to have grown up on a small farm in central California, and to have been given their inherited agrarian wisdom that accrues to any who try to make a living from the soil.

Aside from a healthy skepticism, and a need to match words with deeds, the farmer, who can lose his yearlong crop to a rain before harvest, learns to appreciate the power of an unforgiving nature, and its uneasy relationship with culture, without which nature turns destructive.

That fragile balance is inherent in all classical Greek and Roman thought, and I was fortunate, secondly, in college to be introduced to our Classical heritage, which in the

literature of Homer, Thucydides, Sophocles, and Euripides taught me what I had seen on the farm was not haphazard impression, but had been focused and refined by abstract thinkers over some 2,500 years. The shared message from such formal study and practical experience was of the need for culture, of a respect for an unchanging human nature, and especially that current problems are simply reoccurring old dilemmas in new shapes and forms -- that nevertheless convince all too many that we alone confront new challenges.

These should be the most optimistic of times. The 20th Century saw the destruction of fascism, and on the left the implosion of communism. But now our challenges are not so much hostile nation-states, or ideologies even that confuse the ignorant or the desperate into thinking there is an alternative to liberal democratic capitalism.

Instead, the current challenge lies within us -- we, the most affluent and leisured generation in the history of civilization. 21st Century Western man has deluded himself into thinking that he no longer need be satisfied with simply being good, when absolute perfection is for the first time within his grasp. In our generation, the source of our worry is not the state, but we ourselves, who are risking what we have inherited -- like the ancient farming parable of the picker who losses the good fruit within his grasp by reaching for that unattainable shiny apple at the top of the tree.

Due to good intentions and the technological progress that has insulated us from a cruel nature, we are losing the gifts of the Enlightenment, of speaking freely and with courage about what is wrong and nonsensical. The culprit is not as in the past ubiquitous surveillance and midnight arrests, but our own fear of speaking the truth as we know it.

Recently, a well-known Reverend addressed a conference of the NAACP and explained that racial differences in brain chemistry account for differing methods of black and white learning -- not to public outrage, but to a standing ovation and without a note of censure from the current Presidential candidates. We hear that we have no recourse to traditional fuels, and to use our vast coal reserves, to develop nuclear power, to drill for vast amounts of oil and gas under our shores and soil would either not help to alleviate our energy problems or would do only more damage to the environment. In short, we pass on rational objection when it butts up against what we wish to be true, but cannot be, or what a majority deems to be suitably progressive when it is not.

We are lectured that in the age-old Western tension between security and freedom, we have erred on side of the former, and so shredded our civil liberties through government censorship and intrusion. But surely the opposite is true in this respite from terrorist attack on our homeland since September 11. Think for a minute.

Is a moviemaker in the West in more danger producing a feature-length film envisioning the assassination of a sitting President, such as Gabriel Range's *Death of a President* -- or Girt Wilders' *Fiona* or Theo Van Gogh's *Submission*?

Is a Western writer more endangered for writing a novel contemplating the assassination of a sitting American President, such as Nicholson Baker's 2004 Alfred Knopf-published *Checkpoint*, or one who, in allegorical fashion, caricatures religion, such as Salmon Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* -- or draws editorial cartoons mocking fundamentalism, such as those initially published in 2005 in the Danish *Jyllands-Posten*?

Is a Western religious figure more in danger of losing the right to free expression by publicly evoking God to damn the United States to his audience or more calmly referencing the historic relations between Islam and Christianity, such as Pope Benedict's quotation of a 14th

Century Byzantine treatise about a letter from a Manuel II Paleologus to leaders of the Ottoman Empire.

I raise these contrasts not to suggest that we should censure the poor taste of those in free societies or to demonize Islam, but to remind us again that the latest enemy of freedom of expression is not, at least not now at this age of the West, government statute.

No, it is the tyranny of good intentions, the adoption of doctrines such as moral equivalence and multiculturalism, this desire not to say what we think or describe reality as we see it, perhaps because to do so would suggest that the world is not perfect as we wish it, and that therefore the fault, given our great wealth and education, would have to be entirely our own.

If we are to keep what we inherited, then, we must condemn religious intolerance wherever we see it, pseudo-science wherever we hear it, and impossible utopian demands upon us wherever we read of them -- and to do so with a newfound sense of humility and recognition of our own limitations. Of all the traits that we prize, courage in expression at this hour is the most critical.

Thank you for this great honor and I thank the Bradley Foundation for a being a beacon of light and hope among the descending fog of our times.