

Bruce Thornton: The classic understanding of human nature is that it is flawed by its passions, by the irrational, and these are unchangeable. These are permanent. Best you can do is manage and mitigate them, but you should expect that at any time, they will manifest themselves, usually in destructive ways. This big shift that happened in modernity, and this begins about the 19th century, the enlightenment, and that is the notion that human nature can be perfected because human nature is now a consequence of an environment, of a cultural environment, of insufficient enlightenment, inherence to old traditions or old religions. So, the problem lies in the environment rather than in the nature of humans. So human nature is now plastic, it can be changed, it can be improved, and this improvement will progress steadily as long as the right people are in control of society. The consequence of that attitude, we have seen in this country with the progressive movement, because the progressive movement starting in the late 19th century, about the 1880s, is that if you have a technocratic elite governing rather than the people governing, they will know better what policies to pursue to mitigate the eternal destructive behaviors of human beings and improve them, and gradually they will achieve enlightenment and you will reach a society in which these problems aren't that important. When you have such an idea of governance that has been developing in this country, the consequences are first, freedom must be diminished. People must be protected from themselves. They can't have as much freedom as the founders envisioned because they will make choices that interfere with this progress. So you have to diminish freedom, you have to increase the power of the state, you have to give the federal centralized state more power to override what any other institution, whether that be the family or that be schools, because they don't know what is best for them. And you start to get this sort of intrusive regulation of business that we see now, interference in family life, child protection services, for example, a parent doesn't know what's best for the child, New York's ban on sugary drinks. You can multiply the examples of an intrusive nanny state predicated on the notion that a technocratic elite knows better. And so, the primary goal of the Constitution was not to solve problems, it was to protect freedom, and that freedom is being eroded.

Bruce Thornton: When we look at a phenomenon like appeasement, we have to dig deeper and look at what were the ideas that made such a disastrous foreign policy possible. If we look in the '20s and the '30s, some of those ideas were that idealistic internationalism, through institutions such as the League of Nations in the '20s, treaties like the Kellogg-Briand Pact that outlawed war, signed by the three axis powers of World War II, that talking with their enemies, signing agreements with their enemies could preclude the use of force. But we make the mistake of thinking that the person on either side of the table believes and wants the same things we do, and it was painfully clear that the Germans, even before the rise of Hitler in 1933, the Germans were not interested in what the French and the British and the Americans were interested in. The Germans were interested in getting the power that they had enjoyed back and getting revenge on the Versailles settlement, which they interpreted as a betrayal. That mistake was painfully obvious in the three meetings that Neville Chamberlain had with Hitler in September of 1938. And so delusional was Chamberlain that he told his cabinet that he had gained some measure of influence over Adolph Hitler, that Adolph Hitler would never go back on his word when he had given it. The reality of course was very different, and we know because Hitler called the French and the English at Munich, he said they were little worms. He said if Neville Chamberlain ever came back to Berlin, he would kick him in the stomach and push him down the stairs of the Reich's Chancellery. He had nothing but utter contempt for them, because they had misread Germany, Germany's intentions and ideology. The mistakes in Munich have been duplicated in the Iran deal, which was based on faulty assumptions that the Iranians, despite all their apocalyptic rhetoric and their fervent Shiism, that the Iranians wanted to be reintegrated in the Community of Nations, to have trade with the Community of Nations, to improve the lot of their people, all ideals that we share but that their behavior and their words tell us they don't share. And it's our inability to take seriously these motives, these religious motives and these religious beliefs that we have

discarded for the most part. That is a huge mistake that duplicates the mistake of Munich and basically any act of appeasement is going to be based on that fundamental mistake. It's a failure of imagination, and this is what Robert Conquest says. It's a failure of imagination to sit across the table and try to imagine that you're a Shi'a Muslim Iranian and what would I be thinking if I were he? What would I want? And it's kind of a peculiar western arrogance to say that, "Well of course, they want what we want."