

**Stephen Balch:** If you look at Western Civilization during the last 300 years, you see something pretty amazing. What you see is that the most successful people in our society are not people whose success, whose wealth, whose position, whose status is usually derived from government, from that institution that throughout the history of humankind has been engaged, more or less, in a constant process of extraction, of taking things from people, of taxing, of regulating, of seizing wealth. Rather, they're people who have gotten where they are by producing things that others want; by producing things that others will voluntarily give up their wealth to purchase. They are folks whose activities in life have been constructive, have contributed to the overall commonwealth. This is a tremendous departure. If you look at the Forbes top 400 people and you ask from their biographies what was it that made them successful, you'd see that they're largely entrepreneurs. They are people who had a great idea of some sort, something that can improve the human condition and got into the marketplace and successfully sold it and built up a huge enterprise of some kind or other. Had you done the same thing, and Forbes been around, say, half a millennium ago or almost any other time more recently in most other parts of the world, what you would have discovered were that they were kings and princes, that they stood at the edifice of a vast pyramid of folks whose business was to overawe others and to take some portion of what these others possessed. So, the great anomaly is that the route to success in the Western world, in recent times, has been a productive rather than destructive route, and that is something extraordinary and, I would say, precious because it has improved the conditions of life for everyone.

**Stephen Balch:** Well, if you look at the world today, there are many people who will talk about how the world has globalized. And, they often are people who simultaneously think that to emphasize the West is somehow to be narrow minded, maybe even worse than that—perhaps, bigoted. But if you look at what they're saying when they say that the world has become global, that society, culture, civilization is now global, what they really mean is that it has become Western, that the institutions, the practices, the ways of life that developed within the Western world over the last 500 years particularly, though its roots are further back than the roots of these institutions, practices and ways of life or further back than that, that they have spread. For example, we have a globalized economy. We have a globalized economy because of modern technology that allows us to trade, that allows interaction over large scales. We have great movements of people and they only occur because of these same technologies, transportation, communication. We have around the world institutions of governance that are very similar to one another, that recognize each other, that have entities like legislatures and elected executives that call themselves republics, that sometimes are, or at least, claim to be democracies. We have, as a pillar of everything that happens, a great scientific project that originated in the West, but is now practiced worldwide in some parts of the world like the Far East are certainly making sizeable contributions to it. We have a popular culture that is worldwide; you know, there are kinds of national rock groups in various parts of the world, but they sort of sing similar types of songs and communicate with their fans in similar types of ways. A lot of the big celebrities certainly are world celebrities—they'd be recognized everywhere. I could just go on and on and on, but we have a world culture, and this world culture, in most of its instantiations is Western—Western origin. So, Western culture has reshaped the world by writing itself at large in the world and making everyone in the world—or at least most people in the world, whether they like it or not, even many of those who kind of rail against the West and attack the West, they have to do it through Western means. So, in that sense, Western culture has transformed the world.

**Stephen Balch:** What makes the West “the West” is the primacy within it of people who do constructive things, who make rather than take. But if makers are going to have the freedom they

need to make, they have to find some way of keeping the takers at bay. They have to solve the initial problem of how do you keep raw power from commanding people's ability to decide things for themselves. And so, if you look at the whole course of Western civilization, it has periodically involved defending the institutions that allow for creativity and productivity. If you go all the way back to ancient Athens, the Athenians and the other Greeks defended themselves against the Persian invasion. The whole course of subsequent history would have been vastly different had the Persians won at Salamis, but that didn't happen. If you look through European history, time and time again, those peoples who wanted to live freely and constructively—I've called them in some of the essays I've written, the "Armed Industrious"—had to defend themselves and were celebrated; there was sort of a long tradition in the West, a tradition of celebrating the champions of freedom. Rossini writes this opera about William Tell, the peasants of the Swiss Mountains who fight off the Austrians and established themselves as free communities; the rise of the Dutch Republic, you know, the burghers of Holland fighting against the armies of Spain; the English fighting against the armies of Spain; the English parliamentarians fighting against the royal autocrats; the glorious Revolution; the American Revolution; the Civil War; Britain's standing alone in 1940 against the Nazis— all these are cases of free people who had to use force to defend their freedom and who we honor today for their belief to do it. And history, despite what some people have said, is not, in my opinion, over. We are still going to have these threats. We have them today, and in order to be able to, never eliminate them I think, but at least keep them at bay and keep that sphere of creative life healthy and flourishing, we have to have the ability to defend ourselves, which is not just the matter of arms and technology, but also a matter of confidence and will. And I worry less about the cutting of military budgets and that sort of material demilitarization than the demoralization that has gone hand in hand with it at times, that robs us of the confidence, and the foresight and the understanding of how wrong the world is outside that sphere that we have created for ourselves, and in which things work so well—we take it for granted, but shouldn't. We have to have the knowledge to understand, and it's the demoralization that prevents us from doing it; the bad education that deprives us of the lessons of history that, I think, are pretty clear.