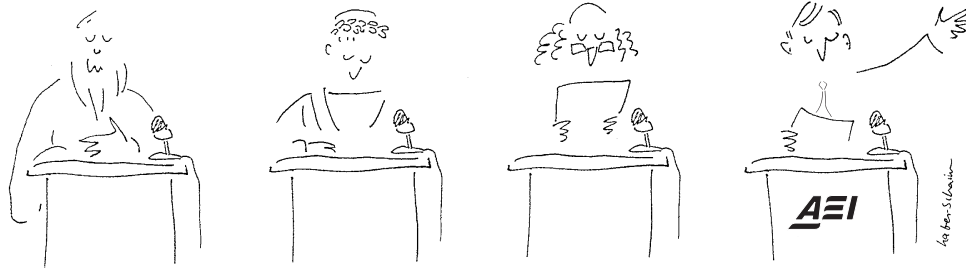


BRADLEY LECTURE SERIES

Sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research



The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature

STEVEN PINKER,

Harvard University

Tuesday, October 7, 5:30–7:00 p.m.

Wohlstetter Conference Center, Twelfth Floor, AEI

Why does talk of human nature inspire such fear and loathing in so many people? It challenges three deeply held beliefs: the blank slate (the mind has no innate structure), the noble savage (people are naturally good), and the ghost in the machine (behavior is not caused by physical events). These beliefs are thought to undergird indispensable moral values, and challenges to the beliefs are therefore thought to undermine the values. These orthodoxies, however, are flawed and should not have such influence on modern ethical principles. The meaning and purpose that people ascribe to life are not compromised by explanations of the ascribing process.

STEVEN PINKER is a native of Montreal. After teaching at MIT for twenty-one years, he returned to Harvard in 2003 as the Johnstone Professor of Psychology. Mr. Pinker's experimental research on cognition and language won the Troland Award from the National Academy of Sciences and two prizes from the American Psychological Association. He has also received several honorary doctorates and numerous awards for graduate and undergraduate teaching, general achievement, and his critically acclaimed books *The Language Instinct*, *How the Mind Works*, and *The Blank Slate*. Mr. Pinker has also appeared in many television documentaries and writes frequently in the popular press, including in the *New York Times*, *Time*, and *Slate*.

Future Lectures

Monday, November 3: **The Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy and How It Grew: Thoughts on Thirty Years of Politics**, ALAN EHRENHALT, *Governing Magazine*

Monday, December 1: **Leo Strauss's Perspective on Modern Politics**, THOMAS L. PANGLE, University of Toronto

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