

The 'Impossible Conversation' Continues: How Can We Save the West? with Dr. Peter Boghossian

(January 20, 2026)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, how do you have conversations with people with whom you don't agree? And how do you do it in a way that is calm? And why do it, especially in our social media age, where the algorithm that you have is just going to keep feeding you things that affirm what you already believe, which might be one big reason our country and even the world is so polarized.

Well, my friend, Dr. Peter Boghossian, who originally was a member, or a faculty member at Portland State University's Philosophy department until they went so far illiberal that he could no longer tolerate it, is my guest today.

He was the guest on the previous podcast. We met at UC Berserkly when we were out there. Peter's an atheist, I'm a Christian, but we have a lot in common. And we're having a discussion about how can we save Western civilization? What can we do to save the freedoms that allow us to have freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom association, freedom of press, freedom of assembly? Because they are going away unless the direction of Europe and the United States changes.

And Peter, now, since he's no longer at Portland State, is on the road 24/7, 365, trying to get people to think more clearly about the freedoms that we have and how to defend them. So for that, he gets another great round of applause, ladies and gentlemen. [Applause]

PETER:

I have to carry that around with me. Every time I'm down about Western Civ, I'll just press the button.



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FRANK:

That's right. Hey, by the way, Peter, now I need to warn you that if you do say something that really is clearly not factual, you're going to hear this.

[Trump]:

Wrong.

FRANK:

Okay? And by the end of this, if I'm no longer interested, you're going to hear

[Trump]:

You're fired.

FRANK:

All right?

PETER:

Uh oh, the pressure is on me. [Laughter]

FRANK:

But no, Peter, we had a great discussion in the previous podcast. We're just going to continue our discussion here. People have to know about the experiment that you, James Lindsay, and Helen—

PETER:

Pluckrose.

FRANK:

Pluckrose. Actually conducted back in 2017 to point out the ideological insanity of the academy. Can you tell us what happened there?

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PETER:

Sure, yeah. I never think about that stuff anymore, but-- And there are reasons I don't think about that stuff anymore. But I was surrounded in a sea of utter madness. And again, I haven't thought about this stuff in years.

And I kept trying to figure out why these insane, completely deranged policies were being institutionalized. And every time I would ask people, it was amazing. Nobody had an answer to it. Can I say the word P E N I S on your show?

FRANK:

Of course. Go. Yeah. [Laughter]

PETER:

Okay. Figure I'd spell it out just in case. So, so we were inspired by Alan Sokol, who's, now a friend of mine who wrote the famous Sokol hoax, the first paper he submitted in the late 90s to social text.

He basically, it was a nonsense paper where he used fancy words. He's a physics professor and mathematician. He told me at dinner one night, he's like, yeah, all this stuff in physics, all this lifetime work in mathematics-- In my obituary in the New York Times, no one's going to care about anything.

They're just going to care about my hoax paper. He hoaxed the, with just gibberish and nonsense, the most famous postmodern journal. So we were inspired by that. So we submitted-- This is actually a really funny story I haven't thought about in a while. We were trying to think about the craziest idea we could submit. And I think the original idea we came up with was that all potatoes are sexist.

FRANK:

Potatoes are sexist? [Laughter] Mr. Potato Head sexist.

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PETER:

Yeah, we're going to put Mr. Potato Head in there too. And back when, you know, because we wanted to make a really silly, ridiculous paper and have them publish it. But I, when I used to use Google, I came up with all these results with potatoes being sexist. So then we came up with the idea that because these people believe literally everything is a social construct, that we would say that the penis is a social construct. [Laughter]

FRANK:

Okay. [Laughter]

PETER:

So we, we published this paper about the conceptual penis, we called it, and we hoaxed it, a fairly low level journal.

And we wanted to kind of duplicate the Sokol, the Sokal thing. And then the usual suspects lost their freaking minds. They went crazy. This doesn't do it. You know, you say it does, it doesn't prove what you said. And so they also said in the same breath, this is interesting.

They also said if you want to do what you claim to do, that there are problems in these, what we call grievance studies, grievance fields. You have to do the following ABCD, publish more papers, publish them in higher tier journals. And I called James Lindsay on the phone and I said, Jim, dude, this is awesome.

They've given us a recipe for what we need to do to succeed. By the way, you know, Slate, Salon, all these leftist rags were putting out hit pieces on me, you know, on us, but on me because I was vulnerable because I had an institutional position at a university. And I would email a call and say, you know, I'm more than happy to talk to you about this.

I'd like to write a rebuttal, like to write a response. Crickets, nothing. Because that's not what they do as we talked about in previous conversation. They don't have conversations, they don't have a dialectic, they don't have a discussion. Everybody is an existential enemy, and they won't talk to you, they won't platform you.

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So then we, we spent the next year writing intentionally broken, completely deranged, morally repugnant papers. And we got busted by the Wall Street Journal when we had I think seven accepted or published.

And then I think we had five more under review, if memory serves me correctly. And I'm fairly confident that those would have gotten a fair number of those would have gotten accepted. And the idea, I actually got this, you'll appreciate this. I got this from the new atheist movement, this idea.

And the idea was that if you want to delegitimize an idea, you go after the canonical texts. So if you want to delegitimize grievance studies, because I knew there was no there there, then you do that by publishing completely broken, fraudulent, you know, publish, you know, version of Mein Kampf.

Mein Kampf in there. And so, that's what we, that's, that's what we did until we got caught by the Wall Street Journal.

FRANK:

So you got peer reviewed and the peers of your papers accepted that the penis was a social construct.

PETER:

Yeah, that was the first one. I mean that paper is like totally deranged, but it's, you know, it's a humorous paper. It's funny. If you haven't read it, you, you know, you should totally sit down over a glass of wine one night and read it. It's actually really, really funny. We put every kind of vulgarity we could in there that we could think of. It's actually really funny. But the more serious one is, you know, I can't remember, dog parks or—

FRANK:

You did one, apparently, where you observed, if I remember correctly, the mating habits of dogs in dog parks. And you noticed, apparently, that the male dogs were a little bit too aggressive with the females. And if I remember this right, then that somehow could, you could transfer that to human beings somehow. It's like—

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PETER:

Yeah, I-- [Laughter]

I think it's even worse than that. I think it's, I think we claimed, if memory serves me correctly, that we closely examined the genitals of 10,000 dogs and then interrogated their owners as to their sexual orientations.

FRANK:

And somehow that the rape culture of the dog park, it shows oppression that we could then apply to men and women, and somehow that got past peer review. It got an award.

PETER:

It got an award. Yeah, we talked about that on Rogan. It got an award. It was published in the most prestigious—

You know, again, we did exactly what these people told us to do. But if these people had even a modicum, an iota of integrity, they would have said, wow, you know, we asked you to do this.

Well, they didn't ask us, but we told you what you needed to do to succeed, to show that there's a problem of ideological corruption, and in certain fields, and you did it. And now we need to sincerely look at these journals and look at the kinds of ideas they're forwarding, and ask ourselves, honestly, are these ideas tethered to reality?

But they did not do that. Instead, they brutally attacked me. I was brought up on all these charges, which is actually a really funny story. You know, I'm in the room and all the recording devices are going on, and one of the charges they brought. This is awesome. I haven't thought about this stuff in years.

I should think about this stuff every time I see the decay in society, cheers me up. They brought me up on the charge of plagiarism for plagiarizing Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf. And the first thing I did—

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[Laughter] The first thing I did in my trial was I admitted to plagiarizing Mein Kampf. I said I did it. I admit it. I fully—

And I kept repeating it. I plagiarized Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf. I submitted it. I am guilty to their own charge. But the reason that they had to find me not guilty of the charge that they brought me up on, that I confessed to, is because that would mean that their ideological bedfellows had published Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf. [Laughter]

FRANK:

They were damned either way. Right? No matter what they said, they were indicting themselves. Yeah.

PETER:

Yeah. It kind of—

Again, I haven't thought about this stuff in years, but it kind of reminds me of my dad died in Las Vegas. I was at the funeral, and then we went to this, like, dinner afterward, and all these people were talking to me about Milo Yiannopoulos.

And I just thought, like, why are these people talking to me about Milo? That's so weird. My dad just died. I'm emotional and talking about Milo Yiannopoulos. But it kind of, you know—

You know, I told them, like, don't do this. Like, don't bring me up on any charges. You didn't-- Sokol wasn't brought up on any charges. This is not-- But they wanted to humiliate me.

They wanted to embarrass me. They wanted to make sure that I lost my job. They had no idea, nor did I, of the public reaction that would come from this. But the reason I mentioned Milo Yiannopoulos is that if they had left me alone, and not done anything, and just kind of swept it under the rug, it wouldn't have been anywhere near the big of a deal that it was.

And I told them specifically, don't do this. Like, instead of doing—

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Instead of, like, finding someone, you know, to be upset with, why don't you look at, you know, entire wings of university architecture are dedicated to things that are just false. They're just not true. Why don't you be sincere and look at this and honestly examine this? But they weren't interested in that. They wanted to torture me, and they were successful.

FRANK:

I want to go back to our previous conversation in the last podcast. And, folks, if you haven't listened to the first podcast, it's the last one we did, Peter and I did. Dr. Peter Boghossian and I did. Because Peter—

And this is from your book 'A Manual for Creating Atheists', you point out that so often people don't pay attention to facts. They are taking action based on morality. What is the morality that you, that your, little escapade there exposed or threatened? Maybe that's a better word. What morality did you threaten by getting those false papers published under peer review in these journals?

PETER:

That, a lot. That certain conclusions are forwarded if they agree with the dominant moral orthodoxy, which is that marginalized and oppressed. There are marginalized and oppressed people.

These people happen to have certain identity characteristics with an identity level salience: Homosexuals, trans people. There's also a hierarchy. Indigeneity, etc. Now I actually throw midgets every time I publish anything, I always make sure I put the word midget in there.

I just published a piece of Lawrence Cross's book. I got that in there. Smuggled it in. So I challenged the idea that the conclusions that they forwarded were not only untrue but could be taken even further. For example, is this a family podcast? Can I--?

FRANK:

It is but go ahead. You can, you can say it a certain way. Yeah.

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PETER:

All right, I'll try to say it a certain way. So, okay, so, you know, huge trigger warning for your audience. This is absolutely not family fair.

FRANK:

Okay, all right.

PETER:

But we had to do this to publish in these, we had to talk about these ideas.

FRANK:

I'll tell you what—

PETER:

Crazy.

FRANK:

Say what you need to say. We'll beep anything that people understand. Go ahead.

PETER:

So we submitted this paper for why is it that men don't like large objects inserted in their -- Heterosexual men.

And we were saying it's because they're homophobic. And we submitted this. And again, you know, you don't have to believe me. Everything we've published, all the reviewer's comments, everything is completely transparent. It's all online, it's all there for people to see.

And it's free. I don't make any money off of this. I want to expose the rot, the ideological corruption. And the reviewer said-- You just can't make it up. [Laughter] The reviewer said, no, no, it's not because they're homophobic. It's because they're transphobic. And I didn't even, I didn't even understand the comment.

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And I, I talked to Jim and I said, dude, like, I don't even get this. And he said, he said to me, I know. It's genius. Let's run with it. And so we wrote this paper that said the reason that men don't want things in their -- The large objects is because they have a fear of, irrational fear of trans people.

And we call it the trans hysteria. And we tried to, the goal was to let this sit in the literature, and have other people cite it, and make our own vein of literature in which everybody is thinking that they're trans, they're afraid of trans people if they don't like large objects inserted in their -- So, but unfortunately, again, we got caught before that.

FRANK:

Oh, so it didn't spread any further then? [Laughter]

PETER:

No, we didn't spread any further. [Laughter] I could make a very inappropriate joke.

FRANK:

Okay, so wait a minute. Peter, How was this discovered by somebody at the Wall Street Journal? What happened?

PETER:

Well, I made a key mistake. So we fabricated everything. In fact, we put up a website, a fake website where we had phony credentials. These credentials, Frank, they were hilarious, you know, like, what do you do in your free time? And, you know, one of the people I-- We found images and we put bindis on people, you know.

I don't have-- I live in, you know, New Mexico with her two cats and her three wives. And I don't have any time for, you know, freedom is oppression and all this stuff. But anyway, we got caught because I made a crucial mistake with the dog park paper. I put in-- We had to fabricate, you know, because everybody, the whole thing was a fiction.

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We fabricated fake institutes. We fabricated everything. But I fabricated a PhD in feminist studies as opposed to a PhD in gender studies. And somebody looked into it and found every single person that had a PhD in feminist studies.

And the person, the putative author, Helen Joyce or Helen-- I can't remember her name. She was not one. But if I had put, if I had just made, not made that one mistake and said gender studies instead, wouldn't have gotten caught.

FRANK:

Well, at some point you wanted to be caught so you could blow the top off all this.

PETER:

We had to be. We had to be caught. But we didn't want to get because we gave ourselves one year and we still had five papers out for review.

And that was way before AI or anything. I mean, you know, I was just sitting down there drinking glasses of wine and thinking about the craziest stuff. Like truly not only just crazy, but morally vile and revolting, like putting white kids on chains and speaking over them in the classroom as a form of experiential reparations. I mean, crazy stuff. And so—

Oh, and that's the other thing that I learned as a result of this, you know? Because when I originally wrote this paper, and this is-- There's just so much in there. There's so much in the statements. I originally thought, well, you know, these things are so demonstrably ugly, and so malicious, that nobody is possibly going to accept this.

So I found this line of literature about, you know, being compassionate to people when we abuse them. And so, for the idea, of putting white kids in chains, and speaking over them, and oppressing them, and yelling at them, etc., I thought, well, you know, if this is too crazy, you know, even the craziest person is going to think that this is morally wrong.

So I put this little, you know, line of literature about. But we need to be compassionate to people when we abuse them, basically. And the reviewers wrote back and said, no, we don't.

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We don't need to be compassionate. These people are oppressors. And it just completely blew my mind. It's like, it completely blew my mind.

FRANK:

And now, you know, if the evidence that we have is good, and it appears to be good, Charlie Kirk was shot.

PETER:

Correct. All of these things are related. So that's the thing, Frank, that other people don't understand. All of this stuff is downstream of the university. People just don't get that. It's not that this guy ex nihilo just happens to go out and start murdering people. Like there's a sea, there's a pool in which people get these ideas.

There's an infrastructure in place. There's an academic, there's a literature. There's a long pedigree, a history of citations and citations of people citing other citations, and then the universities themselves act as indoctrination factories where the goal is to replicate the dominant moral orthodoxy.

And that's exactly what they've done. And that's the thing that people don't understand. But if you really want to know what people don't understand, and I've been so busy, I haven't tackled this, but I think that this is a key to saving Western civilization. You have to figure out what is the wellspring of the idea?

What is the wellspring? The wellspring of the idea is teacher certification programs. You can't teach. It doesn't matter. You have PhD, I have PhD. I have tons of publications. None of that stuff matters. Sorry.

FRANK:

You're alright. Go ahead, keep going.

PETER:

Yeah, yeah. None of that stuff matters. None of that stuff matters. You need to, in this country at least. I can't speak for other countries, but you need a, to get a teacher certification, and you

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get those from colleges of education. And in colleges of education, they don't have the model that you and I have.

It's not a truth model. It's Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed. It's everybody's oppressed, how to remediate oppression. And we've now trained generations of teachers in K through 12 education to think about things in terms of systemic oppression. How do you fight systems?

How do you dismantle systems? And so, those people then become teachers who indoctrinate our children in K through 12 education. Again, this is not a truth seeking pedagogy. This is, it's not a way to find truth. Truth is totally irrelevant.

It's all about power, power and oppression. So, you know, if you want to know how we're in this mess and this, you know, Linda McMahon can completely solve this problem. Oh, and, you know, that's the other thing with Charlie. Charlie said that one of the last texts I had from Charlie was that he would go to war for me to become, I still saved the text, the Secretary of Education. And so, and then we went from the Secretary of Education and I was, I actually flew and—

But for political reasons, I didn't have it. But again, this is a long thing, but here's my advice to Linda McMahon, which I said from day one.

FRANK:

Secretary of Education, ladies and gentlemen. Yeah.

PETER:

Yeah. So what you need to do, you can pretty much solve this problem with the wave of a wand. Here's what you need to do. Everybody, all of the universities are beholden to what Trump, or what I call the accreditation cartel. Now, I'm a full disclosure, I'm a member of the founding faculty fellow at the University of Austin. So that's my university affiliation. That's a new university going up that's on right now in its second year in Austin, Texas.

FRANK:

Is Elon Musk behind that?

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PETER:

No, not to my knowledge. Not to my knowledge. Joe Lonsdale, Barry Weiss, Neil Ferguson. A lot of people have made very generous donations.

FRANK:

CBS now?

PETER:

Yeah.

FRANK:

Okay. All right.

PETER:

Yep, yep, yep. So, but universities need to get, become accredited. And the way they get accredited is through an accrediting body. But there's a kind of, to borrow, to mix metaphors, to borrow something from the Lord of the Rings, it's kind of a one ring. There's one accreditation body that is behind all of the other accreditation bodies. And they are caught in the orbit of critical social justice.

They're caught in the orbit of this, everybody's oppressing these oppressors. We need to remediate this, and rip down systems, and teach people this. If you got rid of that and they're directly certified by the Department of Education, Trump wants to do away with the Department of Education. Actually, Charlie said to me, are you okay with being the last Secretary of Education?

I'm like, great, because I'm telling you, Frank, when I would walk into one of those rooms, they would tremble. They would know what's coming for them. I would have come for all of them, all of them, all of the infrastructure, everything. Anyway, didn't happen. So I hope Linda McMahon can put the nail in the coffin of the indoctrination mill that is K through 12 certification.

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FRANK:

You know, Christians have a similar problem. We have some bad seminaries. You get a bad seminary, you get a bad pastor, you get bad congregants.

PETER:

Correct.

FRANK:

It's the same kind of thing, and we're doing it at the school level. And look, if you start indoctrinating kids into bad ideas, is it any wonder you're going to get bad behavior? No.

PETER:

Yeah, that's absolutely correct. And the problem is that this is a public funded, it's at a national problem, almost nobody's talking about it. And so what we tried to do with the grievance study stuff, the, you know, Sokol squared, is we tried to alert people to the wholesale corruption in certain fields. These fields are bogus. They're hurting people, they're spreading false information. Public policies are being formed around these things.

And it's just like Fat Studies was a great example of that. We published a paper, the bodybuilders, professional bodybuilders, lost their minds about this, in which we argued that-- I think it's, I can't remember the newspaper, like overcoming, I can't remember—

FRANK:

Fat shaming or something?

PETER:

Yeah, like so people should, you know, they don't use the word obese because obese, they call it a medicalized narrative, should be able to go into competitive bodybuilding arenas to display their fat in noncompetitive ways. And just, you know, just in that paper I wrote, it's the final frontier for fat activism.

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And because I'm a big Star Trek fan, science fiction fan, and they said that the final frontier was hurtful to indigenous Americans and take it out. But the bodybuilding people were rather upset by the idea that morbidly obese people should come into their spaces and display their fat.

But anyway, but my larger point there is this is an example of how these disciplines have gone completely crazy. And they're there to forward narratives, they're not there to find the truth. But all of those at core comes from teacher certification. That's the root of the whole problem.

FRANK:

Teacher certification. And is it any wonder? Is it any wonder why Johnny can't read anymore? It's because—

PETER:

Yeah, that's the other thing.

FRANK:

Go ahead.

PETER:

Johnny can't read. I can answer that in a quick nutshell. Johnny can't read because we know what works and we know what doesn't. Whole language doesn't work. Phonics works. The other reason Johnny can't read is we know there are criminogenic factors. We know that you know—

And people are going to look at this and say, oh, Boghossian, he's some kind of conservative. I'm just telling you what the data is man. You can deny it. You can, you can-- And you're more than welcome, I want you to.

I want people to deny this. I don't want people to believe me. Is if you look on the data, and this is-- You can find some of this stuff in Matt Thornton's latest book. He's under Aliveness Ape at Twitter. He's written a lot of stuff about this, the gift of violence. Is if there's an adult male in the home, we know—

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FRANK:

Oh, yeah.

PETER:

We know that it's a criminogenic factor, kids are more likely to wind up incarcerated. We also know that has an effect on reading and academics in general, whether or not there's an adult male in the home. So people are going to say, I just want to say, I'm sorry, I'm a little discombobulated, but I want to get so much out in this conversation.

I think that every time we have any of these conversations, and, you know, I've done so many things with Billboard Chris, you know, the-- You know Billboard Chris? He has the Billboard, you know, children cannot consent to puberty blockers. I think it's really important to get beyond the fact of, oh, the Democrats believe this, it must be bad.

Oh, the Republicans believe this, it must be bad because I'm a Democrat or Republican. I had Jesse Pelton on the show, and I talked to him about solar energy. And one, which I think is one of the most important things for our country right now. Solving the debt is one, although I've kind of given up since Trump passed the Big Beautiful Bill. Solving the debt's one. And, you know, there's been no—

There's a wonderful chart. There's been no rich country that's energy poor. And I asked him, why is it that--? What have Republicans failed on? And he said that Republicans think that solar is just this is like leftist thing and because the leftists are in favor of solar, we have to be against it.

But solar and nuclear and other things, but solar primarily is part of the answer to our energy crisis. But I only mention this in the larger context of we have to get beyond the fact and think, oh, the right believes this, the left believes it's about trans or about, you know, some you know, homosexuality whatever.

It's just, forget about all that. Like what does the data say? Like what is the evidence? Figure out what the evidence is, then you can figure out what to do with it.

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FRANK:

You know, as I mentioned in the previous show, we're writing a book right now, me and Phoenix Hayes called 'The War on Reality', and it's dealing with these kind of issues. I just want to read a short section of it because it kind of sums up some of our discussion, Peter. Although you might not agree with all this, but the problem with Marxism.

Marxism is a philosophy that believes old racism can be solved with new racism, demands equal rights for all humans except the unborn and oppressors, preaches inclusion, tolerance, and diversity, unless your views are too diverse, then you're excluded and not tolerated for everyone's safety.

Swears gender has nothing to do with biology and then demands surgeries to make one's biology match their self-proclaimed gender. Condemns colonizers for not assimilating yet insists immigrations or immigrants shouldn't assimilate. Wants open borders but triple locks their front door.

Thinks immigration laws are xenophobic, but a no trespassing sign on a tribal land is sovereignty. Posts about the evils of capitalism using their latest iPhone made by capitalism. Thinks free speech or thinks speech is violence but actual violence is mostly peaceful. Right? [Laughter]

PETER:

Yeah. So here's so I agree with much of that. So here's part of the problem. Part of the problem is that if somebody doesn't buy into the law of non-contradiction, you know, because I'm sure a lot of people, not Marxists because they fall in that traditional but certainly postmodernists.

FRANK:

Yeah.

PETER:

Like for a lot of people, like for me and you, a lot of like for you, that makes sense. I, you know, I'm for abortion in the first trimester, etc. We can have that conversation. But a lot of these people don't find a problem with contradictions in their belief system. So they would say, you

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know, Aubrey Lord has this piece, the master's tools can only dissemble or disable the master's house.

The master's tools can't do that. So you can't use reason, science, evidence, anything to overthrow the systems of oppression and power. You have to use other tools. You have to use-- So for them, not the Marxists again, because they're more in a modernist framework, but anybody in a postmodern framework, I would call it hypocrisy, but they would call it contradictions itself a western white colonial idea.

FRANK:

As opposed to it not being a Western white colonial idea.

PETER:

I mean, obviously it's not.

FRANK:

Yeah, they're using the very law of non-contradiction they're denying is of any value.

PETER:

Yeah, that was Habermas' critique of Derrida. He said that it was a performative contradiction. And your guests can look that up, performative contradictions like-- But the problem with that is that nobody—

So listen, this is, listen, Frank. All this is just verbal behavior. Nobody actually believes any of this. Nobody believes this when, for example, I'll give you two quick examples. When they go to the bank with a ten dollar bill and they want, and they get the change, and they get, they're given 8 cents. Nobody's like, well, that's just your truth.

FRANK:

That's right, of course.

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PETER:

Nobody says that. And when they break their leg when they fall down the stairs, virtually nobody would call the witch doctor. Everybody would go to the hospital. Right? So like people by and large don't believe what they profess to believe. It's verbal behavior and it's behavior to fit in and conform. It's virtue signaling with the community.

FRANK:

The problem is it's verbal behavior that becomes a mind virus in some people who then get up on a building and shoot my friend in the neck.

PETER:

That's correct. That's absolutely correct.

FRANK:

And that's why I admire what you're doing, Peter. You're devoting-- Look, you and I are both about in the fourth quarter of our lives and you're devoting what could be retirement for you, you're devoting the time you have left to actually save civilization from the barbarians who, although they can't—

PETER:

I'm trying man.

FRANK:

Yeah. They can't articulate an argument for their view, they can certainly pick up a weapon and try and enforce it and—

PETER:

Yeah, well, you know, I was going to say something to you at the beginning of the show, when you said, you know, trying to save Western Europe and America.

I'm not trying to save Western Europe. They're done. They're completely toast. They're in hospice. I don't think there's anything that can be done. And the reason is because they're not honest about the nature of the problem.

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FRANK:

Well, that's true. And I like the way you say that. They're in hospice now. Yeah. Unless something-- You know, there's a new party in the UK. It's called the Reform UK Party. I just met Dr. James Orr who is-- Hang on a second.

PETER:

I've done an event with him. Matt Goodwin's a very, very close personal friend of mine. I'm happy to connect you to get him on your show.

FRANK:

I just saw him at Amfest recently.

PETER:

Oh, yeah.

FRANK:

And here's his card. Senior advisor to Nigel Farage. Did I say that right?

PETER:

Yeah.

FRANK:

And, Reform UK, he said they got about 33% of the population, which at this point is a plurality because the other groups are scattered. So they're hoping that they can get enough political power to turn immigration around in the UK. Whether they'll be able to do that or not, the current madness, that's going—

PETER:

Not possible.

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FRANK:

Can we talk about one thing before--? I want to ask you more about the grounding of morality. But this nonsense term Islamophobia. In my view, Islam-- Well, it's not just my view. I think this is true. Islam is not a race, it's not an ethnicity.

You're going to find Muslims of every race and ethnicity. Islam is a political/religious ideology that wants to put the world into submission under Sharia Law. There's no reason to not be concerned about that.

PETER:

Okay, so here's—

FRANK:

What's your view on this?

PETER:

So you could do a genealogy. Here's my take, my take on that. So I do think, I think it is both a bogus term, and I think it is a useful term. I do think that there are some people who are genuinely fearful of Muslims, and I do think that many Muslims have weaponized that term to buttress or protect any criticism of Islam. So we have to make some distinctions.

Ideas do not deserve dignity. People deserve dignity. And so, any idea should be on the table. And so, I'm radically against any blasphemy laws. I'm against any kind of political correctness as it's institutionalized. Certain words you can't say just parenthetically.

Someone told me the other night, but I can't remember. Oh, I used the word midget. And someone told me then that I can't use that word. And I said to her, oh, is there a place I can go to figure out what words I can and cannot use. And of course, there's no place you can go. So people are just kind of grasping onto these things.

But I do think that there are some people who are fearful of Muslims. With that said, I also think that there is no render unto Caesar in Islam. And so, I do think that it's a, that it's a largely, political religion in a way that Christianity is not a political religion.

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And so, I think, I think that there's a delicate balance to be made from the fear, and the antagonism that some people actually have towards Muslims because they're Muslims, and the being honest with oneself about the nature of the problem.

For example, the Rotterdam gangs, excuse me, the grooming gangs that Douglas Murray writes about so eloquently, and that Matt Goodwin and Eric Hoffman and others have talked about.

FRANK:

Here's part of the problem. And Charlie used to make the distinction between macro Islam and micro Islam. Macro Islam is a problem. It's been a problem for 1400 years. Wherever Islam takes over a society, freedoms go away. Micro Islam is your buddy next door who happens to be a Muslim who may not agree and does not agree with Sharia law.

The problem is the micro people, when the Muslims gain a majority, typically do not resist the more radical elements, and Sharia law is put into place anyway. I mean, how often do you hear Muslims speaking up against jihad even though they might not personally believe it?

PETER:

All right. I'm going to, I'm going to push back on you. Here's my take on this.

FRANK:

Okay.

PETER:

So in the last—

FRANK:

I'm supposed to-- What I'm supposed to say now, Peter, is agree with me now. It'll save time. No, I'm just kidding. [Laughter]

PETER:

I thought you were gonna-- I thought you're gonna push that button.

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[Trump]:

Wrong. [Laughter]

FRANK:

Go ahead, Go ahead.

PETER:

Oh, my that was funny. Okay, what were we just talking about?

FRANK:

I'm saying that-- I'm saying that when Muslims get a majority, typically freedoms go away. And even if an individual Muslims don't agree with Sharia law, they tend to capitulate.

PETER:

I got the idea. I got the idea.

FRANK:

Okay.

PETER:

I'm gonna defend these people. And I'd say this most sincerely. One thing we've learned in the last maybe, I don't know, 15 years, even when things were just so demonstrably idiotic and absolutely evident to anybody, anybody with a half a brain that you know what a woman is, people did not speak up in the West, secular people.

In fact, secular people were the worst. Atheists were the worst. They were the ones that were leading this kind of secular jihad. People did not speak up against men in women's sports. They didn't speak up about anything because they were afraid about getting canceled. Forget having your head sawed off with a butter knife. And so, I think it's—

We've seen in our own society, it's not merely cowardice, although cowardice plays a large part. But I think it is not fair to expect Muslims to stick up-- And I know people are going to lose their mind when I say this, but I actually sincerely believe it's true. It's not fair to expect

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moderate Muslims to speak up against radical Muslims, because we didn't even do that in our own society with things that were clearly idiotic.

FRANK:

Okay, let me agree with you that that is the tendency of human beings, to-- There was, it used to be a saying in the Soviet Union that went like this. The tallest blade of grass always gets cut first.

PETER:

Oh, yeah. The Australians call that Tall Poppy syndrome. Yeah.

FRANK:

Yeah. So, okay, yeah, we're all cowards in certain areas because we don't want to-- We don't want to experience any kind of pain that courage may bring out. You know, we're gonna stand up, we're gonna get persecuted.

So you're basically, if I understand you right, Peter, you're saying that because people in the West don't stand against oppression, we can't criticize, say, Muslims who don't stand against oppression in their communities.

PETER:

Close. I think it needs slightly more precise formulation, as I look at it. We haven't stood up against clearly false, clearly wrong, morally wrong, factually wrong. We haven't done any-- We just, we just watched wholesale institutions collapse and cave, and that's nothing. It's still going on. This whole, you know, puberty blockers for kids, double mastectomy, mastectomies for girls—

FRANK:

Madness.

PETER:

Who have no medical-- It's still going on. It's still going on. And so, we've been unable to-- And those people who originally did speak out against it paid a price. And so, we haven't been able

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to do it when the consequences were lower. They were just financial consequences. So I think it's extremely unreasonable to expect Muslims, moderate Muslims, to speak out against extremists, because in their case, they'll actually be murdered.

FRANK:

Yeah.

PETER:

They will. They will actually like actual, just death. And so, I do think that's an unreasonable expectation that we have.

FRANK:

Oh, no, it is. I agree it's an unreasonable expectation, but our immorality doesn't justify their immorality is my point.

PETER:

Yeah—

FRANK:

Our cowardice doesn't justify their cowardice.

PETER:

Correct. They could say the same thing about you.

FRANK:

Exactly.

PETER:

You, you like, they could say, well, how can we do this? You guys didn't even do this.

FRANK:

Agreed. Yeah, I agree.

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PETER:

Yeah.

FRANK:

All I'm saying though, from a political perspective, the idea that says that it's only the radicals that we need to worry about might not be actually true.

PETER:

Yeah, look—

FRANK:

Because if you have more of a particular group that's going to acquiesce to the more radical elements, you still have that political issue that, that Sharia law is going to be politically imposed. Am I wrong?

PETER:

I mean, look. The solution to this stuff is very simple. And yet it is—

FRANK:

Jesus. Thank you. It's Jesus! Admit it, Peter. [Laughter]

PETER:

Well, it's-- No, I don't admit that. I will say that maybe—

FRANK:

What you want to say is this.

[Trump]:

Wrong.

PETER:

I need one of those buttons. Yeah. So look, the solution to this is obvious, but yet it's impossible to achieve. Less so in the United States, more so in, I'm specifically talking about the UK and

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Western Europe is that you just have to limit the number of immigrants who come into the country.

I would suggest a five year moratorium. But even for, you know, bracketing that for a second. And I just want to be again, clear that I am for immigration. My grandparents came here legally. But I'm for legal immigration.

FRANK:

And you're for assimilation.

PETER:

I'm completely for assimilation. I don't care if anybody's a Muslim, I don't care if they're Christian, Hindu, atheist. I don't care. As long as they're ready to assimilate, and contribute to society, and let people live the kind of lives that they want to live.

FRANK:

As long as they agree with our Constitution and will support our Constitution.

PETER:

I have no problem with that. But here's the problem in a nutshell, and here's how you solve this problem and here's why it is insoluble. You have to prevent, the first order of business is you have to prevent illegal immigrants from coming into the UK for example, or Western Europe.

But they can't do that because I think yesterday I just read 238 illegals, we have no idea who these people are. But here's what we do know in terms of their background. We know that they're young, male, and largely, if not exclusively, unskilled. You can't even talk about a solution until you talk about figuring out ways to blockade it and just not let—

Poles have figured it out, the Hungarians. I've been to that border, the Pole. So, you know, unless you're willing to stop people coming in and dinghies, you cannot solve this problem. It is completely insoluble, and they're not willing to do that, so-- Well, then your civilization will collapse. There's no, it's inevitable.

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FRANK:

So it's a matter of the will, really.

PETER:

Well, yeah. And I've argued for years that you should negotiate a surrender now. So if they negotiate a surrender now, they can pay the Jazeera, the tax, and minimize it. I've actually thought about going and speaking, you know, unofficially, of course, on behalf of the surrender of the British people. And my first order of business is, I would be a hard negotiator, and I would demand that the Jews be allowed to leave, and that the punishments for homosexuality be limited to 10 years, no hard labor.

So those would be my non-negotiables. But we know. We know that surrender is inevitable. I mean, there's just no other, there's no other option. All you need to do is just look historically, and practically in the world, and they're not willing to do what it takes. And even before this, we talked about first principles. They're not willing to be honest about the nature of the problem. And it's good. I mean, I don't live there, so best of luck to you.

FRANK:

Yeah. It is tragic. They are our—

PETER:

It's inevitable.

FRANK:

Great grandparents, if you will.

PETER:

It's inevitable. It's inevitable. It's inevitable. This is what happens when people are not honest.

FRANK:

It's inevitable unless there's a Christian revival and people start reproducing. If we don't reproduce the Muslims, you're right. Because—

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PETER:

I'll tell you exactly why it won't work. Because Christians are having-- Well, Christians, the native population is having—

FRANK:

1.8. Yeah.

PETER:

Yeah. Fewer kids. But what they don't tell you is the age. The age which you have kids matters. The native population are having kids older, and the immigrants are having kids younger. That's the first problem. But even if you were to do that, you would still have to stop the flow of illegal immigrants.

And you're, you're just not. So you could talk about having 10 kids, but if you're taking in 238 people a day, and that number is slowly going up over time, well, what are you going to do? And that's just the UK.

FRANK:

Yeah.

PETER:

So there's nothing you can do. There's literally nothing you can do about it. You're done. The society is over. It's in hospice. And the sooner that you're honest about that, it's great. I mean, you have, again, this is a long conversation. We could talk about it, but there's no point in trying to convince anybody of anything unless you're willing to talk honestly about the nature of the problem and take action to solve it.

FRANK:

Yeah, if you're not going to take action to solve it, forget about it, as we say in New Jersey.

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PETER:

Yeah, well that's the other thing. Could it be then that the society in which you're involved is not a society worth preserving? Seems to me the answer is yes, if you're not willing to fight for it.

FRANK:

Yeah. Hey, Peter, let me ask you this. And this is in the spirit of your book, which is, 'A Manual for Creating Atheists.' And the newer book is 'How to Have Impossible Conversations.' Correct?

I just have the first, I don't have the second. I just want to ask you a question just so I can understand where you're coming from. Peter and I are not having a debate here. I just want to, I want to understand where you're coming from as an atheist or maybe an agnostic, I don't know where you are.

PETER:

Atheist.

FRANK:

Atheist. Okay. How do you, by the way, how do you define atheism?

PETER:

Great question. I do not think there's sufficient reason to justify belief in a God, or God, but if I were given that evidence, I would believe.

FRANK:

Okay, good. So you're open then?

PETER:

Well, of course, yeah.

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FRANK:

Yeah. Okay, good, good. The biggest issue that we all agree on, but I would argue that the Christian has grounding for this, is morality. You're obviously a moral objectivist. You think certain things are objectively right and objectively wrong.

So from the atheist perspective, how do you ground that? Why do we, why do we have these objective moral values that it's objectively morally wrong to say, murder people for converting away from Islam than not?

PETER:

Yeah, so just, the point of agreement there is I absolutely believe it is the punishment for apostasy should not be death. So just-- [Laughter]

FRANK:

And as a negotiator, you're gonna-- That's right. [Laughter] Otherwise, you know what? Peter, you're gonna hear—

[Trump]:

You're fired.

PETER:

It'd be kind of funny if you had me on. I'm like, yes, kill everybody. [Laughter] Yeah, so then the question is like, why would I believe that? And so at some point, you have to invoke a first principle. And the first principle, my first principle would be—

And I realized that the accusation of smuggling is, William Lane Craig said this about Harris, that he's smuggled in this idea of, well-being in the moral landscape. So I don't smuggle it in. I'm being explicit. I think you can derive, just as you can think critically about investments or what have you—

Tesla's up today. So too can you think critically about moral matters. I think that there are moral facts. I think that those facts are rationally derivable. I think that just as-- Just as they're, like, if you put me in front of a piano, I could play Chopsticks. That's it.

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I have no expertise in playing piano. Some people have expertise in playing piano, but isomorphically, that there are some people who have moral excellence, and some people who don't have. The Taliban has the opposite. The Taliban are like me with Chopsticks on the piano. So I think that those are rationally derivable because there's such a thing as moral facts.

FRANK:

Okay. I would agree with you on the epistemology of that. The question is the ontology. Why are there moral facts? Why is it wrong to murder people for changing their religion? That kind of thing.

PETER:

Yeah, so that's a far more difficult question. And there are a few answers to that. I'm not sure that putting a question word in front of a bunch of other words makes a legitimate sentence.

You know, like, why is something--? I think that's a, that's a kind of a linguistic problem. I don't mean to be overly philosophical.

FRANK:

Okay. No, go ahead.

PETER:

I think. Yeah, well, I also think that we can-- We can derive, like there are certain types of lives that are better than other type of lives. Like, you know, if you're living-- And like, I guess a simple example is dental pain, right? I've never met anybody who likes dental pain. I think that a world in which we had good dental care would be better in a world in which we do not have dental care.

And I just want to say, as an aside, I find it fascinating how people glamorize tribal societies. You know, I went on Leighton Smith's show, and I got a crazy amount of flack for that. Living in a stagnant society for hundreds, if not thousands of years is not a positive thing.

Removing the method of error correction is not a problem. You know, immiserating people in poverty and despair, where they die at young ages when they have no technology to take care

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of themselves, like dental technology, it's not a positive thing. But I can make that. I don't need an ontology to make that claim.

All I need to do is to just say what contributes to the human flourishing. We could talk about compassion, we could talk about kindness, we could talk about human decency. But you have to have some first principles to have a moral architecture.

FRANK:

No, I think we could all agree on that. But still, my question is, why should we be concerned about human flourishing at all if there is no ultimate objective meaning or purpose to life? There is no standard beyond us that we're obligated to obey.

You might be concerned about it, but Hitler isn't. Hitler's just concerned about his own moral or well-being and the well-being of the Aryan race. He's not concerned about anybody else. So why is Hitler wrong and say we are right as--?

PETER:

Well, okay, so I'm being attacked by bugs here. Habermas calls that dark modernism. The idea that the German philosopher, the idea that people use reason instrumentally for bad purposes.

So reason is like an instrument. You can use it to accomplish certain ends. The question then becomes how do you know what ends? I'm really, I might have to move. I'm being eaten alive here. How do you know what--?

FRANK:

You're in LA. There are no bugs in LA. What are you doing?

PETER:

Well, I'm by a swimming pool here. I can show you the swimming pool, but I'm by a pool, but the mosquitoes are having it. Okay, well that would be another example. Like why don't I want mosquitoes to bite me?

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Why don't I just sit here while they just, you know, eviscerate my arms? Because it's uncomfortable, it makes me miserable. And if the response to that some guy in my class said, what if some greater understanding evolves?

You know, I was talking about in, I can't remember, I think the Congo, in a particular combat, people would chop off the limbs of other people and just bleed to death. And I was giving that example that that's morally wrong and that you don't need an ancient book to figure that out.

And he said to me, how do you know that some greater understanding didn't evolve from them having chop, having had their limbs chopped off? And I could never say this now, of course, but I said, if you actually believe that, why don't you chop off your own limbs? Why don't you give someone a machete and have them saw off your, you know, just start with a couple fingers and then move to an ankle or knee.

The reason is because they don't actually believe that. So you have to have some kind of a first principle is I'm a human and I am a rational animal. My first principle would be humanity. Now, you could also say, well, why isn't your first principal egoism? Well, that's-- You can have that conversation.

FRANK:

Yeah.

PETER:

But to my response to that would be that, may seem far afield, but it's not. The highest type of life is. The highest type of life that one could lead is a life of virtue. And the highest type of friendship that one could have-- Friendship is echoing Aristotle.

Friendship is only possible between virtuous people or among virtuous people. And you'll never have the richness and fulfill a fulfilling life unless you have a virtuous life. So I try to live completely transparently in all my relationships. But again, those are rationally derivable principles.

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FRANK:

No, I agree. And I don't think you need an ancient book to know basic right and wrong. And even the ancient book teaches that. That's what Romans chapter two teaches. My question is the grounding for that. What is the grounding of virtue other than my own self-interest?

Because sometimes I can, through my, because of my self-interest, lie to people in order to get what I want to get. And why is that wrong if there is no standard outside of myself that is telling me, and has established I ought not lie and do right, even if it hurts me?

PETER:

All right, so I'll answer that question directly, and then I'll jump off from there.

FRANK:

Yeah.

PETER:

So, I think you can, you know, history of Western intellectual thought is littered with people trying to figure that out. Kant, for example, has the categorical imperative. Bentham and Mill have utilitarianism. You know, so we have this deontology, we have virtue ethics. What kind of life I want to lead. All these questions. Ultimately, the answer is you have to have some kind of principle that you invoke to figure this out.

FRANK:

Right. Is that just a personal principle? Or is that principle outside of ourselves that is imposing oughtness on us?

PETER:

That's a great question. You know, that's Plato's or Socrates question in the Euthyphro. Is it pious because the gods love it or do the gods love it because it's pious? I don't have an answer to that question. I think that there's something about, and I could be wrong about this, but I think that there's something inherent in reason and the human condition that allows, that's the groundwork that allows for the possibility of living a better life.

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And I think reason is the tool to allow people to do that. And I think that once you have a kind of structure for that, then you can rationally derive certain principles, integrity, what it means to be virtuous, what it means to be honorable, Chivalry, if you're on a date, for example.

FRANK:

Yeah, I do. And maybe we could have a longer discussion and another show. I think reason is a great tool toward that end. But reason alone can't tell you you ought to do something. That's the—

PETER:

Yeah, that's why you do need to and many atheists will not be honest about this, or they'll be relative. You do need to have something that you, I don't want to say smuggle in, but something that you explicitly acknowledge you're doing.

FRANK:

Right.

PETER:

Eudaimonia or happiness or I don't think it's happiness, but you know, some conglomeration or maybe it's a Venn diagram of symbols. So I'll throw this out to you kind of playing on that. So I think Christians have exactly backwards the following. How can you have a meaningful life or a purpose driven life if there's no objective or greater, you know, kind of God, a figure?

And my thinking on that has always been if there were, you know, Hitchens called it a celestial dictator. But if there were something external in the world in which you could look to for meaning and purpose, your life could never be, you know, like subspecies eternitatis.

Your life could never be truly meaningful unless you don't have that. It's only because there is no objective-- You know, I don't want to say God or gods because that will-- But that's actually what it is. It's only because you don't have that, that you have the possibility of having purpose and meaning in your life. There's no ledger that's out there eternally.

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FRANK:

But then that, that purpose or meaning would just be subjective. It wouldn't be objective. It would just be what I want. Hitler wanted to kill the Jews.

PETER:

Right.

FRANK:

You know, Churchill wanted to save them.

PETER:

Yeah. It would be subjective if you just had meaning. It would be objective if the purpose of your life, how you choose to live your life, hooked onto rational dictates.

FRANK:

Right. But rational dictates are not moral dictates. That's my issue.

PETER:

Well that's where I think the source of our disagreement is. I think rational dictates are moral dictates. Because if there are moral facts-- So there are three possibilities. There are moral facts which I believe, and you believe.

FRANK:

Right.

PETER:

There are no moral facts, which a lot of atheists believe. Oh, and the other people of other religions believe there are moral facts.

FRANK:

Right.

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PETER:

And then this-- So those are the two basic possibilities. Now there are others. There could be moral facts, but we're just our meat brains, as the Oxford professor Nick Bostrom says. Our meat brains are not intelligent enough to figure out these moral facts.

Like we need some kind of sophisticated AI and this solved a problem and go like Rule 72 or something. So we need something more sophisticated through the tools of kind of some hyper rational agent from agentic AI to figure it out—

FRANK:

Like God? [Laughter] Right.

PETER:

Yeah, yeah or—

FRANK:

Something beyond us.

PETER:

Yeah, something beyond us that we make. But in any of those, in any and all of those cases. So it's easier if you don't think that there's any objective morality, anything relative, then you don't have to justify anything. But if you fall into the condition in the camp that I fall into—

I mean, think about it like this. This is another thought experiment. Think about it like this. So let's say that there's a, there's a kind of meteor. You know, I've been really interested in this Three Eye Atlas comet that's coming toward.

And I've been following Avi Loeb and all these other people speculating this alien technology. But let's say that it's just going to scrape the surface of the, you know, go tangent to the earth, and then doing that-- Thanks for, you know, sticking with me in the thought experiment.

Doing that is going to have some horrific, you know, we're going to have diarrhea 10 times a day. We're going to, you know, lose our—

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FRANK:

Without eating at Taco Bell.

PETER:

Yeah, without no Taco Bell. Fifty percent of our vision is going to be gone. We're going to vomit 10 times a day. I'm using the number 10 because I'm going to come back to it. So let's say that somebody works really hard in their lives and develops some kind of a semi vaccine in which we go from vomiting and having diarrhea 10 times a day to having it only five times a day.

I think we would both agree that we can use the word good for that. So that is a good thing. And then similarly we have some maniac who is, you know, who thinks this is a great idea and they want to make us have diarrhea 20 times a day and then they start experimenting on people, etc., children for fun.

I think we both agree that we can tag the word bad with that. So if we agree to that, we don't need any ancient book, we don't need any greater truth. We can figure out what the word good means and what the word bad means. And once we figured that out, then we can create an infrastructure around which these generalizable principles can be thought of, operationalized and thought of in a meaningful way.

FRANK:

Yeah, but that smuggles in the idea that human beings and comfort are good things, and pain and human beings aren't really all that important on the other hand.

PETER:

Yeah, it smuggles in ideas. Yeah, yeah, that's correct. You're always gonna have to presuppose something.

FRANK:

Yeah, that's-- I'm trying to get back to that first, that first assumption. And where does that come from? Or that first oughtness, where does that come from? Because it just can't come from us.

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Otherwise it's just two people having opinions over moral issues rather than here's where we're going, here's who we are. We're all made in the image of God. And so, because of that, everyone needs to be treated with respect and people are valuable. If we don't have that, then we're just really intelligent roaches.

PETER:

Well, I don't know. I mean, I'm just thinking about the comet example of scraping the planet and making everybody sick. Everybody, you could find someone in India and Delhi, you know, some village in a Ugandan fishing village or whatever.

Everybody, nobody wants diarrhea 10 times a day. Like at the very least, somebody wants a choice for that.

FRANK:

Right.

PETER:

And I think that if we can get, if we can get people to agree on that one thing which seems to be very simple to agree on, then you can have, you can form an architecture. Like you can say, okay, things that lead to the good life are good, and we can get more granular and talk about those things. But I don't even think you need to talk about meaning or purpose or any of that. You can just say the alleviation. Like my dad, for example, when he got a dent, a cavity.

I'm not making this up. I know again, 500 comments this isn't true, but it's actually true. He would get it without Novocain. Now, that's completely inconceivable to me, like, utterly-- I want to be like, as out as possible. I want the whole thing to be numb. But even in that context, he had a choice.

So you could invoke the other principle that you can choose. People should be able to choose the kind of lives that they want to lead. So, like, all of this stuff, once you've established what good and bad is, the rest of it is just filling in.

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FRANK:

No, you're right. But that's still the question. How do we establish what good and bad is? Because we could all agree that killing an innocent man might quell a mob. But that doesn't mean we ought to do it. Right? Because we think human beings are inherently valuable. Why are they inherently valuable? Well, they can't be inherently or eternally valuable if there is no eternity.

PETER:

Yeah. So that, killing an innocent man is a great example, Frank, because people have long thought in conversations about the death penalty, how many people, how many innocent people would have to die before the death penalty would be justified? And, you know, it's long taken as an apodictic truth that it's better to let a guilty man go free than to condemn or kill an innocent man. But still—

FRANK:

Another moral principle. Yeah, yeah.

PETER:

But still, we've wrestled with that. And that's the other thing about morality and thinking about these things. These are really messy issues. You know, these are not-- These are not easy issues. You know, I came to my conclusions about abortion and other things. It, you know, I had to be kind of dragged along to some of the things that, some of the conclusions. Which is another, which is actually another question.

Should you be comfortable with all of your moral opinions? I think that there's some deeper-- If you're comfortable with everything you believe morally, it's probably something that's not functioning well in your moral apparatus would be my suspicion.

FRANK:

Yeah.

PETER:

I'm not comfortable with a lot of moral opinions I have.

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FRANK:

No, I agree. But I would also say that difficult problems in morality don't negate easy problems in morality. Similar to like difficult problems in calculus don't negate easy problems in arithmetic. And most of the moral problems we struggle with are easy. I mean, not struggle with. Most of moral problems we have every day are easy.

They're not complex. But I think that's the case because there's an ontological category known as justice and righteousness outside of ourselves that we're obligated to obey. We more have been talking about the epistemological outcome of once we agree on what that is, how can we set up a society that accomplishes that?

I'm still trying to get back to the ontological grounding of it, but—

PETER:

Yeah, I don't buy any-- I don't think there's anything other than-- I'm a naturalist. So I don't think there's anything outside the natural world. But you know, I was thinking as I was talking to you, you know, I could be wrong about all this stuff.

I mean it really could be, maybe it's just I have some weird kind of egoistic self-aggrandizing thing I want to-- But it could be that we really, it's really relative, the whole thing is relative. And we're just like hurling through space in the rock. I mean, I guess actually think about that.

So instead of the comet coming down and scraping the planet, let's say it kills all of us. And what's that say about Jesus or what we believe? I mean, if you know of the meaning of life or the purpose of life.

Kurt Vonnegut has that great story about, you know, these creatures, there's no faster than light travel, there's no FTL, so these creatures have to go from one area of the universe to the, on the other end of the universe, people living there, and they want to deliver these messages to them.

But halfway, a little beyond halfway through, the ship breaks down, and they go to some planet, but they don't have the technology to fix the ship. So they have to basically seed the

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whole planet with DNA and wait until these people are technologically developed. Then they take the part from them, and they continue on the mission, and they, they deliver it.

It turns out to be some innocuous message like, hi there. But asking the question, you know, what is the purpose of life? Or what is the meaning of life? Well, for those people who were just seated on a planet from aliens, the purpose of their life was to just contribute to their progeny, to develop a technology so someone could steal it, and take it, and continue on with a meaningless journey.

So, I mean, the whole concept of what does it mean to have a meaningful life? What is the purpose of life? I think you'd rethink that rather quickly if, you know, a large asteroid were going to come and wipe out all life from Earth.

FRANK:

Well, unless that was the way the whole thing ended and then there was an afterlife life. That could be the case, right?

PETER:

I mean, yeah. I mean, anything would be possible. I guess it's just like how likely are the outcomes? I mean, I attribute it-- You know, Dawkins in 'The God Delusion', I think he puts it at a 6.9 on a scale from 7, The Dawkins Scale, if there's a God. And I think subsequently he amended that to like 6.999 or something like.

FRANK:

Well, you don't-- Would you consider yourself a materialist, Peter?

PETER:

It depends what you mean by that.

FRANK:

Like, we're just moist robots. We're just molecular machines. There's no immaterial realm.

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PETER:

I think if you take the ghost out of the machine, there's only the machine. But I think we're thinking machines.

FRANK:

Okay, so —

PETER:

I'd belong to the David Deutsch Karl Proper school. Yeah.

FRANK:

Would that mean that you're thinking machines in the sense that you do have a mind, not just a brain, that you have a soul, not just a body?

PETER:

No, I don't. I don't think we have a soul, but I think that we have ways to-- I think it's possible for us to apprehend broadly what's outside of us. I think it's possible for us. That's why your starting assumptions are so important in all of this.

FRANK:

Right.

PETER:

Because if your starting assumptions are wrong, then you create realities outside yourself that you think will bring about your own flourishing but won't. So those starting—

The starting premises we have about reality are key. That's why the postmodernists have all these starting assumptions that are just, you know, clearly false. So I don't think there's anything—

Not only do I not think there's anything outside the natural realm, I don't even think, I don't even understand how we could know that there was anything outside the natural realm. I don't

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think there's anything that points to it. I don't think there's any evidence, not even a literal particle of evidence for that.

FRANK:

But don't you think that the very laws of logic that you're using to say that are not made of molecules, they're metaphysical principles, so you know them intuitively.

PETER:

Yeah, I wouldn't say they're metaphysical principles. I would say that-- So even for that, you need to invoke some kind of a dualism. I'm not a dualist. I'm more of a monist. You know? I think that it's the particles themselves that give rise to the possibility of making logical inferences about things.

FRANK:

But then if we're driven completely by the laws of physics, why should we trust any of our thoughts?

PETER:

I'm not sure we should. I think doubt's a virtue. You know, I'm not sure we should.

FRANK:

But you're not sure about doubt being a virtue, are you?

PETER:

No, not really. I mean, I think-- I think, here's another way. The Popperian way of thinking about it would be to just, and this is something that I've been switching to more and more.

And my thing is as I get older, 59 now, I think holding something as provisionally true is important. And I think that the way to do that is always ask yourself, what would it take to change my mind? How do I falsify that?

But I also think that there are some attitudinal dispositions that people possess that themselves are almost definitely irreversible. And one of those would be the willingness to revise a belief.

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And I think that that is-- So here's the other thing. I think that the willingness to revise a belief is not just epistemically beneficial, but I think it's a moral virtue.

FRANK:

Okay, but having the ability to revise a belief would require you to have free will, which would mean you can't be completely a molecular machine. You have to be-- You can't be a moist robot and change a belief freely.

PETER:

Yeah, I've been thinking about that too. I'm not a big fan of free will, and I think we think that we have far more agency than we do. But I am-- It's a weird thing to say, but I'm kind of a little bit of a compatibilist in terms of free will. I think we have some agency in terms of what we can think about.

You know, I taught critical thinking for decades, and one of the conclusions that I came to as a result of that is that the most important thing that you can do in teaching critical thinking is to teach people that there are certain attitudinal dispositions that will lead them to the truth is not exactly right. But make it so that they're less wrong more often. And the ability, the willingness to revise a belief is one of those things.

FRANK:

So they do have the will to do that?

PETER:

I wouldn't say will, but I would say-- And again, this is, linguistically or semantically tricky. And I don't mean to say this in a way that I obfuscate your point because I acknowledge your point and I hear you. But I think it's, it can be looked at naturalistically as a function of the brain and as an evolutionary product. You know, like throwing spears.

Dawkins calls it the Middle Kingdom. Throwing spears at gazelles in the savannah. If you didn't do that, you know, Pygmies, n I don't know what they call the politically correct word for pygmies is anymore.

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FRANK:

It doesn't matter. Go. [Laughter]

PETER:

Yeah, in Australia, we know they have some of the best spatial recognition of anybody even better than Ashkenazi Jews.

And it's been hypothesized that the reason that they have such good spatial recognition is because those who didn't make it back to this encampment, or the settlement, or what have you, died. And so, evolutionarily, over time, they developed this rather extraordinary ability.

I think you could look at that as a heuristic for how evolution has helped us to think and mold ideas about survival mechanisms. That's why, for example, it conveys no evolutionary advantage to understand quantum mechanics.

That's why we don't understand quantum mechanics. It's not because there's a logic that escaped us. It's because it didn't confer a survival advantage on us to understand what happens inside of a black hole or what happens in the quantum realm. But you can, you know, to use a phrase, from AJ Ayer.

You know, dry-sized goods like in the Middle Kingdom, Dawkins calls it, like what we have here. We can successfully navigate this world because of our ancestors who didn't die. So you don't need a metaphysic to understand that. You don't need anything outside of naturalistic phenomena to understand how to successfully navigate.

And then once you have that, you can also build a layer up from that, and think, well, how do we make it, you know, use your word, more comfortable for us? How do you make it so we don't feel dental pain, given that we can, you know, work with these abstractions in our perceptual landscapes.

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FRANK:

But isn't it--? Is there a problem, though, in Dawkins's view, when he says essentially that this conclusion he came to, gave us survival advantage, and it doesn't mean it's necessarily true. It's just survival advantage. So if evolution gives us—

PETER:

That's right.

FRANK:

--these conclusions for survival rather than truth, why should we believe them?

PETER:

Yeah, that's correct. And again, I'm not meaning to go down a semantic rabbit hole, but what you said is basically factually accurate. There's some really good stuff Brett Hall, the Australian philosopher of science, has on this. And so the idea is that, again, this is a huge thing. Michael Shermer, my good friend, I just interviewed him the other day. He's written about this pretty extensively.

FRANK:

You know I've had a couple debates with Michael?

PETER:

Oh, I didn't know that. Yeah, he's a very good, very close friend of mine.

FRANK:

I like Michael. We were at Stony Brook University in 2015, and we were in San Jose in 2018.

PETER:

Oh, is that when they wanted to cancel you guys talking about gay marriage?

FRANK:

Exactly. Yeah, that's Stony Brook.

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PETER:

Okay, so that's-- That's like, okay, that's wrong. That's just, that's just wrong. That's just like dead stop, that's wrong.

FRANK:

Yeah, I agree with you. And so, you, me, and Michael agree on so much, even though we have a different viewpoint on the issue of God. I'm just trying to-- I'm trying to understand your ontological foundation for these things. That's why I'm just asking the questions.

PETER:

Yeah, so let me go back to that. So can we say these things are true? It depends what you mean by true. I mean, we can certainly say that we have adapted to these things, and our apprehension of these things makes it more likely that we will survive.

Now, can you say it's true? Like, it depends. You know, I just read Shermer's new book is 'Different Definitions of Truth' and what one means by truth. I mean, it's not mathematically true if that's how one is using it. But it's just-- It's like a probability vector. It's just more likely that that we can propagate the species given certain priors.

FRANK:

Right. Well, even our discussion right now, even if we were to conclude that that particular way of arriving at a belief is just survival rather than truth, our conclusion about that, is that true?

See, you're still dealing with the issue of true or false. And if we're going to say no, that's also survival, then we're in complete agnosticism about everything.

PETER:

No, I wouldn't, I wouldn't say that. I'd say it is-- So that's when you need the linguistic infrastructure, so you can say, you know, if you eat so many calories a day, you will live.

So that's something you can get by evolution that again, it's a little tricky, but that's the basic idea. But you can say that it is true that, so then it becomes true. But what you're really doing

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there is you're just looking at truth linguistically in terms. Philosophers call it propositions in terms of sentence. You know, what is the sentence?

So you can say that the sentence is true, but you can't really say that evolution has in any way, evolution isn't oriented towards truth. Evolution is oriented towards survival.

FRANK:

And I don't know if it was Dennett who said Darwinism's universal acid. Somebody said that.

PETER:

Oh yeah, yeah.

FRANK:

Yeah. The problem is it makes it the universal acid over all of our conclusions, not just our conclusions about whether or not we evolved or were created. All of our conclusions become suspect then if we're saying that all of our thoughts are arrived at by some sort of physical process and we don't have any free will in coming to that conclusion.

PETER:

Yeah, well, you know, from the selfish gene, Dawkins talked about memetics. And we think about evolution as a biological process, which it is obviously. But there's also kind of a memetic transmission of ideas. I've been thinking about this. You know, there are these like meme plexes and you know, this idea that the Overton Window moves on things.

So, you know, certain now an idea is unthinkable, like surrender of the UK. And so, now more and more people over time I predict will be talking about this. But that's why I'm not. It's not clear to me. In fact, I don't think that people choose their beliefs. I think that people largely go along with their culture. Like Barack Obama, for example, in his first term he was against gay marriage. And now the Overton Window has shifted on that.

FRANK:

Right.

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PETER:

The way that we-- But evolution has a mechanism with the spread of ideas and how those ideas get spread is largely the result of an evolutionary process mimetically that people don't think about or talk about.

And I think that's really important when it comes down to human agency and what people believe. I mean, Islam, for example, even Christianity, these are memes, ideas that have been spread out. And there's a kind of survival of the fittest. Some memes die out, some memes thrive, some memes spread, some memes don't. But that can be looked at not as a function of biological evolution, but a function of a memetic transmission of ideas.

FRANK:

In order for us to have this discussion, it would seem to me that we have to get outside of what, assuming evolution's true, and I don't concede that, but for the sake of our argument, we'd have to get outside of the evolutionary forces driving us to our conclusions to say that all of these conclusions have been given to us by evolution. In order for us to say that's true, we couldn't get that idea from evolution.

PETER:

Yeah, that's, that, that's not true. I'll give you some basic examples why. We can understand from like double split experiments, etc., that a particle can be in the same place at the same time, the same particle. Please don't ask me why, I don't know nothing about it.

But you know, Ramanujan, the Indian physicist and Indian mathematician, came up with a whole series of mathematics that no one knew what to do with. Now we can apply that largely to what happens inside of the black hole.

But we didn't evolve to understand any of that. But we understand any of, we understand that at all, not because of an evolutionary mechanism, but because evolution gave us the tools to apprehend things and apply those tools instrumentally to other realms like the quantum realm, the realm of the very, very big, etc. But we don't, so we can figure things out that are true that way that conferred no evolution.

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FRANK:

Right. But in order for us to say that, we'd have to be outside of the evolutionary machine to say that that's how we got our beliefs. Otherwise the evolutionary machine gave us the belief that the evolutionary machine gave us these beliefs.

PETER:

Yeah, okay, you could look at that. That's one way you could look at it. There are others. Like one is if this could be a byproduct of the evolutionary machine. So the byproduct of the evolutionary machine is it enables you to not merely adapt to circumstances to enable prodigy so we can do the hokey pokey and continue the generation.

But it enabled you to-- [Laughter] Family show here. It's a family show. But that itself enabled you to, it created the great grounds that allowed for the possibility of, for example, manipulating symbols.

Wittgenstein in the Blue and Brown books starts with this, this idea. I haven't read this stuff in a while, but, you know, slab for words. The words, you know, the words are the investigations, you know, too. You know, the words correspond to things. And then once we think we figure out what words do, we can use words as instruments and tools, etc.

So none of those things, all of those things can be yielded through evolution without needing anything external. You don't need metaphysics, you don't need anything other than naturalistic realm to have those things.

FRANK:

Right. But that theory itself, we'd have to have an objective point of view to say that theory is true. In other words, if evolution has given us that theory, and we don't have free will to arrive at it by evidence, then that theory itself is suspect, and all our thoughts are suspect. That's why in my view, I love what you've done in the book 'A Manual for Creating Atheists' in the sense of your epistemology.

But my point would be that our ability to know anything presupposes that we have a mind and a free will that can take us to rational conclusions rather than natural conclusions.

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PETER:

Okay, so let's go back to the first thing you said. And I was thinking about mathematics and how we can know the sums of two numbers we've never seen before. You know, so we can, I think mathematics would be a good example of how we didn't evolve to figure out, you know, I don't know, some huge integer plus another. I'm terrible at math.

So I don't, I don't think you need any external thing. I think even thinking that is, I don't even see that there's a reason to think that. And I'm not saying you're doing this, but the reason that people could be invoking that in the first place is to try to make sense of something that doesn't seem to make sense.

So you need to kind of have some organizing principle that allow for the possibility of making truth pronouncements. But I don't think you need that organizing principle in the same way that you don't really need it for the addition of large integers you've never seen before.

FRANK:

Okay, we could go on talking about this, but we've been at it for 80 minutes. This is the second. And I love talking about this, especially with you, Peter, because even though we don't agree on the God question, it's just fascinating having a conversation with a PhD in philosophy who can hold his own.

PETER:

Yeah, well, I love having conversations and I like, you know, I don't want to be wrong. I want to be-- I want to believe true stuff. And so I really like, you know, and I honestly like, I have no animus against any of this stuff.

I just want to know. I just want to be, live a good life and honest life. That's the awesome thing. You know, I have a nonprofit. I can say and do anything I want to do. Yeah, like, I want to go to the slums of Paris. I go. I just want to figure out. I just want to figure it, especially at this age, you know, my later years, from the late middle age or middle age, whatever I am.

And I would have to say this to your listeners or your viewers, like, if you, if everybody you know, believes the same stuff as you, man, you've got to extend your circle because that's not

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good for you. I mean, you need to be challenged and questioned. And if nothing else, it just makes it for more interesting life, more interesting conversations.

I have a lot of friends who, Christians-- I have good friends who are Muslims. I knew them from Jitsu. Like, I have a lot of people who believe that, you know, I have a donor who's an orthodox Jew. I have a donor who's an orthodox Christian. I have a donor, another donor who's a trans pornographer. I have, you know, I have—

I just think it's really important to have conversations with people with whom you have substantive disagreements. And you know, none of these things, like, I'm not offended by any of this. I hope you're not offended. I'm just trying to like work out my ideas and figure stuff out.

But I think people get caught up in this idea that like, oh, I want to save face, or I want to do this. No, I mean, come on, man. Just like figure out what's true and then that people will respect you for that as opposed to, you know, sticking to your guns.

FRANK:

That's right. Yeah. No, we ought to have conversations with people, and once you're educated enough, ladies and gentlemen, I got one more question for Peter before we go. Once you're educated enough, in our view, in Christianity, we know what it is. You know the evidence for it.

You should be challenged by the evidence if there is evidence against it. You should be challenged by people like Peter, who put out a book, 'A Manual for Creating Atheists.' You ought to read it. I've read Dawkins, I've read Hitchens, I've read all these people because I want to know what they believe.

PETER:

So think about this. To me, this blew my mind when I first learned this. So you've read this stuff, you've had friends, you know, we're buddies, you're talking to me. You know, I'm sending pictures of my midget wrestling debut, etc. Mila Omar, the former header of the Taliban, in his whole life, he only knew two non-Muslims.

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FRANK:

Wow.

PETER:

That's mind blowing. That's like Kierkegaard saying, everybody's a Christian, thus no one's-- Everyone's a Lutheran. Thus no one's a Lutheran. Like, I don't-- The older I get, the less certain I become that if you haven't really challenged or questioned your ideas that you can truly believe them.

FRANK:

Yeah, Yeah.

PETER:

I think you can say that you believe them.

FRANK:

Right.

PETER:

But whether or not you can actually believe them is something different.

FRANK:

That's right. You ought to be challenged. And when you can answer the challenge, it makes whatever you believe, your beliefs more secure.

PETER:

Yeah. So that's, that's the other thing. So that's the greatest commonality or among the greatest commonalities that you and I have, is we both adhere to that principle. So you're willing to debate, and you have extensively, Shermer, Silverman, Hitchens, etc. I'm willing to. I'm less of a debate guy. I want more of a conversation. Like—

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to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek

PODCAST

FRANK:

Sure, I like the conversation too. I think the formal debates-- Yeah, yeah. We can challenge one another, and you know, go back and forth on the point rather than have to wait 20 minutes. You know what you said 20 minutes ago. You know? I hate those debates, the formal debates where they never interact, you know.

PETER:

Yeah, I agree.

FRANK:

It's not really a debate.

PETER:

This is much, much, much better for me, for my style. But my point is that that point of commonality is far more significant, far more attributive to a life of virtue than if you believe some guy walked on water.

You know, how you treat your dog or your wife, or your cat, or your neighbors, or your friends, or me is far more important to me than if you believe some guy turned water into wine. Like, those things are just—

FRANK:

Sure, if a guy did turn water into wine and he is God, we ought to listen to him. But it's if—

PETER:

But I don't believe he did. But of course, yeah.

FRANK:

If you believe in Jesus, you ought to be emulating Jesus. Okay? But I want to ask you one more question before we go.

PETER:

Can I just pause that?

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FRANK:

Oh, yeah, go ahead, go ahead.

PETER:

I would say that even if you don't believe in Jesus, there are many things in the life of Jesus that are worthy of emulation. And when I say believe in Jesus, I'm not talking about the historicity of Jesus, although maybe not. You know, I think that there are many lessons about treating people turning the other cheek, etc., that are worthy to emulate, even if you don't accept the metaphysics. Culturally Christian, in other words.

FRANK:

Yeah, yeah, good point. And one of the ways, by the way, ladies and gentlemen, that you can get ready to deal with ideas that contradict Christianity is to take the course that is coming out just in a week or so.

It's called 'Why I Still Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist', and I'll be your instructor. And if you take the premium version, you'll get several Zoom sessions with me for Q&A. And we also have two courses in logic. They're called 'Train Your Brain.' One's for sixth to eighth graders and the other is for adults.

They'll be right on our website. Go to crossexamined.org, click on online courses. Take those. I'll be involved in both of those as well. Logic, you need to know. Fallacies, you need to know when people are putting out fallacies and how to answer them.

Also I want to let you know that I'm going to be at, let's see, January 25th, I'll be at Prestonwood Baptist Church down there in Dallas. And we've got a lot more coming up. The college events begin in February. Keep an eye on the calendar for that. And also, go to CrossExamined.org, click on events.

You'll see it there. Peter, here's my final question for you. We're going to put all Peter's contact information into the show notes. Peter, as Christians, most of the people that listen are Christians. We do agree with all the work you're doing to help people realize the value of the

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freedoms that we have here in America. Tell us what we can do to help you. And if you need donations, people want to donate to the work you're doing. They can. You can mention that.

PETER:

No, no, that's very kind. I don't need any donations. I would never come on a show and ask for that. But if you want to help, you know, you can maybe subscribe to the Substack, or kind of watch some of the videos, or comment on some of the videos.

But no, I'm absolutely not asking for donations. And I think that really, the best thing you could do is, you know, in the book 'How to Have Impossible Conversations', I talk about, like, here's some keys to have conversations. I think if you really want to help, go find somebody you disagree with and have a conversation with them. And, you know, listen. Really focus on listening. Make sure you understand what they say. Repeat it back to them. That's one thing you can do to—

Because the society, I don't want to see the whole society fall into a cesspool. And I see that happening more and more. And I think one of the prophylactics against that is to start talking to people with whom you disagree.

That's one thing. And another thing that I think is important is, you just need to kind of subset of that. You just need to sincerely listen to somebody when they say something to you. And I think we've lost, the older I get, the more important listening becomes. I don't know how much I did that today. [Laughter] I hope I did an okay job at that.

FRANK:

Oh, no, you did.

PETER:

I think it's really important to listen to people, and particularly if the gulf or the divide is too great.

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FRANK:

Absolutely. And as my wife always says to me, you never listen to me or something like that. I don't know. [Laughter] Yeah, it's much better than as soon as someone says something, you say—

[Trump]:

Wrong.

FRANK:

Okay?

PETER:

Right.

FRANK:

You ought to have a conversation with them. And that's how you can build friendships. That's how you can win people to your side if you think you're on the right side. Or maybe you just might learn something. Maybe you got something wrong. Right? Absolutely. Peter, it's been an honor and a pleasure. And we're Christians, so we're going to pray for you. And you need to report back when you get, hopefully you'll get back from France and—

PETER:

I'll let you know how it goes.

FRANK:

Yeah, yeah. For those of you that don't know, he's going into some Muslim areas and he's going to have some conversations. He's gonna put it all on his YouTube channel.

PETER:

Yep, honest conversations to figure out what people believe and to just get their message out there, whatever that is.

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FRANK:

Peter, you're a stand-up guy, man. I love talking to you. I hope we can do this again.

PETER:

Thanks. I very much appreciate the fact that you referred to me as your friend. I value our friendship and I appreciate the fact I think you're a stand up dude, and I very much appreciate the fact that you had me on and were willing to have these conversations. Thank you.

FRANK:

Alright, thank you sir. That's Dr. Peter Boghossian, ladies and gentlemen. Check out all of his contact information in the show notes. Look for his YouTube channel, and his Twitter account, his X account. Follow him there.

He is fighting the good fight for Western civilization, and he is an ally in that regard, and so make sure that you tell others about him. He also has a Substack as well. And we're gonna have him back on the show at some point. So thanks so much for being with us, ladies and gentlemen, and God bless. All right, see you next time.

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