

Woods: I have people who are just nuts about Michael Malice and I have people who say if you have that Malice on one more time, that is the last straw.

Malice: Is that true?

Woods: I'm not really sure but I did get some bad feedback with the episode we did of the police. I got some fantastic glowing feedback saying, boy that was courageous and gutsy and we love this guy. And I had some people saying, you know, you're just taking things too far. You're throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Malice: Well, sometimes that baby needs throwing out.

Woods: Oh yeah. Well, I always tell them, of course you throw out the baby with the bathwater when it's a demon baby.

Malice: Yeah. What if it's Damian?

Woods: Yeah, exactly, exactly. That's what I say when I was talking about getting rid of the Fed. They say, oh, okay. The Fed's made some mistakes, but you're throwing out the baby with the bath water. That demon baby.

Malice: Mistakes were made.

Woods: Yeah. That's right. Indeed. Indeed. Alright, today we're going to talk about instead of a specific topic. As you say we're going to go meta, to use this annoying term. We're going to look at looking at things. We're going to look at how it is that we persuade people. How it is that we bring people over to our point of view because let's face it, our point of view is sort of the minority position. Every time I feel encouraged that we're really making progress, and I say this as somebody who comes out of the conservative movement, some really low IQ conservative meme is up there on Facebook and it's got 58,000 likes. If I had 88 lifetimes, I couldn't get that many likes on a meme and this happened in ten seconds. It makes me feel like, oh, maybe we're not making the process I think or it's going to be a longer slog than I thought.

Malice: I don't know if it's a numbers game on our part. I mean the goal isn't to get as many people as possible. It's just to get the right people, right?

Woods: No, that absolutely is true. But at the same time it is demoralizing all the same to see how many people will just mindlessly click on that thing. But you're right,

because we could get a whole lot of people who are going to click like on a meme and then go back to playing video games all day.

Malice: Exactly.

Woods: That doesn't do us any good.

Malice: Actually it does us a lot of good. Wouldn't you rather they be playing video games than be causing trouble with the state?

Woods: Oh, yeah, yeah. I mean if they were on our side, it wouldn't do us a lot of good. I'm glad they're playing video games.

Malice: Yeah.

Woods: As a matter of fact, there's a particular person, I can't say his name, but this is a person who has done a lot of damage I think because of his association with the Rand Paul movement. I was told that he was not a very hard worker in whatever it is that he does and that he basically plays video games all day and I thought great.

Malice: Yeah.

Woods: He's doing much less damage. It's the Obama playing golf principle. I'd rather have him play golf. All right, listen, I'm talking too much here. Let's start though with that point. You already jumped in with something interesting. It's not the number of people you get, it the quality of the people you get. Expand on that. Which people are we trying to reach?

Malice: Well, it's interesting because I've been on a couple of these anarcho-capitalist Facebook groups. I think a lot of these kids have a basic error in their approach, which is they're trying achieve non-democratic ends through democratic means. I don't know what they're thinking, but it sounds like they think we're going to have 100 anarchistic senators and they're going to pass a bill declaring America Ancapistan. That's not how it works.

I think what more people need to realize, because you grow up in a government school and you're taught government propaganda, the government and the state is going to act the way it wants independently largely of public opinion. Having a lot of people one way or another, I wrote an article about this for *The Guardian* about why I don't vote. The health care bill was a perfect example of this. All of the polls were violently against it. The Democrats rightly or wrongly

thought this was the right thing to do and they just went ahead. This idea that if we persuade everyone to our point of view that freedom is going to be a consequence, the state's going to dig in its heels unless it absolutely has to. Don't you think?

Woods: I do and I don't. For example, the bailouts are another good example of what you're talking about. The polls were dead set against this. The calls into the congressional office were dead set against it. Yet it went through anyway. But on the other hand, I don't think there was going to be a spontaneous movement at any level of government to decriminalize marijuana. I think that's a case where you did have the people leading, where there was a very dramatic and sudden shift in public opinion. I think in that case the politicians did follow. Am I wrong?

Malice: Sure, but I mean again, I think this is very much a marginal issue. I don't think incarceration rates have decreased. I think yeah, at some point there's going to be some things in the margin. Sure. But in terms of deconstructing the edifice of the federal government, it's still there. I think this is kind of losing the forest for the trees on that issue. Although, I definitely concede that point.

Woods: All right. Let's talk about styles and persuasion styles because you and I are different. There are people I've had on this show who are different from both of us. Everybody has a unique approach. I sometimes am accused of two mutually exclusive things. On the one hand, I over-intellectualize things. I'm too respectable with my coat and tie and laying out my arguments. On the other hand, I get told I'm too much of a firebrand. I've got to tone it down and stop being so confrontational. Maybe they're just seeing me on different days or something because I see myself in both of those descriptions.

I'll tell you a little bit about the way I've approached this. I'm curious to really know your approach. I've seen you on Fox Business. I've read your articles. When I read your articles I don't find you to be a million miles removed from my writing style.

Malice: Okay, yeah.

Woods: What's your overall approach? I mean you are a Randian.

Malice: No, kind of.

Woods: In the sense that I have a pretty good instinct about what you think about appealing to the masses.

Malice: Yes. That's not from Rand. That's from the Italian elitists.

Woods: But it could also be from Rand. She wrote her books and we'll see where things go. You remember when Mises wrote that letter to Rand talking about how wonderful *Atlas Shrugged* was and he said, you had the guts to tell people, especially the broad mass of the public, look, you are inferior and all the developments that have improved your standard of living came about because of people who are better than you. That is a way of looking at society that I think is more or less in line with her views.

Malice: I'm just going to say one thing. I think people who are in the liberty movement need to understand that for a large percentage of the population, which is higher than 10% but less than 40%, saying that you like Rand is conceptually identical to saying you're a Scientologist.

Woods: Yeah, I know. When did this happen?

Malice: I think this has been happening from the beginning with the NBI days. Don't you think?

Woods: I don't know enough about the institutional history but I do know enough having been around for a while that before we became kind of cool and hip, we being libertarians, there were few enough of us that we didn't go around saying, you know, Mises wasn't compromising enough or whatever. We were all just glad to meet someone who was kind of in our camp. It's only recently, it's only really since the Rand Paul days that I find, especially younger libertarians, who kind of turn up their noses at some of the great names of the movement. "I don't need Rothbard or whatever. I don't need Rand. I don't need any of these people," because they had this shortcoming or that shortcoming. I could develop all the ideas purely out of my own head, which seems to be the implication.

Malice: No, I think this is actually the implication. I think probably in the '80s or so there was a big argument, which in retrospect was absurd, about whether someone can be very religious and be a libertarian. The answer is of course, right? A lot of these objectivists, Rand very much made this a package deal that if you want to be for liberty you have to be a militant atheist and this kind of nonsense. I think what we're seeing now is people who are ideologues of progressive persuasion, which is its own version of religion, are being attracted to libertarianism and they're trying to bring their own religion and make this kind of syncretic mix of the two.

Part of their ideology is heavily based on egalitarianism. Rothbard of course, wrote explicitly against the egalitarianism. Rand could not be any more anti-egalitarianism if she tried. I think that's where their need to repudiate these people comes from.

Woods: I guess I hadn't really thought of it that way. I knew that part of the history, but it just seems to be a feature of, again, the sort of younger generation. I'm sorry, I sound like an old man, I say, these younger kids, they don't read books. Some of them do, just there's a wing of them, maybe associated with the more DCish fashionable, chic libertarians, who really are almost contemptuous of great figures who came before them. Not to say we have to worship these people but for heaven's sake we ought to learn from them.

Speaking of these people let me say something about Murray Rothbard because his own approach to spreading these ideas is very interesting because he didn't have just one approach. If you read *Man, Economy and State*, his great economic treatise, it's written in a very scientific idiom. It's not written in his punchy style that we would have written in the *Libertarian Forum* newsletter or that he would have given in a speech. It's very, very dispassionate, technical writing, but he felt like economics needs this. It needs a pure dose of Austrianism. It needs this reconstruction, so he did that. He did a book on the Great Depression. Again, very scholarly, very great history, great economics. But then on the other hand when he would reach out to the general public and he'd write newspaper articles or he'd give speeches, very punchy. It wouldn't be so much of well, here's how the business cycle works. It was more of, these people are ripping you suckers off because he realized some people can be reached through that. Through this sense of doggone it I am being screwed here. He had a different approach to different audiences.

Malice: I'm going to say something. You're not going to like it.

Woods: No. Michael Malice. No.

Malice: First of all, I think Rothbard in many ways is a real villain of libertarianism.

Woods: Oh, all right, all right. We're switching the subject of the whole show now.

Malice: I think a lot of the abhorrent behavior we're seeing in contemporary left libertarianism has its roots in Rothbard. This is what I mean. Rothbard, throughout his career, made it a point of denigrating, in snide and condescending term and personal terms, people he had been formerly allied

with, people who were still on the same team. He went after Rand with that play, *Mozart is a Red*. He went after Ed Crane, the former chairman of the Cato Institute, who I'm not a fan of, but he wrote this vituperative letter about how Ed Crane's the devil. By the end of his life he was such a pariah he has to try to build a bridge to Pat Buchanan, of all people.

I think Rothbard is a perfect example of someone who had the exact wrong strategy. If you hate someone, Tom, there's no one who hates more people than me, I don't think the way to get people on your side is to attack people personally, individually and by name because who's going to want to associate with you wondering when the other shoe is going to drop.

Woods: Well, you see, I can't agree with you because I know so many people Rothbard remained very close with to the end of his life who held exactly the same views as the people he would up tangling with. Neil McCaffrey for example was a traditionalist Catholic right out of the Bill Buckley mold. He was always around *National Review* magazine. They maintained a very close relationship to the end even though he founded the Conservative Book Club. He was associated with all kinds of things Rothbard couldn't stand, but nevertheless they remained friends. I can find many examples of this.

Also, we have his voluminous correspondence at the Mises Institute. It doesn't seem to bear this out. Regardless of what back and forths appeared in public, he maintains a very cordial correspondence with a lot of people. With Ed Crane, I'm not so sure I can really blame him given some of the early turns that the Cato Institute was taking and the way it was shifting in response to donors. I can understand his exasperation in that situation. My point is, if our subject today more or less is how do you reach the public, how do you spread the ideas, in a way I've kind of followed in his footsteps in the sense that I do write, I don't much anymore because I'm so sick of doing it, but I do write scholarly articles. I do write books for academic publishers, so that I can say here's my lasting contribution but I don't want to spend my life doing that because frankly not that many people read those things. I would rather get out there in front of large audiences and somehow take complicated ideas and distill them so that they grab people, that they make people want to be a part of this movement. Of course, if you're just bitter and angry who's going to say, yeah, I want to be a part of that. We have plenty to be angry about.

Malice: Whoa, whoa, whoa.

Woods: Go ahead. Are you going to make an argument for bitterness and anger?

Malice: You don't think bitterness and anger have mobilized movements throughout history?

Woods: No, it's true.

Malice: I'm not even joking.

Woods: No, no, no. Look at Communism. That's true. Look, we just have a few strategic differences with the provisional government. It was not that.

Malice: This is where I strongly disagree with so many people in libertarianism, this idea that if you're kind of nice, people are going to glom on to you. When if you look at the data, aggression and antagonism are far more of a magnet for people who want to be surrounded by strength and kind of be told what to do. That's how it works in nature with schools of fish, packs of dogs. I think it would behoove Libertarians to study zoology a bit more because so many people are operating on some kind of animal level. This idea if you're friendly people are going to belong to you, it's not true. This kind of thing even with dating, like nice guys finish last. I think people historically are very much drawn to those who validate their envy and their antagonism and their anger. The left exploits this beautifully. That's money on the table that would be left behind.

Woods: That is true. There is certainly something to that. I guess in my own public persona let's say, when I'm engaged in public speaking, I try to transfer that into humor.

Malice: Sure.

Woods: So that it's not just I'm up there pointing my finger, because that gets boring, but I transmute it into mordant humor and it seems to work. I'm talking way too much in this conversation. You're the guest.

Malice: There's this idea in the liberty movement that things like "negative emotions" and "negative appeals" are not legitimate and this is just a new age piece of B.S. If it's part of our social psychology, that's something to exploit, so I really have a big problem with this.

Let me just speak to something else, which is I think a broader issue of with people in general and libertarians maybe specifically, which is the complete lack of empathy a lot of people have. By empathy I don't mean caring about other

people. I mean the ability to understand how other people think. When you're talking to a leftist you have to speak to them differently than when you're talking to a conservative. Most libertarians will say, I think X, Y and Z are the most important values. They'll regard it as prima facie, like it's this obvious thing. When someone disagrees with them, they'll just call the other person stupid and have absolutely no attempt to look at things from their perspective.

This is something that people who want to persuade really need to learn. I learned this because I write books for celebrities. I have to be able to write in their voice. This was a skill that took me many years to develop and I see an absolute dearth of it on Facebook and people I speak with.

Woods: Now, in light of your views of, I don't know, human nature or the way people are reached, how have those insights that you have affected the way you yourself have gone about this task?

Malice: Let me give you a good example. I'm Jewish. That means very little to me. However, I 100% will have my, if I have any, son circumcised because I'm not going to let this piece of crap snotty kid not get circumcised and repudiate thousands of years of suffering just so he can be holier than thou.

Woods: By the way, I'm going to get a ton of emails saying, why didn't you challenge Michael Malice because he wants to mutilate his son. You know, I'm sorry, listen to another podcast if you want me to berate people. I'm not going to do it, so that's it.

Malice: That's a very separate issue.

Woods: Okay, go ahead.

Malice: Fine. Let's suppose you're talking to someone who is African American. To them the right to vote, even though it's irrelevant, voting doesn't matter one way or another, to them this is something that people, who look like them, who are their relatives, had to deal with a lot of humiliation and oppression to get that right. If you're going to speak to someone like that, if you're going to open with voting is a fraud, blah, blah, blah, it has some symbolic emotional resonance, which is not false. This is a perfect example of what I'm talking about. If you're going to have someone who's an ancap, every once in a while they flick a switch even for Hillary. Is that really count as a loss in our column?

Woods: Alright, fair enough. But I want to know exactly, when Michael Malice tries to get people to agree with him, there are multiple ways of trying to do that. Which one do you choose based on what you think is likely to work?

Malice: The first thing you have to do is to look it at a person and recognize what their values are, what they find important, what they don't find important. Jonathan Haidt has this great book called *The Righteous Mind* and he basically breaks it down there are seven axes people care about: fairness, hygiene. I forget what all the seven were. Let's suppose you're talking to someone who wants income equality. And you are of the believe that in an anarchist society there would be less income disparity. You don't come in and say, I also believe in income equality, but. You have to argue with them on their turf. They're not going to let you in the house unless you're willing to validate their context and accept it as true even just for the sake of the discussion.

Woods: I've been able to do that. For instance, when *Meltdown* came out and people were beginning to talk about the Federal Reserve, I went on a number of progressive radio shows. They had never heard of the Austrian theory of the business cycle or anything, but the way I explained it to them did resonate with them because it seemed like aha, okay, so there's some manipulation going on and as usual the most vulnerable people wind up getting left hanging out to dry when the whole thing has collapsed. They were willing to accept that wow, I'd never thought of this. This is another way that the average Joe is getting screwed.

If that's the way people want to look at Austrian theory of the business cycle and the Fed, I'm perfectly at peace with that and I haven't betrayed anything I believe in. Yet I was able to speak to people who basically are egalitarians. Their first principles are all screwy. But if I can get that foot in the door, if I can open that door a crack and I can get them to think about one of my ideas, maybe they'll think about another one and maybe they'll think about another one. Then that's how people change when they realize wait a minute these ideas are not disjointed. They make sense. They're all integrated.

Malice: That's right. When I talk to people like that what I tell them is the weakest people are the most vulnerable to government shenanigans by definition. When you put it in those terms, that's exactly terms they speak and they understand. A lot of times people on the right side of anarchism are so anti-Progressive that as soon as someone starts speaking Progressive jargon they're going to dig their heels in as well.

I saw a good example of this on Facebook, where someone was saying, the Paul Baltimore thing, they were arguing against police brutality and that being the cause of all this. I said, would you rather there be egalitarian police brutality, right, that all races were being beaten equally. Would that be an improvement? And the guy made a very good point. He goes, yes, because if people like Michael Bloomberg's son were getting people then there would be enough people to actually do something about the issue, instead of being able to say, not my problem. Sweep it under the rug. When he put it in those terms, it actually made a lot of sense. But when you first hear someone being like racism, police brutality you think it's just going to be liberal claptrap and you are going to shut your ears off.

Woods: It really is true. It's demoralizing how quickly people resort to familiar and comforting slogans no matter what the issue is, with foreign policy, with the economy. People have got three or four slogans and that's it. Then they shout them at each other all day and they make memes about them with talking frogs or beer-drinking guys or whatever.

What do you think, in terms of what would be productive for people to do, what would be unproductive for people to do? If you had to give advice to listeners to the show, practically all of whom are trying to spread what is an unpopular message, let's face it, what advice would you give? What's a waste of their time and what might be a better use of their time?

Malice: I mean, I would say, when you're having an argument with someone you're disagreeing with, assume that they are a rational actor just for the sake of argument, right? Given that they're a rational actor, what axioms are they basing their ideology on that you can kind of leave aside for the moment because an axiom is not open to change and how can you take those axioms and build on that to have a bridge between what they think and what you think?

Another argument I just got into this week is what people need to realize is most human beings start their moral reasoning with the idea that I'm a good person. It goes from I'm a good person. I like X or I hate Y, therefore good people like X and hate Y. That's how they start their thinking. You always see on TV people saying, I'm a good mother. I'm a good mother. I love my son. I've never heard anyone say, I'm a bad mother, but there's plenty of bad mothers out there. When you realize that people regard it as the basis of their thinking that what they think is good and the idea that there is a good out there that may be different from what

they just deduced from the ethos it opens up a lot of doors in terms of approaching them and arguing with them.

Woods: Let's talk for a minute before we wrap up about Fox Business, where you appear somewhat regularly. You were on The Independence and now you're on Kennedy quite a bit. What are you trying to accomplish? Other than getting your name out there of course, which we all want, but what are you trying to accomplish when you're on a show where you're going to get a brief chance to talk and somebody else is going to talk then you get a brief chance to talk? What are you aiming to do there? Are you trying to educate the public? Are you trying to shock the public? What are you trying to do?

Malice: My first priority is always to mock and denigrate politicians personally and to make them subjects of ridicule if not contempt. Then hopefully I'll be able to get a few sound bites in that have good ideas. If I say something that's banal, I'll say it hopefully in an interesting way that maybe will make some people just repeat that funny little sound bite. I'm not under any expectation to change minds. I'm just there to have fun. I think it's very important to not give the state the moral apparatus and to regard it as something sacrosanct when it should be something that is regarded with contempt.

Woods: Before I let you run I'd like you to recommend, just off the top of your head, whatever occurs to you, a few books that you think really are the kind of books that can either change minds or at least get people thinking in ways they hadn't thought before.

Malice: Sure. The most important ones are *The Machiavellians* by James Burnham, who was a Trotskyite then he worked for *National Review*. He just discusses Elite Theory and how the nature of the government is independent of the masses always and by definition. Jonathan Haidt's *The Righteous Mind*, I mentioned earlier. Steven Pinker's book, what's it called? *The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. I'm blanking on the title. I can't believe it. Those three are very, very useful to unpack and understand how most people actually think and operate. Because I think people think that persuasion is just I throw logic, you throw logic and whoever has more logic wins. It's not that way at all. It's operating on this background machinery that we all have in our minds. That's where you have to figure out how to persuade people. It's not through strength of facts or else we would have won, right?

Woods: Well, no doubt. I will link to all those books as well as to MichaelMalice.com on today's show notes page TomWoods.com/393. If I didn't have to run, I would talk to you for another half hour, but unfortunately I'm under a time crunch today and it's my wife's birthday today.

Malice: Happy Birthday, Heather!

Woods: Yeah, she's great. We have a bunch of things going on today, so I have to cut short my otherwise wonderful conversation with Michael Malice. But boy, I've gotten ideas for like three more conversations just from this one. Anyway, thanks for talking to me today. I hope to see you soon.

Malice: Always a pleasure, Tom.