

EPISODE 29

THE HEAD AND THE HEART

Hi there. Welcome to the end of the world. My name is Michael Folz. And this is Episode number 29 of my podcast Dial It Back Or Die. Now last time I mentioned that this time we're going to step sideways a little. And that's because this episode involves another one of those spoiler alerts. As in: Here's something that's really central to the spoiling of the Western mind. And you'll recall that so far there have been two of them. First there was the belief in the social contract; that is, that humanity started off as a bunch of totally independent individuals. The second was the acceptance of the totally unproven hypothesis that somehow matter created consciousness, and then transforming that, without any scientific evidence, into a bedrock assumption of science.

Now the third one has to do with changing beliefs about the innate nature of male and female, of yin and yang, if you will, and of the proper relationship between the sexes. The problem with explaining how these changes occurred, however, is that, although an argument can certainly be made that the changes were totally a function of the Age of Enlightenment, a strong counter-argument to that can also be made.

In other words, it's complicated.

On the other hand, though, this is an extremely important spoiler alert. In fact, in some ways this was the worst spoiler of them all. So it is also important that we go over this before we head into the domain of the 19th Century.

Therefore the way I'm going to try to do the explaining is to step outside the narrow time frame of the Enlightenment and to try to trace the progression of these beliefs throughout history.

So let's start with pre-history.

And the reason that I am doing that is because, not only is there certain evidence from archaeology, but there is much more evidence from the multitudes of pre-literate societies and cultures which have been studied by anthropologists.

And I'll be going over all this somewhat more thoroughly when we get to the Science part. But the main point is that before Civilization ever appeared with its putative patriarchy or whatever, in virtually every society ever discovered, there was Man's World and there was Woman's World. And to make it simple: Men really did hunt and women really did gather. Men fought wars with each other, and women were pacifists who spent their time nurturing their children. And if you searched through all of the literature, you might find one or two examples where women also participated in the hunting or the fighting. But I doubt it. And even if you did all you would be doing is finding exceptions which proved the rule. I mean, there was a good reason why Amazon warriors were a myth.

But the gulf between Man's World and Woman's World was a lot deeper than just who killed the animals and/or sometimes other people. Almost all rituals, dances, initiation ceremonies, not to mention most everyday behaviors, were sexually segregated.

Further, what today would be called the power relationship was virtually always tilted towards Man's World. Which makes perfect sense, since human males had evolved to be bigger and stronger than females, and to have more than ten times the testosterone, which is after all the hormone which is almost the sole determinant in creating levels of assertiveness.

(And, by the way, if you're thinking, 'But what about matriarchal societies?' Well, first, the word 'matriarchal' usually really means 'matrilineal', and it refers to things like kinship rules and to who got to stay within the group and who had to leave when people got married. Not to which sex was really calling the shots. And were you to actually find a society where women truly did call the shots, once again you would be finding the exception which proved the rule.)

So that was what it was like before Civilization. Now what happened once the Bronze Age took hold, and places like Mesopotamia and Egypt started holding massively more numbers of people than the 200 which seems to be the upper limit for tribal societies? Well, man's work and woman's work continued to be quite separate. But man's worth and woman's worth started to vary quite considerably.

For instance, it's kind of a shame that the Egyptian civilization, the first major one, in the end had little influence on the West. Because this was one in which male energy and female energy were to a large extent considered equal. Thus, if a prominent official or merchant had a statue made of himself, he would also have one of equivalent size made of his wife.

And further afield, both Indian and Chinese philosophy placed an extreme importance on the theoretical balance between Shiva and Shakti, yin and yang.

But, as mentioned earlier, Egyptians didn't colonize other places. They weren't merchants or explorers. So their culture just stayed in Egypt. (Although, interestingly, after 300 BC the one part of Egyptian culture which did spread to the rest of the Mediterranean was the cult of Isis, a mystical goddess.)

Of course, as also mentioned earlier, it was the Greeks who were the colonizers and the merchants and the explorers. And although not all of the Greeks were homosexual pedophiles like the Athenians, their culture was definitely 'manly', and their womenfolk were pretty much second class citizens.

Same with the Romans, who, what with all their constant soldiering and warfare, not to mention their relative neglect of poetry and the arts, certainly took manliness to a whole other level. Further, neither Greek nor Roman culture really had much of an ideal of equality, let alone true love, between a man and a woman.

But at least within their pantheon of multiple deities both Greece and Rome recognized that female energy played a large part in the functioning of the Universe. All the fun, positive stuff—beauty, art, music, inspiration, creativity—was assigned to goddesses. Some of their most impressive temples were dedicated to goddesses. And, as I just mentioned, the cult of Isis became one of the most important of the mystery religions.

But this appreciation of the Feminine was most definitely not the case with the third leg of the West's foundational stool, Judaism.

After all, as I've already gone over, in its original form the Hebrew God was not really the monotheistic One God for all of humanity that we pretend that it was today. Rather Jehovah was just another tribal god. The difference was, though, that whereas most tribes also recognized that other tribal gods were equally legitimate for those other tribes, the Hebrews saw their Jehovah as the only legitimate god. But he was still only legitimate for them. Which meant that the rest of the world was, according to the ancient Hebrews, therefore not only worshiping fake gods, but also permanently out of luck. Which is where, by the way, that whole 'I'm saved and you're not' attitude originated.

Thus, whereas sophisticated pagan thought pretty quickly developed the concept of a transcendent Godhead which was way above and beyond sex or gender, the original Jehovah really was conceived of as a male being sitting on a throne somewhere. And the Torah—Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, etc.—was almost entirely a list of rules and regulations. All masculine stuff. Nor was

there much of any mention of compassion or mercy or inspiration, all attributes traditionally assigned to the feminine. So that the ancient Hebrews really were patriarchal, in theory as well as practice.

Now the interesting thing here is that when Christianity appeared—again, as was discussed—one of the main objections to it was that it was overly feminine. After all, to a manly Roman meekness, mildness, turning the other cheek, were all things that girlie girls did. And Paul actually spent a lot of effort trying to ensure that his new Christian converts did not come across as too fey.

Nor were the Romans that far off. Because Christianity's emphasis on love and forgiveness was revolutionary in making what had always been seen as solely feminine traits more or less mainstream. And when, a thousand years later, after the High Middle Ages took hold, and Christian values totally drove the culture, to a large extent this did lead to the feminization of said culture. You'll recall that this era was the high point of the veneration of the Virgin Mary, who served as the representation of the feminine principle in an otherwise masculine theology. Nuns were considered pretty much the equal of monks, and many rose to relatively high position in the Church. Furthermore, in places where there were councils in which people voted, abbesses were among the few in society who were given a vote.

And in the secular world, the High Middle Ages were the time of chivalry, of the idealization of romantic, chaste love, and of those knights in shining armor serving the fair maidens. In general clothing was simple, modest, and unisex, and in no way drew attention to women's distinct differences. In fact, it was so egalitarian that women could even become master craftspeople.

Not that this era was some sort of Earthly Paradise. After all, it was the Middle Ages. Most people, male and female, still toiled in the fields. And people were still people. As with the entire rest of History personalities, both male and female, ran the gamut from sinner to saint. Further, men still had their natural born lust. Women of necessity still spent most of their time rearing children. And the power differential which evolution had created was still operative.

But it is certainly plausible that by around the year 1250 the status and treatment of women was about the best that it had ever been since the beginning of Civilization. And certainly so in the West. In fact, one of the reasons that comparatively so many female scholars are drawn to Medieval Studies is because of the special respect that was given to femininity during this period.

Although once again I should emphasize that no matter what stage or kind of civilization you were part of, and no matter what the balance or lack thereof was between the Masculine and the Feminine, absolutely no one anywhere, from Kyoto to Kathmandu to Copenhagen, ever doubted for a

moment that Man's World and Woman's World were qualitatively different spheres containing fundamentally different priorities, mentalities, and outlooks.

So let's skip over a few centuries now.

Because by the beginning of the 18th Century the status of women had, sadly, actually degenerated from what it had been during the Medieval Period. And, as I pointed out in the episode on the Reformation, a certain amount of this was because of the Reformation. After all, when you get rid of the veneration of the feminine principle, i.e. the Virgin Mary, and when you make the Bible not only absolutely literal, but also your only authority—and remember that the Old Testament is way more than half of the Bible—what else would you expect than that early Iron Age ideas about Jehovah, patriarchy, and the total submission of females would take over? Further, and I am being a little simplistic here, because of course other conservative cultural forces were and always have been also at work, but as the Reformation took hold the Catholic Church then found itself to a large extent aping the Protestants in regards to the literal truth of the Old Testament and of the ancient Hebrews' opinion and treatment of women.

So, as a result of Protestantism, now there weren't any women tradesmen. Not to mention poets, writers, artists, doctors, etc. And although almost all middle and upper class women at the turn of the 18th Century were literate, they weren't expected to do much more than to read the Bible and to then also teach their children how to read and write.

But it would be a mistake to think that the educated men of this era thought that this state of affairs should continue. And, as the 18th Century progressed, almost all thinking men, whether positive deists or negative deist, theist or atheist, liberal or conservative, were all on board with the idea that girls should be exposed to a better education. If only so that they could become more interesting companions to their husbands and better teachers of their children. And although, as with most other topics in life, there might well have been a large gap between theory and implementation, still to push for better education for females or to push for more respect for the feminine was pretty much like pushing on an open door.

And, again, no matter how liberal or even radical an intellectual might have been back then, and even if one argued for women becoming doctors and lawyers and such, nobody thought that the nature of men and women was identical. After all, it was still the most obvious thing in the world that Man's World and Woman's World were those innately different spheres.

And now let's pause for a moment, though, and briefly remind you of that episode on the invention of sex.

Because—and I hate to have to use this word—but almost all of us have been indoctrinated, both by education and by watching historical dramas, etc., to think that promiscuous sex has always been going on behind the curtains.

Well, it hasn't. For instance, in 1650, with almost a complete absence of birth control options, only 1% of births were out of wedlock. And any stories from before that that were bawdy or salacious were just that: stories. Just like the fact that, even though ever since the 1930s our popular entertainment has been consumed with violent shoot-em-ups, this doesn't for a moment mean that this level of violence is a reflection of what actually goes on in our everyday lives.

But all of that did start changing around the year 1720 or so. Because now out of control out of wedlock promiscuous lust did start to become front and center. Again, though, this was only for the upper classes. And it was only for men. Because virtually absolutely no one thought that any woman had the capacity for, let alone the desire for, such behavior. And the few prostitutes and courtesans who did favor these new promiscuous men with their favors, while gossiped about and even made into some of the first mass celebrities, were at the same time seen as hopelessly fallen, totally disreputable women.

In other words, even when the understanding of man's nature was taking a fall, the understanding of woman's nature was not. Indeed it was now clearly seen as the superior nature.

So... Let's look at what the real world situation as to the quote/unquote 'liberation of women' actually was around the year 1780.

Because you may already be aware that most of the salons, which were where almost all of France's intellectual discussions took place, were both established by and run by women. Before the Revolution the most famous portrait painter in France was a woman. In 1768 two of the founding members of London's Royal Academy of Art were female artists. And as for the novel, that primary means of entertainment at this time, around half of the writers of novels were women.

Now: Was this world an egalitarian paradise as we currently understand the term? No, of course not. But then, as I keep pointing out, no one of any theological or political persuasion wanted it to be or expected it to be. Because both the common sense and the reason of the time easily saw that the

psychological mandates of the two sexes were vastly different. After all, remember that back then over half of all children died before the age of five. Moreover, many, many mothers died in childbirth. So no matter how intellectually equal a woman might be to a man, the plain fact of nature was that unless she devoted the majority of her mental effort to lovingly rearing her multitudinous children, the species would just flat out not continue. What's more, the plain fact remained that unless each mother had both the physical and financial support of a monogamous mate, the odds of her and her children surviving were pretty bleak.

So the common sense of the time was also that a woman would have to cultivate not only those traits which would maximize the nurturing of her offspring, but also those traits which would make her attractive and emotionally agreeable to that husband who was expected to provide for her and stand by her her entire life.

In other words, the warm, fuzzy stuff. The Heart.

And as for the man who had to provide for the wife and kids (because, remember, that for every mother who had to slave away taking care of ten children, there was also a father who had to slave away earning enough money to feed and clothe those ten children) anyway, to maximize the earning potential and social status which would protect his family any man had to develop his intellectual skills to the best of his abilities.

In other words, the cold, analytical stuff. The Head.

So perhaps the best way to describe the state of affairs in the real Age of Enlightenment is to say that what the most progressive thinkers, both female and male, were getting at was most definitely not the idea that, absent culture and tradition, men and women would be interchangeable units. Rather it was an update to what I keep referring to as the classical take on Civilization. Namely that male and female, yin and yang, head and heart, were still qualitatively different essences. But that for Civilization to truly evolve and proceed it was necessary for these two essences to balance each other. For the yin and the yang, the head and the heart, to be equally valid.

And of course it was also recognized that each individual, male or female, had at least a certain amount of Head and a certain amount of Heart. And that, further, there was often going to be a struggle between these two forces. Which is why, if you have the chance, you should look up and then read the famous essay written by Thomas Jefferson, which is entitled 'A Dialogue of the Head vs. the Heart'. For it will give you a good idea as to how people who were not ideological fanatics thought back then.

All the same, though, it was also taken as given that the Head dominated in Man's World and the Heart dominated in Woman's World. And that unless everyone recognized this and respected this, then the two worlds would never meet.

Of course, this is not the presumption in the official postmodern Western World. No, these days you are dismissed as an Antediluvian freak if you suggest that male and female are in any way intrinsically different. And when we shortly get to the science section we'll go over what actual real world scientific evidence there is on the question of whether gender differences are nature or nurture. But, if you're ready to trust me in the interim on the science stuff, then let's ask this question: Namely, if it's clear that the supposition that men and women are not intrinsically different did not arise from the mainstream Age of Enlightenment, and, further, since there is no other culture or civilization in the entire history of mankind which did have this belief, then when and how did it occur?

Would you be surprised if I said the name 'Jeremy Bentham'?

Probably not. But if you're at all still skeptical of my thesis that today's strange postmodern cultural certainties are a direct function of this one disturbing individual, then one of my strongest pieces of evidence for the thesis is that it so neatly explains why our ideological guardians of culture dogmatically insist, contrary to all common sense and to all scientific research, that gender differences are artificial.

After all, only ideology is strong enough to do something like that. Because it turns out that ideology not only trumps common sense. It also trumps evidence, reason, and just about everything else.

So now let's see how this belief that gender is just a state of mind directly arose from the theory of Utilitarianism.

Because remember, once again, that Jeremy Bentham had virtually no experience with females his entire life. Even his mother died when he was twelve. What's more, while he no doubt had a genius IQ, he also had no social skills, abilities, or experience. It's kind of like if Sheldon from The Big Bang were to develop the blueprint for all of humanity to follow. Except without the cuteness and the funny lines.

And it would be one thing if the Unisex World that Utilitarianism envisioned was some sort of fusion of the masculine and feminine. But it wasn't. Instead it had no place for compassion, wonder,

inspiration, or companionship. Let alone love or affection. Absolutely none of those traditional feminine traits.

In other words, Utilitarianism is literally all Head. And this even includes negative emotions such as fear or anger. No, every single human is theorized to be, as it were, nothing more nor less than a coldly rational pleasure accumulator. And happiness is then defined as the freely chosen sum total of goods, services, and sensory stimulation. Which, as I've already noted, also happens to be the foundational assumption of the entire field of economics.

So—and not to put too fine a point on this—it turns out that Utilitarianism is the complete and absolute denial of what every other culture which has ever existed has more or less termed the Feminine Principle. Or, as I'm putting it now, the Heart. And, once one has accepted and internalized this frame of mind, what does one then do when it turns out that so many women would much rather idealize a life of lovingly giving themselves over to their children, husband, and other relatives rather than to, say, becoming lawyers writing legal briefs, or becoming powerful business executives? Why, the only logical and tautological answer is that these women must have been brainwashed by a patriarchy or whatever. Because this ideology dictates that clearly, since all that exists in the human experience is Head, that therefore any un-brainwashed woman would of necessity naturally have the same priorities as any man.

Okay. Now some of you who have had a little training in feminist thought might no doubt be thinking, 'But what about Mary Wollstonecraft? After all, wasn't she an 18th Century woman with thoroughly modern feminist credentials? She fought for women's rights, the equality of women, and free thinking in general. And she came by this attitude totally independently of Jeremy Bentham.'

Well, for those of you who have never heard of Mary Wollstonecraft, let me give you a brief biography. Born in 1759, in the late 1780s she decided to become a writer, and was immediately at least somewhat successful. The work which really made her famous, though, was a book written in 1790 entitled 'A Vindication of the Rights of Man'. Which was followed in 1792 by 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman'. She hung out with radicals like Tom Paine, and in 1797 she married William Godwin, a fervent atheist and polemicist who is today considered a fellow traveler of Utilitarianism. She died later that year after giving birth to her daughter Mary. Who, eighteen years later, as Mary Shelley, wife of the famous Romantic poet Percy Shelley, would write the novel 'Frankenstein'.

All very modern and revolutionary, right? Except that when you study what Mary Wollstonecraft actually thought and did, it turns out that she wasn't nearly as much of a free thinker as modern day feminists pretend. For instance, she was a strong believer in God and in compassion. And the two main ideas which she fought for were, first, that women were as smart as men and should therefore receive the same level of education. And, second, that the late 18th Century infatuation with 'Sensibility', or extreme sensitivity to any- and everything emotional, was corrupting the women of France and England. Neither point, of course, differed all that much from the observations of many men of that time.

And it's very important to note that she most definitely did not think that, absent culture and tradition, men and women would be the same. She freely admitted that men and women were intrinsically different, and in fact specifically wrote, 'Let it not be concluded that I wish to invert the order of things'.

What's more, in her personal life she showed herself to be what had always been thought of as prototypically feminine. For instance, before meeting Godwin, while in revolutionary France she had an affair with an American adventurer named Gilbert Imlay, and had a child out of wedlock with him. And once the child was born she immediately became a prototypical mother, fawning and doting over it. She also became desperately emotionally attached to Imlay. And when he, as out of wedlock fathers have done since time immemorial, coldly blew her off, she then became horribly depressed and twice attempted to commit suicide.

And hers is indeed an interesting story. But we have to leave it there. And briefly go forward into the 19th Century, and look at what 'feminism' meant to the people of that era. Especially in America.

Now I'm sure that you're well aware of Susan B. Anthony and her friends in the woman's suffrage movement. But what you may not know is that all of them were radicals, atheists or agnostics, and haters of organized religion almost to a person, who were on the outer fringes of American thought. So you can imagine how popular that made them in 1850's America. Further, even when we get to the beginning of the 20th Century woman's suffrage was still a rather unpopular idea, not only with American men, but also with American women as well. After all, as I mentioned in the last episode, back then most people still carried around with them the ideal that the participants in a marriage should strive to become one soul in two bodies. They really believed the part about God joining them

together. And it therefore crept most people out to think of a vision of marriage in which two distinct egos would ever want to hold conflicting political viewpoints.

So that you could honestly say that, especially around the middle of the 19th Century, the right for a woman to vote was a solution in search of a problem.

Further, whatever one thought about the rightness or wrongness of women voting, it was still the case that virtually no quote/unquote 'feminist' of that era thought for a moment that Man's World and Woman's World could or should merge into a Unisex World. And even at that such feminists as there were were still a decidedly small minority of the entire female population.

But, as we shall shortly see, the middle of the 19th Century is also coincident with the resurgent mainstreaming of liberal thought. And the establishment of the particular ideology of liberal democracy. Courtesy of, once again, John Stuart Mill. And never forget that, although Mill definitely repudiated his horribly stunted upbringing, he never began to repudiate the Utilitarian dogma which had been drummed into him. And, as I just went over a little while ago, Utilitarian dogma most emphatically did necessitate a Unisex World.

So if and when you do your own research, and you read that John Stuart Mill was a tireless campaigner for women's rights, understand that he was coming at the topic from an entirely different direction than were Mary Wollstonecraft or even Susan B. Anthony or any of the other female 19th Century feminists. And that our present day conception of the issue is thus directly a function of the thoughts of, not Susan B. Anthony or indeed any other woman, but rather of Mr. Jeremy Bentham.

Filtered, of course, through the mind of John Stuart Mill.

Well, if you're a true believer in the mythology of feminism, I'm not sure that I'll be able to convince you otherwise with this one episode. But hopefully I've been able to at least present to you another explanation for the gender-free mentality which the politically correct are so convinced of nowadays.

And now that I have firmly stated this third major spoiler alert, it's time to go back to the 1780s, to take up the thread of history once again, and to see what happened once people set out to put into practice all the ideas and ideals of the liberals and of the philosophes of England and France.

Although, as usual, that's for next time. And, as usual, for this time once again I thank you for so far having listened.