

EPISODE 32

APPROACHING THE CUSP

Hi there. Welcome to the end of the world. My name is Michael Folz. And this is Episode number 32 of my podcast Dial It Back Or Die. And congratulations. Because, although this episode is the longest one so far, this is also our last history lesson for a while. And what we're going to do today is to try to round out some of the aspects of that 19th Century which I am spending so little time on. And I'm going to especially deal with some of the social and political ideas, theories and isms of that period. Any one of which, from the vantage point of the late 19th Century, could have possibly sprouted forth and dominated the 20th.

Because—and just to reiterate—far from being the repressed, cautious Victorian world which our postmodern propaganda pretends it to be, the 19th Century in reality was wide open intellectually and creatively. It's just that in general people were content to think through those new ideas while staying within certain boundaries. And there was not all that much enthusiasm to fall for the half-baked pseudo-scientific adolescent ideas of the 18th Century.

But the plain historical fact that people in the 19th Century were in general happier and more content than people have been in the 20th or 21st Centuries is a truth that many of us might find hard to accept. After all, that the future is always by definition supposed to be better and brighter and more progressive than the past, well, is an article of faith which has been drummed into us since Day One. And this faith in Progress in and of itself also turns out to be—surprise, surprise—one of those foundational assumptions of both the Age of Enlightenment and present day Liberal Democracy. Which is why, as I pointed out way back in Episode 6, present day apologists for Liberal Democracy, such as the Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker, have to endlessly frantically tell you not to look at the world around you and believe your lying eyes, ears, and emotions, but rather to accept their carefully collated cherry picked reams of statistics.

But I hope that my history lessons have already pretty well established, for instance, that the Rome of the 6th Century was a lot more miserable than was the Rome of the 3rd Century. Western Europe in the 14th Century was horribly more miserable than the Western Europe of the 12th and 13th

Centuries. And we're never going to not only get at the real reasons for the cultural collapse of the West, but, more importantly, figure out what can be done about it, unless we fully come to grips with the reality that, sure, things can get better. But things can also get worse. And that it is the standards which we set up, the cultural milieu which we create that we all end up walking around in, which to an extremely large extent determines how happy and inspirational this world—which we do have to maneuver our way through—actually is.

After all, as I pointed out all the way back in the first episode, it doesn't matter if we solve global warming, or change which political party controls the White House, or whatever, so long as the culture itself is retarded. Which it is.

And so... What was the cultural milieu back then?

Well, obviously we can't go back in time in order to get people from the 19th Century to fill out those questionnaires which researchers use to purportedly find out how happy someone is. But as I also pointed out in Episode 6, the term 'happiness' is so slippery as to be almost useless for real social science purposes.

But we do have evidence of standards for both verbal and mathematical expression.

For instance, think back to those Civil War documentaries and the letters which common soldiers wrote to their wives and girlfriends, and vice versa. Both tenderhearted and sophisticated in turns of phrases, they put to shame 20th Century correspondence. When you get to the more educated writers of the time, most of the prose reads like pure poetry. And the poets themselves? The way that someone like Keats or Wordsworth could make utter beauty out of such rich vocabulary also make 20th Century attempts seem lame in comparison.

And then consider the level of math—basically third year algebra—which was required just for high school graduation, let alone university. Which many students attended in their mid teens. So that it is extremely difficult to deny that both verbal and math ability standards were much higher then than they are now.

Or think of the dominant themes which the novelists focused on back then. Isolated stories like *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina* aside, whether it was Jane Austen, Walter Scott, or Charles Dickens, the major novelists were always writing about love, romance, friendship, honor, chivalry, and all the other high ideals which 19th Century people were striving for. And no matter what terrible twists of fate the authors put their characters through, in the end there was almost always a happy ending.

Then there was the spiritual life. For instance, the fantasy that somehow everyone in the 19th Century was a troglodyte fundamentalist is just flat out wrong. Indeed, certain present day fundamentalist ideas, such as the thought that the world was created 6000 years ago, didn't even appear until the end of the 1800s. Most denominations in fact concentrated on preaching the ideal of Christian *behavior*. Which, interestingly, as the century progressed tended to approximate the ideal of classical Stoic behavior: Namely, that one always acts with discipline, in an upright and moral fashion, and without regard to reward or results.

Nor was this just moralistic chest thumping. In politics, sports, and daily life, codes of honor were laid out and mostly lived up to. And it's easy nowadays to mock those Southern gentlemen or British aristocrats all 'upholding their honor', but really, in an ever more urbanized and anonymous world, a man's reputation legitimately was his most important asset. And in point of fact there were remarkably few cheaters in such a system.

And remember how, back in the episode on the invention of sex, I pointed out that by the year 1800 the illegitimacy rate in England had shot up to 40%. Well, by the year 1860 it was back down again to 6%. Couple that with the successful nationwide American campaign for alcohol temperance in the 1830s and 1840s, and you can well conclude that, assuming that the motivation is there, it is indeed possible to get toothpaste back into the tube.

Now am I saying that the 19th Century rolled along without any problems or hiccups or festering sores? Of course not. And it does get a little tiring to have to keep pointing this out. But there have been problems and hiccups and festering sores in every culture which has ever existed throughout history. And I'm certainly not pretending to claim that the 19th Century was one long, uninterrupted Utopian idyll.

BUT... As someone who is pretty intimate with the cultural history of both the 19th and the 20th Centuries, I can say without reservation that the 19th was the one which was kinder, gentler, more hopeful, more optimistic, and certainly more moral. And if you want to do the relevant open minded research, I think that you also will come to the same conclusion.

However, when I say that there was little enthusiasm in the 19th Century for half baked ideas, this doesn't mean that there was none. What's more, given the various genuine problems which Capitalism and industrialization were creating, many if not most thinking people realized that the world could and should be moving towards some fairer, more harmonious system.

And so for the rest of this episode we're going to look at some of the various ideas and isms which were being debated and considered throughout the 1800s.

For instance, take the Communists. No, not those Communists. Instead I'm referring to the Shakers.

Sort of an offshoot of the earlier Quakers, the Shakers got their name for sort of the same reason: During their religious services that would go into ecstatic, convulsive trances. The first religion ever founded by a woman, a lady named Ann Lee, the Shakers coalesced in England in 1772. They then moved to America in 1774, and immediately started gaining new converts. Besides said trances, they also had prophetic visions, believed that they were actively communicating with spirits, were awaiting the imminent return of Jesus, and—male and female alike—were totally celibate. At their height between 1820 and 1860 there were around 6000 of them, scattered around the United States in prosperous self-contained villages of around 200 members each. They held all things in common, and—male and female alike—were entirely equal.

Now such a lifestyle would be hard to proselytize for today. But historically the Shakers are very important. Because they showed that communism, at least the religious kind, was not only possible, but that it could also be highly successful.

Nor were they the only attempt at Utopia in the 19th Century. Here's another, one that has been pretty much lost to history:

Charles Fourier could be considered a not so intelligent French version of Jeremy Bentham, in that, like Bentham, he thought that the ideal society was one in which everyone would be pleasuring themselves in every way that they could imagine. He also shared Bentham's utter contempt for the present day world which surrounded him. But unlike Bentham, who thought that his ideal state would be achieved through radical individualism, Fourier thought that his New World would arrive through radical voluntary communism. He also thought that there were exactly 810 different personality types, so that each of his proposed communities, which he called phalanxes, would contain precisely 1620 people, all living together in one very large four story building. Further, he believed that once humanity followed all of his voluminous instructions, thousands of years of harmony would ensue. And that, as one result of all this, the oceans would turn to lemonade.

And although almost totally obscure and unknown while alive, for some reason around 1840 suddenly a Fourier craze swept America. Up to several dozen attempts at constructing phalanxes were

started. Unfortunately for the enthusiastic American true believers, however, none of these 'communities' lasted for more than a few months.

Then there was New Harmony, a place that you might have indeed heard of. Even so, though, you probably are not familiar with the back story.

It all started with hundreds of German peasants. They were all followers of a semi-mystical preacher named George Rapp. Persecuted in their homeland, in 1803 they all moved with Rapp to western Pennsylvania, when the area was almost a complete wilderness. Although sex was allowed for purposes of procreation, otherwise they, too, like the Shakers were celibate. Also like the Shakers, they were extremely hard working, and within ten years they had built a prosperous town, once again proving that at least religious communism could work. Then, with civilization closing in on them, they picked up and moved to the swampy wilderness of southern Indiana. Where they repeated the process, creating an even more prosperous town. Which they named Harmony.

Meanwhile, in 1799 in Scotland a Welsh textile dealer named Robert Owen had married the daughter of the owner of one of the largest textile mills in Britain. Now at the time most mill workers were from the poorest, most woebegone parts of society. And at the time most textile mills treated their workers as shabbily as possible. So Owen decided to treat his workers half decently. And they responded by being happier, healthier, and more productive.

Now Owen was one of those people who, even after the failures of the French Revolution, still clung to those liberal Enlightenment ideas of Deism and hatred of religion. He most especially was of the belief that one's upbringing was the sole cause of all human difficulties. He also, by the way, was a fellow traveler with Jeremy Bentham. Anyway, he looked at the better lives he had created for these dirt poor workers, and he then concluded that he could also solve all of humanity's problems in the same way. Once again, though, he differed with Bentham in that he thought that the solution lay not in radical individualism, but rather in voluntary socialism.

So that in 1824, when the Rappites decided to once again move back to Pennsylvania and start a third town, Owen bought their town of Harmony, Indiana, lock, stock, and barrel, renamed in New Harmony, and then invited all and sundry to come help create his vision of perfection.

Unfortunately, he hadn't figured out that Americans were not the poorest of the poor. So that holding out the carrot of not being completely ripped off every moment of their lives was meaningless to them. And so what actually happened was that just about every grifter, blowhard and ideological

crank in America converged on New Harmony. And, needless to say, within two years, Owen's investment of \$150,000—a huge sum back then—was back down to a nice, round zero.

Of course, as I keep pointing out, no amount of reality can stop a true ideological believer. And around this time a young, wealthy British heiress named Fanny Wright, another acolyte of Jeremy Bentham, showed up at New Harmony. She soon became intimate friends with Owen's son Robert Dale Owen, and then she went down to the outskirts of frontier Memphis, Tennessee, where she financed her own Utopian community, where slaves would theoretically learn skills and trades, and would then, in a true classically liberal way, buy their way to freedom in a free market. Unfortunately for Fanny and the slaves, this attempt utterly failed, also.

Undaunted, she now undertook an extensive lecturing tour of the United States, preaching the liberal Benthamite doctrine of atheism, radical feminine equality, and free love to all the ignorant Americans. The first time around her lectures were actually filled to overflowing, partially because they were free, and partially out of the novelty of her being the first woman ever to have the nerve to give lectures. And it is true that she did have a few supporters.

But mostly the reaction was one of outrage and contempt. Dubbed 'The Red Harlot of Liberty' by the press, it seems that those ignorant Americans just didn't cotton all that much to classical liberalism. And, faced with constant rejection and ever diminishing audiences, in the end Ms. Wright became a bitter old lady who died, forgotten, in Cincinnati.

Because, as I keep mentioning, even though Americans called their system 'democracy', in reality in Political Science terms it had always been an ad hoc representative republic based on 17th Century ideas. And as Alexis de Toqueville, the most famous foreign observer of early America, pointed out at around the same time as Fanny Wright was giving her lectures, the reason that America worked as well as it did had nothing to do with radical individual freedom. And it had everything to do with the strong stabilizing influences of family, church, and voluntary clubs and associations, all of which served to both give the community meaning and also to mediate and to act as buffers between the individual and the larger state.

Anyway, I could go on and on about the strange smorgasbord of ideologies which bubbled up in America throughout the 19th Century. But let's go back to England and Europe now, and see what was happening there.

Okay, first there's obviously Marxism. And I hope that by now I've established the point that Marxism was just one of many, many socialist and pseudo-socialist ideas which were out there. And this isn't the place for a detailed discussion of Karl Marx and his book *Das Kapital*, etc. But for the purposes of this podcast, you should know that Marx was just as much of a product of Enlightenment thinking as was Bentham or John Stuart Mill. After all, he, too, was an atheist, a philosophical materialist, a believer in the supremacy of economics and market forces, and someone who was fighting for an extreme vision of utter equality. He just took it all in a slightly different direction.

One of his twists was that he recognized out front that the only way for his Utopia to happen was through the totalitarian power of the State. And another twist was that he recognized out front that if the marketplace was indeed paramount, then those with economic advantage would never voluntarily give up that advantage. So that to him violent revolution was the only answer possible. And you can add a half twist to that. Because, unlike the theories of Fourier or Owen, which called for voluntary associations, and which therefore could actually be tested in the real world, Marx's theory couldn't be even tested unless and until you did have a violent revolution.

Then there were the Anarchists. Now, once again, this isn't the place for a detailed analysis of Anarchism. Which is good, because beyond calling for the abolition of all central State authority, anarchists have never really agreed on much of anything else. Instead, also once again, I'll point out that Anarchism is yet another child of Enlightenment thinking, just like liberal democracy. Except that it takes the foundational assumptions of hatred of organized religion, philosophical materialism, hatred of existing society, a belief in rational self interest, and the destruction of all tradition, which is then theoretically replaced by a complete egalitarianism. Anarchism then just also goes off in a slightly different direction.

The first self-declared anarchist was a Frenchman named Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who coined the term in 1840 when he published his first book, entitled 'What is Property?' Strangely enough, a few years earlier, while working as a printer, he had been influenced by an old and still obscure Charles Fourier, who had come into the shop trying to get someone to publish *his* work. But whereas Fourier, although foolish, had at least laid out a plan whereby people could actually attempt to build his Utopia, Proudhon ended up mostly ranting and railing against both the idea that private property should exist and the idea that any church or government should ever have any authority over anyone. In his

Utopian vision, once all authority was removed, then workers would somehow automatically voluntarily join together in order to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Now that may sound to you to be on the same relationship to reality as the oceans turning to lemonade. But to his credit Proudhon rejected all violence in his call to reform society. And although it was his rejection of the concept of private property which led a young Karl Marx to do the same, the two soon permanently split over Proudhon's repulsion over Marx's insistence on violent revolution and on the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

In fact, in 1850 Proudhon was actually the more influential of the two. And one of his early disciples was a former Russian aristocrat named Mikhail Bakunin. As with Proudhon, Bakunin started out on almost the same page as Karl Marx, but they soon split, for somewhat the same reasons, and by 1870 they were leaders of diametrically opposed factions of the so-called worker's movement. More tolerant of spontaneous revolution than Proudhon had been, nonetheless Bakunin was dead set against any sort of centralized revolutionary authority. The famous Paris Commune of 1870—which came about as a result of the Franco-Prussian War—was run according to principles established by Bakunin. And for several months anarchists actually controlled almost the entire city. Until of course the authorities regained control and massacred up to 10,000 people.

Okay, now I'd better stop. Because I'm afraid that I'm going to give you the impression—completely contrary to what I said in the last episode—that the 19th Century was some sort of bubbling cauldron of discontented workers and the like. Because it mostly wasn't. In reality, in comparison to the 18th Century, and especially in comparison to the 20th Century, in the 19th Century the center held together remarkably well. Because it turned out that most people *liked* being bourgeois and at peace. They *liked* their Sunday afternoons in the park.

In fact, they liked it so much that by 1890 probably the dominant thought—at least for those who thought about such things—was, as I said last episode, that the upcoming glorious 20th Century would be one in which the entire world would be even more bourgeois and even more peaceful. And the economic thinkers who were most in tune with this idea were the ones who called themselves Fabian Socialists.

Founded in London in 1884, the Fabian Society was mostly the creation of the husband and wife team of economists Sidney and Beatrice Webb. And its members included many of the leading British intellectuals of the day, such as George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells. Sort of a soft and easy

to digest socialism, it foresaw a gradual and peaceful replacement of Capitalism with a system more in tune with a humane and spiritually evolved humanity. Which is why Annie Besant, the founder of Theosophism, a Hindu derived mystical society, was also a member.

Now I hope that you still recall that, in Political Science in general and in Britain in particular, the word 'liberal' is in no way synonymous with 'left wing'. Which is why in Britain, both back then and today, the Labour (ie left wing) Party was and is completely distinct from the Liberal Party. And the Fabian Society was most definitely connected to the Labour Party. What's more, the 'Democratic Socialism' of today, which is most often associated with Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Denmark, is generally seen as the closest successor to Fabian thought, and definitely not to Liberal thought.

Anyway, as I just said, towards the end of the 19th Century, most progressive, optimistic thinkers thought that the natural progression would be towards something similar to Fabian Socialism. Because surely Capitalism couldn't and wouldn't coexist with society's inexorable march towards Truth and Beauty.

And I don't have time to get into the ideas of the American economic writer Henry George. Or of the Cooperative movement. Or of the first welfare state, set up, by of all people, the right wing Otto von Bismarck. Or of all the various Christian Socialist political parties which sprang up.

But what all of these disparate late 19th Century movements did have in common was this belief that the upcoming 20th Century would be one in which we would all also be having Monday in the park, Tuesday in the park, and so on.

Of course, it didn't turn out that way, now did it? And for that we have to thank—oh no, here it comes again—...you guessed it, Liberal Democracy.

Now, as I keep pointing out, the 19th Century was primarily conservative. In fact, although lower case liberals and radicals did continue to exist after the Napoleonic Wars, the official British Liberal Party didn't even exist until 1859. Before that for two hundred years you had Whigs and Tories, who were only very vaguely connected to what we now think of as Liberals and Conservatives. And, in reality, ideologically speaking Whigs and Tories had about as much differentiation as 'shirts and skins'.

And I know that this is getting ad nauseum—but, hey, this is the last history lesson for a while, so bear with me. Anyway, once again, historians agree that *the* major influence on the British Liberal Party was none other than John Stuart Mill.

Now what I've been trying to establish during my tour this episode through various wacky isms is that Liberal Democracy was no less wacky than any of the others. What is different, though,—besides the fact that everyone today has grown up being taught that Liberal Democracy is real, whereas all of the others isms were crazy—is that John Stuart Mill was a lot smarter and a lot more cautious than all of the other wild eyed prophets out there. Thus he never came out in favor of free love. Although, if you think about it, once one dissolves the theory behind the sacred bonds of marriage, then the situation pretty much does lead to that conclusion. Nor did he have anything published admitting that he was an atheist until after he had died. Instead he told everyone that he was an agnostic, which sounded kind of noble and scientific. On top of that he was always agreeing with the other mainstream 19th Century people about the need for morality and piety. And the result was that, instead of being lumped together with the wild eyed Anarchists and Communists, he was seen as a sober and shining intellectual.

In short, he was everything that his father and Jeremy Bentham had, in their atheistic way, hoped and prayed for.

And it's not like all of the various isms I'm briefly discussing shared each and every one of the various Enlightenment era foundational assumptions. But it is critical for you to understand that, unlike the vast majority of 19th Century thought, they were all based in one way or another on the Enlightenment era mindset. That is to say, once you strip away the respectable, middle class veneer of John Stuart Mill, you are left with the same insane foundational assumptions of Jeremy Bentham and the worst part of the Age of Enlightenment.

So now let's go over one last time what those particular foundational assumptions were.

First, of course, there was the atheism and the belief in philosophical materialism—that is to say, that there is no spirit in the Universe, just cold, dead matter. Again, just to remind you, this is in direct contrast to the dominant ethos of the 19th Century, which had seen a rebirth both in religious faith and in what can broadly be termed the 'spiritual'.

Second, as opposed to the communitarian impulse of the 19th Century, there was the liberal dogma about the overwhelming primacy of individual liberty. In fact, one of Mill's most famous works is entitled 'On Liberty'. (Although, interestingly, Mill did not extend this franchise, this supposedly

most important of human needs, to non-whites. He thought it perfectly acceptable for the Brits to conquer and rule so-called 'barbarian' countries such as India and China.)

Then, third, against the prevailing 19th Century view that commerce was something which may have been necessary, but which was hardly praiseworthy, there was the belief that free trade and laissez-faire economics are by far the ideal economic system. (Again: This is why the West's worship of free markets for the last thirty years has been called neo-liberal economics. What's more, Liberal Democracies were supposed to be against wars, not because of some desire for peace or peace of mind., but because wars are bad for business.)

Fourth, there was that belief in rational self-interest. And it shouldn't surprise you in this context that John Stuart Mill was also the era's leading economist.

Although Mill took it even further, and assumed that not only would everyone always be rational, but that it would be the most normal thing in the world that everyone would always act in such a way as to further the common happiness.

Fifth, there was the belief in absolute democracy. That is to say, the only way to make political decisions was through the principle of one human, one vote. No matter how wise or how foolish that human might be.

And then finally there was the Utilitarianism that underlies Liberal Democracy. Which, as I've been trying to show this episode, is of the same level of wackiness as Marxism, Fourier's system, Anarchy, you name it. And it continually amazes me how the plain fact is that that the poor little three year old John Stuart Mill was indoctrinated for twenty-four hours a day into the cult of Utilitarianism. That he never renounced it. And that he even declared (as I noted earlier), quote, 'there is hardly anything in Bentham's philosophy which is not true'. And yet virtually everyone who is involved in strenuously defending Liberal Democracy today seems to be completely unaware of all this.

Although, as I intimated earlier, Mill did make one significant change. Because as you'll recall, to Jeremy Bentham 'push-pin was the same as poetry'. Playing hopscotch was the same as going to the opera. Well, to his credit John Stuart Mill saw how a formulation such as this would lead everyone to pursue the easiest, basest forms of pleasure. So in his system pleasures of the mind were far superior to pleasures of the body. Which, by the way, is pretty much what everyone else who had ever thought about aesthetics throughout history had also concluded.

But this new more sensible sense of aesthetics immediately created a circle which could not be squared. Because although Bentham had come up with a mental construct which was almost beyond

autistic, at least it was clear and consistent. Under Mill's formulation, though, let's start off by agreeing that reading a book is of higher utility than, say, playing solitaire on your computer. But then who's to say that reading 'War and Peace' is of higher utility than reading a trashy novel? And even if we can agree on that, then how does one distinguish the relative utility of, say, reading 'War and Peace' and reading 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'?

Then there was *the* basic contradiction which I've pointed out earlier. Because both Bentham's and Mill's system of Utilitarianism started out with pure personal liberty. But simultaneously each individual, because of their enlightened rational self interest, was automatically supposed to also calculate the entire social ramifications of each and every one of their expressions of pure personal liberty.

So what happens when, out of ignorance, naivete, poor ability to reason, or just plain meanspiritedness, every single individual does not reach the 'proper' social conclusion? Well, then, what answer is there other than that the government, in other words the State, in other words the totalitarian state, has to come in and do it for him?

Then there was the question of fairness and equality. Because Bentham had assumed that every single person had the same intelligence, the same level of rationality, and the same amount of information available to them. Therefore, if someone agreed, say, to a loan at 300% interest, that was their problem. *Caveat emptor*.

But Mill could see that reality wasn't remotely like this. For whatever reasons, some people were much better equipped than others to make their way through the allegorical shopping mall of life. So that, to Mill, something needed to be done so that everyone could start out with the exact same advantages.

Further, Bentham saw exactly zero need for culture or tradition. In his mathematical mind, it just simply did not make sense. After all, weren't we all interchangeable cogs of consumption? Mill, however, did recognize that people needed at least some sense of a larger inclusive group in order to give their lives meaning. So that this problem, too, would have to be solved in order for the Utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill to work.

Now I know that at least some of you are probably still thinking, 'But what does any of this have to do with the modern world?' Well, for the umpteenth time: In one word, Everything. Because, once the science part is over and we pick up on the history again, we are going to see how it wasn't just the foundational assumptions of Utilitarianism, but also the ramifications of the various tweaks that

John Stuart Mill made to it, which are what is responsible for virtually all of the contradictions and craziness which the post modern world exhibits.

But that's for later. For right now there are just a couple more points, which do sort of muddle the picture, which I'd like to make before we take our break from history.

First, John Stuart Mill may have been the largest influence on the development of Liberalism and Liberal Democracy. But he was not the only one. For instance, there was his rough contemporary, a philosopher and scientist named Herbert Spencer. A Utilitarian like Bentham and Mill, Spencer was incredibly influential in the latter part of the 19th Century. And it has been suggested that he is the only philosopher in all of history to sell a million copies of his work during his lifetime. But his extreme libertarianism, his connection with the concept of Social Darwinism, and his either quasi- or outright belief in scientific racism (and experts do disagree on this) all contributed to his reputation evaporating once the 20th Century took hold. After all, Hitler considered the liberal philosopher Spencer to be one of his greatest inspirations.

The second point is that, just as John Stuart Mill tweaked Utilitarianism, so, too, did the British Liberal Party tweak pure Liberal Democracy. For one thing, the party's dominant leader during its first forty years was William Gladstone, who held the position of Prime Minister four different times. And under the heading of 'go figure', it turns out that Gladstone was an extremely religious man. Although, other than that, the rest of him did follow 19th Century Liberal dogma: That is to say, the maximum personal liberty possible, and the fewest political and economic restraints. Or, in other words: Free markets rule.

But once Gladstone was gone, around 1900 a movement calling itself 'New Liberalism' arose. And this was a direct development of one of the conundrums which Mill's changes to Utilitarianism had created. After all, if upbringing or education or whatever had brought about unequal conditions for all of the millions of individuals out there, then it followed that the Liberal Democratic Utopia couldn't happen until this inequality was rectified. And what could fix this inequality better than big government? And thus we start to see the transmogrification of the Liberal from someone who believed in the absolutely least government possible into someone who now demanded the most government possible.

And there would be many more transmogrifications to come.

As I've said, though, all of that is going to have to wait until we pick up the thread of history once again. Because now it's finally time to drop all of that, completely shift our focus, and start in on all the fun and excitement of Science. Which, I assure you, is going to be fun and exciting.

Except... before we go, there is one last point about ideology and history which I would like to leave with you with so as to ponder in the interim. And it is this:

Supposedly the most important aspect of Liberal Democracy is right there in its name: Democracy. The more democracy the better. And somehow Democracy in and of itself not only will solve all of our problems, but its results are beyond question.

But let me ask you a simple question: Did anyone, past or present, ever get to democratically *vote* on Liberal Democracy? Was democracy itself something that all world religions or cultures had somehow agreed was an a priori concept? Was there some sort of cross-cultural Council of Sages which decided this? Or was it more akin to those small groups of Marxists loudly self-proclaiming that they were speaking for some imaginary amorphous group called 'the workers'? Which was then supposed to justify whatever ridiculous or destructive economic or political ideas which said Marxists then tried to implement?

Because consider: As I pointed out way in the beginning, an essential absurd contradiction with Liberal Democracy is that it is a system which by its very definition you cannot vote out of existence. And now let's take it further. Because it turns out that you also cannot vote down any of its constituent parts. Because anything that Liberal Democracy believes which is definitively rejected by the public automatically is transformed into a 'human right'. Which of course isn't subject to a vote. And who gets to determine what are and what are not human rights? Again, not religious or cultural leaders. Not some council of sages. But rather the ideological guardians of... Liberal Democracy.

For instance, consider transgenderism.

Now I don't care what your position is on transgenderism. But even if you are 100% in favor of it, surely you must recognize that up until around twenty years ago virtually no one in the history of the world had ever even thought about it. And somehow now it is a basic human right? When health care isn't? Or full employment isn't?

And the absurdity of all this is so transparent that many of us probably can't even recognize the absurdity. Which then creates another level of absurdity. And so on.

But let's leave it all there for you to, as I said, ponder. Because, as I keep saying, now it's time for us to embark on our Quest for Science. And in so doing I will make the modest claim that we will be able to finally get to know what the true parameters are of the human condition and of human behavior.

Really.

Because now we've reached that cusp. Because most historians agree that the year 1914 was one of the sharpest and cleanest breaks which history has ever recorded. For before that date, the major part of the people in the major part of the 19th Century were living those lives of peace and contentment and, most importantly, having unbridled optimism about the future. And since the beginning of World War I we've had pretty much nothing but unending war, brutality, stress, the collapse of both belief systems and social structures, and raging pessimism. In short, from Utopia to Dystopia is almost a split second.

So on this cheery note we'll finally do that history pause. And next time we'll clear our minds, reset our parameters, and finally get started in on all those science lessons.

But for this time, once again, I'd like to really thank you for so far having listened.