

EPISODE 58

DOPAMINE NATION

Hi there. Welcome to the end of the world. My name is Michael Folz. And this is Episode number 58 of my podcast Dial It Back Or Die. Now the last three episodes have covered the relatively short period between approximately 1962 and approximately 1982. This episode we're going to to all the way to the end of the line. Which will, in more ways than one, signify the end of History.

The End of History. The concept sort of arose out of the philosophy of Hegel, and it then became a central element of Marxist theory: Once class structure was eliminated, there would be no need for conflict, hence no more 'history'. And other 19th Century secular Utopian visions foresaw similar outcomes.

More recently the phrase gained new currency in 1989, when the historian Francis Fukuyama postulated that with the fall of Communism this meant that Liberal Democracy, being the last ideology standing, would march forever into its golden future. Of course, he didn't really classify Liberal Democracy as just another ideology on par with Marxism or Fascism. Rather he saw Liberal Democracies and their Market Economies as the highest natural evolution of human society.

Just exactly the same as Marxists had thought of their ideology.

Not that his theory has stood the test of even thirty years of time. As I mentioned way back in the beginning of all this, even if China completely imploded tomorrow, it would still easily rank as History's most amazing success story, not only for its explosive economic growth, but also for its elimination of poverty, its increase in health and longevity, and even (compared to earlier Chinese history) its relatively great increase in personal liberty. In honestly conducted polls its citizens consistently give their government approval marks of 70-80%. And similar majorities have a positive vision of their future. And this is all for a bunch of Communists.

Next, the EU, which Fukuyama saw as the ideal 'liberal democracy' is now widely regarded to be sclerotic, drifting, and ineffectual. Britain, its second largest member, recently voted to leave. And many of its Eastern members, such as Hungary and Poland, are consciously rejecting the 'liberal democratic' label.

Further afield, many of the Asian so-called democracies are jokes, with celebrities and film stars and political dynasties continually being elected. Others are noted for their fistfights in Parliament and their former leaders constantly being criminally prosecuted and jailed. In Latin America public opinion polls now find that consistent majorities think that some other form of government would be superior to democracy.

And as for those 'authoritarian' regimes, such as Turkey or Russia? Well, recently Western media was jubilant that Vladimir Putin's approval rating had finally slumped. To 59%, from its usual 70-80%. Do you know the last U.S. President whose average approval rating was above 60%? John F. Kennedy, some 57 years ago.

And speaking of U.S. Presidents: Donald Trump is quite plausibly one of the worst people in an entire country of 330 million. So doesn't the fact that he could come even close to being elected President totally invalidate the entire theory of Liberal Democracy?

Apparently not to the true believers in Liberal Democracy.

Anyway, with that one hypothesis about the End of History out of the way, let me offer another one. At least, that is, for the end of the history covering the last four hundred years or so, since the upheavals of the Reformation towards the end of the 16th Century and then the start of the Scientific Revolution in the beginning of the 17th Century.

For as I pointed out way back in one of the earlier episodes, classical civilizations, whether in Rome, Greece, India or China, never thought of history as some sort of process which would lead to some 'end'. They certainly thought that individual souls could progress. Those souls could also, however, just as likely regress. But Progress itself as some sort of goal for Civilization? No, the best that could be hoped for was to have a wise leader and wise laws fairly and honestly enforced. After all, the poor would always be with them. The rules governing harmonious family life and the need for the cultivation and exercise of Civic Virtue were already well established. So that evil kings could arise, famines and plagues and other natural disasters could occur, and enemies could appear on the horizon. But these were all events to be dealt with. Because to a large extent there weren't any great questions of proper behavior, ethics and morals, or social order which needed to be answered.

Now whether you think that the Reformation was a net positive or a net negative for mankind, it is difficult to deny that it certainly shook up the established order. And the Protestants in particular

started equating the Christian progress of each particular soul with some grander societal idea of Progress.

Further, the Scientific Revolution, which, by the way, and just to remind you, happened completely independently of the Reformation, it laid the foundation for much faster and wider technological innovation than humanity had ever before experienced. So the possibility soon arose that maybe, at some point in the future, the poor wouldn't be with us any more. Maybe society at large could actually progress on to something intrinsically better.

Finally, new manufacturing processes by the middle of the 18th Century had helped create the world's first real middle class, with all of the leisure time that this implies. And which also served to shake up the established order all the more. If nothing else, the old feudal structure of aristocracy, clergy, a thin layer of merchants, and then a great unwashed mass of humanity, now seemed irrelevant.

All of which set the stage for that Age of Enlightenment. Which, as I have been attempting to show throughout this podcast, by assuming the absolutely wrong assumptions about human nature and the human condition, has ended up accomplishing way more harm than good.

But this doesn't mean that the initial questions of what Progress should actually mean, how then to achieve it, and how then to properly reorder society, weren't all real and valid. Nor can we blame all of the 18th Century thinkers for their thoughts at the time. After all, given the almost total lack of real scientific knowledge back then, every thinker and every theorist, of just about every stripe, to a large extent was shooting in the dark.

And I think that just about every 18th Century person, no matter how misguided their theories would ultimately be, would have agreed with the famous observation of the American Founding Father John Adams. That he was being a soldier, so that his son could be a businessman, so that *his* son could be an artist. The implication always being that if only someone did figure out what human nature really was, if only someone did figure out a fair and sustainable economic and social order, if only someone did figure out a meaningful philosophical/religious system free of dogma and superstition, then surely Progress would have reached its logical end. And in that sense then so would History. Not to mention senseless striving.

Of course, no one ever asked, implicitly or explicitly, what would happen if all of those puzzles were figured out, and then, because of weakness, laziness, ideological blindness, or whatever, society

then chose to ignore that the problem had been solved, that the solution was at hand. Which, as I have argued, was indeed the situation in the early 1970's. What happens then?

Or to put it another way: What happens when millions of people in the Western world have been crying out for hundreds of years, 'If only there were some answer!'. And then the answer is stumbled upon. But it requires working on one's self, and not trying to change some other 'them'. It requires curbing one's own desires. It requires not trying to get more out of the Universe than one has put into it. And then it turns out that no one really wants to do all of that heavy lifting. What does happen then?

And this all would have been bad enough if the world of 1982 had just gone back to the status quo ante of 1962. But, as I pointed out way back in Episode 2, although America circa 1960 certainly had a certain component of 'experts', academics, and Madison Avenue types who were plugged into the mindset created by Utilitarianism and Liberal Democracy, most Americans still had that vague, ad hoc definition of 'democracy' in their heads. Their clubs and associations and churches might well seem hokey in today's context. But they also showed that most people back then, even in the midst of ever expanding commerce and commercial concerns, even with all of the useless fins on automobiles and even with all of the planned obsolescence, still believed in the validity of religion and groups and organizations.

What's more, there were only three television channels. Most people voted Republican or Democrat because that's what their parents had done. When surveyed, perhaps 5% of 14 year olds expressed a desire to be famous some day. If you had drawn a one mile radius circle around your house, it would have been almost certain that everyone within it would have been homogeneous.

But if the tumult of the Sixties and Seventies had accomplished anything that was indeed irreversible, it was the almost the complete destruction of that world of 1962. And that world view. So that when in the early 1980's society as a whole retreated from its commitment to the good and the wholesome and Nature and Simplicity, there was no 'there' to return to. The America which had previously existed, no matter how unhip and small 'c' conservative, had at least had the virtue of two centuries of tradition and continuity and organic growth. Now, however, all sides agreed that those 'values' were untenable, even dead.

So let me remind you yet again that Liberalism in general, and specifically the theory of Liberal Democracy, created in 19th Century England, had always been somewhere between a bad and a horrible fit with traditional America, what with its intense religiosity and its fairly strict moral code. Even Thomas Jefferson, easily the most Deist and probably the most liberal of the Founding Fathers, had become personally disgusted when confronted by the loose morals and openly secular mindset which surrounded him when posted to France in the mid 1780's.

And it's not like the United States had always been a pure and virtuous society. However, its *image* of itself, especially among the educated and church-going middle classes (who were always easily a sizable majority) was certainly one of strict moral probity.

For instance, consider the history of gambling. In the 17th Century upper class Virginia planters gambled extensively. Many of the colonies raised their revenue through lotteries. In fact, the settlement of Jamestown itself in 1607 was financed through the sale of lottery tickets. But Protestants in general, and Puritans and other Pietists in particular, saw gambling as inherently sinful. After all, a man's daily bread should be earned by the sweat of his brow, and not through the rolling of some dice. And by the 19th Century, even though cities such as New Orleans and San Francisco, not to mention those famous riverboats, were well known as centers for gambling, most respectable Americans saw the behavior as just as contemptible as that of drunken immigrant laborers or Southern lynch mobs.

In fact, one of the greatest impacts of the Progressive Movement of the 1890's was the relatively swift outlawing of all forms of gambling in each and every state in the Union. After all, gambling wrecked lives. It created addicts. It was an open door inviting in both organized crime and all sorts of other disreputable behavior.

But in 1931, when Las Vegas was a town of 5,000 and the entire state's population was 90,000, Nevada, as a temporary expedient due to the Depression, legalized gambling again. And a number of other states around that time also legalized betting on horse races, again solely in order to fill empty state coffers during the midst of the Depression.

By 1960, though, Nevada was still unique among the states. In the Northeast people looked askance at New Hampshire, simply due to the fact that it had a state lottery, that it made its money off of 'sin taxes'. In fact the entire nation was so straitlaced that in Pennsylvania, where I grew up, beer could only be purchased in State liquor stores, which were both few and far between. And because of those Blue Laws which regulated shopping hours, Sundays in an industrial city felt as calm and peaceful as in a small town in Kansas.

But, as I noted earlier, since commercial interests framed the elimination of Blue Laws as an exercise in personal freedom, most people at the time were all in favor of getting rid of them. And ‘slippery slope’ arguments made in their defense were openly ridiculed.

And as time continued, the same sort of ‘progress’ occurred with gambling laws. In 1977 New Jersey, ostensibly to ‘save’ the down at the heels resort city of Atlantic City, legalized gambling there. In 1979 the Seminoles in Florida opened the first reservation based casino. And the race was on. Today Utah and Hawaii are the only two states which do not allow at least some form of gambling.

In fact, it’s no longer called gambling any more. It’s ‘gaming’, evoking old-time family nights of playing gin rummy or Parchesi. And the plain fact that gambling addicts generate fully half of all gambling profits is completely obscured by the fiction that ‘gaming’ is some sort of harmless fun.

And those pesky Blue Laws? By the early 1980’s it was common for supermarkets in relatively small towns to be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And those ubiquitous Quicke Marts? When the 7-11 chain started, the name was an advertisement for the fact that the stores would stay open until the outrageously late hour of 11 PM.

So that the United States which emerged from its brief flirtation in the 1970’s with wholesome purity was far more libertarian a place than would have possibly been imagined just twenty years earlier.

Remember the no fault divorce laws? One unintended (but hardly unimaginable) consequence was that within a few years, although the marriage vows still declared ‘until death do us part’, young brides-to-be in practice understood that, hey, if it didn’t work out they could always get a divorce. Marriage counselors today estimate that up to 80% of divorces could be averted if both parties put a mind to it. It’s also an undisputed sociological fact that children of divorce fare much worse in just about every measurement in both their youth and their adulthood. Nonetheless, when it soon developed that there was almost less social penalty for divorce than there was for unpaid credit card bills, it’s not surprising that the divorce rate grew so explosively between 1960 and 1980.

And the titillation which Playboy Magazine first created in the 1950’s was soon left in the dust. For instance, there had been a suggestive lingerie catalog in the Fifties called ‘Frederick’s of Hollywood’, which just about any middle class female who received one was shocked and disturbed to have received. In 1977 the first Victoria’s Secret store opened in a mall in Palo Alto, and soon there

were hundreds of stores in hundreds of malls, each one with a display window far racier than anything which had been portrayed in those wrapped in brown paper Frederick's of Hollywood catalog.

And naked ladies? In 1974 an owner of a strip club in Cincinnati, named Larry Flynt, started a truly hardcore and deliberately lowbrow pornographic magazine called Hustler, which at its peak in the 1980's would have a circulation of over three million. In comparison, Playboy, with its centerfolds and its interviews with Norman Mailer, was now viewed as modest and restrained. Another token of a quaint bygone era.

So that soon, even though Americans still held onto the idea that they were Americans, in this new world in effect the only morality that mattered was that of the marketplace: If you could make money off of something, then this was the only justification which you needed.

And you may still think it just a strange coincidence that this new mindset meshed perfectly with the particular vision of one Jeremy Bentham. If so, however, I challenge you yet again to come up with one other philosopher, political theorist, or whatever, from whichever culture in the entire history of the world, who thought it wise, or even possible, to discard all meaningful ties to family, religion, tradition, and nation, and to find purpose solely in accumulating possessions and sensory stimulation. After all, merchants have existed forever. People have flaunted wealth for just about forever. But anyone of any breeding or learning in every culture before ours always looked down on such people and such displays. It went with the territory.

Except, of course, for Jeremy Bentham.

And I don't think that you'll find any reason to argue with me when I point out all of the 'Greed is good' uber-materialism which developed by the mid Eighties. Here again, though, it is important to note the distinction between the 'Capitalist' early Sixties and what arose some twenty or so years later.

Because back in 1962 'Business' was a college major reserved for the relatively unintelligent and unimaginative. For instance, the admissions standards for Wharton, one of the country's premier business programs, were much lower than that of Penn, the Ivy League school to which Wharton was attached. And if you were an older person with a lot of money, in a large sense you wanted staid, unimaginative people, and not risk taking mental whizzes, to be the ones in charge of it.

Of course, by the Eighties risk taking mental whizzes were discovering that much more money could be made, for themselves, by manipulating financial instruments than by the long, slow process of

patient investing. And for the first time large numbers of graduates of elite universities, such as Harvard or Princeton, instead of becoming lawyers or doctors, were instead joining Wall Street financial firms.

Nor was this just a boomlet during the ‘material girl’ Eighties. In 1989 Michael Lewis wrote a best selling book, entitled ‘Liar’s Poker’, about his several years being a bond trader, and revealed first hand what a sick and dangerous joke the entire finance industry was. Combined with the supposedly widespread public disgust with the previous few years, he figured that his tell-all would totally deflate anyone’s interest in working in such a degenerate field. Instead he received hundreds and hundreds of letters from young people inquiring how they could get such a job.

And so now it has been almost forty years since the tide went out. Since the baby was thrown out and somehow the foul smelling bath water was kept. Since in effect the dopamine rush became the only source of purpose or meaning in our hyper-individualized lives. And never forget the plain scientific fact that it is in the nature of dopamine that ever more intense experiences are always needed just so as to maintain the same level of rush. For example, just as Playboy Magazine went from being considered as beyond good taste to being relatively mild in less than thirty years, so, too, has internet porn gone from depictions of ‘regular’ sex to ever more violent and beyond the pale imagery in a far shorter time period. And surveys now show that a significant portion of young men can no longer be even physically aroused by actual, real women.

Nor have seemingly world shaking events, such as 9/11, or the Great Recession, or most probably the present pandemic, no matter how hopeful some people have become, done anything to change the trajectory. And why should they? Because as anyone who has ever been addicted to anything knows, once you get on that dopamine treadmill, it is extremely difficult to get off.

But here’s a phenomenon about the present times that Bentham or Mill would never have predicted. And how could they have, since they actively assumed that experiencing pleasure equated with meaning. But hopefully the Science section convinced you of the absurdity of that notion. So... How can a dopamine addicted nation convince itself that there really is any meaning to life?

Well, as I alluded to in the last episode, by totally deluding itself. To create a fake world of pretend. Where everyone is pretend independent and creative. And where everyone is chock full of pretend virtues. After all, if we can just get everyone to pretend together, maybe we can pull it off.

To give an analogy: What if, instead of going to all the trouble and discipline of actually losing weight, everyone just got proficient at using Photo Shop to ‘edit’ all of their pictures? And then the edited pictures became the norm, and not the reality of everyone’s still fat bodies. Expand the idea just a bit, and soon everyone can just curate an entire fake life. (Which, by the way, to a large extent is exactly what already happens on Facebook and Instagram.)

As for fake independence and fake creativity, the word BoBo (for Bourgeois Bohemian) has been used widely in France since the 1990’s, and refers to those highly educated upper class types who claim to despise conspicuous consumption all the while that they are conspicuously consuming. Silicon Valley is famous for these people, who wear jeans and t-shirts to work and drive \$400,000 cars.

And all of this against a background where fewer and fewer people are familiar with the ‘Great Books’, let alone even read anything of a semi-serious nature any more. In the very first episode I ranted about how the New York Times has become so dumbed down. But here’s another somewhat shocking example: Even Ronald Reagan spoke with a higher level of vocabulary and grammar than did either Bill Clinton or Barack Obama. Or I suggest that you find a video of those famous Kennedy-Nixon debates in 1960. You’ll find that both men answered questions extemporaneously in long, coherent paragraphs. I grew up in a row house in a completely working class neighborhood. Yet I remember adults back then talking seriously and intelligently about those debates.

In terms of pure fakeness, however, perhaps the truest hallmark of our postmodern times is the pointless and meaningless virtue signaling that pervades society.

As an example: Anyone who ever experienced the American South as recently as the early 1960’s knows that in comparison—in fact, in comparison with most cultures in most times—today we are surrounded by racial nirvana. What’s more, if you had lived in the South back then and had been anti-racist, you would have not only been taking a bold moral stand, but you might well have also been putting your life on the line.

For a person who is declaring themselves to be anti-racist today, though: Do they really believe that there is a significant population of racists out there that they are making a stand against? (By the way, the best estimate for the number of far-right believers—and many of them even say that they are anti-racist—is 30,000. Which is approximately one out of every 10,000 Americans.) So that, since these snowflakes are expressing a point of view held by the overwhelming majority of Americans, what point are they actually making?

And the same goes with being anti-Fascist. Or being all for ‘fairness’. Or being in favor of helping out poor Third World people. Virtually everybody believes in all that stuff.

But there’s another element at work here. Because the entire theory of Liberal Democracy is that if you maximize ‘personal freedom’, ie individual pleasure seeking, the result will be universal happiness. Yet virtually every indicator of postmodern life, from incidence of chronic depression to ‘deaths of despair’, shows that we are collectively becoming ever unhappier. So that, just as people in the Soviet Union in the Seventies and Eighties saw all of the decay around them, but then concluded that it was all due to their incompetence, their inability to implement Marxism, so, too, do the true believers in Liberal Democracy today assume that society’s unhappiness is just the result of the sloppy implementation of their ideology. Thus they *need* there to be endemic and systemic racism, inequality, or Fascism which still begs to be eliminated. And *then* everyone will be happy.

Anyway, since we don’t need to go on and on about how dreary it is here at the end of the road in 2020, let me suggest again that the real end of History began sometime around the year 1970. Because, to use a maybe more evocative metaphor, this is when the conveyor belt of history broke. And ever since then everything just has been piling up in a big, random jumble on the floor.

Think about it: Up until that point History, for better or for worse, had been relentlessly moving forward. For instance, someone who had left the U.S. in 1950 and then had returned in 1970 wouldn’t have recognized the place. Yet someone who left in 1970 and then returned today, fifty years later, may well be depressed about how things have turned out. But although the weeds might have overtaken the flowers, all the seeds had already been planted back then. There really haven’t been any new ideas or modes of being since then, just endlessly regurgitated and intensified fashions and styles.

Take music. Because in 1965 absolutely no one in the youth culture was still listening to Glenn Miller records from just twenty years earlier. Yet today, fifty-five years later, many of today’s youth still love the music of The Beatles, of Motown, and of Bob Dylan.

And it’s not just the flying cars which haven’t appeared. There also hasn’t been any new household appliance, save television, which has taken hold since the 1920’s. And economic historians agree that all of the significant increases in health and longevity happened over a hundred years ago, what with indoor plumbing, electrification, and the like. That the only genuinely ‘new’ technology has been the computer and the internet. And, given that the ‘plus’ of ease of research on the internet is

counterbalanced by the narcissism and vapidness of social media and the depravity of hard core pornography, that the jury is still out on whether society has actually benefited.

All of which brings us to the End Game.

But before we get into that, let me remind you once again of the difference between 'authoritarian' and 'totalitarian'. Because the authoritarian just wants to control your behavior. Whereas a totalitarian wants to control your actual thoughts.

Let me explain. Roads that you drive on have speed limits. And the state troopers don't care if you want to drive faster than that limit; they just care if you actually do. And in that sense, any organization, let alone any government, by setting limits on your behavior in any way, is essentially authoritarian.

Most of us, of course, never see it that way, so long as we consider those limitations to be fair and reasonable. Although different people can certainly judge 'fair and reasonable' differently. A family man driving along in his minivan, and with a wife and kids to think about, may think a speed limit of 60 to be perfectly fair and reasonable. Whereas a young guy with a new sports car might think 60 to be horribly restrictive. And a full on libertarian would object just on principle. Just remember, though, that most folks who we label 'authoritarian' in their own minds are just trying to set fair and reasonable parameters.

As for the totalitarian impulse, we have this fantasy that somewhere there exist purely evil, power mad dictators determined to control people's thoughts just for the sake of it. But just as in reality there are no James Bond villains out there, so, too, when you look at the actual biographies of supposedly purely evil people, such as Hitler or Stalin, you find that they, like the rest of us, had complex personalities, and that, just like the rest of us, they were a mixture of good and bad traits.

What distinguishes them, though, is that they truly, fully absolutely believed in some fantasy ideology wherein, if we just did this or that, we as a species could magically eliminate evil. And as a result an endless Utopian future would transpire. Hitler's fantasy was that, since all evil ultimately came from Jews, if we could just eliminate them then everyone else would be automatically good, and a thousand year Reich would ensue. Stalin's Marxist fantasy was that, since all evil ultimately came from economic class distinctions, then if we could just eliminate them then the State would magically wither away and a world of endless peace would be upon us.

Now we in the West refuse to accept that we, too, are ensconced within an ideology. No! We are serving the One Truth! (Just as Hitler and Stalin were convinced that they were serving the One Truth.) So we portray them as either James Bond villains, straight out sociopaths, or simply cynical non-ideological manipulators. But, again, delve into their actual biographies. They each had certain admirable traits. And they were each truly True Believers in what they believed.

The problem with such getting-rid-of-evil fantasies, though, is that anyone who has ever had any real experience in the real world knows that both good and evil reside in each of us, that the only way to eliminate evil in each of us is through long, patient discipline, and that, because of that, the issue can never be made to magically disappear. And that, therefore, for such fantasies to prevail, then in effect every single person has to be made to believe that the Emperor really does have new clothes. Because for anyone to impertinently suggest that he doesn't would blow the entire trip.

And *that* is the reason why totalitarians need to control your thoughts.

So now back to the End Game.

Because as I've been tirelessly and tiresomely pointing out throughout this podcast, Liberal Democracy is another one of those fantasy getting-rid-of-evil ideologies. In this one, if we just got rid of the Authority of the Church and State and tradition and whatever, and permitted everyone to pleasure themselves as they saw fit, then everyone would be automatically happy onward into the future. Now of course this fantasy is just as ignorant of the true nature of good and evil and of pleasure and happiness, if not more so, than were Hitler's and Stalin's fantasies. And what makes this particular fantasy even more dangerous is that Hitler and Stalin at least both acknowledged that an interim ruthless dictatorship would be necessary before Utopia could be attained. Whereas Liberal Democracy on the surface at least pretends that its Utopia can be reached without any violence or outside control.

But we've now reached the point where the Liberal Democracy fantasy has progressed to where it has almost taken over the world. And everyone is unhappier than ever. So that the same totalitarian impulse, the same need to rid the world of anyone who would dare suggest that this Emperor is naked, *has* to arise.

Enter the woke generation.

Now it is easy to mock the strange beliefs, the bizarre moral posturing, the fear of microaggressions, and, yes, the totalitarian anger of this ever increasingly larger group of Millennials. But I would suggest that their particular beliefs, and their particular moral outrages, are really beside

the point. After all, once one realizes that the purpose of the totalitarian impulse is to force everyone to believe all of the same things in order that there is no one left to contest the validity of the ideological fantasy, then it really doesn't matter what the content of those beliefs actually is.

Just so long as the gist of the ideological fantasy is maintained.

So that this is what is really behind all that social media shaming. Behind the destruction of someone's career and/or reputation over some stupid tweet from ten years ago. And behind the woke mob howling at even well established liberals who, for whatever reason, fail to agree with each and every ever more radical or irrational demand from said woke mob.

And after the woke mob comes the truly last stage of the devolution: The woke corporation.

Now it may seem beyond strange that a Capitalist, profit making, money seeking organization would enthusiastically support policies and slogans of a supposedly leftist movement. But that would be ignoring the true essence of Co-optation. And it would also be forgetting that the foundational assumptions which are used to justify both Capitalism and free markets and the ideology of Liberal Democracy are identical: Self interest, 'personal freedom', and rejection of 'traditional' morality. Thus the fact that the term 'selling out', which used to refer to the degrading loss of one's personal or artistic integrity, is now seen by YouTube influencers as the highest type of compliment, would seem to be a fitting end to all of these episodes on history and culture and science.

And so we'll leave it at that.

Because, as I said a little while ago, it is getting dreary here at the end of the road.

So that is it, eh? After two years of doing this? The End of History.? The End Game? The end of the road? The end of the line? Everything's over?

Well, not quite. Because, as I promised in the beginning of all this, there very well can be sunlight at the end of all this darkness. And the next last few episodes are going to try to show how we can use our knowledge about real science and real history and real human nature in order to create the 'right' parameters for harmonious living for us hypersocial humans.

Not that salvation is going to be easy. Or even all that probable, given how far down this dopamine addicted road we've traveled.

But though a new road would be a straight and narrow one, it indeed is possible. It's just that there aren't any magic pills to swallow. Or any magic buttons to push.

However, as I said at the outset, it may indeed be nearly impossible to get toothpaste back into the tube. But if you absolutely knew that the alternative was death, you'd at least be highly motivated to make the attempt, now wouldn't you?

Anyway, that's for next time. For this time, as for the previous 57 times, I would like to thank you once again for once again so far having listened.