

The Twilight of Reason

James Kalb

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My talk today is based on my book, *The Tyranny of Liberalism*. The title of this panel is “the descent of liberalism into madness.” And the conference as a whole is about equality. This morning I’ll try to tie all those things into a neat package.

The title of my book is a paradox. Liberalism, after all, presents itself as the party of freedom. If it’s tyrannical, something strange is going on.

Nonetheless, it seems to me and many others that liberalism is indeed tyrannical. It’s not tyrannical in the old-fashioned way other tyrants have been. It’s an up-to-date tyranny that uses softer but more pervasive methods.

At bottom, it’s a tyranny of standards that don’t deal with human life in any sensible way but we’re stuck with because laws and administrative structures enforce them everywhere. The result is the disruption of ordinary human relationships and ways of thinking, for the sake of a system of general social management answerable to no one.

The goals of the system are said to be freedom and human rights. The infinitely abstract and open-ended nature of those goals, and the consequent need to supervise and reform all human attitudes and connections in the interests of what is considered justice, means that they require the abolition of self-rule, of all diversity that matters, and of all social authorities other than global markets and transnational regulatory bodies with comprehensive authority over everything.

The subtitle of my book describes the resulting situation as “administered freedom, inquisitorial tolerance, and equality by command.” The point of the subtitle was to bring out the oddness of the situation. Systematic disruption of ordinary life by an irresponsible governing class in the name of principles that appear simple and rational but don’t make human sense is very odd. Indeed, it’s madness.

Naturally, those in charge of the system don’t view things that way. It’s not the madman who’s crazy, it’s everyone else. The whole world’s always been discriminatory and therefore maliciously irrational, and it’s only now that we’re starting to force it to make sense. The combination of mass immigration, multiculturalism, and a comprehensive welfare state is only simple reasonableness. So is eradication of sexual distinctions—“gay marriage” and what-not. Those things are the new normality. If you see a problem with them there’s something wrong with you.

Such is the established wisdom.

1 Sources

If liberalism is tyrannical madness though what are its nature and roots? It’s based on an understanding of human life that’s dissociated from reality and combines inadequacy with intolerance. I’ve hinted that at bottom it’s the madness of excessive rationalism.

Someone said that “he who lives without folly is not so wise as he thinks.” The comment applies to public life as well as private. We are the heirs of the Enlightenment. The outlook that has authority in public life and discussion today wants to be as neutral and reliable as possible. To that end it takes a neutral, reliable and productive fragment of reason, scientific method, and tries to treat it as the whole. The result is that it restricts what can be known, and therefore what can be treated as real, in such a way as to make it impossible to deal sensibly with human life.

It’s difficult to know how far back to trace the roots of the problem. It’s quite basic, though, and is closely associated with the issue of modernity in general. Francis Bacon and René Descartes therefore stand for a decisive stage in its development:

- Bacon wanted knowledge to become modern technology.
- Descartes wanted knowledge that would stand up against all doubt, so he tried to base knowledge on his own experience—“*cogito, ergo sum*”—together with the most rigorous reasoning possible.

Put the two together and you get a narrow and focused view of knowledge that turns out to be extremely effective within its limits. We should be as skeptical as possible, take nothing on faith, and base knowledge and our whole way of acting as much as possible on our own experience and on logic and mathematics. And we should treat the purpose of knowledge as practical, as a matter of getting what we want.

That approach to knowledge achieved great successes and acquired a great deal of intellectual authority. Also, its rigorous attitude toward evidence and inference causes it to take an extremely critical attitude toward tradition, common sense, revelation, and other nonscientific forms of knowledge.

The result has been what’s called scientism: the attempt to limit knowledge to a very few sources, those upon which modern natural science relies most explicitly. If science is our only source of knowledge, the objects of modern scientific study are the only things we can treat as real. Everything else is opinion, feeling, taste, prejudice, or fantasy.

2 Scientism and liberalism

One consequence of such an outlook is liberalism. Other political manifestations of scientism, like scientific socialism, were too crude and have destroyed themselves. When applied to human relations, scientism gives us a highest good as well as a highest standard of justice. From those two principles it is possible to generate a complete political and moral system. That system is contemporary liberalism.

- The highest good scientism gives us is freedom, understood as satisfaction of desire. Preference and aversion are observable,

and they tell us what to do. Since they are available as guides, energetic application of Occam's Razor tells us we should stick with them, and concentrate on setting up a system that gets us what we want and gets rid of what we don't want. Why bring in other standards based on things that are harder to demonstrate, like God or the good, beautiful, and true? That would be unscientific and therefore irrational.

- The standard of justice that corresponds to scientism is equality. What is good is simply what is desired, so all goods must equally be goods. Also, all men equally confer goodness on things by desiring them, so the desires of all men have an equal right to consideration. To say one man's desires are less valuable than another's is simply to value the first man less. That is arbitrary, discriminatory and oppressive. It leads to Auschwitz, and cannot be allowed.

In effect, scientism tells us that there are no transcendent goods, just desire, and there are no essences of things that we have to accept and respect, the world is what we make of it. So the point of politics, social life, and morality must be to treat the world simply as a resource and turn the social order into a kind of machine for giving people whatever they happen to want, as long as what they want fits the smooth working of the machine. And the machine must treat all men and all desires equally, because all men are equally men and all desires equally desires.

2.1 Features of the liberal order

The specific features of the liberal order follow from its basic logic. These include:

- **Universality.** Reason is universal. Whatever it demands applies always and everywhere. Since liberalism follows from reason, it too must be universality applicable.
- **Absolute validity.** A system based simply on reason is the only possible legitimate system. Dissidents are not properly part of

political discussion, since they reject reason. They should be ignored or suppressed lest they corrupt social discourse.

- Insistence on abolition of all standards and institutions at odds with the unity, clarity, universality, and efficiency of the system.

2.2 Liberal institutions

The last point is very important but not often made explicitly. The insistence on rational unity is what lies behind the demands for inclusiveness, tolerance, and the like. For a rational technological system to perfect itself, everything has to be transparent and manageable from the point of view of those on top. All institutions have to have a clear rational orientation toward maximizing preference satisfaction or equality, and it has to be possible to supervise them and intervene to correct irrationalities.

The only institutions that can measure up to those standards are markets (especially global markets) and bureaucracies (especially transnational bureaucracies). In contrast, traditional and local institutions—family, nation, religion, and non-liberal conceptions of personal dignity and integrity—are

- Opaque and resistant to outside control. They resist change.
- Not oriented toward maximum equal satisfaction of individual preference. They are oppressive.
- Not based on expert scientific knowledge. They are ignorant and prejudiced.
- Dependent on distinctions and authorities that are not required by liberal market and bureaucratic institutions. The family, for example, depends on distinctions of age, sex, and blood. It follows that such institutions are bigoted and hateful.

Accordingly, liberalism tells us, institutions other than bureaucracies and markets have no right to exist. Their very existence

makes a just, rational, and efficient social order impossible. If you cannot simply get rid of them then you must redefine them as something else or reduce them to private choices that are not allowed to affect social relations that matter. You must privatize family, religion, and personal morality, and redefine nation and culture as folk dancing and ethnic cuisine.

2.3 Liberal dominance

Liberals say they believe in reason. On their understanding of reason, they are right beyond all possibility of discussion. What part of maximum equal satisfaction of legitimate preferences could any intelligent and well-meaning person have a problem with? Their opponents are therefore not just wrong but so obviously wrong that there must be something wrong with them. If you oppose liberalism

- What you favor is not based on knowledge and is against reason. You are ignorant, confused, and irrational.
- You are trying to get what you want at the expense of what other people want. You are greedy.
- Since you want to stick other people with what you want them to have instead of what they want, you are willful and oppressive. You are a bigot and a hater.

Those views are now fundamental to the public legal and moral order. They are taught in the schools, insisted on by reputable public figures, and guide respectable statecraft. They mean that in much of the West you can now be fined or put in jail for saying there are problems with homosexuality or Islam.

They stack the rules of discussion against us. Public discussion must be based on principles acceptable to all parties, but the only principles liberals will accept for purposes of public discussion are stripped-down scientific principles that when taken as the basis of discussion automatically give back liberalism.

The situation has us caught. It is very difficult to avoid falling into the basic assumptions on which the people around us carry on

discussions. The most basic of those assumptions is their understanding of reason, which as now understood requires liberalism. That is why even people who officially do not believe in the basic principles of liberalism—would-be followers of religious tradition for example—most often largely accept them in practice.

3 Problems with scientism and liberalism

From a scientific and liberal standpoint all this appears too obvious to be questioned. Nonetheless, it's madness, because it provides a comprehensive scheme of social life that does not engage with the world in which we actually live. You will not understand the world or deal with it sensibly if you try to simplify it too much and leave out qualities and distinctions that cannot be measured. The attempt to do so leads down very strange paths.

3.1 Ethical irrationality

To begin, you will not be able to deal intelligently with questions of good and bad. Good and bad are not objects in space, so scientific reasoning cannot handle them. Preference and aversion don't substitute, since the reason we talk about good and bad is that they supply a standard for what our preferences and aversions *should* be.

Liberals try to turn that incapacity into a virtue. They claim their approach lets a hundred flowers bloom because it does not depend on any particular view as to the nature of the good. Each can follow his bliss.

The claim is obviously false. The good is simply whatever it is that makes a goal worth pursuing. No government or social order can stand above arguments about what goals are worth pursuing. Decisions must be made that foreclose other decisions, so some goals must be accepted and others suppressed. A government cannot equally favor protection of the unborn and the right to choose abortion.

It follows that in order to deliberate rationally a government must adopt some particular understanding of the good and reject

others. If a government claims to be based simply on freedom and equality independently of any definite conception of the good, either it's simply acting irrationally or something's being hidden.

3.2 Irresolvable conflicts

The attempt to leave the question of the good unsettled—in practice, to define it as equal preference satisfaction—soon leads to insoluble problems. Liberals want to say that freedom is freedom to do what you want. In order to say that, however, they have to do away with practical conflicts among desires. Otherwise, as in the case of abortion, some people's desires have to give way to other people's desires.

The need to abolish conflicts makes anything anybody wants that affects others a problem. To resolve the problem advanced liberalism limits legitimate human goals to those that can be fully integrated into a universal rational system of production, distribution, and control. The model for all freedom becomes Burger King's have it your way—the ability to choose completely arbitrarily among goods the system finds equally easy to provide: careers, consumer goods, and private indulgences.

All other goals are ruled out of order, because they cannot be managed and are likely to cause disruptions, disputes, and oppression. To that end, human conduct, attitudes, and relationships have to be supervised and controlled. A comprehensive regime of political correctness must be imposed because otherwise the wrong sort of goals will creep in. Someone might want to choose cultural cohesion or traditional marriage, for example, and those things would create centers of social power that violate liberal freedom and equality simply by existing.

Such an attempt to abolish oppression by abolishing conflict makes no sense because it is itself extraordinarily oppressive: man does not live by career, consumption, and private indulgence alone, and to force him to do so is to deny him what he cares about most.

In any event, oppression cannot be defined without knowing what goods are worth having. Careers compete with careers, consumption of offroad vehicles is at odds with consumption of un-

spoiled nature, and private indulgences like drugs and pornography have public effects. In such cases, who is oppressing whom? If all goals are equally valued, it is impossible to say.

3.3 The dialectic of subjectivity

A final radical result of the scientific and liberal outlook is extreme subjectivism that disintegrates reason. The result is paradoxical, since the original goal was total rational objectivity.

3.3.1 The dissolution of connections and distinctions

The problem was already visible in Descartes, whose extremely critical attitude toward knowledge tended to reduce the scope of knowledge to his own immediate experience.

In our day it starts most obviously with concepts such as the good and beautiful. Scientism tells us that the good and beautiful are real only if they can be observed and measured. To make them observable and measurable, however, they must be identified with what is preferred, so that they can be studied by the methods of the social sciences. But if good means preferred, it is simply a matter of what we want, and the triumph of the good becomes the triumph of the will.

Ideas have consequences. In particular, it matters what we take as our most basic guide to action. If willfulness is our guide, then rejection of stable qualities and relationships becomes a basic principle of life.

A technological approach to things promotes the dissolution of such things in any event. That approach puts us in a sort of eternal now without past, place, context, or future, in which everything is a neutral resource for the achievement of the projects of whoever is in control. A computer doesn't care what you program it to do, it works the same in all settings, and it can interact with equal facility with any other computer anywhere.

The result of such influences, as someone said, is that all that is solid melts into air. Hence the abolition of traditional culture and the belief that history has ended, since both depend on particular connections and meanings. Hence also the assertion that

essentialism—the belief that things have a particular nature and meaning—is ignorance and bigotry, and discrimination—treating one person, act, or thing as different from another in a way that matters—is supremely irrational and wrong.

And hence also inclusiveness. If willfulness is our guide, and there are no essential natures, then there are no natural classifications. We invent categories for our own purposes, so for me to classify myself as X and you as Y is simply for me to decide to exclude you by arbitrary line-drawing, perhaps for the sake of defining myself as a superior being. Why should I be allowed to do that, especially when I confirm suspicions as to my motives by suggesting that there's a problem with Ys? Isn't classification of other people a sort of conceptual apartheid that—like everything else rightwing—leads straight to Auschwitz?

3.3.2 Postmodernism

Subjectivism thus comes to permeate thought and action in general. Under such circumstances it can hardly be kept from infecting concepts of truth. Hence postmodernism. If our thoughts and concepts are our own creation for our own purposes, and if our assertions about matters of fact always go beyond the evidence for them and so have a necessary subjective element anyway, then why attribute any kind of objectivity to them? Isn't it obvious they're just expressions of will like everything else? Hence the claim that the Cartesian outlook has been superseded, that our condition of placelessness puts us in an open-ended postmodern age, and so on.

That view has become influential, and it's done a lot of damage in politics, the humanities and the social sciences. Its influence is subject to limitations, though. The fuzzier aspects of current thought—eco-feminism and whatnot—help obfuscate issues and give some people a substitute religion, but they're more ornamental than functional. In practice, skepticism, including postmodern skepticism, is a secondary matter. Social constructivism does not answer questions. When decisions have to be made, there has to be some way of making them, and announcing that nothing has any real nature or connection to anything else doesn't do the job.

Scientism still rules. Modern natural science came into being in response to skepticism and is designed to defend itself against skeptical objections. In battle it's usually the last view left standing. For that reason the contemporary expert wraps himself in the mantle of scientific method or some imitation thereof. Those who rely on less formal modes of knowledge, such as tradition and common sense, are out of luck.

Postmodern views thus make it harder to contest claims of expertise. They do change expertise somewhat as an institution. They make it less transparent and more likely to resort to manipulation of procedure and evidence for political ends. A postmodern expert, with the benefit of multiculturalism, tells us that what a witch doctor or flat earther thinks is on a level with what any laymen thinks. The effective conclusion is that laymen should shut up, abandon everything they ever thought they knew, and accept what experts tell them to do and think.

Expert consensus becomes irrefutable no matter how silly it is. It creates reality. If the official expert view is that race does not exist or "diversity" is monolithically beneficial, then that's the truth of the matter, and if you express doubts you're evil, willfully ignorant, or mentally ill.

[NOTE: due to lack of time, what follows was not actually delivered at the conference.]

3.4 Self-refutation

At bottom, the problem with scientism and liberalism is that they try to do too much with too little. You can't be scientific about everything. Nor does equal freedom have the substantive content to answer the questions it has to answer. Free to do what? Equal in what respect? Liberalism can't say. It can't deal with the world as it is, so it becomes self-referential. Instead of freedom we get the cause of freedom as the highest good. Freedom becomes freedom to be free, or rather freedom to be liberal.

Political correctness is the left wing version of how that works in practice, while the Iraq war and global democracy are the right-wing version. The idea, it seems, is that we do not know what

freedom is, but we do know that everyone must be forced into it. The moral is that when equal freedom is made the highest principle it becomes tyrannical. The attempt to reduce everything to its measure leads to fanaticism that has no place for the truths men need or the goods men love most.

4 What do we do?

To deal with our situation we need a different and broader conception of reason: that is, a more adequate and comprehensive way of coming to reliable conclusions about the good, beautiful and true.

- As to the good, one thing we need is what might be called moral essentialism. Rational action is not a simple matter of means and ends. To act rationally is also to act in accordance with what things are. Loyalty, for example, is rational because it's a matter of acting in accordance with what I am. I'm loyal to my country and my family not simply because I happen to feel like it or to achieve some other goal but because I'm part of them and they are part of me. To be disloyal would deny and to some extent destroy myself. That would not be rational.
- As to the beautiful, we need a way to take it seriously. Beauty is something modernity simply can't give us. In principle, it should be a great argument in favor of conservatism. It's radically opposed to scientism. Its point, after all, is to be exactly what it is. It's irreducibly non-technological. That makes it useful for debunking utility. It shows that what we love is not simply what we desire. It demonstrates that what matters most can be recognized, but not demonstrated. And the way it is produced proves the necessity of tradition.
- And as to the true, we need the transcendent. The modern outlook has no way of dealing with realities that we cannot fully grasp. Those realities include almost everything we care about as human beings: for example, the good, beautiful and true.

So we have to identify a source of knowledge other than modern natural science. Otherwise nothing we say will make sense to anyone. All arguments will end by reinventing liberalism. The madness of the present day will be invulnerable and immortal.

4.1 Common sense

One way to start is to point out the necessity of good sense and judgment for knowledge. That necessity is a consequence of the personal, social, and informal aspects of knowledge. Mathematics can be formalized, but not much else can. Good sense and judgment are necessary for science itself, and give it a personal and informal element.

Descartes tried to avoid the problem by claiming he could take good sense for granted. In the very first sentence of his Discourse on Method he says that

Good sense is, of all things among men, the most equally distributed: for every one thinks himself so abundantly provided with it, that those even who are the most difficult to satisfy in everything else, do not usually desire a larger measure of this quality than they already possess.

It is a very amusing quotation. Descartes, though, meant it literally. He had to mean it literally, because his system of universal clear knowledge based on individual subjective experience cannot work unless he can assume personal good sense away as an issue. Otherwise, personal interpretations of subjective experience can't necessarily be relied on.

In fact, good sense and judgment are subtle, complex and hard to assess. They cannot be defined or quantified, and our need for them is all-pervasive. Some of us have more of them than others, and none has enough. The realization that we ourselves lack them is normally taken to be the beginning of wisdom.

For that reason the kind of reasoning Descartes was willing to recognize, which Pascal called *l'esprit de géométrie* (the mathematical mind) and which insists on complete order, clarity, and certainty, is not enough. We also need Pascal's *esprit de finesse* (intuitive mind). That's the same as what Newman calls the illative

sense and I call good sense and judgment. It is that latter form of reasoning, however named, that enables us to draw reliable conclusions from myriad considerations we could not possibly explain with any clarity, or often even identify.

4.2 Tradition, revelation and the Church

So where do we get Pascal's esprit de finesse? The capacity for it may be an inborn gift to some extent, but if so it is one that needs development. The most important source is experience—dealing with whatever life throws up and seeing what works, what does not, and what comes into focus. If we are ordinarily well-disposed, we become wiser as we grow older.

4.2.1 Necessity of tradition

Since we are limited, life is short, and the world is subtle and complicated, individual experience is not enough to enable us to know what we need to know. Man is social, and reliance on social experience, or tradition, is basic to what we are. Tradition is necessary to the very language we use to order and articulate experience. Without it we could not say what things are or what they mean. Judgment and good sense would remain at an animal level.

The need for tradition applies to particular pursuits as well as life in general. Every complex activity has a tradition. Modern natural science, which is thought to be so strictly rational, also has a tradition. It even involves an element of personal apprenticeship: it matters among scientists who one trained under.

So we have a source for the informal knowledge that enables us to evaluate beliefs and actions to decide whether they are worth accepting and doing. That source is tradition. Everybody relies on it, so everybody must admit its authority.

4.2.2 Choice of tradition

Which tradition, though? After all, there are many of them, and they clash. We can stick to our own tradition, but we often find ourselves heir to several, and besides, tradition claims to be about

something other than itself, and so can't be understood as an ultimate standard. We need some sort of criterion for comparing traditions.

For starters, we can insist on a tradition that can make sense of itself as such. That rules out scientism and liberalism right away, since their demand for comprehensive perspicuous rationality rules out principled reliance on any tradition, even their own.

A tradition we accept should also be one that is not doomed to fall apart. Such a standard is more demanding than it might seem. Tradition by itself has certain problems. It can be wrong, but that is not the real problem, since it is reasonable to suppose that if experience misleads you then more experience is the best thing to set you straight.

The more basic problem is that by itself tradition cannot maintain its coherence and its ability to guide us reliably. The reason is that in and of itself tradition—the simple accumulation of experience and what various people have said and done—cannot resolve all the issues it throws up. Look at where mainstream Protestantism or modern thought in general, which rely solely on the accumulation of experience, discussion, and the decisions of particular men, have ended up.

Discussion does not in fact lead to consensus on the most basic issues. The liberal thinker John Rawls admits as much, in his book *Political Liberalism*. It follows that tradition needs an authority transcending itself to resolve the issues it cannot resolve on its own.

Science has recourse to observation for that purpose. That is fine for objects in space. Not everything is an object in space, though, and on other issues the continuing coherence of tradition also requires an authority that appeals to something beyond inherited consensus and present-day discourse.

4.2.3 Revelation

In the case of ultimate moral and spiritual issues, it is hard to imagine what the authority could be other than revelation. It is important to note that ultimate issues do not keep their distance from us. Human knowledge in general depends on them, since knowl-

edge is social and enduring complex social cooperation depends on ultimate issues. If people do not believe in truth or honesty, for example, scholarship and the scientific enterprise will go nowhere.

Without revelation, then, tradition will eventually become incoherent. Our acceptance of our own views will become irrational and fideistic since other men, apparently as reasonable as ourselves, will reject them, and we will be unable to provide reasons that are sufficient to show them wrong. Under such circumstances coherent thought and reason, which depend on tradition we are entitled to accept, will become impossible.

We thus need revelation. By itself, however, it is not enough because it does not settle its own interpretation. So we also need an authoritative interpretive method to resolve basic issues. We need, in fact, something that functions like a pope.

If no pope is available we can no longer rely on tradition, since we know in advance it will not be able to resolve the basic issues life will predictably throw up. We know it is going to fall apart—not develop in accordance with its own principles, but fall apart—so we cannot rationally believe in what it tells us. Since we cannot believe in it, and since connected thought and belief must be integrated with some particular tradition, we cannot rationally believe in anything that is at all complex.

In summary: without a coherent tradition worthy of rational belief, reason falls apart. Without some definite way to resolve questions that cannot otherwise be resolved, no such tradition can exist. We cannot get by without something very much like the Church. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is, among other things, a statement of the necessity of an authoritative Church based on revelation to a life of reason.

5 Outlook

The modern understanding of reason cannot meet human needs. We should ask people to consider whether the answers present-day thought gives them are adequate to their actual experience of life. Rather than engaging liberals by accepting their stated principles, which invariably lead back to scientism and liberalism, we

should point out the real principles by which they live, which always smuggle objective goods and particular loyalties back in to make their system minimally workable.

Changing something as basic as a conception of reason is not easy. If we preach the word in season and out of season, however, people will get used to hearing what we have to say even if it takes them a while to understand what it means. And if they do understand it, and it makes sense to them, first the discussion and then the possibilities of social order will change radically.

Our advantage is that the truth will out. Liberalism seems all-powerful, but it leaves out too much and cannot last. Victory makes it increasingly corrupt. If getting your way is the ultimate reality, there is no basis for the sacrifices even ordinary honesty requires. For illustrations, look at news stories about corruption in Brussels and at the UN. Look at present-day intellectual life.

It is hard to live happily or well as a liberal. Crude measures like surveys of reported happiness and charitable giving show as much. There are too many things the outlook cannot deal with. The future belongs to people with children, for example, and liberalism does not fit well with family life. Liberals do not have children.

Victory makes people stupid. That is especially true when the view that has won leaves out as much as scientism and liberalism do. Current ways of thinking deprive good sense and judgment of their basis and eventually their authority.

The problem is not merely theoretical. Political correctness and zero tolerance are among the consequences. No matter how stupid people think they are, they cannot get rid of them. That is a sign visible to everyone that something has gone basically wrong in the way people think about things.

Such signs can be multiplied. They include the coarseness of modern culture, the ugliness and inhumanity of modern architecture, the irrationalism of a great deal of academic thought, the narrowness of many apologists for modern science, the abusiveness of discussion relating to religion and traditional morality, and the growing censorship, which in much of the West is now backed by fines and imprisonment. We have seen the future, and it does not work. Surely, something so dysfunctional can be beaten.

We cannot expect fast results, but we have good reason to be

confident in the ultimate outcome. It can seem like we are getting nowhere, but it is not possible to know that. Pour water into a bucket full of sand, and it looks like nothing is happening, and then the bucket overflows.

The Soviet Union looked like it was going to last forever, but did not. The same is likely to be true of liberalism. Basic issues cannot be suppressed forever, and they can reassert themselves very quickly when the wind changes. The realization that the emperor has no clothes is sudden and changes everything.