

Lex Fridman Podcast #448 - Jordan Peterson: Nietzsche, Hitler, God, Psychopathy,

Suffering & Meaning

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Lex Fridman

The following is a conversation with Jordan Peterson. His second time on this, The Lex Fridman Podcast. You have given a set of lectures on Nietzsche as part of the new Peterson Academy, and the lectures were powerful. There's some element of the contradictions, the tensions, the drama, the way you like, lock in on an idea, but then are struggling with that idea, all of that, that feels like it's a Nietzschean.

Jordan Peterson

Well, he's a big influence on me stylistically and in terms of the way I approached writing, and also many of the people that were other influences of mine were very influenced by him. So I was blown away when I first came across his writings. They're so intellectually dense that I don't know if there's anything that approximates that. Dostoevsky maybe, although he's much more wordy. Nietzsche is very succinct partly he was so ill because he would think all day he couldn't spend a lot of time writing. And he condenses writings into very short while this Aphoristic style he had, and it's really something to strive for. And then he's also an exciting writer like Dostoevsky and dynamic and romantic in that emotional way. And so it's really something, and I really enjoyed doing that. I did that lecture that you described, that lecture series is on the first half of Beyond Good and Evil, which is a stunning book. And that was really fun to take pieces of it and then to describe what they mean and how they've echoed across the decades since he wrote them. And yeah, it's been great.

Lex Fridman

Taking each sentence seriously and deconstructing it and really struggling with it. I think underpinning that approach to writing requires deep respect for the person. I think if we approach writing with that kind of respect, you can take Orwell, you can take a lot of writers and really dig in on singular sentences.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah, well, those are the great writers because the greatest writers virtually everything they wrote is worth attending to. And I think Nietzsche is in some ways the ultimate exemplar of that because often when I read a book, I'll mark one way or another, I often fold the corner of the page over to indicate something that I've found that's worth remembering. I couldn't do that with a book like Beyond Good and Evil because every page ends up marked. And that's in marked contrast, so to speak, to many of the books I read now where it's quite frequently now that I'll read a book and there won't be an idea in it that I haven't come across before. And with a thinker like Nietzsche, that's just not the case at the sentence level. And I don't think there's anyone that I know of who did that to a greater extent than he did. So there's other people whose thought is of equivalent value. I've returned recently, and I'm going to do a course on to the work of this Romanian historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, who's not nearly as well known as he should be, and whose work, by the way, is a real antidote to the postmodern, nihilistic, Marxist stream of literary interpretation that the universities as a

whole have adopted. And Eliade is like that too. I used this book called *The Sacred and the Profane* quite extensively in a book that I'm releasing in mid-November, *We Who Wrestle with God*, and it's of the same sort. It's endlessly analyzable. Eliade walked through the whole history of religious ideas and he had the intellect that enabled him to do that. And everything he wrote is dreamlike in its density. So every sentence or paragraph is evocative in an image-rich manner. And that also, what would you say deepens and broadens the scope. That's part of often what distinguishes writing that has a literary end from writing that's more merely technical. The literary writings have this imagistic and dreamlike reference space around them. It takes a long time to turn a complex image into something semantic. And so if you're writing evokes deep imagery, it has a depth that can't be captured merely in words. And the great romantic poetic philosophers, Nietzsche is a very good example, Dostoevsky is a good example, so is Mircea Eliade, they have that quality and it's a good way of thinking about it. It's kind of interesting from the perspective of technical analysis of intelligence, and there's a good book called *The User Illusion*, which is the best book on consciousness that I ever read. It explains the manner in which our communication is understandable in this manner. So imagine that when you're communicating something, you're trying to change the way that your target audience perceives and acts in the world. So that's an embodied issue, but you're using words which obviously aren't equivalent to the actions themselves. You can imagine that the words are surrounded by a cloud of images that they evoke and that the images can be translated into actions. And the greatest writing uses words in a manner that evokes images that profoundly affects perception and action. And so I would take the manner in which I act and behave, I would translate that into a set of images. My dreams do that for me, for example. Then I compress them into words. I toss you the words, you decompose them, decompress them into the images and then into the actions. And that's what happens in a meaningful conversation. It's a very good way of understanding how we communicate linguistically.

Lex Fridman

So if the words spring to the full visual complexity and then that can then transform itself into action.

Jordan Peterson

And change in perception because-

Lex Fridman

Change in perception. Yeah.

Jordan Peterson

Well, those are both relevant and it's an important thing to understand because the classic empiricists make the presumption, and it's an erroneous presumption that perception is a value-free enterprise. And they assume that partly because they think of perception as something passive. You just turn your head and you look at the world and there it is. It's like

perception is not passive. There is no perception without action ever, ever. And that's a weird thing to understand because even when you're looking at something like your eyes are moving back and forth, if they ever stop moving for a tenth of a second, you stop being able to see. So your eyes are jiggling back and forth just to keep them active. And then there's involuntary movements of your eyes and then there's voluntary movements of your eyes. What you're doing with your eyes is very much like what a blind person would do if they were feeling out the contours of a object. You're sampling and you're only sampling a small element of the space that's in front of you, and the element that you choose to sample is dependent on your aims and your goals. So it's value saturated. And so all your perceptions are action predicated and partly what you're doing when you're communicating is therefore not only changing people's actions, let's say, but you're also changing the strategy that they use to perceive. And so you change the way the world reveals itself for them. See, this is why it's such a profound experience to read a particularly deep thinker because you could also think of your perceptions as the axioms of your thought. That's a good way of thinking about it. A perception is like a... what would you say? It's a thought that's so set in concrete that you now see it rather than conceptualize it. A really profound thinker changes the way you perceive the world. That's way deeper than just how you think about it or how you feel about it.

Lex Fridman

What about not just profound thinkers, but thinkers that deliver a powerful idea, for example, utopian ideas of Marx or utopian ideas, you could say dystopian ideas of Hitler? Those ideas are powerful and they can saturate all your perception with values and they focus you in a way where there's only a certain set of actions.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah, right. Even a certain set of emotions as well.

Lex Fridman

And it's intense and it's direct, and they're so powerful that they completely altered the perception and the words spring to life.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah, it's like a form of possession. So there's two things you need to understand to make that clear. The first issue is that as we suggested or implied, that perception is action predicated, but action is goal predicated, the act towards goal. And these propagandistic thinkers that you described, they attempt to unify all possible goals into a coherent singularity. And there's advantages of that. There's the advantage of simplicity, for example, which is a major advantage. And there's also the advantage of motivation. So if you provide people with a simple manner of integrating all their actions, you decrease their anxiety and you increase their motivation. That can be a good thing if the unifying idea that you've put forward is valid, but it's the worst of all possible ideas if you put forward an invalid, unifying

idea, and then you might say, well, how do you distinguish between a valid unifying idea and an invalid unifying idea? Now, Nietzsche was very interested in that, and I don't think he got that exactly right. But the postmodernists, for example, especially the ones, and this is most of them with the Neo-Marxist bent, their presumption is that the fundamental unifying idea is power, that everything's about compulsion and force essentially, and that that's the only true unifying ethos of mankind, which is, I don't know if there's a worse idea than that. I mean, there are ideas that are potentially as dangerous. The nihilistic idea is pretty dangerous, although it's more of a disintegrating notion than a unifying idea. The hedonistic idea that you live for pleasure, for example, that's also very dangerous. But if you wanted to go for sheer pathology, the notion that, and this is Foucault in a nutshell and Marx for that matter, that power rules everything. Not only is that a terrible unifying idea, but it fully justifies your own use of power. And I don't mean the power Nietzsche talks about. His will to power was more his insistence that a human being is an expression of will rather than a mechanism of self-protection and security. He thought of the life force in human beings as something that strived not to protect itself, but to exhaust itself in being and becoming. It's like an upward oriented motivational drive even towards meaning. Now he called it the will to power, and that had some unfortunate consequences, at least that's how it's translated. But he didn't mean the power motivation that people like Foucault or Marx became so hung up on.

Lex Fridman

So it's not power like you're trying to destroy the other. It's power, full flourishing of a human being, the creative force of a human being in that way.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Well, you could imagine that... and you should, you could imagine that you could segregate competence and ability. Imagine that you and I were going to work on a project, we could organize our project in relationship to the ambition that we wanted to attain, and we can organize an agreement so that you were committed to the project voluntarily and so that I was committed to the project voluntarily. So that means that we would actually be united in our perceptions and our actions by the motivation of something approximating voluntary play. Now, you could also imagine another situation where I said, here's our goal and you better help me, or I'm going to kill your family. Well, the probability is that you would be quite motivated to undertake my bidding. And so then you might say, well, that's how the world works. It's power and compulsion. But the truth of the matter is that you can force people to see things your way, let's say, but it's nowhere near as good as strategy even practically than the strategy that would be associated with something like voluntary joint agreement of pattern of movement strategy towards a goal. See, this is such an important thing to understand because it helps you start to understand the distinction between a unifying force that's based on power and compulsion, and one that is much more in keeping, I would say with the ethos that governs western societies, free western societies, there's really a qualitative difference, and it's not some morally relativistic illusion.

Lex Fridman

If we just look at the nuance of Nietzsche's thought, the idea he first introduced in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* of the *Übermensch*. That's another one that's very easy to misinterpret because it sounds awfully a lot like it's about power. For example, in the 20th century, it was misrepresented and co-opted by Hitler to advocate for the extermination of the inferior non-Aryan races.

Jordan Peterson

And the dominion of the superior Aryans. Yeah, yeah. Well, that was partly because Nietzsche's work also was misrepresented by his sister after his death. But I also think that there's a fundamental flaw in that Nietzschean conceptualization. So Nietzsche of course, famously announced the death of God, but he did that in a manner that was accompanied by dire warnings like Nietzsche said, because people tend to think of that as a triumphalist statement. But Nietzsche actually said that he really said something like the unifying ethos under which we've organized ourselves psychologically and socially has now been fatally undermined by, well, by the rationalist proclivity, by the empiricist proclivity. There's a variety of reasons. Mostly it was conflict between the enlightenment view, let's say, and the classic religious view, and that there will be dire consequences for that. And Nietzsche knew like Dostoevsky knew that, see, there's a proclivity for the human psyche and for human societies to move towards something approximating a unity because the cost of disunity is high. Fractionation of your goals, so that means you're less motivated to move forward than you might be because there's many things competing for your attention. And also anxiety, because anxiety actually signals something like goal conflict. So there's an inescapable proclivity of value systems to unite. Now, if you kill the thing that's uniting them, that's the death of God, they either fractionate and you get confusion, anxiety and hopelessness, or you get social disunity or and you get social disunity or something else arises out of the abyss to constitute that unifying force. And Nietzsche said specifically that he believed that one of those manifestations would be that of communism and that that would kill... he said this in *Will to Power*, that that would kill tens of millions of people in the upcoming 20th century. He could see that coming 50 years earlier. And Dostoevsky did the same thing in his book, *Demons*. So this is the thing that the areligious have to contend with. It's a real conundrum because I mean, you could dispute the idea that our value systems tend towards a unity and society does as well because otherwise we're disunified. But the cost of that disunity, as I said, is goal confusion, anxiety, and hopelessness. So it's like a real cost. So you could dispense with the notion of unity altogether, and the Postmodernists did that to some degree, but they pulled off a sleight of hand too where they replaced it by power. Now, Nietzsche did. He's responsible for that to some degree because Nietzsche said with his conception of the *Übermensch*, let's say, is that human beings would have to create their own values because the value structure that had descended from on high was now shunted aside. But there's a major problem with that, many major problems. The psychoanalysts were the first people who really figured this out after Nietzsche, because imagine that we don't have a relationship with the transcendental

anymore that orients us. Okay, now we have to turn to ourselves. Now, if we were a unity, a clear unity within ourselves, let's say, then we could turn to ourselves for that discovery. But if we're a fractionated plurality internally, then when we turn to ourselves, we turn to a fractionated plurality. Well, that was Freud's observation. It's like, well, how can you make your own values when you're not the master in your own house? You're a war of competing motivations, or maybe you're someone who's dominated by the will to force and compulsion. And so why do you think that you can rely on yourself as the source of values? And why do you think you're wise enough to consult with yourself to find out what those values are or what they should be say in the course of a single life? I mean, it's difficult to organize your own personal relationship like one relationship in the course of your life, let alone to try to imagine that out of whole cloth you could construct an ethos that would be psychologically and socially stabilizing and last over the long run. And of course, Marx people like that, the people who reduce human motivation to a single axis, they had the intellectual hubris to imagine that they could do that. Postmodernists are a good example of that as well.

Lex Fridman

Okay. But if we lay on the table, religion, communism, Nazism, they are all unifying ethos. They're unifying ideas, but they're also horribly dividing ideas. They both unify and divide. Religion has also divided people because in the nuances of how the different peoples wrestle with God, they have come to different conclusions, and then they use those conclusions that perhaps the people in power use those conclusions to then start wars, to start hatred, to divide.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Well, it's one of the key sub-themes in the gospels is the sub-theme of the Pharisees. And so the fundamental enemies of Christ in the gospels are the Pharisees and the scribes and the lawyers. So what does that mean? The Pharisees are religious hypocrites. The scribes are academics who worship their own intellect, and the lawyers are the legal minds who use the law as a weapon. And so they're the enemy of the Redeemer. That's a subplot in the gospel stories, and that actually all means something. The Pharisaic problem is that the best of all possible ideas can be used by the worst actors in the worst possible way. And maybe this is an existential conundrum, is that the most evil people use the best possible ideas to the worst possible ends. And then you have the conundrum of how do you separate out, let's say, the genuine religious people from those who use the religious enterprise only for their own machinations. We're seeing this happen online. One of the things that you're seeing happening online, I'm sure you've noticed this, especially on the right wing psychopathic troll side of the distribution, is the weaponization of a certain form of Christian ideation. And that's often marked at least online by the presence of, what would you say, cliches like Christ is king, which has a certain religious meaning, but a completely different meaning in this sphere of emerging right wing pathology, "right wing". The political dimension isn't the right dimension of analysis, but it's definitely the case that the best possible ideas can be used for the worst possible purposes. And that also brings up another

specter, which is like, well, is there any reliable and valid way of distinguishing truly beneficial, unifying ideas from those that are pathological? And so that's another thing that I tried to detail out in these lectures, but also in this new book, it's like, how do you tell the good actors from the bad actors at the most fundamental level of analysis?

Lex Fridman

And good ideas from the bad ideas, and you lecture on truth that Nietzsche also struggled with, so how do you know that communism is a bad idea versus it's a good idea implemented by bad actors?

Jordan Peterson

Right. That's a more subtle variant of the religious problem. And that's what the communists say all the time, the modern day communists like, "Real communism has never been tried," and you could say, I suppose with some justification, you could say that real Christianity has never been tried because we always fall short of the ideal mark. My rejoinder to the communists is something like every single time it's been implemented, wherever it's been implemented regardless of the culture and the background of the people who've implemented it, it's had exactly the same catastrophic consequences. It's like, I don't know how many examples you need of that, but I believe we've generated sufficient examples so that that case is basically resolved. Now, the general rejoinder to that is it's really something like, "Well, if I was in charge of the communist enterprise, the utopia would've come about," but that's also a form of dangerous pretense. Part of the way... See, that problem is actually resolved to some degree in the notion of... in the developing notion of sacrifice that emerges in the western canon over thousands and thousands of years. So one of the suggestions, for example, and this is something exemplified in the passion story, is that you can tell the valid holder of an idea because that holder will take the responsibility for the consequences of his idea onto himself. And that's why, for example, you see one way of conceptualizing Christ in the gospel story is as the ultimate sacrifice to God. So you might ask, well, what's the ultimate sacrifice? And there are variants of the answer to that. One form of ultimate sacrifice is the sacrifice of a child, the offering of a child, and the other is the offering of the self. And the story of Christ brings both of those together because he's the son of God that's offered to God. And so it's a marketable resolution of that tension between ultimate sacrifice, ultimate because once you're a parent, most parents would rather sacrifice themselves than their children. So you have something that becomes of even more value than yourself. But the sacrifice of self is also a very high order level of sacrifice. Christ is an archetype of the pattern of being that's predicated on the decision to take... to offer everything up to the highest value, that pattern of self-sacrifice. And I think part of the reason that's valid is because the person who undertakes to do that pays the price themselves. It's not externalized. They're not trying to change anyone else except maybe by example. It's your problem. Like Solzhenitsyn pointed that out too when he was struggling with the idea of good versus evil, and you see this in more sophisticated literature. In really unsophisticated literature or drama, there's a good guy and the bad guy

and the good guy's all good, and the bad guy's all bad. And in more sophisticated literature, the good and bad are abstracted. You can think of them as spirits. And then those spirits possess all the characters in the complex drama to a greater or lesser degree and that battle is fought out both socially and internally. In the high order religious conceptualizations in the West, if they culminate, let's say in the Christian story, the notion is that battle between good and evil is fundamentally played out as an internal drama.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. So for a religious ethos, the battle between good and evil is fought within each individual human heart.

Jordan Peterson

Right. It's your moral duty to constrain evil within yourself. And while there's more to it than that, because there's also the insistence that if you do that, that makes you the most effective possible like warrior, let's say, against evil itself in the social world, that you start with the battle that occurs within you in the soul, let's say. The soul becomes the battleground between the forces of good and evil. There's an idea there too, which is if that battle is undertaken successfully, then it doesn't have to be played out in the social world as actual conflict. You can rectify the conflict internally without it having to be played out as fate as Jung put it.

Lex Fridman

So what would you say to Nietzsche who called Christianity the slave morality, and his critique of religion in that way was slave morality versus master morality, and then you put an Übermensch into that?

Jordan Peterson

Well see, I would say that the woke phenomenon is the manifestation of the slave morality that Nietzsche criticized and that there are elements of Christianity that can be gerrymandered to support that mode of perception and conception. But I think he was wrong and he was wrong in his essential criticism of Christianity in that regard. Now, it's complicated with Nietzsche because Nietzsche never criticizes the gospel stories directly. What he basically criticizes is something like the pathologies of institutionalized religion. And I would say most particularly of the, what would you say, of the sort of casually too nice Protestant form, that's a thumbnail sketch and perhaps somewhat unfair. But given the alignment, let's say, of the more mainstream Protestant movements with the woke mob, I don't think it's an absurd criticism. It's something like the degeneration of Christianity into the notion that good and harmless are the same thing, or good and empathic are the same thing, which is simply not true and far too simplified. And I also think Nietzsche was extremely wrong in his presumption that human beings should take it to themselves to construct their own values. I think he made a colossal error in that presumption.

Lex Fridman

And that is the idea of the Übermensch, that the great individual, the best of us should create our own values.

Jordan Peterson

Well, and I think the reason that he was wrong about that is that, so when God gives instructions to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he basically tells them that they can do anything they want in the walled garden. So that's the kind of balance between order and nature that makes up the human environment. Human beings have the freedom vouchsafe to them by God to do anything they want in the garden except to mess with the most fundamental rule. So God says to people, "You're not to eat of the fruit of the tree, of the knowledge of good and evil," which fundamentally means there is an implicit moral order and you're to abide by it. Your freedom stops at the foundation. And you can think about that. I'd be interested even in your ideas about this as an engineer, let's say, is that there is an ethos that's implicit in being itself, and your ethos has to be a reflection of that, and that isn't under your control. You can't gerrymander the foundation because your foundational beliefs have to put you in harmony like musical harmony with the actual structure of reality as such. So I can give you an example of that. So our goal insofar as we're conducting ourselves properly, is to have the kind of interesting conversation that allows both of us to express ourselves in a manner that enables us to learn and grow, such that we can share that with everyone who's listening. And if our aim is true and upward, then that's what we're doing. Well, that means that we're going to have to match ourselves to a pattern of interaction, and that's marked for us emotionally. Like you and I both know this, if we're doing this right... ..marked for us emotionally. Like you and I both know this, if we're doing this right, we're going to be interested in the conversation. We're not going to be looking at our watch. We're not going to be thinking about what we're aiming at. We're just going to communicate. Now, the religious interpretation of that would be that we were doing something like making the redemptive logos manifest between us in dialogue, and that's something that can be shared. To do that, we have to align with that pattern. I can't decide that there's some arbitrary way that I'm going to play you. I mean, I could do that if I was a psychopathic manipulator. But to do that optimally, I'm not going to impose a certain A priori aim, let's say, on our communication and manipulate you into that. So the constraints on my ethos reflect the actual structure of the world. This is the communist presumptions. It's like, we're going to burn everything down and we're going to start from scratch. And we've got these axiomatic presumptions, and we're going to put them into place. And we're going to socialize people so they now think and live like communists from day one. And human beings are infinitely malleable, and we can use a rational set of presuppositions to decide what sort of beings they should be. The transhumanists are doing this too. It's like, no, there's a pattern of being that you have to fall into alignment with. I think it's the pattern of being, by the way, that if you fall into alignment with, it gives you hope, it protects you from anxiety, and it gives you a sense of harmony with your surroundings and with other people. And none of that's arbitrary.

Lex Fridman

But don't you think we both arrived to this conversation with rigid axioms? Maybe we're blind to them, but in the same way that the Marxists came with very rigid axioms about the way the world is and the way it should be. Aren't we coming to that?

Jordan Peterson

Well, we definitely come to the conversation with a hierarchy of foundational axioms. And I would say the more sophisticated you are as a thinker, the deeper the level at which you're willing to play. So imagine first that you have presumptions of different depth. There's more predicated on the more fundamental axioms, and then that there's a space of play around those. And that space of play is going to depend on the sophistication of the player, obviously. But those who are capable of engaging in deeper conversations talk about more fundamental things with more play. Now, we have to come to the conversation with a certain degree of structure, because we wouldn't be able to understand each other or communicate if a lot of things weren't already assumed or taken for granted.

Lex Fridman

How rigid is the hierarchy of axioms that religion provides? This is what I'm trying to understand, the rigidity of that hierarchy.

Jordan Peterson

It's as rigid as play.

Lex Fridman

Well, play is not rigid at all.

Jordan Peterson

No, no, no, no, no, no. It's got a rigidity.

Lex Fridman

There's some constraints.

Jordan Peterson

It took me about 40 years to figure out the answer to that question. I'm serious about that. It wasn't a random answer. So play is very rigid in some ways. If you and I go out to play basketball or chess, there are rules and you can't break the rules because then you're no longer in the game. But then there's a dynamism within those rules that's... Well, with chess, it's virtually infinite. I mean, I think, what is it? There's more patterns of potential games on a chessboard than there are subatomic particles in the observable universe. It's an insane space. So it's not like there's not freedom within it. But it's a weird paradox in a way, isn't it? Because music is like this too, is that there are definitely rules. You can't throw a basketball into a chess board and still be playing chess. But weirdly enough, if you adhere to the rules,

the realm of freedom increases rather than decreasing. I think you can make the same case for a playful conversation. It's like we're playing by certain rules and a lot of them are implicit, but that doesn't mean that... It might mean the reverse of constraint. Because in this seminar, for example, that I was referring to, the Exodus Seminar and then the Gospel Seminar, everybody in this seminar, there's about eight of us, played fair. Nobody used power. Nobody tried to prove they were right. They put forward their points, but they were like, "Here's a way of looking at that. Assess it." They were also doing it genuinely. It's like, this is what I've concluded about say this story. And I'm going to make a case for it, but I'd like to hear what you have to say because maybe you can change it, you can extend it, you can find a flaw in it. Well, that's a conversation that has flow and that's engaging and that other people will listen to as well. See, I think that one of the things that we can conclude now, and we can do this even from a neuroscientific basis, is that that sense of engaged meaning is a marker not only for the emergence of harmony between you and your environment, but for the emergence of that harmony in a way that is developmentally rich, that moves you upward towards... What would you say? Well, I think towards a more effective entropic state. That's actually the technical answer to that. But it makes you more than you are, and there's a directionality in that.

Lex Fridman

The reason I like talking about communism because it has clearly been shown as a set of ideas to be destructive to humanity. But I would like to understand from an engineering perspective the characteristics of communism versus religion where you could identify religious thought is going to lead to a better human being, a better society and communist Marxist thought does not. Because there's ambiguity, there's room for play in communism and Marxism, because they had a utopian sense of where everybody's headed, don't know how it's going to happen. Maybe revolution is required. But after the revolution is done, we'll figure it out. And there's an underlying assumption that maybe human beings are good and they'll figure it out once you remove the oppressor. I mean, all these ideas, until you put them into practice, it can be quite convincing if you were in the 19th century. If I was reading, which is fascinating, the 19th century produced such powerful ideas, Marx and Nietzsche.

Jordan Peterson

Fascism too, for that matter.

Lex Fridman

Fascism. So if I was sitting there, especially if I'm feeling shitty about myself, a lot of these ideas are pretty powerful as a way to plug the nihilist hole.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah, right, absolutely. Well, and some of them may actually have an appropriate scope of application. It could be that some of the foundational axioms of communism,

socialism/communism, are actually functional in a sufficiently small social group, maybe a tribal group even. I'm not sure this is correct, but I have a suspicion that the pervasive attractiveness of some of the radical left ideas that we're talking about are pervasive precisely because they are functional within say families, but also within the small tribal groups that people might've originally evolved into. And that once we become civilized, so we produce societies that are united even among people who don't know one another, different principles have to apply as a consequence of scale. So that's partly an engineering response, but I think there's a deeper way of going after the communist problem. So I think part of the fundamental problem with the communist axioms is the notion that the world of complex social interactions can be simplified sufficiently so that centralized planning authorities can deal with it. And I think the best way to think about the free exchange rejoinder to that presumption is no, the sum total of human interactions in a large civilization are so immense that you need a distributed network of cognition in order to compute the proper way forward. And so what you do is you give each actor their domain of individual choice so that they can maximize their own movement forward. And you allow the aggregate direction to emerge from that rather than trying to impose it from the top down, which I think is computationally impossible. So that might be one engineering reason why the communist solution doesn't work. Like I read in Solzhenitsyn, for example, that the Central Soviet authorities often had to make 200 pricing decisions a day. Now, if you've ever started a business or created a product and had to wrestle with the problem of pricing, you'd become aware of just how intractable that is. How do you calculate worth? Well, there's the central existential problem of life. How do you calculate worth? It's not something like a central authority can sit down and just manage. There is a lot of inputs that go into a pricing decision. And the free market answer to that is something like, well, if you get the price right, people will buy it and you'll survive.

Lex Fridman

This is a fascinating way to describe how ideas fail. So communism perhaps fails because just like with people who believe the earth is flat, when you look outside, it looks flat, but you can't see beyond the horizon, I guess. In the same way with communism, communism seems like a great idea in my family and people I love, but it doesn't scale.

Jordan Peterson

And it doesn't iterate, and that's a form of scaling too.

Lex Fridman

Right. Well, I mean, whatever ways it breaks down, it doesn't scale. And you're saying religious thought is a thing that might scale.

Jordan Peterson

I would say religious thought is the record of those ideas that have in fact scaled. Right, right.

Lex Fridman

And iterated.

Jordan Peterson

And iterated.

Lex Fridman

Does religious thought iterate? I mean, there's a fundamental conservative aspect to religious thought, tradition.

Jordan Peterson

This is why I like Mircea Eliade, for example, who I referred to earlier. One of the things Eliade did and very effectively, and people like Joseph Campbell, who in some ways were popularizers of Eliade's ideas and Carl Jung's, what they really did was devote themselves to an analysis of those ideas that scaled and iterated across the largest possible spans of time. And so Eliade and Jung, Erich Neumann and Campbell, they were looking and Campbell, they were looking at patterns of narrative that were common across religious traditions that had spanned millennia and found many patterns. The hero's myth, for example, is one of those patterns. And it's, I think, the evidence that it has its reflection in human neurophysiology and neuropsychology is incontrovertible. And so these foundational narratives, they last. They're common across multiple religious traditions. They unite. They work psychologically, but they also reflect the underlying neurophysiological architecture. So I can give you an example of that. So the hero myth is really a quest myth. And a quest myth is really a story of exploration and expansion of adaptation. So Bilbo the Hobbit, he's kind of an ordinary every man. He lives in a very constrained and orderly and secure world. And then the quest call comes and he goes out and he expands his personality and develops his wisdom. And that's reflected in human neuropsychological architecture at a very low level, way below cognition. So one of the most fundamental elements of the mammalian brain, and even in lower animal forms, is the hypothalamus. It's the root of primary motivation. So it governs lust, and it regulates your breathing, and it regulates your hunger, and it regulates your thirst, and it regulates your temperature. Like really low level biological necessities are regulated by the hypothalamus. When you get hungry, it's the hypothalamus. When you're activated in a defensively aggressive manner, that's the hypothalamus. Half the hypothalamus is the origin of the dopaminergic tracts, and they subsume exploration. And so you could think of the human motivational reality as a domain that's governed by axiomatic motivational states, love, sex, defensive aggression, hunger, and another domain that's governed by exploration. And the rule would be something like when your basic motivational states are sated, explore. And that's not cognitive. Like I said, this is deep, deep brain architecture. It's extraordinarily ancient. And the exploration story is something like go out into the unknown and take the risks because the information that you discover and the skills you develop will be worthwhile, even in sating the basic motivational drives. And then you want to learn to do that in an iterative manner so it sustains across time, and

you want to do it in a way that unites you with other people. And there's a pattern to that, and I do think that's the pattern that we strive to encapsulate in our deep religious narratives. And I think that in many ways we've done that successfully.

Lex Fridman

What is the believe in God, how does that fit in? What does it mean to believe in God?

Jordan Peterson

Okay, so in one of the stories that I cover in *We Who Wrestle with God*, which I only recently begun to take apart say in the last two years, is the story of Abraham. It's a very cool story, and it's also related, by the way, to your question about what makes communism wrong. And Dostoevsky knew this. Not precisely the Abraham story, but the same reason. In *Notes from Underground*, Dostoevsky made a very telling observation. So he speaks in the voice of a cynical nihilistic and bitter bureaucrat who's been a failure, who's talking cynically about the nature of human beings, but also very accurately. And one of the things he points out with regards to modern utopianism is that human beings are very strange creatures. And that if you gave them what the socialist utopians want to give them, so let's say all your needs are taken care of, all your material needs are taken care of and even indefinitely, Dostoevsky's claim was, well, you don't understand human beings very well. Because if you put them in an environment that was that comfortable, they would purposefully go insane just to break it into bits just so something interesting would happen. Right. And he says it's the human proclivity to curse and complain. He says this in quite a cynic and caustic manner, but he's pointing to something deep, which is that we're not built for comfort and security. We're not infants. We're not after satiation. So then you might ask, well, what the hell are we after then? That's what the Abraham story addresses. Abraham is the first true individual in the biblical narrative. So you could think about his story as the archetypal story of the developing individual. So you said, well, what's God? Well, in the Abraham story, God has characterized a lot of different ways in the classic religious texts. Like the Bible is actually a compilation of different characterizations of the divine with the insistence that they reflect an underlying unity. In the story of Abraham, the divine is the call to adventure. So Abraham has the socialist utopia at hand. He's from a wealthy family, and he has everything he needs. And he actually doesn't do anything until he's in his 70s. Now, hypothetically, people in those times lived much longer. But a voice comes to Abraham and it tells him something very specific. It says, "Leave your zone of comfort. Leave your parents. Leave your tent. Leave your community. Leave your tribe. Leave your land. Go out into the world." And Abraham thinks, well, why? I've got naked slave girls peeling grapes and feeding them to me. It's like, what do I need an adventure for? And God tells them, and this is the covenant, by the way, part of the covenant that the God of the Israelites makes with his people. It's very, very specific. It's very brilliant. He says, "If you follow the voice of adventure, you'll become a blessing to yourself." So that's a good deal because people generally live at odds with themselves. And he says, God says, "That's not all. You'll become a blessing to yourself in a way that furthers your reputation among people and validly, so that you'll accomplish things

that were real and people will know it. And you'll be held high in their esteem and that will be valid." So that's a pretty good deal because social people would like to be regarded as of utility and worth by others. And so that's a good deal. And God says, "That's not all. You'll establish something of lasting permanent and deep value." That's why Abraham becomes the father of nations. And finally, he caps it off and he says, "There's a better element even to it. There's a capstone. You'll do all three of those things in a way that's maximally beneficial to everyone else." And so the divinity in the Abrahamic story is making a claim. He says, first of all, there's a drive that you should attend to, so the spirit of adventure that calls you out of your zone of comfort. Now, if you attend to that and you make the sacrifices necessary to follow that path, then the following benefits will accrue to you. Your life will be a blessing. Everyone will hold you in high esteem. You'll establish something of permanent value, and you'll do it in a way that's maximally beneficial to everyone else. And so think about what this means biologically or from an engineering standpoint. It means that the instinct to develop that characterizes outward moving children, let's say, or adults is the same instinct that allows for psychological stability, that allows for movement upward in a social hierarchy that establishes something iterable, and that does that in a manner that allows everyone else to partake in the same process. Well, that's a good deal. I can't see how it cannot be true, because the alternative hypothesis would be that the spirit that moves you beyond yourself to develop, the spirit of a curious child, let's say, what, is that antithetical to your own esteem? Is that antithetical to other people's best interest? Is it not the thing that increases the probability that you'll do something permanent? That's a stupid theory.

Lex Fridman

So God is a call to adventure with some constraints.

Jordan Peterson

A call to true adventure.

Lex Fridman

To true adventure.

Jordan Peterson

True adventure. Yeah. And then that's a good observation because that begs the question, what constitutes the most true adventure? Well, that's not fully fleshed out until, at least from the Christian perspective, let's say, that's not fully fleshed out until the gospels, because the Passion of Christ is the... This is the perfectly reasonable way of looking at it. The Passion of Christ is the truest adventure of Abraham. That's a terrible thing, A, because the passion story is a catastrophic tragedy, although it obviously has its redemptive elements. But one of the things that's implied there is that there's no distinction between the true adventure of life and taking on the pathway of maximal responsibility and burden. And I can't see how that cannot be true. Because the counter hypothesis is, well, Lex, the

best thing for you to do in your life is to shrink from all challenge and hide, to remain infantile, to remain secure, not to ever push yourself beyond your limits, not to take any risks. Well, no one thinks that's true.

Lex Fridman

So basically, the maximally worthwhile adventure could possibly be highly correlated with the hardest possible available adventure.

Jordan Peterson

The hardest possible available adventure voluntarily undertaken.

Lex Fridman

Does it have to be voluntary?

Jordan Peterson

Absolutely.

Lex Fridman

How do you define voluntarily?

Jordan Peterson

Well, here's an example of that. That's a good question too. The night before the crucifixion, which in principle he knows is coming, he asks God to relieve him of his burden, and understandably so. I mean, that's the scene famously in which he's literally sweating blood because he knows what's coming. And the Romans designed crucifixion to be the most agonizing, humiliating, and disgusting possible death. Right. So there was every reason to be apprehensive about that. And you might say, well, could you undertake that voluntarily as an adventure? And the answer to that is something like, well, what's your relationship with death? That's a problem you have to solve. And you could fight it and you could be bitter about it. And there's reasons for that, especially if it's painful and degrading. But the alternative is something like... Well, it's what's fleshed out in religious imagery always. It's very difficult to cast into words. It's like, no, you welcome the struggle. That's why I called the book, *We Who Wrestle with God*. You welcome the struggle. And Lex, I don't see how you can come to terms with life without construing it as something like, bring it on. Welcome the struggle. I can't see that there's a limit to that. It's like, well, I welcome the struggle until it gets difficult.

Lex Fridman

So there's not a bell curve, like the struggle of moderation. Basically, you have to welcome whatever as hard as it gets, and the crucifixion in that way is a symbol.

Jordan Peterson

Of that. Well, it's worse than that in some ways because the crucifixion exemplifies the worst possible death. But that isn't the only element of the struggle. Because mythologically, classically, after Christ's death, he harrows hell. And what that means, as far as I can tell psychologically, is that you're not only required, let's say, to take on the full existential burden of life and to welcome it regardless of what it is and to maintain your upward aim despite all temptations to the contrary, but you also have to confront the root of malevolence itself. So it's not merely tragedy. And I think the malevolence is actually worse. The reason I think that is because I know the literature on post-traumatic stress disorder, and most people who encounter, let's say, a challenge that's so brutal that it fragments them, it isn't mere suffering that does that to people. It's an encounter with malevolence that does that to people. Their own sometimes often, by the way. Soldier will go out into a battlefield and find out that there's a part of him that really enjoys the mayhem, and that conceptualization doesn't fit in well with everything he thinks he knows about himself and humanity. And after that contact with that dark part of himself, he never recovers. That happens to people, and it happens to people who encounter bad actors in the world too. If you're a naive person and the right narcissistic psychopath comes your way, you are in mortal trouble because you might die, but that's not where the trouble ends.

Lex Fridman

If there's a young man in their 20s listening to this, how do they escape the pull of Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground? With the eyes open to the world, how do they select the adventure?

Jordan Peterson

So there's other characterizations of the divine say in the Old Testament story. So one pattern of characterization that I think is really relevant to that question is the conception of God as calling and conscience. Okay, so what does it mean? It's a description of the manner in which your destiny announces itself to you. I'm using that terminology, and it's distinguishable say from Nietzsche's notion that you create your own values. It's like part of the way you can tell that that's wrong is that you can't voluntarily gerrymander your own interests. You find some things interesting, and that seems natural and autonomous, and other things you don't find interesting and you can't really force yourself to be interested in them. So what is the domain of interest that makes itself manifest to you? Well, it's like an autonomous spirit. It's like certain things in your field of perception are illuminated to you. You think, "Oh, that's interesting. That's compelling. That's gripping." Rudolf Otto, who studied the phenomenology of religious experience, describe that as numinous. The thing grips you because compelled by it, and maybe it's also somewhat anxiety provoking. It's the same reaction like a cat has to a dog. When the cat's hair stands on end, that's an awe response. And so there's going to be things in your phenomenological field that pull you forward, compel you. That's like the voice of positive emotion and enthusiasm. Things draw you into the world. It might be love. It might be aesthetic interest. It might be friendship. It

might be social status. It might be duty and industriousness. There's various domains of interest that shine for people. That's on the positive side. God is calling. That would be akin to the spirit of adventure for Abraham. But there's also God as conscience, and this is a useful thing to know too. Certain things bother you. They take root within you and they turn your thoughts towards certain issues. Like there are things you're interested in that you've pursued your whole life. There are things I'm interested in that I felt as a moral compulsion. And so you could think and I think the way you can think about it technically is that something pulls you forward so that you move ahead and you develop. And then another voice, this a voice of negative emotion, says while you're moving forward, stay on this narrow pathway. And it'll mark deviations, and it marks deviations with shame and guilt and anxiety, regret. And that actually has a voice. Don't do that. Well, why not? Well, you're wandering off the straight narrow path. So the divine marks the pathway forward and reveals it, but then puts up the constraints of conscience. And the divine in the Old Testament is portrayed not least as the dynamic between calling and conscience.

Lex Fridman

What do you do with the negative emotions? You didn't mention envy. There's some really dark ones that can really pull you into some bad places, envy, fear.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah, envy is a really bad one. Pride and envy are among the worst. Those are the sins of Cain, by the way, in the story of Cain and Abel, because Cain fails because his sacrifices are insufficient. He doesn't offer his best. And so he's rejected and that makes him bitter and unhappy. And he goes to complain to God, and God says to him two things. God tells him, "If your sacrifices were appropriate, you'd be accepted." It's a brutal thing. It's a brutal rejoinder. And he also says, "You can't blame your misery on your failure. You could learn from your failure. When you failed, you invited in the spirit of envy and resentment, and you allowed it to possess you. And that's why you're miserable." And so Cain is embittered by that response, and that's when he kills Abel. You might say, well, how do you fortify yourself against that pathway of resentment? Part of classic religious practice is aimed to do that precisely. What's the antithesis of envy? Gratitude. That's something you can practice. And I mean, literally practice.

Lex Fridman

I think envy is one of the biggest enemies for a young person because basically you're starting from nowhere. Life is hard. You've achieved nothing. And you're striving and you're failing constantly because...

Jordan Peterson

And you see other people whom you think aren't having the same problem.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, and they succeed. And they could be your neighbor, they could be succeeding by a little bit, or somebody on the internet succeeding by a lot. And I think that that can really pull a person down. That kind of envy can really destroy a person.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah, yeah, definitely. Well, the gratitude element would be something like, well, yeah, you don't know anything and you're at the bottom, but you're not 80. One of the best predictors of wealth in the United States is age. So then you might say, well, who's got it better, the old rich guy or the young poor guy? And I would say most old rich guys would trade their wealth for youth. So it's... Old rich guys would trade their wealth for youth. So it's not exactly clear at all at any stage who's got the upper hand, who's got the advantage? And you could say, "Well, I've got all these burdens in front of me because I'm young and oh my God." Or you could say, "Every dragon has its treasure." And that's actually a pattern of perception. I'm not saying that people don't have their challenges. They certainly do. But discriminating between a challenge and an opportunity is very, very difficult. And learning to see a challenge as an opportunity, that's the beginning of wisdom.

Lex Fridman

It's interesting. I don't know how it works. Maybe you can elucidate, but when you have envy towards somebody, if you just celebrate them, so gratitude, but actually as opposed to sort of ignoring and being grateful for the things you have, literally celebrate that person. It transforms ... It lights the way. I don't know why that is exactly.

Jordan Peterson

Absolutely. The only reason you're envious is because you see someone who has something that you want. Okay, so let's think about it. Well, first of all, the fact that they have it means that in principle, you could get it. At least someone has. So that's a pretty good deal. And then you might say, "Well, the fact that I'm envious of that person means that I actually want something." And then you might think, "Well, what am I envious of? I'm envious of their attractiveness to women." It's like, okay, well now you know something about yourself. You know that one true motivation that's making itself manifest to you is that you wish that you would be the sort of person who is attractive to women. Now, of course, that's an extremely common longing among men, period. But particularly among young men. It's like, well, what makes you so sure you couldn't have that? Well, how about, here's an answer. You don't have enough faith in yourself. And maybe you don't have enough faith in, well, I would say the divine. You don't believe that the world is characterized by enough potentiality so that even miserable you has a crack at the brass ring. I talked about this actually practically in one of my previous books, because I wrote a chapter called Compare Yourself to Who You Are and Not to Someone Else at the Present Time. Well, why? Well, your best benchmark for tomorrow is you today. And you might not be able to have what someone else has on the particular axis you're comparing yourself with them on, but you could make an incremental

improvement over your current state regardless of the direction that you're aiming. And it is the case, and this is a law. The return on incremental improvement is exponential or geometric and not linear. So even if you start ... This is why the hero is always born in a lowly place, mythologically. Christ, who redeems the world is born in a manger with the animals to poverty parents in the middle of a God-forsaken desert in a non-descript time and place, isolated. Well, why? Well, because everyone young struggles with their insufficiency. But that doesn't mean that great things can't make themselves manifest. And part of the insistence in the biblical text, for example, is that it's incumbent on you to have the courage to have faith in yourself and in the spirit of reality, the essence of reality, regardless of how you construe the evidence at hand. Right. Look at me, I'm so useless. I don't know anything. I don't have anything. It's hopeless. I don't have it within me. The world couldn't offer me that possibility. Well, what the hell do you know about that? This is what Job figures out in the midst of his suffering in the Book of Job, because Job is tortured terribly by God, who makes a bet with Satan himself to bring him down. And Job's decision in the face of his intense suffering is, "I'm not going to lose faith in my essential goodness, and I'm not going to lose faith in the essential goodness of being itself, regardless of how terrible the face it's showing to me at the moment happens to be." And I think, okay, what do you make of that claim? Well, let's look at it practically. You're being tortured by the arbitrariness of life. That's horrible. Now you lose faith in yourself and you become cynical about being. So are you infinitely worse off instantly? And then you might say, "Well yeah," but it's really asking a lot of people that they maintain faith even in their darkest hours. It's like, yeah, that might be asking everything from people. But then you also might ask ... This is a very strange question. If you were brought into being by something that was essentially good, wouldn't that thing that brought you into being demand that you make the best in yourself manifest? And wouldn't it be precisely when you most need that it be that you'd be desperate enough to risk what it would take to let it emerge?

Lex Fridman

So you kind of make it seem that reason could be the thing that takes you out of a place of darkness. Finding that calling through reason. I think it's also possible when reason fails you to just take the leap. Navigate not by reason, but by finding the thing that scares you. The risk. Take the risk, take the leap, and then figure it out while you're in the air.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Well, I think that's always part of a heroic adventure is that ability to cut the Gordian knot. But you could also ask from an engineering perspective, okay, what are the axioms that make a decision like that possible? And the answer would be something like, I'm going to make the presumption that if I move forward in good faith, whatever happens to me will be the best thing that could possibly happen, no matter what it is. And I think that's actually how you make an alliance with truth. And I also think that truth is an adventure. And the way you make an alliance with truth is by assuming that whatever happens to you, if you are living in truth, is the best thing that could happen, even if you can't see that at any given

moment. Because otherwise you'd say that truth would be just the handmaiden of advantage. Well, I'm going to say something truthful, and I pay a price. Well, that means I shouldn't have said it. Well, possibly, but that's not the only possible standard of evaluation. Because what you're doing is you're making the outcome, your deity. Well, I'd just reversed that and say, no, no. Truth is the deity. The outcome is variable, but that doesn't eradicate the initial axiom. Where's the constant? What's the constant?

Lex Fridman

It may be when you said Abraham was being fed by naked ladies-

Jordan Peterson

That's an interpolation, obviously, but would've been out of keeping for the times.

Lex Fridman

But it does make me think sort of in stark contrast in Nietzsche's own life, that perhaps getting laid early on in life as a useful starter. Step one, get laid, and then go for adventure. There's some basic satiation of base desires.

Jordan Peterson

So I think it's perfectly reasonable to bring the sexual element in because it's a powerful motivating force, and it has to be integrated. I don't think it's adventure. It's romantic adventure.

Lex Fridman

Right, but the lack of basic interaction, sexual interaction, I feel like is the engine that drives towards that cynicism of the incel in Dostoevsky's Notes from Underground.

Jordan Peterson

There's very little doubt about that. We know perfectly well anthropologically that the most unstable social situation you can generate is young men with no access to women. That's not good. They'll do anything, anything to reverse that situation. So that's very dangerous. But then I would also say there's every suggestion that the pathway of adventure itself is the best pathway to romantic attractiveness. And we know this, in some ways in very blunt manner. The Google boys, the engineers who are too ... What would you say? Naively oriented towards empirical truth to note when they're being politically incorrect, they wrote a great book called A Billion Wicked Thoughts, which I really like. It's a very good book. And it's engineers as psychologists. And so they'll say all sorts of things that no one with any sense would ever say that happen to be true. And they studied the pattern of pornographic fantasy, and women like pornographic stories, not images. So women's use of pornography is literary. Who are the main protagonists in female pornographic fantasy? Pirates, werewolves, vampires, surgeons, billionaires. Tony Stark. And so the basic pornographic narrative is Beauty and the Beast. Those five categories. Terrible, aggressive male, tamable

by the right relationship, hot erotic attraction. And so I would say to the young men who, and I have many times to the young men who are locked in isolation, it's first of all, "Join the bloody club." Because the default value of a 15 year-old male on the mating market is zero. And there's reason for that. Zero is a bit of an exaggeration, but not much. And the reason for that is, well, what the hell do you know? You're not good for anything. You have potential and maybe plenty, and hopefully that'll be made manifest, but you shouldn't be all upset because you're the same loser as everyone else your age has always been since the beginning of time. But then you might ask, "Well, what should I do about it?" and the answer is, get yourself together. Stand up straight with your shoulders back, take on some adventure, find your calling, abide by your conscience, put yourself together and you'll become attractive. And we know this is ... Look, we know this is true. The correlation between male sexual opportunity and relative masculine status is about 0.6. That's higher than the correlation between intelligence and academic achievement. I don't think that there's a larger correlation between two independent phenomena in the entire social science and health literature than the correlation between relative male social status and reproductive success. It's by far the most fundamental determinant.

Lex Fridman

What's the cause and effect there?

Jordan Peterson

It's a loop. Men are motivated to attain social status because it confers upon them reproductive success. And that's not only cognitively, but biologically. I'll give you an example of this. There's a documentary I watch from time to time, which I think is the most brilliant documentary I've ever seen. It's called Crumb, and it's the story of this underground cartoonist. Robert Crumb, who in high school was in the category of males for whom a date was not only not likely, but unimaginable. So he was at the bottom of the bottom rung, and almost all the reactions he got from females wasn't just no, it was like, "Are you out of your mind?" With that contempt. And then he became successful. And so the documentary is super interesting because it tracks the utter pathology of his sexual fantasies because he was bitter and resentful. And if you want to understand the psychology of serial sexual killers and the like, and you watch Crumb, you'll find out a lot more about that than anybody with any sense would want to know. But then he makes this transition, and partly because he does take the heroic adventure path, and he actually has a family and children, and he is actually a pretty functional person as opposed to his brothers, one of whom commits suicide, and one of whom is literally a repeat sexual offender. It's a brutal documentary. But what he did in his adolescence after being rejected was he found what he was interested in. He was a very good artist. He was very interested in music, and he started to pursue those single-mindedly, and he became successful. And as soon as he became successful, and the documentary tracks this beautifully, he's immediately attractive to women. And then you might ask too, even if you're cynical, it's like, "Well, why do I have to perform for women?" And the answer to that is something like, why the hell should they have anything to do with

you if you're useless? They're going to have infants. They don't need another one. Partly the reason that women are hypergamous, they want males who are of higher status than they are, is because they're trying to redress the reproductive burden. And it's substantial. The female of any species is the sex that devotes more to the reproductive function. That's a more fundamental definition than chromosomal differentiation. And that's taken to its ultimate extreme with humans. And so of course women are going to want someone around that's useful, because the cost of sex for them is an 18 year-old period of dependency with an infant. So I think the adventure comes first.

Lex Fridman

Heroic adventure comes first.

Jordan Peterson

Well, it's complex. Because the other problem, let's say with the Crumb boys, is that their mother was extremely pathological and they didn't get a lot of genuine feminine nurturance and affection.

Lex Fridman

Of course. The family and society are not going to help you most of the time with a heroic adventure, right? They're going to be a barrier versus a catalyst.

Jordan Peterson

Well, in good families they're both. Because they put up constraints on your behavior. I've interviewed a lot of successful people about their calling, let's say, because I do that with all my podcast guests. How did the path that you took to success make itself manifest? And the pattern's very typical. Almost all the people that I've interviewed had a mother and a father. Now, it's not invariant, but I'd say it's there in 99% of the time. It's really high. And both of the parents, or at least one of them, but often both were very encouraging of the person's interests and pathway to development.

Lex Fridman

That's fascinating. I've heard you analyze it that way before, and I had a reaction to that idea, because you focused on the positive of the parents. I feel like it was the ... Maybe I see biographies differently, but it feels like the struggle within the family was the catalyst for greatness in a lot of biographies. Maybe I'm misinterpreting it, but I just-

Jordan Peterson

No, no. I think that that's a reflection, maybe ... Correct me if I'm wrong. I think that's a reflection of that dynamic between positive and negative emotion. Like my son, for example, who's doing just fine, he's firing on all cylinders as far as I'm concerned. He has a nice family, he gets along with his wife, he's a really good musician, he's got a company he's running well. He's a delight to be around. He was a relatively disagreeable infant. He was

tough-minded, and he didn't take no for an answer. And so there was some tussle in regulating his behavior. He spent a lot of time when he was two sitting on the steps trying to get his act together. And so that was the constraint. But that wasn't something that was ... It's an opposition to him away because it was in opposition to the immediate manifestation of his hedonistic desires, but it was also an impetus to further development. The rule for me when he was on the stairs was as soon as you're willing to be a civilized human being, you can get off the stairs. And you might think, well, that's nothing but arbitrary superego, patriarchal oppressive constraint. Or you could say, "Well, no, what I'm actually doing is facilitating his cortical maturation." Because when a child misbehaves, it's usually because they're under the domination of some primordial emotional or motivational impulse. They're angry, they're over-enthusiastic, they're upset, they're selfish. It's narrow self-centeredness expressed in an immature manner.

Lex Fridman

But see ... Okay. Tell me if I'm wrong, but it feels like the engine of greatness, at least on the male side of things, has often been trying to prove the father wrong, or trying to gain the acceptance of the father. So that tension, where the parent is not encouraging like you mentioned, but is basically saying, "No, you won't be able to do this."

Jordan Peterson

Okay. So my observation as a psychologist has been that it's very, very difficult for someone to get their act together unless they have at least one figure in their life that's encouraging and shows them the pathway forward. So you can have a lot of adversity in your life, and if you have one person around who's a good model and you're neurologically intact, you can latch onto that model. Now, you can also find that model in books, and people do that sometimes. I've interviewed people who had pretty fragmented childhoods, who turned to books and found the pattern that guided them in, let's say, the adventures of the heroes of the past, because that's a good way of thinking about it. And I read a book called *Angela's Ashes* that was written by an Irish author, Frank McCourt. Fantastic book, beautiful book. And his father was an alcoholic of gargantuan proportions. An Irish drinker who drank every cent that came into the family and many of whose children died in poverty. And what Frank did is a testament to the human spirit, is he sort of divided his father conceptually into two elements. There was sober morning father who was encouraging and with whom he had a relationship, and then there was drunk and useless later afternoon and evening father, and he rejected the negative and he amplified his relationship with the positive. Now, he had other things going for him, but he did a very good job of discriminating. And partly the question that you're raising is to what degree is it useful to have a beneficial adversary? Yeah, struggle-free progress is not possible. And I think there are situations under which where you might be motivated to prove someone in your immediate circle wrong, but then that also implies that at some level, for some reason, you actually care about their judgment. You just didn't write them off completely.

Lex Fridman

Well, that's why I say there's an archetype of a young man trying to gain the approval of his father. And I think that repeats itself in a bunch of biographies that I've read. I don't know. There must have been an engine somewhere that they found of approval of encouragement. Maybe in books, maybe in the mother, or maybe the role of the parents is flipped.

Jordan Peterson

Well, my father was hard to please. Very.

Lex Fridman

Did you ever succeed?

Jordan Peterson

Yes, but it wasn't easy, ever.

Lex Fridman

When was the moment when you succeeded?

Jordan Peterson

Pretty late. Like 40, maybe later.

Lex Fridman

Was it gradual, or a moment when a shift happened?

Jordan Peterson

My father was always willing to approve of the things I did that were good, although he was not effusive by any stretch of the imagination, and the standards were very high. Now, I was probably fortunate for me. And it does bear on the question you're asking. If you want someone to motivate you optimally ... God, it's complicated because there has to be a temperamental dance between the two people. What you really want is for someone to apply the highest possible standards to you that you're capable of reaching. And that's a vicious dance, because you have to have a relationship with your child to do that properly. Because if you want to be optimally motivating as a father, you keep your children on the edge. It's like, you might not reward something in your child that you would think would be good in someone else because you think they could do better. And so my father was pretty clear about the idea that he always expected me to do better, and was that troublesome? It was like I felt often when I was young that there was no pleasing him, but I also knew that that wasn't right. See, I actually knew that wasn't right. Because I could remember, especially I think when I was very young, that I did things that he was pleased about. I knew that was possible. So it wasn't unpredictable and arbitrary. It was just difficult.

Lex Fridman

It sounds like he's hit a pretty good optimal. But for each individual human that optimal differs, and that's what's hard.

Jordan Peterson

Well, that's why you have to have a relationship with your children. You have to know them. Well, with yourself too, and with your wife. You can't hit that optimal ... That optimal is probably love, because love isn't just acceptance. Love is acceptance and encouragement. And it's not just that either. It's also, "No, don't do that. That's beneath you. You're capable of more." And how harsh should that be? That's a really hard question. If you really love someone, you're not going to put up with their stupidity. "Don't do that." One of the rules I had with my little kids was don't do anything that makes you look like an idiot in public. Why? Because I don't want you disgracing yourself. Why not? Because I like you. I think you're great, and you're not going to act like a bloody fool in public so that people get the wrong idea about you. No.

Lex Fridman

What about inside a relationship? A successful relationship. How much challenge, how much peace? Is a successful relationship one that is easy or one that is challenging?

Jordan Peterson

I would say to some degree that depends on your temperament. My wife is quite a provocative person, and there are times when I, I suppose ... Do I wish that ... There are times when I casually wish that she was easier to get along with, but as soon as I think about it I don't think that. Because I've always liked her. We were friends ever since we were little kids, and she's plays rough, and I like that, as it turns out. Now, that doesn't mean it isn't a pain from time to time. And that is going to be a temperamental issue to some degree, and an issue of negotiation. She plays rough, but fair. And the fair part has been establishing that it's been part of our ongoing negotiation.

Lex Fridman

And part of it is in the play, you get to find out about yourself or what your temperament is. I don't think that's clear until it's tested.

Jordan Peterson

Oh, definitely not. Definitely not. You find out all sorts of things about yourself in a relationship, that's for sure. Well, and partly the reason that there is provocativeness, especially from women in relationship to men, is they want to test them out. It's like ... Can you hold your temper when someone's bothering you? Well, why would a woman want to know that? Well, maybe she doesn't want you to snap and hurt her kids. And so how's she going to find that out? Ask you? Well, you're going to say, "Well, I'd never do that." It's like,

"Never eh? Let's find out if it's never." So we don't know how people test each other out in relationships, or why exactly, but it's intense and necessary.

Lex Fridman

What's your and what's in general should a man's relationship with temper be?

Jordan Peterson

You should have one and you should be able to regulate it. That's part of that attractiveness of the monstrous that characterizes women's fantasies. And Nietzsche pointed this out too-

Lex Fridman

Pirates.

Jordan Peterson

To go back to Nietzsche.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Jordan Peterson

One of Nietzsche's claims was that most of what passes for morality is nothing but cowardice. I'd never cheat on my wife. Is there anybody asking you to that you actually find attractive, or are there dozens of people asking you to that you find attractive? It's like, "Well, I would never cheat." It's like, "No, you just don't have the opportunity." Now, I'm not saying that everyone's in that position that they would cheat even if they had the opportunity, because that's not true. And it's the same with regards to, "Oh, I'm a peaceful man." It's like, "No, you're not. You're just a weak coward. You wouldn't dare to have a confrontation, physical or metaphysical, and you're passing it off as morality because you don't want to come to terms with the fact of your own weakness and cowardice." And part of what I would say is twisted pseudo-Christian morality that Nietzsche was criticizing was exactly of that sort, and it tied into resentment and envy. And he tied that in explicitly said that failure in life masked by the morality that's nothing but weak cowardice turns to the resentment that undermines and destroys everything, and that does that purposefully.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, I think it was criticizing under the facade of niceness, there's an ocean of resentment.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah, that's for sure. For sure. That's also the danger of being too forthcoming with people. See, this is another thing, let's say, about my wife, who's not particularly agreeable. She's not particularly agreeable, but she's not resentful, and that's because she doesn't give things

away that she isn't willing to. And if you're agreeable and nice and you're conflict avoidant, you'll push yourself too far to please the other person, and then that makes you bitter and resentful. So that's not helpful.

Lex Fridman

Do you think you'll be in trouble for saying this on a podcast later?

Jordan Peterson

No, no. We know each other pretty well. And like I said, it's a trait that I find admirable. It's provocative and challenging.

Lex Fridman

And it seems to work.

Jordan Peterson

Well, we've been together 50 years, so ...

Lex Fridman

Quick pause, bathroom break. If we can descend from the realm of ideas down to history and reality. I would say the time between World War I and World War II was one of history's biggest testing of ideas, and really the most dramatic kinds of ideas that helped us understand the nature of good and evil. I just want to ask you a question about good and evil. Churchill, in many ways, was not a good man. Stalin, as you've documented extensively, was a horrible man. But you can make the case that both were necessary for stopping an even worse human being in Hitler. So to what degree do you need monsters to fight monsters? Do you need bad men to be able to fight off greater evils?

Jordan Peterson

It's everything in its proper place is the answer to that. We might think that our life would be easier without fear, let's say. We might say that our life would be easier without anger or pain, but the truth of the matter is that those things are beneficial, even though they can cause great suffering, but they have to be in their proper place. And that capacity that could in one context be a terrible force for evil can in the proper context be the most potent force for good. A good man has to be formidable. And partly what that means, as far as I can tell, is that you have to be able to say no. And no means ... I thought a lot about no working as a clinician, because I did a lot of strategic counseling with my clients in a lot of extremely difficult situations, and I learned to take apart what no meant- ... called situations, and I learned to take apart what no meant. And also when dealing with my own children, because I used no sparingly because it's a powerful weapon, let's say, but I meant it. And with my kids, what it meant was if you continue that pattern of behavior, something you do not like will happen to you with 100% certainty. And when that's the case and you're willing to implement it, you don't have to do it very often. With regards to monstrosity, it's like weak

men aren't good. They're just weak. That's Nietzsche's observation. That's partly, again, why he was tempted to place the will to power, let's say, and to deal with that notion in a manner that when it was tied with the revaluation of all values was counterproductive.

Counterproductive in the final analysis. It's not like there wasn't something to what he was driving at. Formidable men are admirable and you know, don't mess with them. Douglas Murray is a good example of that. He's a rather slight guy, but he's got a spine of steel, and there's more than a bit of what's monstrous in him. And Jocko Willink is like that, and Joe Rogan is like that, and you're like that.

Lex Fridman

But there's a different level. I mean, if you look, to me, Churchill might represent the thing you're talking about, but World War II Hitler would not be stopped without Stalin.

Jordan Peterson

Well, I wonder. Yes, yes.

Lex Fridman

And if I may insert into this picture of complexity, Hitler would've not stopped until he enslaved and exterminated the entirety of the Slavic people, the Jewish people, the Slavic people, the gypsies, everybody who was not Aryan. But then Stalin in the mass rape of German women by the Red Army as they marched towards Berlin is a kind of manifestation, the full monstrosity that a person can be.

Jordan Peterson

You can easily be in a situation, you can easily, unfortunately find yourself in a situation where all you have in front of you are a variety of bad options. That's partly why, if you have any sense, you try to conduct yourself very carefully in life because you don't want to be in a position where you've made so many mistakes that all the options left to you are terrible. So you said, well, was it necessary to ally with Stalin? Well, it's very difficult to second guess the trajectory of something as complex as World War II, but we could say casually, at least as Westerners have in general, that that alliance was necessary. Now, I think the mistake that the West made in the aftermath of World War II was in not dealing as forthrightly with the catastrophes of communism as an ideology as we did with fascism. And that's especially true of the intellectuals in the universities. I mean, it was very common when I was teaching both at Harvard and at the University of Toronto for the students in my personality class where we studied Solzhenitsyn, who's actually an existential psychologist in many ways and a deep one, none of them knew anything about the Soviet atrocities. None of them knew anything about what happened in Ukraine and the death of 6 million productive people, had no idea that the communists killed tens of millions of people in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution.

Lex Fridman

They know even less about Mao and the Great Leap Forward.

Jordan Peterson

Right. Which some estimates are a hundred million people. Now when your error bars are in the tens of millions, well, that's a real indication of a cataclysm. And nobody knows how many people died from direct oppression or indirect in the Soviet Union. 20 million, it seems like a reasonable estimate. Solzhenitsyn's upper was higher than that.

Lex Fridman

And how do you measure the intellectual output that was suppressed and killed off the number of intellectuals, artists and writers that were put into the gulags.

Jordan Peterson

Well, farmers for that matter, and anyone who was willing to tell the truth, right? Absolutely. So, yeah, catastrophic. And so I think the West's failure wasn't so much allying with Stalin. I mean, it was Douglas MacArthur who wanted to continue. He thought we should just take the Soviets out after the Second World War, and they removed them from any position of authority where such a thing might be made possible and people were tired, but was MacArthur wrong? Well, he certainly wasn't wrong in his insistence that Stalin was as big a monster as Hitler or bigger. So the valorization of the radical leftist proclivity is the sin of the West, I think more intensely than allying with Stalin.

Lex Fridman

Tricky nuanced topic. But if we look at the modern day and the threat of communism Marxism in the United States, to me it's disrespectful to the atrocities of the 20th century to call somebody like Kamala Harris a communist. But I see the sort of escalation of the extremeness of language being used when you call somebody like Donald Trump a fascist, that it makes total sense to then use similar extreme terminology for somebody like Kamala Harris. But maybe I could ask your evaluation. If you look at the political landscape today, somebody like Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

Jordan Peterson

Okay. Well, the first thing I would say is that I think that viewing the political landscape of today as a political landscape is actually wrong. I think it's not the right frame of reference because what I see happening are a very small percentage of dark tetrad personality types. So Machiavellian, manipulative, narcissistic, wanting undeserved attention, psychopathic that makes them predatory parasites and sadistic, because that goes along with the other three. That's about in the serious manifestation, that's probably three to 5% of the population, and they're generally kept under pretty decent control by civilized people and stable social interactions. I think that their imaginations are disinhibited by cost-free social media communication. So they gain disproportionate influence. Now, these people want

undeserved recognition and social status and everything that goes along with it, and they don't care how they get it, because when I say they want that, I mean that's all they want.

Lex Fridman

So in the realm of social media, you mentioned, yes, but are you also suggesting that they're overrepresented in the realm of politics, politicians and so on?

Jordan Peterson

They're overrepresented in the realm of fractious political discourse because they can use ideas. First of all, they can use, let's say, the benevolent ideas of the right and the benevolent ideas of the left, either one, and switch back and forth for that matter as a camouflage for what they're actually up to.

Lex Fridman

You've interviewed a lot of people and you have a really powerful mind. You have a good read on people. So how do you know when you're sitting across from a psychopath?

Jordan Peterson

I wouldn't say that I do know. In normal social circumstances, we have evolved mechanisms to keep people like that under control. Let's say that you and I have a series of interactions and you screw me over once. I'm not going to forget that. Now, I might not write you off because of the one time, but if it happens three times, it's like we're not going to play together anymore. And in normal times, most of our social networks are connected and interacting. So if you ripped me off three times and I noted that, I'm going to tell everybody I know and they're going to tell everybody they know, and soon everyone will know, and that's the end of your tricks. But that assumes that we know who you are and we're in continual communication. Well, all of that's gone online. So anonymity does that and so does the amplification of emotional intensity by the social media platforms and their algorithms. I think what we're doing, this is happening on Twitter continually, is we're giving the 5% of psychopaths a radically disproportionate voice. And what they're doing is there's a bunch of them on the left, and they're all, we're so compassionate, and there's a bunch of them on the right, and at the moment they're all, we're so Christian and free speech oriented. It's like, no, you're not. You're narcissistic psychopaths, and that's your camouflage. And you hide behind your anonymity and you use fractious and divisive language to attract fools and to elevate your social status and your clout. And not only that, to gain, what would you say, satisfaction for your sadistic impulses.

Lex Fridman

See, the problem is it's hard to tell who is the psychopath and who is a heterodox truth seeker.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Well, if you were charitable about Tucker Carlson's recent interview, you'd say that was exactly the conundrum he faced. And it is hard. I've thought about, for example, interviewing Andrew Tate, and I thought, I don't think so. And then I thought, why? I figured it's not obvious to me at all that he wouldn't charm me. So I knew this guy, Robert Hare. Robert Hare was the world's foremost authority on psychopathy. He established the field of clinical analysis of psychopathic behavior, and Hare was a pretty agreeable guy. So he would give people the benefit of the doubt, and he interviewed hundreds of serious psychopaths, like imprisoned violent offenders. And he told me in one of our conversations that every time he sat down with a violent offender psychopath, and he had a measure for psychopathy that was a clinical checklist, so he could identify the psychopaths from just the say, run-of-the-mill criminals. Every time he sat down with them, they pulled the wool over his eyes, and he videotaped the interviews. And it wasn't until later when he was reviewing the videos that he could see what they were doing, but in person, their tricks were more sophisticated than his detection ability.

Lex Fridman

Well, okay, this is fascinating because again, you're a great interviewer. I would love it if you interviewed somebody like Putin. So this idea that you are a fool in the face of psychopathy just doesn't jive with me.

Jordan Peterson

I'm an agreeable guy. That's the problem. I'll give people the benefit of the doubt.

Lex Fridman

Right. But that's good because the way you reveal psychopathy is by being agreeable, not weak, but seeking with empathy to understand the other person. And in the details in the little nuanced ways that they struggle with questions, the psychopathy is revealed just to separate the two things. So one over-representation, psychopathy online with anonymity. That's a serious fascinating problem. But in the interview one-on-one, I don't know if the job of a human being in conversation is to not talk to psychopaths, but to talk... How would you interview Hitler?

Jordan Peterson

Well, I've had very difficult clinical interviews with people in my clinical practice.

Lex Fridman

How do you approach that?

Jordan Peterson

Well, I really probably approach that the way I approach most conversations. And it's something like, I'm going to assume that you're playing a straight game, but I'm going to

watch, and if you throw the odd crooked maneuver in, then I'll note it. And after you do it three times, I'll think, okay, I see. I thought we were playing one game, but we're actually playing another one. And if I'm smart enough to pick that up, that usually works out quite successfully for me. But I'm not always smart enough to pick that up.

Lex Fridman

But see, here's the nice thing. There's the one-on-one conversation that's not recorded is different than one that's listened by a lot of people because I would venture to... I trust the intelligence of the viewer and the listener to detect even better than you.

Jordan Peterson

Yes. And I think that's true, by the way.

Lex Fridman

To detect this psychopathy.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. I've had the odd interview with people that I wasn't happy with having organized because I felt that I had brought their ideas to a wider audience than might've been appropriate. But my conclusion and the conclusion of my producers and the people I talked to was that we could run the interview, the discussion and let the audience sort it out. And I would say they do. I think as a general rule of thumb, that's true. And I also think that the long form interviews are particularly good at that because it's not that easy to maintain a manipulative stance, especially if you're empty for two and a half hours. So you get tired, you get irritable, you show that you lose the track, you're going to start leaking out your mistakes.

Lex Fridman

And that actually is the case for all the world leaders. I would say one hour is too short. Something happens at two hour plus mark where you start to leak. And I trust in the intelligence of the listener to detect that.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. And it might be the intelligence of the distributed crowd. And I mean, that's what I've seen with the YouTube interviews is that it's hard to fool people as such over a protracted period of time. And I guess it's partly because everybody brings a slightly different set of falsehood detectors to the table. And if you aggregate that, it's pretty damn accurate.

Lex Fridman

But of course, it's complicated because ideas of Nazi ideology spread in the twenties. There was a real battle between Marxism and Nazism.

Jordan Peterson

Oh, yeah.

Lex Fridman

And I believe there's some attempts at censorship of Nazi ideology. Censorship very often does the opposite. It gives the fringe ideologies power if they're being censored, because that's an indication that the man in power doesn't want the truth to be hurt, this kind of idea. And that just puts fuel to the fire.

Jordan Peterson

It also motivates the paranoid types because one of the reasons that paranoia spirals out of control is because paranoid people almost inevitably end up being persecuted because they're so touchy and so suspicious that people start to walk on eggshells around them as if there are things going on behind the scenes. And so then they get more distrustful and more paranoid, and eventually they start misbehaving so badly that they are actually persecuted often by legal authorities, and it's down the rabbit hole they go. And so Musk is betting on that to some degree. Right? He believes that free expression on Twitter X will sort itself out and be of net benefit. And I follow a lot of really bad accounts on X because I like to keep an eye on the pathology of the left, let's say, and the pathology of the right thinking, at least in my clinical way, that I'm watching the psychopaths dance around and try to do what their subversion. And it's an ugly place to inhabit, that's for sure. But it's also the case that a very tiny minority of seriously bad actors can have a disproportionate influence. And one of the things I've always hoped for for social media channels is that they separate the anonymous accounts from the verified accounts. They should just be in different categories. People who will say what they think and take the hits to their reputation, anonymous types. If you want to see what the anonymous types say, you can see it. But don't be confusing them with actual people because they're not the same. We know that people behave more badly when they're anonymous. That's a very well-established psychological finding. Well, and I think the danger to our culture is substantive. I think the reason that perhaps the reason that everything started to go sideways pretty seriously around 2015 is because we invented these new modes of communication. We have no idea how to police them. And so the psychopathic manipulators, they have free reign. About 30% of the internet is pornography. A huge amount of internet traffic is outright criminal. And there's a penumbra around that's psychopathic, narcissistic troublemaking trolls. And that might constitute the bulk of the interactions online. And it's partly because people can't be held responsible, so the free riders have free reign.

Lex Fridman

It's a fascinating technical challenge of how to make our society resilient to the psychopaths on the left and the right.

Jordan Peterson

It might be the fundamental problem of the age, given the amplification of communication by our social networks.

Lex Fridman

And so to generalize across psychopaths, you could also think about bots which behave similar to psychopaths in their certainty and not caring. They're maximizing some function. They're not caring about anything else. Attention. Yeah.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Short-term attention, even worse. Yeah, because that's another problem. If the algorithms are maximizing for the grip of short-term attention, they're acting like immature agents of attention. Right? And so then imagine the worst-case scenario is negative emotion garners more attention and short-term gratification garners more attention. So then you're maximizing for the grip of short-term attention by negative emotion. I mean, that's not going to be a principle. We were talking earlier about unsustainable, unifying axioms, that's definitely one of them. Maximize for the spread of negative attention, negative emotion that garners short-term attention. Jesus, brutal.

Lex Fridman

I tend to not think there's that many psychopaths. So maybe to push back a little bit, it feels like there's a small number of psychopaths.

Jordan Peterson

Three to 5% is the estimate worldwide.

Lex Fridman

In terms of humans, sure. But in terms of the pattern of stuff we see online, my hope is that a lot of people on the extreme left and extreme right, or just the trolls in general are just young people kind of going through the similar stuff that we've been talking about, trying on the cynicism and the resentment. There's a drug aspect to it, there's a pull to that to talk about shit somebody, to take somebody down. I mean, there is some pleasure in that. There's a dark pull towards that. And I think-

Jordan Peterson

That's the sadistic pull.

Lex Fridman

And I think a lot of people, I mean, you see, when you say sadistic, it makes it sound like some kind of, it's a pathology.

Jordan Peterson

It's pleasure in the suffering of others.

Lex Fridman

Right. But I just think that all of us have the capacity for that. All humans have the capacity for that.

Jordan Peterson

Some more than others, but everyone to some degree.

Lex Fridman

And when you're young, you don't understand the full implications of that on your own self. So if you participate in taking other people down, that's going to have a cost on your own development as a human being. It's going to take you towards a Dostoevsky's, notes from underground in the basement, cynical, all that kind of stuff.

Jordan Peterson

Alone.

Lex Fridman

Which is why a lot of young people try it out. The reason is, you get older and older, you realize that there's a huge cost to that. So you don't do it. But there's young people that... So I would like to sort of believe and hope that a large number of people who are trolls are just trying out the derision.

Jordan Peterson

No doubt.

Lex Fridman

So they can be saved, they could be helped. They could be shown that there's more growth, there's more flourishing to celebrating other people and actually criticizing ideas, but not in the way of derision LOL, but by formulating your own self in the world by formulating your ideas in a strong, powerful way, and also removing the cloak of anonymity and just standing behind your ideas and carrying the responsibility of those ideas. Yeah.

Jordan Peterson

I think all of that is right. I think the idea that that's more likely to occur among young people, that's clear. People as they mature, get more agreeable and conscientious. So we actually know that what you said is true technically. It's definitely the case that there's an innate tilt towards pleasure in that sort of behavior. And it is associated to some degree with dominance, striving. And I do think it's true, as you pointed out, that many of the people who are toying with that pattern can be socialized out of it. In fact, maybe most people,

even the repeat criminal types tend to desist in their late twenties. So 1% of the criminals commit 65% of the crimes. Imagine that that 1% are the people that you're really concerned with. They often have stable patterns of offending that emerged very, very young, like even in infancy and continued through adolescence and into adulthood. If you keep them in prison until they're in the middle of their late twenties, most of them stop. And the easiest way to understand that might just be delayed maturation. So are most people salvageable? Yes, definitely. Is everyone salvageable? Well, at some point it becomes, first of all, they have to want to be salvaged. That's a problem. But then it also becomes something like, well, how much resources are you going to devote to that? The farther down the rabbit hole you've gone, the more energy it takes to haul you up. So there comes a point where the probability that you'll be able to get enough resources devoted to you to rescue you from the pit of hell that you've dug is zero. And that's a very sad thing. And it's very hard to be around someone who's in that situation, very, very hard.

Lex Fridman

And it seems that it's more likely that the leaders of movements are going to be psychopaths, and the followers of movements are going to be the people that we're mentioning that are kind of lost themselves to the ideology of the movement.

Jordan Peterson

Well, we know that what you said is true even historically, to a large degree, because Germany was successfully de-Nazified. And it's not like everybody who participated in every element of the Nazi movement was brought to justice. Not in the least. The same thing happened in Japan. So to some degree, the same thing happened in South Africa. Right? And it's the case, for example, also in the stories that we were referring to earlier, the biblical stories that patriarchs of the Bible, most of them are pretty bad people when they first start out. Jacob is the one who becomes Israel. He's a major player in the biblical narrative, and he's a pretty bad actor when he first starts out. He's a mama's boy. He's a liar. He steals from his own brother, and in a major way, he deceives his father. He's a coward, and yet he turns his life around.

Lex Fridman

So be careful the leaders you idolize in worship, but then it's not always clear to know who is the good and who's the evil.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

It's hard. You have been through some dark places in your mind, over your life. What have been some of your darker hours, and how did you find the light?

Jordan Peterson

Well, I would say I started contending with the problem of evil very young, 13 or 14. And that was my main motivation of study for 30 years, I guess, something like that. At the end of that 30 years, I became more and more interested in fleshing out the alternative. Once I became convinced that evil existed, and that was very young, I always believed that if you could understand something well enough that you could formulate a solution to it. But it turns out that seeing evil and understanding that it exists is less complicated than a technical description of its opposite, what is good. You can say, well, it's not that for sure. It's not Auschwitz. How about we start there? It's as far from Auschwitz as you can get. It's as far from enjoying being an Auschwitz camp guard as you can get. Okay, well, where are you when you're as far away from that as you could possibly get? What does that mean? And it does have something to do with play, as far as I'm concerned. I think the antithesis of tyranny is play. So that took me a long time to figure out that specifically. So that was very dark. I spent a lot of time studying the worst behaviors that I could discover abstractly in books, but also in my clinical practice and in my observations of people. And so that's rough. More recently, I was very ill and in a tremendous amount of pain that lasted pretty much without any break for three years. And what was particularly useful to me then was the strength of my relationships, my immediate relationships, my friendships. Also, the relationships that I had established more broadly with people. Because by the time I became ill, I was reasonably well known and people were very supportive when I was having trouble, and that was very helpful. But it's certainly the case that it was the connections I had, particularly with my family, but also with my friends, that were the saving grace. And that's something to know. I mean, it's necessary to bear the burdens of the world on your own shoulders, that's for sure, the burdens of your own existence and whatever other responsibilities you can mount. But that by no means, means that you can or should do it alone. And so you might say, well, welcoming the adversity of life as a redemptive challenge is a task that's beyond the ability of the typical person or even maybe of anyone. But then when you think, well, you're not alone, maybe you're not alone socially, you're not alone familial, maybe you're not alone metaphysically as well, there's an insistence. And I think it's true. There's an insistence, for example, in the old and the new testament alike, that the more darkness you're willing to voluntarily encounter, the more likely it is that the spirit of Abraham and the patriarchs will walk with you. And I think that's right. I think it's sort of technically true in that the best parts of yourself make themselves manifest. If you want to think about it that way, the best parts of yourself, whatever that means, make themselves manifest when you're contending actively and voluntarily with the most difficult challenges. Why wouldn't it be that way? And then you could think, well, that's yourself. It's like, well, are the best unrevealed parts of you yourself? Well, no, they're a kind of metaphysical reality. They're not yet manifest. They only exist in potential. They transcend anything you're currently capable of, but they have an existence. You could call that yourself. But it was Jung's contention, for example, with regards to such terminology that the reason we use the term self instead of God is because when God was dispensed with, let's say, by the processes Nietzsche described, we just found the same thing deep within the instinctive

realm. Let's say we found it at the bottom... Deep within the instinctive realm, let's say, we found it at the bottom of the things instead of at the top. It's like it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter fundamentally. What matters is whether or not that's a reality. And I think it's the fundamental reality because I do think that the deeper you delve into things... This is what happens to Moses when he encounters the burning bush. So Moses is just going about his life. He's a shepherd, he's an adult. He has wives, he has children, he has responsibilities. He's left his home and he's established himself. And so things are pretty good for Moses. And then he's out by Mount Horeb in that story, but it's the central mountain of the world. It's the same mountain as Sinai, which is the place where heaven and earth touch. And he sees something that grabs his attention, right? That's the burning bush. And bush is a tree. That's life. That's the tree of life. And the fact that it's on fire is that's life exaggerated because everything that's alive is on fire. And so what calls to Moses is the spirit of being itself, and it tracks him off the beaten track, and he decides to go investigate. So Moses is everyone who goes off the beaten track to investigate. And so as he investigates, he delves more and more deeply until he starts to understand that he's now walking on sacred ground. So he takes off his shoes, and that's a symbolic reference of identity transformation. He's no longer walking the same path. He no longer has the same identity. He's in a state of flux. And that's when what happens is that he continues to interact with this calling and Moses asks what it is that's being revealed, and God says, I'm the spirit of being itself. That's basically the answer. I am what I am. It's a more complex utterance than that. I am what I will be. I am what was becoming. It's all of that at the same time, it's the spirit of being that's speaking to him, the spirit of being and becoming. And it tells Moses that he now, because he's delved so deeply into something so compelling, his identity has transformed and he's become the leader who can speak truth to power. And so he allies himself with his brother Aaron, who's the political arm and who can communicate, and he goes back to Egypt to confront the tyrant. And that's an indication of that idea that if you wrestle with life properly, that the spirit of being and becoming walks with you. And it's like, how can that not be true? Because the contrary would be that there would be no growth in challenge. Well, you have to be infinitely nihilistic to believe that.

Lex Fridman

It's obvious, but it's also just fascinating that hardship is the thing that ends up being the catalyst for delving deeply.

Jordan Peterson

It's hardship voluntarily undertaken. And it's crucially true. Look, if you bring someone into therapy, let's say they're afraid of elevators and you trick them into getting near an elevator, you'll make them worse. But if you negotiate with them so that they voluntarily move towards the elevator on their own recognizance, they'll overcome their fear and they become generally braver, but it has to be voluntary.

Lex Fridman

See, I got to push back and explore with you the question of voluntarily. Let's look at Nietzsche. He suffered through several health issues throughout his life, migraines, eyesight issues, digestive problems, depression with suicidal thoughts, and yet he is one of the greatest minds in the history of humanity. So were these problems that he was suffering, arguably involuntarily, a feature or a bug?

Jordan Peterson

That's a good question. The same thing happens in the story of Job. Because Job is a good man. God himself admits it. And Satan comes along and says to God, "I see you're pretty proud of your man there, Job." God says, "Yeah, he's doing pretty well." And Satan says, "I think it's just because things are easy for him. Let me have a crack at him and see what happens." And God says, "Yeah, I think you're wrong. Do your worst." Right? And that's how people feel when those slings and arrows come at them, let's say like Nietzsche. Well Job's response to that... Now the story is set up so that what befalls Job is actually quite arbitrary, these catastrophes that you're describing. The volunteerism in Job is his refusal to despair even in the face of that adversity. And that seems like something like an expression of voluntary free will. He refuses to lose faith. And the way the story ends is that Job gets everything back and more. So that's a dissent and assent story. And a cynic might say, "Well, the ends don't justify the means." And I would say, "Fair enough." But that's a pretty shallow interpretation of the story. What it indicates instead is that if you're fortunate, because let's not forget that, and you optimize your attitude even in the face of adversity, that it's not infrequently the case that your fortunes will reverse. And I've found that in many situations, the journalists whose goal was most malicious in relationship to me, who were most concerned with improving their own, what would you say? Fostering their own notoriety and gaining social status at my expense, were the ones who did me the greatest favor. Those were the interviews that went viral. And so that's interesting because they were definitely the places where the most disaster was at hand. And I felt that in the aftermath every time that happened, my whole family was destabilized for two months because things... It wasn't obvious at all which way the dice were going to roll.

Lex Fridman

But you leaned into that. So in a sense that there's this kind of a transformation from the involuntary to the voluntary, basically saying, "Bring it on." That act of bring it on turns the involuntary hardship into voluntary hardship.

Jordan Peterson

Well, not necessarily, let's say, but you could say that's your best bet. Well, I'm never going to say that you can transcend all catastrophe with the right attitude, because that's just too much to say. But I could say that in a dire situation, there's always an element of choice. And if you make the right choices, you improve the degree, you improve your chances of success to the maximal possible degree.

Lex Fridman

It might be too much to say, but nevertheless could be true. Viktor Frankl, Marcus Aurelius.

Jordan Peterson

Well, that's what the resurrection story proclaims, is that even under the imaginable circumstances, the fundamental finale is the victory of the good. And that seems to me to be true.

Lex Fridman

Do you have regrets when you look back at your life in the full analysis of it?

Jordan Peterson

Well, as I said, I was very ill for about three years, and it was seriously brutal. This is no lie. Every single minute of that three years was worse than any single time I'd ever experienced in my entire life up to that. So that was rough.

Lex Fridman

Was the roughest the physical or the psychological?

Jordan Peterson

Pain.

Lex Fridman

Just literal pain?

Jordan Peterson

Yep. Yeah, I was walking like 10 to 12 miles a day, rain or shine, winter, didn't matter, not good. And it was worse than that because as the day progressed, my pain levels would fall until by 10, 11 at night when I was starting to get tired. I was approaching, what would you say? I was approaching something like an ordinary bad day, but as soon as I went to sleep, then the clock was reset and all the pain came back. And so it wasn't just that I was in pain, it was that sleep itself became an enemy. And that's really rough, man, because sleep is where you take refuge, you're worn out, you're tired, and you go to sleep and you wake up and it's generally, it's something approximating a new day. This was Sisyphus on steroids. It was very difficult to maintain hope in that, because I would do what I could. There were times when it took me like an hour and a half in the morning to stand up. I'd do all that and more or less put myself back into something remotely resembling human by the end of the day. And then I knew perfectly well, exhausted, if I fell asleep that I was going to be right at the bottom of the bloody hill again. And so after a couple of years of that, it was definitely the fact that I had a family that carried me through that.

Lex Fridman

What did you learn about yourself, about yourself, and about the human mind from that, from all of those days?

Jordan Peterson

Well, I think I learned more gratitude for the people I had around me. And I learned how fortunate I was to have that and how crucial that was. My wife learned something similar. She was diagnosed with a form of cancer that, as far as we know, killed every single person who ever had it except her. It's quite rare. And her experience was that what really gave her hope and played at least a role in saving her was the realization of the depth of love that her son, in particular, had for her. And that says nothing about her relationship with Mikhaila, with her daughter. It just so happened that it was the revelation of that love, that it made Tammy understand the value of her life in a way that she wouldn't have realized of her own accord. We're very, very... There's no difference between ourselves and the people that we love. And there might be no difference between ourselves and everyone everywhere, but we can at least realize that, to begin with, in the form of the people that we love. And I hope I'm better at that than I was. I think I'm better at it than I was. I'm a lot more grateful for just ordinariness than I was because when I first recovered, I remember, I first started to recover I was standing in this pharmacy waiting for a prescription in a little town, and they weren't being particularly efficient about it. And so I was in that, standing in the aisle for 20 minutes, and I thought, "I'm not on fire. I could just stand here for the rest of my life, just not being in pain and enjoying that." And that would have been something that before that would have been, I would have been impatient and raring to go because I didn't have 20 minutes to stand in the middle of an aisle. And I thought, "Well, if you're just standing there and you're not on fire, things are a lot better than they might be." And I certainly, I know that, and I think I remember it almost all the time.

Lex Fridman

You gain a greater ability to appreciate the mundane moments of life.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah, definitely. The miracle of the mundane, right?

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Jordan Peterson

I think Nietzsche had that because he was very ill. And so I suspect he had... And he was regarded by the inhabitants of the village that he lived in, near the end of his life, as something approximating a saint. He apparently conducted himself very admirably despite all his suffering.

Lex Fridman

But that still, there's this tension, as there is in much of Nietzsche's work, between the miracle of the mundane, appreciating the miracle of the mundane versus fearing the tyranny of the mediocre.

Jordan Peterson

It's more the mediocre and resentful.

Lex Fridman

Yes, but that's you giving him a pass or seeing the good.

Jordan Peterson

Well, fair enough.

Lex Fridman

There's a kind of... I mean, the tyranny of the mediocre, I always hated this idea that some people are better than others, and I understand it, but it's a dangerous idea.

Jordan Peterson

This is why I like the story of Cain and Abel, I would say. Because Cain is mediocre, but that's because he refuses to do his best. It's not something intrinsic to him. And I actually think that's the right formulation because I had people in my clinical practice who were, they were lost in many dimensions from the perspective of comparison. One woman I remember in particular who, man, she had a lot to contend with, she was not educated, she was not intelligent. She had a brutal family, terrible history of psychiatric hospitalization. And when I met her at a hospital, she was an outpatient from the psychiatric ward, and she had been in there with people that she thought were worse off than her, and they were. And that was a long way down. That was like Dante's Inferno level down. It was a long-term, psychiatric inpatient ward. Some of the people had been there for 30 years. It made One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest look like a romantic comedy. And she had come back to see if she could take some of those people for a walk, and was trying to find out how to get permission to do it. Better than other people. Some people are more intelligent, some people are more beautiful, some people are more athletic. Maybe it's possible for everyone at all levels of attainment to strive towards the good. And maybe those talents that are given to people unfairly don't privilege them in relationship to their moral conduct. And I think that's true. There's no evidence, for example, that there's any correlation whatsoever between intelligence and morality. You're not better because you're smart. And what that also implies is if you're smart, you can be a lot better at being worse.

Lex Fridman

I think, for myself, I'm just afraid of dismissing people because of my perception of them.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Well, that's why we have that metaphysical presumption that everybody's made in the image of God. Despite that immense diversity of apparent ability, there's that underlying metaphysical assumption that, yeah, we all vary in our perceived and actual utility in relationship to any proximal goal, but all of that's independent of the question of axiomatic worth. And preposterous as that notion appears to be, it seems to me that societies that accept it as a fundamental axiomatic presumption are always the societies that you'd want to live in if you had a choice. And that to me is an existence proof for the utility of the presumption. And also, if you treat people like that in your life, every encounter you have, you make the assumption that it's a radical equality of worth despite individual variance in ability, something like that, man, your interactions go way better. I mean, everyone wants to be treated that way. Look, here's a developmental sequence for you, naive and trusting, hurt and cynical. Okay, well, is hurt and cynical better than naive and trusting? It's like, yeah, probably. Is that where it ends? How about cynical and trusting as step three? And then the trust becomes courage. It's like, yeah, I'll put my hand out for you, but it's not because I'm a fool. And I think that's right, because that's the re-instantiation of that initial trust that makes childhood magical and paradisaal. But it's the admixture of that with wisdom. It's like, yeah, we could walk together uphill, but that doesn't mean, and I'll presume that that's your aim, but that doesn't mean that I'm not going to watch.

Lex Fridman

What's a better life, cynical and safe or hopeful and vulnerable to be hurt?

Jordan Peterson

Oh, you can't dispense with vulnerable to be hurt. That's the other realization. It's like you're going to stake your life on something. You could stake your life on security, but it's not going to help. You don't have that option.

Lex Fridman

So what do you do when you're betrayed ultimately by some people you come across.

Jordan Peterson

Grieve and look elsewhere. Do what you can to forgive, and not least, so you lighten your own burden. Maybe do what you can to help the person who betrayed you. And if that all proves impossible, then wash your hands of it and move on to the next adventure.

Lex Fridman

And do it again.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Yeah.

Lex Fridman

Boy, this life, something else. So we've been talking about some heavy, difficult topics, and you've talked about truth in your Nietzsche lectures and elsewhere. When you think, when you write, when you speak, how do you find what is true? Hemingway said, "All you have to do is write one true sentence." How do you do that?

Jordan Peterson

Well, I would say first that you practice that. It's like that question is something. And Hemingway knew this at least to some degree, and he certainly wrote about it, is that you have to orient your life upward as completely as you can, because otherwise you can't distinguish between truth and falsehood. It has to be a practice. Now and for me, I started to become serious about that practice when I realized that it was the immorality of the individual, the resentful, craven, deceitful immorality of the individual that led to the terrible atrocities that humans engage in that make us doubt even our own worth. I became completely convinced of that. That the fundamental root cause of evil, let's say, wasn't economic or sociological, that it was spiritual, just psychological, and that if that was the case, you had an existential responsibility to aim upward and to tell the truth, and that everything depends on that. And I became convinced of that. And so then... Look, you set your path with your orientation. That's how your perceptions work. As soon as you have a goal, a pathway opens up to you and you can see it. And the world divides itself into obstacles and things that move you forward. And so the pathway that's in front of you depends on your aim. The things you perceive are concretizations of your aim. If your aim is untrue, then you won't be able to tell the difference between truth and falsehood. And you might say, "Well, how do you know your aim is true?" It's like, well, you course correct continually, and you can aim towards the ultimate. Are you ever sure that your aim is the right direction? You become increasingly accurate in your apprehension.

Lex Fridman

Is it part of the process to cross the line, to go outside the Overton Window, to dip a toe outside the Overton Window for a bit?

Jordan Peterson

Of course. That's what you do in part in play. I was at the Comedy Mothership, and every single comedian was completely reprehensible. All they were doing was saying things that you can't say. Well, but it was in play. What I'm trying to do in my lectures is I'm on the edge. I have a question I'm trying to address, and I'm trying to figure it out. I don't know where the conversation is going. Truly, it's an exploration, and I think the reason that the audiences respond is because they can feel that, it's a high wire act, and I could fail. My lectures have degrees of success. Sometimes I get real fortunate and there's a perfect narrative arc. I have a question, I'm investigating it. It comes to a punchline conclusion just at the right time, and it's like the whole act is complete, and sometimes it's more fragmented. But I can

tell when the audience is engaged because everyone's silent, except maybe when they're laughing.

Lex Fridman

There's a sense that you're arguing with yourself when you're lecturing. It's beautiful. It's really beautiful and powerful to watch. Nietzsche does the same. There's contradictions in what you're saying. There's a struggle, what you're saying. But I do think that when you're doing the same on the internet, you get punished for the deviations. You get punished for the exploration, especially when that explores outside the Overton Window.

Jordan Peterson

Look, if you're going to play hard in a conversation to explore, you're going to say things that are edgy, that are going to cause trouble, and they might be wrong. And that's another reason why free speech protection is so important. You actually have to protect the right, let's say, in the optimal circumstance, you have to protect the right of well-meaning people to be wrong. Now, you probably have to go beyond that to truly protect it, you have to even protect the right of people who aren't meaning well to be wrong. And we also need that because we're not always well-meaning. The alternative to that protection would be the insistence that people only say what was 100% right all the time.

Lex Fridman

I'm also, I guess this is a call to our fellow humans not to reduce a person to a particular statement, which is what the internet tends to want to do.

Jordan Peterson

Especially if it's the worst thing they ever said.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Yeah.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Because God... Well, anyone judged by that standard is doomed unless they're silent.

Lex Fridman

But it also just makes you not want to play.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah, right?

Lex Fridman

Not want to take radical thought experiments and carry out to the natural that conclusion.

Jordan Peterson

Well, that's kind of the definition of a totalitarian state.

Lex Fridman

Yes.

Jordan Peterson

No one's playing in a totalitarian state, ever.

Lex Fridman

But in this case, it's an emergent one -

Jordan Peterson

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

... with psychopaths roaming the landscape, the barbarians.

Jordan Peterson

That might be the general pattern of totalitarianism.

Lex Fridman

Well, in totalitarianism, there's usually one psychopath, not multiple.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Well, everyone else is complicit, at least in their silence.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Does the study of the pathology of psychopaths online wear on you?

Jordan Peterson

Yes, definitely.

Lex Fridman

Do you ever consider doing less of that?

Jordan Peterson

Yes. Yes. Definitely. Probably I experienced most of that on X, but that's also where I find most of my guests. That's also where I get a sense of the zeitgeist, which is necessary. For example, if you're going to be a podcast host, it's necessary for me to make my lectures on point and up to date to get a sampling of the current moment. You have to be of the

moment, in many ways, to function at a high level. There's a price to be paid for that because you're exposed to everything in a sense.

Lex Fridman

You can also over sample the darkness.

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

Lex Fridman

And it can make you more and more cynical. It's a danger, right?

Jordan Peterson

Yeah. Yeah. Well, luckily for me, I have many things that counterbalance that, the familial relationships we talked about, the friendships, and then also all of the public things I do are positive. The lecture tours, for example, which I'm on a lot, they're basically 100% positive, so I'm very well buttressed against that-

Lex Fridman

That's great to hear.

Jordan Peterson

... darker element.

Lex Fridman

As a fan in the arena, watching the gladiators fight, your mind is too important to be lost to the cynical, to the battles with the abyss.

Jordan Peterson

You have a moral obligation too, to maintain a positive orientation. It's a moral obligation. The future is, of course, rife with contradictory possibilities, and I suppose in some ways, the more rapid the rate of transformation, the more possibility for good and for evil is making itself manifest at any moment. But it looks like the best way to ensure that the future is everything we wish it would be is to maintain faith that that is the direction that will prevail. And I think that's a form of moral commitment, when it's not just naive optimism.

Lex Fridman

Well, Jordan, thank you for being courageous and being the light amid the darkness for many, many people. And thank you for once again talking today.

Jordan Peterson

Thanks very much for the invitation and for the conversation. It's always a pleasure to see you. You're doing a pretty decent job yourself about there, illuminating dark corners and bringing people upward. You've got a remarkable thing going with your podcast, and you're very good at it.

Lex Fridman

Thank you, Jordan. Thanks for listening to this conversation with Jordan Peterson. To support this podcast please check out our sponsors in the description. And now let me leave you some words from Friedrich Nietzsche. "I would like to learn more to see as beautiful, that which is necessary in things. Then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful." Thank you for listening, and hope to see you next time.