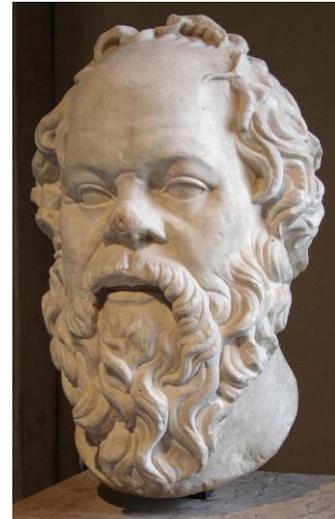


Today I am going to tell you about three more great thinkers. We have already come across some great thinkers. I mentioned THOMAS HOBBS to you on May 5 (the man who thought that the government of a country needed to be terrifyingly powerful, more powerful than anything else in the country) and I mentioned DIOGENES to you on May 6 (the man who told ALEXANDER THE GREAT to 'get out of my light'). So here are three more great thinkers to add to your collection:

## SOCRATES

Socrates (pronounced 'Sok - rah - tees') lived in ATHENS, in GREECE. He was born in 470 BC (that is, 470 years before Jesus was born) and died at the age of 71 in 399 BC (that is, almost 400 years before Jesus was born). He was the first great thinker in history - he made himself annoying by going around Athens and approaching people who thought they knew what love was, or what was involved in being just, and asking them questions about what they knew - which questions showed they didn't know very much. And sometimes Socrates would help them out with his own suggestions, and other times he would leave them dazed and confused, not knowing what to think.



This method of questioning people has come to be known as the SOCRATIC METHOD of testing people's understanding - and is used to this day in American law schools (but not in England!). Socrates did this because when he was 40, he was told that the priestess at the Temple of Apollo in DELPHI had said that 'No one is wiser than Socrates.' And Socrates had thought to himself - 'How is this possible? I know nothing!' But then he thought, 'Maybe I'm wiser than everyone else because I KNOW that I know nothing, whereas everyone else thinks that they know something but in fact they know nothing as well.' So he went about trying to see if anyone knew anything about anything, and discovered that they didn't - that they thought they knew about things like love and justice, but when you prodded them a bit and asked them a few tough questions, they folded like a pack of cards and had nothing to say.

But this really annoyed everyone else in Athens - which had already suffered a big military defeat and was in no mood to engage in word games with someone like Socrates - and Socrates ended up being put on trial for various things like misleading the young people in Athens, and he ended up being sentenced to death. In Athens, that meant being given a big cup of poison (HEMLOCK) and being told to drink it - and the hemlock would make your body stop working, starting with your feet and then your legs, and would work its way up your body. Socrates' friends urged him to leave Athens and escape having to take the hemlock, but he refused - saying that his entire life had been a preparation for dying, and he wasn't about to run away from that moment now.



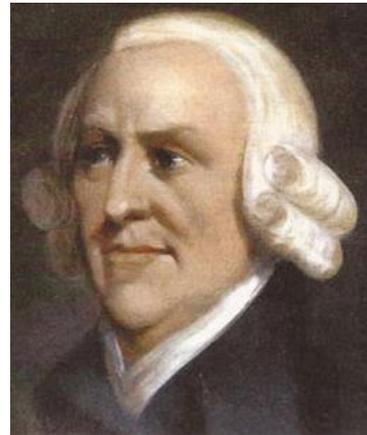
After Socrates died, one of his followers - PLATO (pronounced 'Play - toe') - wrote down his memories of the various conversations Socrates had had with other people while he was alive about issues such as what is love, and what is justice - and then he started to make up his own conversations, still featuring Socrates, that explored those issues in much more detail. One of the books Plato wrote was called THE REPUBLIC, and in it Socrates tells a story about what it is like to be a human living in confusion and illusion, and what it is like to break out of that confusion and illusion and start to see the truth, with the ALLEGORY (pronounced 'All - ah - goree', and meaning 'story that has a point') OF THE CAVE, which is here narrated by ORSON WELLES (who we have talked about before - June 19):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2afuTvUzBQ>

The Allegory of the Cave has the enlightened (or 'woke') individual returning to the cave to tell his friends what he has found out - and that you should do that, even if your friends will then get angry with you for telling them that they know nothing and will want to kill you for it. Plato's big question was - in what sort of society can someone seek the truth and not be killed for doing it, like Socrates was? We like to think that we live in a society like that - but do we?

## ADAM SMITH

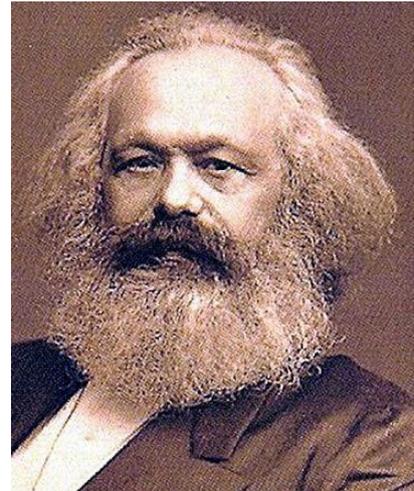
Adam Smith lived a LONG time after Socrates - he was born in 1723 and died at the age of 67 in 1790, and he lived all his life in SCOTLAND. So he lived roughly at the same time as another Scotsman that we have met - the poet Robert Burns (May 16), who was born in 1759, when Adam Smith was already 36 years old, and died in 1796, six years after Adam Smith died. But Adam Smith wasn't a poet - he was one of the very first ECONOMISTS, which are people who study how a country's economy works, and how it can be made to work better.



Adam Smith wrote one of the greatest ever works on economics, which is called THE WEALTH OF NATIONS, and was published in 1776, when Adam Smith was only 43 years old. The big idea that Adam Smith pushed in The Wealth of Nations was that a country doesn't need very much to have a really successful economy - it just needs people to be allowed to trade FREELY with each other, exchanging goods and services on the terms they agreed on. If you allow this to happen - with each individual selfishly pursuing their own interests by trying to get as good a price as possible for what they have to sell, and trying to produce as much as possible of what people want to buy, then, almost as though an INVISIBLE HAND was directing things, everyone will be WAY better off than they would be if the government told people what to produce and for how much to sell the goods and services they produced.

Adam Smith's book had a huge impact, and helped to ensure that countries like Britain and America adopted systems of FREE MARKET CAPITALISM within their country and FREE TRADE between countries because Adam Smith had convinced them that if you do this, Britain or America will be far wealthier than under any other system. Other countries which enthusiastically adopted Adam Smith's views were HONG KONG and SINGAPORE - and just as Adam Smith predicted, those countries became insanely wealthy just by allowing people and countries to trade freely with each other.

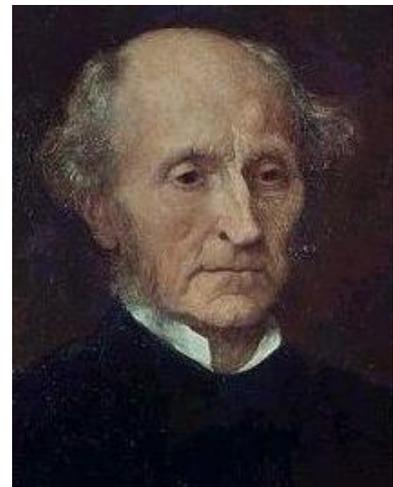
But Adam Smith's views were attacked by KARL MARX (1818-1883), who argued that free markets didn't do enough to protect the interests of workers, and actually resulted in wealth building up in the pockets of businesses and firms that employed workers to work for them. Marx looked forward to a time when workers would take over the shops and factories where they worked, and everything would be owned in common (or COMMUNALLY) by the working classes. But just as Adam Smith predicted, the countries that tried that system out - such as the SOVIET UNION and CHINA - became insanely poor under COMMUNISM, with the result that the SOVIET UNION collapsed (in 1989), and China had to adopt free market capitalism (and became insanely rich as a result), though the Chinese government still maintained strict control over the Chinese population in terms of what they were allowed to say (no Socrates allowed in China!).



But still some people are unhappy with the way a free market economy works - and in particular the way the interests of ordinary people tend to get shoved aside when there is money to be made. The election of DONALD TRUMP as American President and the BREXIT vote - both in 2016 - reflected that unhappiness, but we still have to see whether that unhappiness results in countries like Britain and America running their economies in a completely different way from the way Adam Smith argued for.

### JOHN STUART MILL

John Stuart Mill was an Englishman, who was born in 1806, and died just before his 67th birthday, in 1873. (It looks like if you are a great thinker, you will die at the age of 67 or a little older than that!) He lived at a time of great change in British society (presided over by Prime Ministers like DISRAELI and GLADSTONE), when working class people were being given the ability to vote in elections (before then, you used to have to own land to get a say in who ruled over you) - and there was a lot of fear that working class people would use that power to vote in parties that would give effect to the ideas of people like KARL MARX.



In order to discourage this, John Stuart Mill came up with his big idea, which he set out in his book ON LIBERTY, which was published in 1859. Mill's big idea came to be known as the HARM PRINCIPLE, and it said that the government could only use force against you in order to protect other people from being harmed by you. So if a factory owner just sat quietly in his big country house, doing no harm to anyone, then it would be wrong for the government to do anything to him - even if that government had been voted in by working class people who thought it was very unfair that the factory owner should live in a big country house while his workers lived in horribly small and run down little cottages, and would quite like the big country house to be taken away from the factory owner and turned into flats for ordinary people to buy.

Mill's 'harm principle' has made a big impact on people's thinking about what the government can and cannot do. For example, in a couple of days' time, people like me will be required to wear masks if we go into a shop. Now - why is this? If the government said, 'We want to protect you from being harmed by other people, and wearing a mask is a good way of avoiding picking up other people's diseases', that wouldn't be allowed under Mill's harm principle. If the purpose of getting me to wear a mask when I go into a shop is to protect ME from being harmed by OTHER PEOPLE, then I should be able to say, 'Sorry - I don't want to be protected. I'm happy to take the risk of picking up some disease from someone else.' So instead the government has to say, 'We're making you wear a mask because we want to protect other people from being harmed by you. You might be carrying round a disease, and wearing a mask is a good way of ensuring that you don't give that disease to someone else.' Using force against me to protect OTHER PEOPLE from being harmed by ME is allowed under the harm principle - so the government prefers to say that it is making us wear masks to stop us harming other people, rather than saying that it is making us wear masks to stop other people harming us.



Would John Stuart Mill's harm principle have protected Socrates from being killed, all those years ago? Probably not - and this is the weakness of the harm principle. It's almost always possible to say that something that you are doing is harming someone else, for the purpose of getting the government to stop you doing it. Even the city of Athens would have been able to say that all those annoying questions that Socrates asked were harming other people - and may in fact have contributed to Athens' huge military defeat. So the harm principle, while a big idea that has had a big impact, isn't strong enough to seriously get in the way of a government doing whatever it wants to do.