

We are watching the scaffolding that once upheld decency, order, and democracy be destroyed. There are numerous historical examples where totalitarian governments took control, and the horrors that always follow are well documented. There are many examples in history of authoritarian regimes ending democratic societies. There have always been ebbs and flows between democracy and social deterioration brought on by coerced masses being led to act against their best interests. By acknowledging how unexceptional this is, we can learn from those who came before us and how they navigated the suffocating dynamics tyranny creates, as we build our own story of resilience.

Combating the weaponization of the media through social media posts, protesting, and vocal condemnation of the horrors taking place are incredibly important.. However, totalitarianism in the United States of America developed meticulously and comprehensively, and to meet this moment, we must build a framework of resistance at the same scale. A landmark work on resisting the allure of fascism at the macro-level was Karl Popper's book *The Open Society and Its Enemies* which aimed at preventing the fertilization of political landscapes where fascism grows. Attempting to design utopias isn't pragmatic and we have ample evidence of its inefficacy. Published in 1945, Karl Popper's objective was not to diagnose totalitarianism. When the government disappears people without due process, whether in 1945 or 2025, you should not need to be told you are under fascist control. Karl Popper warned of how easy it is to fall under the spell of totalitarian regimes, the risks of political dogma, and how to identify the seeds of fascism planted in institutions. Karl Popper's concepts are elegant in their simplicity. Societies are safer when they allow criticism than when they forbid it and by admitting errors and working in earnest to address them, we can create a far better world than we can with obedience alone.

We must establish and protect what Karl Popper coined as an open society because the opposite, or a closed society, entices with its simplicity, turbocharged through tribalism. An open society comes with a price - what Karl Popper calls the price of being a human being. Open societies are more complicated to live in than a closed society because you carry the burden of being an individual, with desires and choices. Contrast that with the seduction of a closed society. When people are exhausted by war, famine, or intense political divide, reductionism is awfully enticing. But in this system, evil, abuse of power, inequality, and suffering are guaranteed. A society made up of free individuals, is more difficult to control. That is why fascist regimes focus on the removal of rights using various techniques of coercion and the manipulation of your will to fit the totalitarian system's needs, rather than the system suiting the needs of its people. Timothy Snyder warns us, authoritarian leaders favor sweeping decrees because they foreclose correction. That is what Project 2025 is. Tyranny can be simply defined as the refusal of corrections.

Many renowned political scientists have asked the wrong question: who should rule and how should that person rule? But if you want to prevent totalitarianism upstream, the better question is, how should we design our systems so we can engage in the democratic process without bloodshed, without violence? In 1945 Karl Popper warned us of January 6th.

Humans have an inherent desire to be safe, healthy, and at peace. However, for thousands of years humans learned to identify and support those within their tribe and reject those who are not. This tension reflects a fundamental conflict within the human condition - that is, our collective aspirations for unity and the collective good are constantly challenged by deeply entrenched patterns of tribalism that breed exclusivity. Marcus Aurelius said: "to expect bad men not to do wrong is madness, for he who expects this desires an impossibility. But to allow men to behave that way onto others, and to expect them not to do thee any wrong, is irrational." Therefore, the aim

is not to condemn evil people, rather remove their power. A utopia void of wrong-doers is impossible but societies built on dogma, and static concepts and ideology will in time condemn them - regardless of how benevolent their architects. Elinor Ostrom built on these ideas and said open societies “facilitate experimentation and learning, trust-building, and adaptation.” Let us recognize we are going to have conflicts and create a world that allows us to address them and monitor our progress.

Timothy Snyder says: “[Trump] is a nationalist, which is not at all the same thing as a patriot. A nationalist encourages us to be our worst, and then tells us that we are the best... A patriot, by contrast, wants the nation to live up to its ideals, which means asking us to be our best selves. A patriot must be concerned with the real world, which is the only place where his country can be loved and sustained. A patriot has universal values, standards by which he judges his nation, always wishing it well - and wishing that it would do better.” Resist those who promise greatness through suffering. People’s lives should never be a means to an end, and no policy is just if it requires oppression. Legitimate solutions do not rest in promises of perfection, but in procedures that let citizens contribute, deliberate, and disagree without fear. With courts bent to loyalty, media outlets bought or controlled and freedoms removed one by one, trust will die gradually. Until the fascist’s voice offering order, efficiency, and certainty - feels like salvation. True resilience requires institutions that adapt transparently and equitably. An open society means well-informed citizens engaged in the democratic process, making microchanges. An open society is the safeguard against violence, hatred, and fascism. An open society is never complete. It must be renewed and reinforced over and over as each generation chooses whether to protect the possibility of correction or surrender to the certainty of closure. Marcus Aurelius warned us: “recognize the malice, cunning, and hypocrisy that power produces, and the peculiar ruthlessness of those who habitually court it.” Resist the seductive reductionism of fascism. Don’t allow yourself to become complacent under the intellectual emptiness tyranny provides. Leverage the freedoms you have to be informed and vocal.

As Karl Popper says, “we must become makers of our fate.”