

# 'Whatever' Totalitarianism

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*\* A plutocracy (from Ancient Greek πλοῦτος (ploûtos) 'wealth', and κράτος (krátos) 'power') or plutarchy is a society that is ruled or controlled by people of great wealth or income. Unlike most political systems, plutocracy is not rooted in any established political philosophy. Throughout history, political thinkers and philosophers have condemned plutocrats for ignoring their social responsibilities, using their power to serve their own purposes and thereby increasing poverty, nurturing class conflict and corrupting societies with greed and hedonism.*

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**For three years, maybe unknowingly a little more,** we have struggled with questions that seemed to lack conceivable answers. Nothing made sense. Our questions bounced off the problem(s) and boomeranged back to floor us. Were our 'leaders' being blackmailed or merely bought? How did they sleep at night given the things they spent their days doing? Where were the liberals? Where were the civil libertarians? The model we had worked with until roughly the end of the month before it all began seemed overnight to have become derelict, and yet it was standing still, if only in our minds. We could not shake it off as it manifested from our mouths in blurted rhetorical statements like, 'You can't do this *in a democracy!*' That such a model of civic existence might be gone forever was something we allowed to crystalise but slowly in our thoughts. Better to see this as some kind of aberration. It had started, after all, as an 'emergency', and even though we knew in our hearts that this was bogus, it gave us some kind of comfort to cling to. The unthinkable could be received some other day.

So we built our edifices of thoughts and theories, adding to it all the while as though rocks and slabs and slivers to a dry stone wall. Sometimes, like a jigsaw, the picture seemed to enter a sudden new phase of self-understanding, filling us out with expectation as it filled itself in. A whole new corner might erupt, all but completed, and leave us as dazzled as saddened by what it seemed to suggest. But still the overall picture remained elusive, so we flirted and dabbled with what the Kafkian dung-beetles who were implementing all this were calling 'conspiracy theories', seeking to push towards some kind of Big Bang moment when it might all become clear.

Sometimes, we momentarily forgot parts of what we have already understood, fixing on some adjacent detail at the expense of the big picture, focussing — to mix in another metaphor in keeping with the spirit of the condition and the times — on a tree rather than the wood. Sometimes we forgot that what confronted us was a forest of thoughts and possibilities rather than a group of unconnected trees. Then, in the midst of staring at a particular interesting oak, we caught sight of the shadows behind it, and took to describing anew the wood we had already observed but strangely mislaid from our purview — its depths and murk, its windy paths and briar patches. How had we forgotten all this again? Suddenly the wood seemed all important, and the trees somehow *passé*, beside the point.

In considering the meanings and mechanics of what has happened in these past three years to our democracies and our hearts, there

appears to be at least two layers requiring to come under equal degrees of consideration. The first is what might be called the ‘invasion’ — the indisputable assault upon our nations from outside; the sudden, passive-aggressive usurping of our countries and the ways of being of their native peoples; the apparently overnight capturing of those we still laughably called our ‘representatives’; the dramatic shift in the demeanour of our neighbours, who now seemed to have forgotten everything they had ever claimed to believe until the day before yesterday. The questions in this context abound: Who, really, were these invaders? What were they seeking? From where or what did they derive their authority? How did they achieve what they achieved so easily, meeting almost no significant resistance?

There have been many attempts to answer these questions among others, many of them partial, others merely speculative. Although the edifice of lies that accompanied the invasion is beginning to show cracks, we do not have any clear answers as to the overall nature of what is happening. We know a little more than at the beginning about the external would-be colonising force. At the level immediately beyond our national boundaries, there was, for certain, the layer of supranational bodies — the World Health Organisation (WHO); the World Economic Forum (WEF); the United Nations (UN); the European Commission (EC), and some others — clearly issuing orders and mandates, but all the while conveying a sense that they were also merely implementing a set of protocols issued from above. There was something determined about their behaviour, an imperviousness to actual facts or events, a lockstep pattern that conveyed some element of non-negotiability that sometimes seemed to disconcert them almost as much as it disconcerted us.

Then, there was the odd figure of Bill Gates, travelling under the banner of his infamous eponymous foundation, seeming to be acting as some kind of sweeper behind the supranational backline. He it was who acted as a kind of dogsbody of the global coup, issuing bulletins and clarifications, responding to developments, ‘speculating’ about future possibilities, as though all-knowing, as though he amounted to more than a mere interested observer, and yet lacking any visible qualification in a contest where ‘expertise’ was vaunted as the quintessential element of someone’s right to be heard. If any of us ventured an opinion, we were likely to be asked: ‘Oh, and where did you do your degree in microbiology?’, but no one asked Bill this question.

All this seemed to suggest some even higher ‘authority’ — clearly neither expertise-empowered or elected, to which all the other bodies and their respective spokespersons — national and supranational — and Bill Gates, too — appeared to be beholden and subservient. The nature of this entity has been but vaguely defined. It is commonly referred to as an ‘elite’, by which is generally meant not an intellectual or moral elite, but a financial or supra-political power, perhaps an alliance of millionaires, perhaps a constellation of asset-management organisations or banking moguls, perhaps some kind of arcane secret society, maybe a religious sect of some kind — a Satanic mafia? — or even a coalition of several or all of these elements. This aspect of the discussion lacked clear delineation or illumination, and therefore remains murky. It is much speculated about, under multiple headings: the Cult, the Cabal, the Illuminati, the Predator Class, the Khazarian mafia. I call it ‘The Combine’, a phrase I borrowed from Chief Bromden, the protagonist in Ken Kesey’s 1962 novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. The Chief saw The Combine as a force directed at taming human nature, grinding mankind down to the level of mere brute animal, rendering humanity compliant to its will. ‘Combine’ is a

good word — it gives expression to a confederacy of anonymous plutocrats seeking to thresh, break, grind, strip, disconnect, winnow, reap and gather humanity and put it to use in service of its newly declared masters. The Combine represents, too, the increasingly mechanised structure of all nature and human society in this ‘modern’ moment — an immense, invisible force that grips mankind almost without touching, a process set in train a long time ago with the objective of repressing mankind and re-setting its behaviours so as to achieve greater utility for the machinators. The Chief’s conception of the Combine arises in part from his personal story, in which the land upon which his people worked and lived was seized from his family to build a hydroelectric dam, in service of the palefaced man. In my country, Ireland, we suffered a comparable assault, though this featured one palefaced man grinding down another. Here, now, in my country and yours, it’s *déjà vu* all over again.

All this movement and blur occurs above a line that, unlike what is above, and most of what is underneath, is itself clearly defined. This is the line between the puppet masters and the puppets, connected only by the gossamer-like threads by which control is maintained over the marionettes below. Beneath that line are our former constitutional republics, liberal democracies, free societies, civilisations — with their supposed leaderships and political classes, academics, journalists, artists, philosopher and peoples — all of whom, once free and independent actors, have been reinvented as puppets. The leaders no longer lead, but issue orders as though by rote. Those whose job it was to question things — the scribes and investigators of the press or media — seemed at an early stage to intuit that questioning things was no longer permitted, and became propagandists as a tolerable second option.

The liberals had all flown. Like a murder of crows, they had sat in assembly upon the grass in their thousands, facing south. A hush descended as they observed what was happening. Then it became quieter and stiller, as though someone was expected to speak, and then even quieter, stiller, until — suddenly, as though to an unseen, unheard, sub-reality signal — there was a *whoosh!* unprecedented by any instruction or sign, and thus began the piecemeal ascent of the crows in noisy unison, as they headed for their homes in the heavens. We watched as the cloud of blackness that had until that moment been the voicebox of our freedom move ever closer to the ultimately decisive horizon. A numbness entered into those who remained on the ground. They appeared to have been muted, lockjawed, by some contagion of hopelessness. Our ‘leaders’ went into motion, flexing their puppet limbs, evincing unfamiliar smirks, uttering new and ominous phrases.

What had happened? Had there been, after all, a virus, a pandemic — a pandemic of unhope? A pandemic of fear? A pandemic of our worst fears? Is this why so many people — almost everyone — succumbed as though in the very first moments? And not only succumbed but immediately turned in rage upon those very few who had not? Is it possible that, deep within themselves, they had long been expecting this moment of annunciation? Had they known all their lives that their freedoms were too good to be true, that it was all happening in borrowed time? Why else did they submit when they might have refused? Leaving aside the question of a secret dimension of compulsion, undoubtedly present from the outset in the menacing tone of the chief puppets, they could have said no. They could have assessed the evidence, each from his own perspective, and weighed it in the balance. They might have ripped the masks from their faces, and thrown them on the ground, as gauntlets cast before evil. They need not have looked around to see what all the others were doing, and fallen into lockstep. They could have shaken their heads. They could have said, ‘We’re grand as we are,

thanks but no thanks!’

This is the territory of *Die Illusion der res publica* — ‘the Illusion of the republic/commonwealth’ — the ominous title of a recently-published essay by the German philosopher, Michael Esfeld. In this essay, he directs his attention chiefly to the meaning of events below the line referenced above. He is concerned with events and phenomena among the puppets rather than the notional string-pullers. His questions relate to the condition of our ‘democracies’, our ‘open societies’, our ‘constitutional republics’, and why these appeared to fold at the first firing of an inaudible starter pistol: How could this happen? And what happened anyway — *really*? How could the world’s great democracies, the products of nearly 3,000 years of civic evolution, collapse overnight because of an unglorified head-cold? Is this capable of being understood?

Michael Esfeld is a specialist in the philosophy of physics and the philosophy of mind who in 2020 resigned from the once highly prestigious German Academy of Science, Leopoldina, because of its pro-establishment stance on the Covid scam. The sudden realisations that led to this rupture also caused him to conclude that the West’s political establishments were never sincere in their espousing of liberty, rule of law, division of powers, inalienable rights and all the other much-vaulted ‘democratic values’. Pondering what had just taken effect, he came to the conclusion that all these concepts had long been part of a gigantic sham with its roots in the Cold War. For very much longer than we have imagined, he says, Western political classes had had deep hankerings after authoritarianism, and merely allowed their populations to believe in ‘liberal’ concepts that had — for them — already transmogrified into fictions even as they helped to galvanise Western society in a condition of order and cohesion during the Soviet era. As soon as the circumstances changed, they began to put these childish things away.

The lockstep nature of what occurred in the spring of 2020 has already been exhaustively discussed among the Resistance, and is hardly a matter of controversy, even among those who refuse to hear or see. The same scare, the same remedies, the same diktats, the same measures, were rolled out everywhere — certainly in all Western countries — and all at once. In these matters, it has become increasingly clear, it is important to emphasise that we speak chiefly of the West, which is clearly the immediate target of the coup now in train, with other regions and territories included chiefly as a process of misdirection to bolster the fiction of a global pandemic.

From the start, the conceptual centre of the assault appeared to be situated some considerable distance left of some notional ideological mid-point. Before long, there emerged a pattern of events that seemed to link what was happening with things that had gone before, in which negative elements of the past histories of particular countries were leveraged in events that appeared to emerge spontaneously from the conditions created by the ‘pandemic’. A signal example was the George Floyd episode of the summer of 2020, when BLM activists were allowed to run riot with impunity, first around American cities, then around the cities of the entire West, while the majority of the populations of these cities were locked down. Very soon, what was happening began to demonstrate, in each territory, a dedicated, particularised form of attack upon the past, upon values, upon long-consensual ways of being. Race was employed as the primary front in the US, the object of assault being the historical experience of slavery; in certain European

countries, the focus was on colonial/imperial histories, and the wrongs perpetrated thereby — histories now being revived by the orchestrated arrival of hordes of outwardly indifferent but actually highly programmed aliens seeking to claim what it was implied was their entitlement. In my country, Ireland — which had no history of imperialism to account for — the normative light skin tone of the indigenous race was sufficient basis for an assault not dissimilar to that occurring at the southern border of the United States. In a broader sense, the ‘crimes’ being adduced had in common that they placed each nation’s past in the dock, and then moved directly to the implacable implementation of sentence.

It was not that the perpetrators of the escalating assaults on democracy and freedom — either those above or below the line — cared one continental for whatever suffering particular categories of human being might have endured in the past. What mattered was that these grievances could now be weaponised to alter fundamentally the configuration of power in Western countries. What the conspirators were interested in, chiefly, was a new form of subjugation, which would in the first instance bear down on the alleged former ‘oppressors’ (or, more correctly, their descendants) and, from there, on everyone. To summarise in a manner emblematic of the prevailing logic: a new oppression had being launched in the name of avenging an old one. But the forces behind it, whomsoever they might call themselves, were the inheritors of the forces who had instigated the old oppressions.

Esfeld avoids, even dismisses, the idea of examining matters in the context of what is called ‘conspiracy’. This approach tends to invite a nodding of heads in some sections of the audience, while getting backs up in others. This is not greatly vital in the context of comprehending his thesis, which in the main relates to the pre-existing conditions of Western democracies which enabled the current descent into tyranny to occur. His project is not so much to explain the entire workings of the Covid tyranny, but to discover why so many supposedly liberal institutions and individuals failed to provide any resistance. Although many objections might be raised to his dismissals of the conspiracy hypothesis, his paper offers a vital exercise in focus on the conditions that served to render the coup so easy.

He pays a great deal of attention to what had been happening to the ‘liberal’ mind to cause it to succumb so readily to despotism of this particular kind, and to the conditions that caused it to evolve in this manner. His fundamental explanation is that we never lived in liberal republics in the first place, but merely jurisdictions so depicted in order to differentiate them from Soviet communism during the Cold War. Once the war ended, they began to revert to nature. He also emphasises how the seemingly vital role of reason in these liberal democracies has latterly been usurped by ‘The Science’ — which is to say by scientism.

His compressed explanation is stark:

*It was an illusion to believe that until spring 2020 we lived in a stable open society and a republican constitutional state. This was only because the anti-communist narrative that prevailed until 1989 required a relatively open society and a relatively well-functioning rule of law. Thus, with the demise of this narrative following the collapse of the Soviet empire, it was to be expected that a new collectivist narrative would take its place, sweeping away the pillars of open society and the rule of law that existed as*

*a demarcation from Soviet communism.*

Part of Esfeld's thesis is that collectivist narratives have a natural primacy over open societies, with which they are incompatible. He also seems to imply that collectivism — the absolutist rule of the common good — is the default demeanour of human societies. By this, I infer him to mean that, as the allure of certain civilisational values wanes, the potential for fear-induced tyranny increases. He says that we must 'bid farewell to the illusion that a republican constitutional state, characterized by the monopoly of violence and of law-making and judiciary in the hands of central state institutions, is the tried and tested means to guarantee the basic rights of the people and to realize an open society.'

The phrase 'open society' — by the way — does not refer to open borders, but to the maintenance of cultural and legal conditions which recognise the right of everyone to self-determination in a manner that is non-judgemental and non-intrusive — essentially what we speak of as 'liberal democracy'. This may be an important point due to the misuse of the term, 'Open Society' in the name of a certain organisation which frequently gets a mention in the context of what is currently happening to the West and the world: The Open Society Foundation under the leadership of George Soros, which really directs itself at razing targeted societies and their cultures by forcing them to open their borders to indifferent or hostile alien elements.

Esfeld parses:

*The open society in the sense of Karl Popper (1945) is characterized by the fact that different ways of life, religions, worldviews, etc. live together peacefully and enrich each other both economically (division of labor) and culturally through mutual exchange. The open society is held together by no shared notion of a common good. In this sense it is value neutral. The only thing that applies is that everyone is obliged to respect everyone else's right to freedom of life. There are no specifications as to how this way of life turns out. There is no corresponding narrative that shapes society.*

He conducts a thorough post-mortem on the concept of constitutional republicanism as a instrument of the open society, and finds it remarkably wanting, identifying multiple symptoms that might have alerted us had we been paying more attention.

At the heart of the liberal democracy is a contradiction, a fatal flaw that may well be deemed the central cause of why we have fetched up where we have: The liberal state, because it requires state oversight and tacit coercion to maintain the fragile balance required by openness to a multiplicity of different views, ethnicities, creeds, cultures and opinions, is constantly in a condition of expansion.

*Paradoxically, the abundance of power in the hands of the state with its monopoly of legislation and adjudication is a consequence of the open society, namely the consequence of the fact that in this society no doctrine of a substantive, general good prevails.*

There is a further issue: that liberal democracies generally operate on the basis of a simple majority, leaving even very significant minorities perpetually alienated. This becomes even more confounding in the contemporary Cultural Marxist state, in which the

State ‘adopts’ certain minorities as ideological protectorates, while ignoring or oppressing others.

In this context, Esfeld cites a rather more archaic concept — that of the ‘notional state treaty’, which establishes the monarch/ruler, who cannot thereafter be deposed by the same mechanism.

*There can be no legitimacy within the republican constitutional state to take action against the state authority, because one would then place one's own judgment about what is law against the judgment of the state authority. However, the power of the state appears precisely to prevent everyone from using force to impose their view of what is right. The fact that such state power is necessary is in turn the consequence of the fact that society does not have a shared conception of a substantive general good. The unlimited power of state authority in legislation and judiciary is the consequence of the value neutrality of the open society. The fact that the republican constitutional state has developed into liberal democracies does not change this. In a democracy, decisions are made by majority vote. Whatever a majority decides to be right, that is considered right and is enforced against the respective minority under threat and, if necessary, also with the use of coercion.*

Accordingly, in a constitutional republic, the state, by virtue of the system whereby the law is made on the say-so of a simple majority — and not being itself a party to the social contract — acquires a form of near absolute power, in the fashion of a monarch of old. To adapt Esfeld’s construction by way of summarising his point: ‘The [state authority] is charged with making and enforcing law in the territory. But the [state authority] is not a party to the contract. Contracting parties are exclusively the inhabitants of the area concerned. It follows that when the [state authority] makes and enforces law, [it] does not act as a party to the notional state treaty, but as an organ empowered by this notional treaty to legislate. This means that state power is not limited by the state treaty.’

This is precisely what most of us who tried to resist observed during the early stages of the Covid episode: the summary suspension of constitutions and the rights and freedoms they were presumed to protect, all on the basis of an opaque and — as it emerged — grossly exaggerated threat, without any real possibility of democratic or judicial oversight. Moreover, as though instinctually, the checks and balances purportedly built into the system to ensure its continued answerability to the people were closed down in what seemed to be another lockstep initiative. Those of us who raised questions were immediately treated as enemies of the State, which, by Esfeld explication, is exactly what we were.

It gets even worse. In any given instance of the resolution of a controversial issue by majority vote, the defeated minority has no recourse, short of violent insurrection, which, due to the State's monopoly on legal violence is nigh on impossible. Indeed, as we have been observing, the mechanics of Cultural Marxism, which have now been installed in the operating systems of most Western democracies, enable such a government to create a quasi-permanent majority, by ‘adopting’ a multiplicity of disgruntled minorities — victimologies, essentially — which, by dint of welfare and ideological patronage, can be leveraged to ensure that the munificent state is always able to impose its will. This supporting coalition of Cultural Marxism victimologies is fluid and adaptive, so that even if some of its constituent elements become disgruntled by a particular proposal, these can be outvoted by the co-option of others, so



that the government is never left without an adequate margin. Indeed, a seductive aspect of mass migration is that the majority-of-minorities can be continually augmented with new arrivals, who become reliable voting fodder by virtue of the State's capacity to treat them 'generously' from the public purse.

The modern 'liberal' society, therefore, reveals itself as functioning off a kind of trick. It posits 'democracy', but then, often through the manipulation of public opinion, marginalises a sector of itself, so that the 'democracy' becomes an instrument of subjugation as much as of freedom — subjugation for one, freedom for another.

Moreover, the presumed responsibilities of the constitutional republic enable the already powerful State forces to expand state-power in the name of protecting each citizen from every conceivable form of risk or danger. The citizens are not empowered or entitled to take the law into their own hands, so that every grievance, every instance of alienation, every excluded citizen, every potential risk, becomes an instrument of further state power.

*The problem is this: once there is a state authority that has the power of monopoly of force and law-making and adjudication in an area, the officials of that authority tend to expand their power under the pretext of protecting every person in their area from being attacked by other people. In other words, this abundance of power attracts precisely those people who want to exercise power and therefore embark on a career as a functionary of this state authority — such as politicians in particular who try to win elections with ever more far-reaching promises of protection. In this way, the so-called 'welfare state' emerges, which exercises a monopoly of protection against all possible life risks (illness, poverty, inability to work in old age, etc.) and thus crowds out voluntary associations that can provide such protection. The 'welfare state' binds the people in its field technocratically to itself by protecting them from life risks, which its organs claim to guarantee as a monopoly.*

This is the destination-point of Esfeld's thesis: that what we have been experiencing is merely the beginning of a multi-faceted onslaught that is planned to continue into the distant future, changing form as deemed necessary, but without let-up. His thinking parallels that of Fabio Vighi, expressed in [my January 2022 article, \*The Economy of Permanent Emergency\*](#).

What makes Esfeld's thesis different is his emphasis on the capacity of what he deems a 'postmodern totalitarianism' to ignore reality, as it imposes a false reality to supplant it.

*That's what makes postmodern totalitarianism so dangerous: it's a hydra. When a head has been cut off — like debunking the staging of the Corona crisis — a new head immediately appears, such as staging the challenges associated with climate change as a life-threatening climate crisis. The purpose of the small narratives, each of which is a partial good, is precisely that they can be used to continue totalitarian rule at will: as soon as a narrative breaks down because the catastrophic consequences of its implementation become apparent, one is able to pull another narrative out of the bag to maintain the totalitarian rule of sweeping social control. To this extent, postmodern totalitarianism has understood the lesson of the bon mot attributed to the American*

*writer Ayn Rand: one can ignore reality, but one cannot ignore the consequences of having ignored reality (see Rand 1964, Chapter 1). The Corona regime ignored the reality in which there were no virus waves dangerous for the general public. However, this regime could not ignore the consequences of ignoring reality, as is evident, among other things, from the immense damage to health that this regime has caused. But the postmodern regime does not end there. It can quickly conjure up another equally factless regime that ignores reality. Again, you can let that regime run until the consequences of ignoring reality can no longer be ignored — then move on to the next narrative.*

In this model, everything that arises provides fodder for the tyranny and the implementation of total social control. Money, climate, virus, orchestrated inward mass migration, social unrest, dissent, unwanted commentary — all these can be converted into instruments of coercion and control. Each element is in its way contingent, but the underlying logic is not. There will always be some instrument or another by which the tyranny can be advanced and deepened. Even when things go wrong, they will go wrong in a localised manner, and the problem can be isolated and resolved, spun or memory-holed without terminal consequence for the overall project.

These tendencies are fuelled, Esfeld outlines, by several factors, of which he emphasises these four: Political Scientism, Cultural Marxism, the Welfare State, and State Capitalism.

**1. Political Scientism** — when demands for central state control of people's actions through political coercive measures are derived from the claim that knowledge developed by modern science and its methods can grasp everything, including human thought and action, and therefore used to trample human rights and freedoms — 'Follow the science'.

**2. Cultural Marxism:** Esfeld calls this 'post-Marxism', though it might be altogether better described as 'post-Marxian Marxism' — the Frankfurt School reinterpretation of Marx for the intimate arenas of sex and race. This is what, for 25 years, I have called 'the culture of the Omnipotent Victim' — the leveraging of the latent pseudo-moral power of 'minorities' as an instrument to attack the prevailing cultural forms of the West, such as Christianity, 'patriarchy', what is called 'heteronormality', and the moral claims of Caucasians. The emerging post-Marxian Marxist State essentially reverses the order of the administrative power in order to favour history's alleged victims, and punish their alleged victimisers — or, rather, the descendants of these. At the core of the logic is the idea that it was only by cheating humanity more generally that Western civilisation came into being and endured for nigh on three millennia. Interestingly, this claim originates, exclusively, from within Western civilisation itself.

**3. The Welfare State:** Esfeld essentially sees what is happening under the headings of Covid, Woke, Climate, *ex cetera*, as unwarranted extensions of the State's traditional remit. What is happening (for example during the Covid episode) amounts to a radical extension of the welfare state to intrude on the private lives of individual citizens, to enforce (purportedly) good behaviour in non-criminal contexts and to implement a form of historically-situated redistributive justice — all by way of acquiring additional and unwarranted powers for the state and political establishments, spuriously legitimated by pseudo-science and an arbitrary

assumption of moral grounding. In a sense, then, the welfare state was a baby step along the way to the Covid tyranny. This, and related mechanisms designed to nurture individual groups of voter-citizens, results in a balkanisation of the population. The welfare state thus develops, according to Esfeld, into a 'warfare state', which in turn enables the State to sanction itself to assert greater control, which leads inexorably to collectivism dominated by a perverted notion of the 'common good'.

**4. State Capitalism:** This is really fascism by the dictionary definition: a coalescing of the energies of the political state and corporations, to their mutual benefit. The corporations/entrepreneurial classes provide financial, propaganda and demagogic support for the political system and its offshoots and in return is underwritten from the public purse. The current transition to a specifically postmodern totalitarianism feeds off the alliance of the forces of the welfare state and state capitalism, the forces of political scientism in science, and the ideology of post-Marxian Marxist intellectual postmodernism.

Then we come to the nexus of Esfeld's explication: Why, in the face of these developments, did liberalism instantly collapse and so many who might have been expected to resist immediately bend over to accept their 'punishment'? How did the institutions of state and of democracy, from the supreme courts to parliaments, fall victim to moral collapse?

I believe that, in this analysis and otherwise, Michael Esfeld is breaking through to something very important, starting with his tweaking of the concept of totalitarianism, already canvassed in this context by many commentators, most notably Mattias Desmet. Esfeld introduces a new element, speaking of 'actually existing post-modern totalitarianism', which suggests that it is not some ominous cloud on the horizon but something that has already arrived and bedded itself down. The 'postmodern' element arises chiefly from the evisceration of reason, as he explains:

*Postmodernism is primarily an intellectual current that has gained importance since the 1970s and which opposes the claim of universality of the use of reason. [By its logic] the use of reason is not universal, but bound to a specific culture, religion, ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation, etc. The result of this relativization is that in society and in the state the same law no longer applies to everyone, but that certain groups are to be given preference. Likewise, in science, it is no longer just what someone says, but also who says it, what the culture, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. of the person in question is. The consequence is that reason as a means to limit the exercise of power is no longer available. Reason as an instrument for limiting power stands and falls with the universal claim of the use of reason to be the same for all people. The result is that a subjective point of view is imposed on everyone, namely the point of view of the most influential group (which may well be a minority, even a small minority, numerically).*

Esfeld claims that what we are observing amounts to the emergence of a new and discrete form of totalitarianism — a postmodern form — different not only from the violent forms of the twentieth century, but different from the softer forms we have intuited in various contexts in more recent times. He speaks of a postmodern, hydra-headed totalitarianism, a leviathan flitting between faces, each one capable of retreating or being defeated and decapitated, and yet returning later to the fray, with another of the monster's

many heads having taken up the prosecution of the tyranny in the meantime.

*What is specifically postmodern here is that, in contrast to the old socialist totalitarianism of communist or national socialist stamp, we are no longer dealing with a grand narrative that postulates an absolute good: the ultimate goal of history in the classless or the purebred society that is predetermined by supposedly scientific knowledge (materialistic or biological laws of nature). In place of the one big narrative with the one absolute good, there are a number of small narratives, each of which postulates a partial good, such as health protection, climate protection, and the protection of minorities.*

In the engine-room of this hydra-headed leviathan is the politburo of an understanding of science in which ‘experts’ assume a role of not merely scientific knowledge, but also moral wisdom and authority, a mindset accompanied by a view of humanity that sees mere citizens — lacking this expertise and moral wisdom, and therefore requiring to be guided and, if necessary coerced — as ‘physical objects whose life paths can and should be steered towards the general good by scientific knowledge.’ This in itself is not especially new, being a feature of colonisation through the history of recent centuries. Esfeld’s characterisations perhaps unknowingly echo Padraic Pearse’s analysis in *The Murder Machine*, in which he describes a significant element of the Irish population in his time as behaving in the manner of ‘mere Things’. What is striking is that this state of thingness seems now to have been willingly acceded to on a quasi-universal basis.

Esfeld tellingly emphasises that, in the context in which Western civilisation had seemed to prevail for centuries, the Covid episode, the climate ‘crisis’, the Woke assault struck as events that were, at the same time, ‘amazing and unexpected’. It is as though the preparation had all been at a subconscious level, so that, when the moment struck, the typical response was of recognition, albeit accompanied by a slight sense of fleeting shock.

It may be important to remind ourselves here that the spectre of Soviet totalitarianism was by no means greeted with universal disapproval in the West. Indeed, right up to the collapse of the Berlin Wall, elements with the ‘intellectual’ crucible of the West continued to nurture a ‘sneaking regard’ for actually existing socialist regimes, as though a twitching of some atavistic hankering for collectivism. The student revolutions of 1968 offered an example of this aspect of the collective instinct, a movement ostensibly driven by individualism that spawned or inspired a whole new wave of Western collectivist organisms, before petering out in libertine excess. Although left-wing politics remained a strong feature within the political systems of most Western counties — with the exception, nominally at least, of the United States — this remained a restrained and somewhat underwhelming phenomenon until the 1990s. Aside from a period of radicalism in the 1970s, the general sense within the political mainstream was of ‘socialism’ as little more than an ameliorating and harmless kind-heartedness. In general, leftist parties entered power as junior coalition parties of centrist or, less frequently, right-wing parties, and rarely otherwise. In the few exceptions — the UK Labour Party in the 1970s, and Francois Mitterrand’s ascent to power in France in the 1980s, the outcomes were decidedly inauspicious, with labour issues or recessions tending to bring things to a rather septic head. The late-Cold War period was characterised by right-wing retrenchments in America and Britain — with Reagan-Thatcher emerging as the colossi of the age, and the general hangover impression from that

was that the failure of the Mitterrand experiment had scuppered the chances of the left coming to power elsewhere in Western Europe for a very long time. Thereafter, only by camouflaging itself in the clothes of its opponents could the left gain access to power. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the more successful episodes of leftists in power were characterised by radical shifts in the ideological character of such parties as New Labour in 1997, when the party of Wilson and Callaghan, after two decades of floundering, reinvented itself as a heady mix of neo-liberalism and Cultural Marxism under Tony Blair. Having been a clandestine Trotskyist as a student, Blair, as leader of the Labour Party, positioned himself somewhere between Thatcher and Clinton, playing the field of ideology and possibility. New Labour, as he reinvented it, was socialist in name only, and yet was secretly driven by an entirely new set of leftist ideas, which related to the possibilities of leveraging minority grievances to build and maintain power under an ambiguous and constantly shifting banner, possibly the earliest above-ground manifestation of the new dispensation.

Throughout the Cold War, counter to the overarching climate of Western chariness about socialists, and despite the well-documented atrocities of the actually existing socialist regimes, Western media worked hard to water down the accounts of Stalinist tyranny, with most journalists continuing to be broadly leftist in outlook. This parallel-reality brand of ‘actually unexisting socialism’ persisted chiefly by dint of evasiveness and denial. This, together with the stealthy advances of such as Blair, acquired for the new ideologies an ambiguous camouflage, ostensibly suggesting that socialism was being watered down and absorbed into a centrist mix of common sense policies characterised by a judicious blend of left and right. In reality, the seeds of an even more radical form of Marxist-Trotskyism were being smuggled into the centre of the City, and in the time-honoured fashion: a Trojan horse dressed up in compassion, generosity and tolerance — more ‘gifts’ from the Greeks.

When the Covid craft landed, it was as though those ‘actually unexisting socialists’, having waited so long for their hour to come around, having sniffed in vain after every breeze in ideological history in search of a path to power, having surrendered every principle of their philosophy except the craving to control — to change human behaviour by fair means or foul — recognised in the Covid moment the signal for the initiation of their longed-for *denouement*, and instantly adopted an almost instinctual demeanour of acceptance and collaboration. They took off as though in fulfilment of the description by Mark Cocker, in his book, *Crow Country*, of the assembly of crows ascending in unison, albeit ‘scattered like patterns of iron filings across the metallic sky of winter’ — yes, yes, yes, and drawn as though by a magnetic force to an intuited ideological nesting place.

It had been a cardinal principle of Western civilisation that human beings are self-determining entities, and this is to be respected by every other human being: Human beings are not a means to an end, but the end in itself, and therefore not bound by concepts such as ‘the common good’. While they lasted, these values were — technically — ‘enforced’ on one and on all by a legal system and a police force, but only to the extent of preserving basic order and core values, always on the basis of consent. A republic, Michael Esfeld points out, is supposed to be characterised by citizen participation in the process of governing, and a separation of powers as between the three arms of government — executive, legislative and judicial. These conditions, ringed around with checks and balances, offer no explanation for what has been happening in recent times. Notwithstanding Esfeld’s analysis of the four factors to be observed in the runes of the present imbroglio, if we had truly been living in constitutional republics, these understandings would

fall short of an adequate explanation for what is occurring — why these recent phenomena (Covid, climate, Woke) could ‘sweep away the open society into one closed under a collectivist narrative, and the institutions of what previously appeared to be a constitutional state subordinate themselves to this narrative.’

Esfeld claims that neither the concept of a panic-drive emergency, nor that of an overarching conspiracy, help to provide an adequate understanding of what has happened. We must therefore question the premise that we had lived in open societies or constitutional republics in the first place.

Why, he asks, were the 1957-58 Asian flu and the 1968-70 Hong Kong flu not met with responses like those we saw in 2020? In those episodes — as, indeed, in the Irish ‘Emergency’ of 1939-45 (and beyond), (otherwise WWII)— the measures adopted were nothing like those implemented in 2020 on the basis of a radically lesser crisis. There were no bans on major events, and normal social and economic life continued, including dancing, sporting encounters and travel, which was circumscribed only by shortages of petrol.

*The answer is obvious: [in those earlier instances] the open societies and constitutional states of the West had to distance themselves from the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. The contrast between West and East Berlin was obvious to everyone. Responding to a virus wave with coercive political measures would have been incompatible with what the West stands for.*

Esfeld here summons up Francis Fukuyama’s 1992 thesis that humanity had, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, attained the ‘end of history’. Liberal democracy, founded on science and human endeavour, had attained victory. Esfeld interprets Fukuyama as meaning that the collectivist experiment had ended in failure, and therefore collectivism was dead. Liberal democracy, with its openness and high degrees of tolerance for different belief systems, worldviews and lifestyles, had no need for ‘a collectivist narrative of a substantive common good that holds society together.’ Moreover, in these societies, the use of reason had operated to place limits on the exercise of power. In science the facts ruled supreme — authority was not a factor. The rule of law ensured equal rights for everyone, and the electoral system and separation of powers provided the necessary checks and balances to guarantee that abuses or excesses would very rapidly be curbed.

During the Cold War, the anti-communist narrative had served to ward off any threat from the Soviet bloc, as well as deterring internal drifts towards radical collectivism. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, an end was brought not merely to Soviet Communism, but also — though less manifestly — to the contingent, reactive nature of Western liberal democracy. The open society had prevailed, and therefore — paradoxically — was no longer essential.

Fukuyama was wrong, Esfeld argues, in failing to see this possibility. The key to understanding what happened, he claims, is that liberal democracy was not cherished for itself, but because it represented a clear and opposite alternative to communism. It was this, rather than some innate enlightenment or liberalism that created the conditions obtaining until the 1990s. Liberal democracy was not the preference of Western leaders for its own sake, but because it allowed for a clear demarcation with the Soviet bloc. This

narrative did not permit Western leaders to act too repressively or interfere in the intimate lives of the people. When the Soviet enemy disappeared, this era quietly, osmotically, came to a close. Unbeknownst to the surface culture, new collectivist narratives started to edge forward in the West. The genuine advocates of the open society were unprepared for this, ‘clinging to the illusion that open society had prevailed *qua* open society.’ (Fukuyama may have rendered them even more complacent on this point.)

*Of course, the masterminds of this new, collectivist narrative did not come forward as what they are, namely enemies of the open society (as political scientists, intellectual postmodernists, and postcommunists are). The new postmodern, collectivist narratives tie superficially to the open society: they are globalist instead of nationalist (separating a society as a people or nation from other societies), pluralistic and inclusive — though not for the unvaccinated, oil-fired users, internal combustion engine drivers, meat eaters, non-gender language users, etc., in short, all those who cling to their previous way of life and their property rights, including the power to dispose of their bodies. In essence, pluralism and inclusion here do not go any further than the pluralism and inclusion of the bloc parties of the time in the states of the Soviet empire.*

Globalism benefits only the super-rich and privileged, who possess the means, motive, power and opportunity to transcend all restrictions. On everyone else, the collectivist narrative implicit in the globalist project bears down in a radically adverse way. Yet, many of the devices of the new totalitarianism enable its sponsors to clothe themselves in a semblance of virtue.

*Nevertheless, this connection to the open society has the consequence that many friends of the open society have not yet realized that we are on the way to a society that is closed under a new, specifically postmodern totalitarianism. Denial of what is now unfortunately obvious is still widespread. They simply hold on to the fact that what prevailed in 1989 was the open society and the principles of the republican rule of law. But we must take seriously the idea that this assumption is wrong. Because with this assumption one cannot only not understand what has happened in the meantime, but is also tempted not to even perceive what is happening.*

We must therefore, Esfeld insists, entertain the idea that our constitutional republics were bogus to begin. If we give way to the possibility that our assumption about the basis of liberal democracy was wrong, we arrive at a cogent explanation for what is happening now. From there it flows inexorably that liberal democracy was simply a ‘narrative that is [now] superfluous’.

*A narrative is now filling this gap, which superficially ties in with its rhetoric to the existing open society in order to conquer its institutions, but actually does what narratives that are supposed to hold society together — and people who are supposed to hold such narratives together, pushing forward to exercise power in the name of ‘the general good’ — tend to do: establish a collectivism to which people must submit in their ways of life.*

This, again, suggests something to the effect that some form of tyrannical collectivism is the default condition of human society — that ‘society’ and ‘collective’ are actually synonyms, something Margaret Thatcher was anxious to remind us of (‘There is no such

thing as society' — *Woman's Own*, 1987). Esfeld believes the population of the West was fortunate to experience freedom and openness until 1989. Political scientism, he says, always leads to totalitarianism if not stopped in time within science or civic community.

*I would feel happier if I could dismiss this hypothesis as false. But you should take it seriously. Because it explains why the institutions of the republican constitutional state, right down to the constitutional courts, are failing, why so many people are not only running along, but why especially the members of the leadership classes of what appears to be an open society, with full zeal, are moving in the direction of a new single-minded totalitarianism, why do the liberal and conservative parties and their supporters also participate?, etc.*

All this, he says, was inevitable once the narrative that had developed to differentiate the West from the Soviet empire expired. The narrative that has replaced it is essentially collectivist, founded in scientific, earthbound concepts of the 'common good', which is essentially understood as a coercive utilitarianism, the greatest good of the greatest number, in other words totalitarianism,

What is most interesting about Esfeld's thesis is not so much its novelty (although some of his insights are sharply original) as the achievement of the most succinct expression of something that is in reality extremely complex, and difficult to encapsulate in all its moving elements.

What I gather from his essay is that the totalitarianism we now face exists for its own sake, rather than for the sake of any particular ideology. Designed less as an initiative to push humanity in particular ideological directions than as a descent into tyranny for its own sake, it reveals itself as inspired by the occurrence and failures of past forms of totalitarianism. In some ways, it is an attempt to replicate the 'workable' elements of Nazism, Fascism and Communism, which fell apart because of their single-minded natures, while avoiding their 'mistakes'. The chief distinction, he argues, is that whereas these forms were the pursuit of means to achieve particular ends, the totalitarianism currently emerging in the West simply employs forms of what might be called 'ideological software' to propel the project, but without limiting itself to any particular dogma. This is quite true. Various voices on our side over the past few years have posited communism, or fascism, as the dominant notes of what is happening, but in truth what confronts us has shades of both categories of horror, and also intimations of novel ones.

This provides an ominous verbal understanding that confirms what our guts have been telling us. As a mutual friend, summarising Esfeld, puts it: 'All the ideologies which are plaguing us at present involve ignoring reality and will inevitably lead to a collapse that cannot be ignored. The new totalitarianism takes this unavoidable collapse into account and has refashioned itself as the vessel that contains the "ideology *du jour*". Once the Covid narrative collapses, you replace it with the climate narrative. The climate narrative collapses? No problem, just replace it with the woke narrative, and so on. Thus, what we have on our hands is a kind of totalitarian totalitarianism. It is not enough simply to oppose the ideology *du jour*, the attack needs to be directed at the underlying intellectual structure.'



This is a succinct and accurate summary, which I shall modify only by replacing the phrase ‘totalitarian totalitarianism’ (a bit of a headwreck as well as a mouthful) with ‘whatever totalitarianism’ — or, precisely, “Whatever” Totalitarianism — my own extrapolation from Esfeld’s thesis. I think it a rather good name for what we now face. At the centre of its mechanical operation is a leveraging of apathy, cynicism, indifference, listlessness, alienation, defeatism, nihilism and *ennui*, as well as a coddled complacency born of extended prosperity, peace and security, and a culture of self-indulgence that has obtained for more than six decades. The virtually universal capitulation in 2020 of the young and the liberal classes — the ones whom the rest might have expected to be first out of the traps screaming blue murder — was in many respects the most disenchanting part. In truth, the authoritarians-without-authority were able to tap into a mindset that, riddled with anxiety born of an unacknowledged loneliness, and presumptive of their own capacity to defend anything worth defending if needs be, the liberal classes sat back and ‘trusted the government’, ‘trusted the science’, trusted, in sum, the endurability of their own value-systems on the slim basis of their having survived hitherto. A complicating factor was that many of those we might ordinarily have looked to were technically or instinctually left-liberal inclined, which meant that they were actually the first to fall before the march of an apparently benign State advance. In a certain light, too, it becomes clear that multiple categories of the human — left, right and centre — had become lulled into a false complacency by the apparent recent obsession of the political mainstream with the rights of minorities. After all, how could politicians who insisted on the rights of gays and migrants in the teeth of ‘conservative’ and even ‘far right’ resistance, not be punctilious in protecting the more fundamental rights and freedoms of *all* persons?

The nub of Esfeld’s thesis gravitates towards the Covid project’s perverted definition of the common good, the conversion of an overwhelmingly personally-directed dispensation of freedom-forging into a quasi-totalitarian one. This form of totalitarianism, as our mutual friend says, has no end but itself, and has one ultimate identifying characteristic: *brute force*. Yet, Esfeld does not detour to point out that the ‘common good’ is here an invention, a perversion of the concept that exists in English common law, and therefore in most of the constitutions of the anglophone world, whereby the common good is seen as the aggregate of individual potentialities and freedoms. The postulation of the common good in response to lab-made viruses, the grotesque hoax about climate, or the contrived sensitivities of Woke hysterics, are bogus invocations, by any sane or reasonable definition. Esfeld rightly traces this perversion back to a misappropriation of science, but does not deal with the sleight-of-hand that occurred at an early stage in the Covid episode, when the ‘common good’ was presumed in all contexts to refer to something along the lines of ‘in the interests of the collective, even if to the detriment of all or any individuals.’ By this interpretation, any loss, privation or damage incurred by the individual was to be regarded as inconsequential as compared to the necessity to pursue the largely theoretically-backed objective of ‘saving lives’, corralling the population into a collective state of OCD-by-proxy — governed and enforced by experts. No one afterwards was able to say how many lives — if any — had been saved, or whether one of them might be his own.

In the course of preparing our appeal to the Irish Supreme Court in the challenge taken by Gemma O’Doherty and me, I came across an essay written some three decades ago by the eminent Irish judge and onetime attorney general, Declan Costello, in which he both anticipated and forensically rejected such an interpretation:

*The notion of the common good is derived from the concept that a political community exists to provide a whole range of conditions (material, social, moral, cultural) so that each of its members can realise his or her development as a human person. Thus the common good is the whole ensemble of conditions which collaboration in a political community brings about for the benefit of every member of it. This point is made clear in the preamble [to the Irish Constitution] . . . for the common good is not the good of the political community as such (which is a concept inherent in the totalitarian State and inimical to the protection of human rights) but is an end to be promoted for specific purposes, which include the furtherance of the dignity and freedom of every individual in society. The concept of the common good in the Constitution is one derived from scholastic philosophy and differs fundamentally from the utilitarian concept of the greatest good of the greatest number. This concept is seriously flawed in that it attempts to measure happiness and compare it with pain, and also because it provides a theoretical justification for the restriction on the rights of members of minorities. When therefore the exigencies of the common good are called in aid to justify restrictions on the exercise of basic rights it has to be borne in mind that the protection of basic rights is one of the objects which the common good is intended to assure.*

This perversion had become all but an inevitability in societies with an engorging State head, in which power may be jealously hived off and sequestered for use against those from whom it derives, all in the name of spurious concepts of 'openness', 'democratic values' and 'the common good'. These tendencies, too, Esfeld claims, derive from the 'end of history' moment that flowed from the fall of the Berlin Wall.

*The anti-communist narrative . . . necessitated that 'welfare' could not encroach too much on privacy, i.e. the outlined development into a surveillance state with extensive state social control under the pretext of protection by the dominant narrative because of the demarcation from the communism of the Soviet empire was slowed down. But that doesn't change anything about the following: The republican constitutional state needs the full power of the monopoly of violence and legislation and judiciary, because in the open society there is no prevailing doctrine of a substantive general good. However, this abundance of power sets in motion a development in which the holders of state power continue to expand their legislation and thus their regulation of people's lives in order to provide ever better protection against all possible risks in life. In this way, society is welded together in a technocratic manner. Since this cohesion is not technocratically bearable and justifiable alone, it calls a collectivist narrative back on to the scene.*

Thus, almost seamlessly, with the aid of a strong external cohering threat, the open society transmogrifies into its opposite: a system for total social control. With political scientism as the chief instrument, this new narrative is able to pass its tyrannies off as necessary incursions on human freedom because they are rooted in 'facts' and 'reason', though neither concept very often stands up to scrutiny.

*This is the explanation for the development that has become apparent since spring 2020: this development is quite simply what was to be expected. Those who, like me, did not expect it succumbed to the illusion of the res publica, the illusion of the republican*

*constitutional state as an organ that protects people's basic rights and implements an open society.*

Esfeld enables the beginnings of a crystallisation of the meanings attending our own state of absolute shock in observing the total indifference of liberal establishments to the dismantling of the edifices they had inhabited for decades or not centuries. He also provides a framework for understanding the reasons for the willingness of liberals to bury, under instruction, the value systems about which they have prated all their adult lives, and the total silence of the liberal commentariat in the face of all these obscenities. The basic implement of this operation was 'The Science' — the citing of alleged scientific principles, in the manner of a mullah with his *Koran* or a Christian evangelist with his *Bible*, by way of legitimising these abuses and barbarisms.

At the heart of these subterfuges, as Esfeld observes, is the constant absurd insinuation that these rights and freedoms can be 'won back' by good behaviour: By complying with lockdowns, or injection mandates, or carbon targets, or the intimidation of rainbow flags, the citizen can — it is implied — return to where he was before. Thus, the 'emergency' is constructed to strip the citizen of his 'inalienable' (hah!) rights, and the new dispensation is insinuated as a necessary path of recovery in which the citizen becomes convinced that only his own 'original sin' or personal misbehaviour has delivered and maintains him to this state of unfreedom.

*This is obviously not about freedom or rights, but about privilege as a reward for conforming to the injunctions of an unjust regime.*

Esfeld notes that, although the patterns of the assault are similar, the personnel driving each individual tyranny — Covid, climate, trans, *et cetera* — are broadly different. He refers here, I am sure, to the non-political contexts of 'expertise', administration and propaganda, since the political orchestrators tend to have their fingers in all the pies, which all emerge from the same oven.

It is strange, is it not?: We have lived our lives to this point for whatever number of years, without any of these things — pandemics, climate crises, existential revolutions — happening at all, and now, like buses to a bus stop that has seemed invisible for an hour, they descend in veritable fleets and bevvies. Yet, few remark on there being anything strange or unusual about this coincidence of disruptive activity, as though it is the deliverance of a unusual but natural confluence of ill-fortune, sent by the gods in whom we no longer admit to believing.

Esfeld cuts to the chase:

*Eventually, this claim to knowledge and this view of people are taken up in politics and the media with the aim of building a regime of comprehensive social control that does not recognize privacy.*

This is the heartless heart of what is happening. The emerging reinvented State fears and hates the privacy of the individual, because the private space — a sanctuary of home or head, hearth or heart — is where and how autonomy is exercised, and the sovereign individual is liberated from, and achieves superiority to, the machinations of State actors. To attack privacy is to attack thinking and

reasoning, and therefore questioning. The hate speech laws now imminent in Ireland, — to be followed by rollouts of similar dispensations in other Western former nations — amount to a form of public imprisonment of the democratic impulse — an internment of the heart to prevent it yielding up its feelings. This process is merely the culmination of one that has been in train for many decades, surging in an exponential way in the recent period of technological revolution, featuring the internet, social media, smart phones, data harvesting, surveillance, *et cetera*, and entering its final phase with the Covid scam. We have arrived at the culmination and convergence of several simultaneous initiatives against the privacy of the individual, which is to say the slamming of the totalitarian (trap)door on a past of relative freedom, qualified democracy, rule of law, and the solitary mind. As Esfeld observes, the lockdowns enabled the State to intrude not merely on the intimate family space, but also on the very body of the former individual, now to be subject on a constant basis to ‘the common good’.

*Not even one's own body is in one's own possession anymore: Due to the vaccination orders, it is subject to the state's power of disposal. In the climate regime, it can be regulated down to the last detail how one is allowed to live, how one is allowed to move around and what one is allowed to eat. In the wokeness regime, they can regulate what you can say (and think) down to the last detail.*

What we have been experiencing is merely the beginning of a multi-faceted onslaught that is planned to continue into the distant future, changing form as deemed necessary, but without let-up.

This is war by other means. It is not something else. We are under attack, and our own representatives have been recruited as mercenaries against us. We are already well advanced into the process of our conquering.

Humans beings, Michael Esfeld stresses, are naturally free. They can exercise choice. They are free in their thoughts and actions. The discoveries and diktats of scientists do not take away our free will. Knowledge liberates, freeing us from things that might, without it, influence our thoughts and actions in a negative way, curtailing our freedom, as though voluntarily. We are free to choose, and therefore the future is not closed — it remains open.

The mistake we have made was in allowing the open society to be combined with constitutional republicanism, with all its flaws and dangers — in trying to encapsulate the open society in a republican constitutional state characterised by the monopoly on the use of force and the monopoly on law-making and the administration of justice. What we need to do, he says, is sever the link between the open society and the republican concept of the rule of law, because this is what has supplied the power to the abusers who now seek to destroy our freedom for all future time.

The way to achieve this, he says, is already available. Natural law and the Anglo-Saxon tradition of common law is a way of finding and enforcing justice that does not depend on a central state authority with a monopoly of power and of law-making and enforcement in a territory. It is primarily a matter of recognising the law instead of enacting the law: recognising when a person or

group of people lives his/their life in such a way that it encroaches on the right to free life of other people.

*As in any case of knowledge, this knowledge is best achieved through a pluralism that allows for trial and error or correction, rather than a monopoly in the hands of one force. Freedom rights based on natural law can be clearly defined as property rights, including ownership of one's own body, and can thus be made operational without the need for legislation by a central state authority to resolve the conflict. Likewise, the literature on libertarianism sets out how security services can also be provided and enforced through voluntary interaction and association, rather than requiring a central state monopoly on the use of force, provided that a common-law regime is effectively implemented.*

Liberalism was never about freedom, but nurtured a profound desire to change humanity above all other aspects. This rendered it a willing ally of tyrants promising to do the dirty work of such a project.

There is an additional factor, which is the liberal's disdain for any form of criticism of his philosophy on the basis of its alleged backwardness and reactionism seeking to encroach upon and stymie his 'right' to do as he pleases. Our societies have long lost sight of the idea that 'conservatism' does not call for killjoyism, that its true foundation is a longing for a restoration of the virtuous order of work and duty and courage and sacrifice and loyalty and heroism, which was long since uprooted by transgression and degeneracy and comfort and security and mass culture. Very often, the opponents of liberalism were expressing something absolutely vital to human functioning, but in our emerging culture capable of being heard only as a plea for a return to the past. The bipolar notion that was not fully 'open' must *ipso facto* be 'closed' has been destroying the very fabric of human society and culture, but liberals would concede nothing of this for fear of unleashing a slide back to the dark ages. Only the utter perversion of truth and reason could enable a society to arrive at the idea that the defence of drag queens being placed ahead of poets or priests or philosophers in the instruction of children, but when such a notion becomes an issue of conflict, it very rapidly turns into a matter of ideological principle. As Leo Strauss observed: 'the sublime is unknown to the open society.' Such a society rapidly becomes one in which there is no one willing to lay down his life — literally or metaphorically — to retain it, and that is the beginning of the end, for that way lies cowardice and mutism, which are essentially invitations to tyranny, which sits patiently awaiting its chance. Safetyism is a key symptom of liberal degeneracy, because it fears death more than it fears filth or disgrace.

And herein lies the ultimate irony. By following the logic of its own course, liberalism has evolved past its own optimal point, into a dark tunnel in which the antithetical values of coercion and terror and oppression will undoubtedly be unleashed to play their part in restarting the cycle, giving birth to a new generation of heroes, who will come to believe in old ideas and virtues, because, having studied the nature of humanity's descent, they will realise that there are worse things in reality than being old-fashioned.

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