

# A New Life for Democracy

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A scene from the movie "Equilibrium" (2002). Dimension Films/Blue Tulip Productions/Miramax



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11/13/2024

Updated: 11/13/2024

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## *Commentary*

In the movie “Equilibrium” (2002), all windows in the totalitarian state had been covered with a dingy film that prevented people from seeing

any views of the sunrise, sunset, or anything else. A mandated medicine had been imposed universally to block out all feelings of emotion.

The hero in the film stops taking his meds and gradually feels the need to discover the truth of the situation. He works with the

**Share**nderground to overthrow the despots.



In a key scene, the leading character scratches away the film on the window and observes the outdoors. It's raining and the window seems



to be crying even as he cries as well, feeling genuine emotion that had been banned as policy. He felt a peculiar mix of sadness and also



excitation about what might be possible if he set his mind to it.



That scene keeps coming back to me as I've observed the feeling in the

air in this remarkable and truly historic moment in the life of this

wonderful country. The divisions and discontent on all sides have

intensified without relief for as long as I can remember, particularly since Sept. 11, 2001. The surveillance state grew ever more intrusive and the power of the bureaucracy ascended even as politics itself seemed to stop working as a method of change.

Bureaucratic management necessarily divides the population because of its machine-like and institutionalized indifference to the contingencies of human experience. Some is necessary in every organization but too much cages people in prisons of the system, imposing on them edicts that make no real sense and have no feel for freedom of the human spirit. They can become soul crushing.

Bureaucracies, backed by the ambitions of a weaponized expert class, grew without limit, attempted even full mastery of the microbial kingdom, through coercive methods and experimental shots, as well as the goal of stabilizing the temperature of the whole planet earth through the regulation of our private lives.

What's called "woke" ideology took overlordism to new levels of absurdity, dividing the population into ever more obscure buckets of idiosyncratic identity politics. Everyone was being drafted into camps

of friends and enemies. The coalescing of official victim classes was consolidating ever more power, even within the military, and setting itself against visible targets of anyone who wanted to live what used to be called normal life.

Historians will surely look back at these years in shock, perhaps as we look at the last days of Rome or the French monarchy before the revolution. They will wonder how and why all this insanity was allowed to go on so long and be perpetrated by so many in elite classes.

For many years, I've asked myself the same question. We know how the Soviet empire came to be unraveled and the form that upheaval took in different countries in 1989–90. What we've not known is what form a similar unraveling might take in a Western industrial democracy. Before this past Tuesday, election evening, I had no answer to that other than by reference to the relentless decline of the empire of Spain from the late Middle Ages to the 19th century. That's a depressing historical analogy.

Now we are presented with a different scenario, a far more hopeful one. It appears that the Founders' system of stopping revolution through the ballot box has worked. Millions of people got themselves registered to vote, tossed aside doubts and cynicism about the system, and went out there and made their preferences known.

The results utterly confounded every prediction by the experts. The media was wrong. The polls were wrong. The experts were wrong.

Donald J. Trump is the beneficiary of the biggest landslide in modern times, his party capturing not only the presidency but sweeping in both houses of Congress, plus winning the popular vote. He won every "swing state," re-enfranchised young men, broke through all racial and ethnic barriers, and achieved the seemingly impossible of giving back Americans a sense of hope for the future.

You have surely noticed over this past week the difference it has made. It's not that everyone who voted Republican agrees with every policy or every priority. There is a great deal of diversity within the

winning coalition. What matters is that the revolution is endogenous to the social order itself, achieved through the very methods established by the Founding Fathers (we can even say that phrase now).

The feeling of elation that is in evidence in all corners of American society is palpable. You see it on the streets. You feel it in conversation. The stock market obviously loves it but so do consumers. Over the weekend, I observed lots of celebratory shopping as people have gone out to prepare for a brighter future.

Politically, the closest analogy in American history is the election of 1800 that swept Thomas Jefferson into power against the centralists, snoops, and industrialists under John Adams who had tried to consolidate control. It was a populist revolution that secured America as the land of liberty for a very long time, and made the point that the Bill of Rights was as much a governing document as the Constitution itself.

But there is one major difference. This election was settled by the House of Representatives because the vote was tied. In the election of 2024, there is zero doubt about the outcome and great public awareness of what it all means.

I see some evidence that even some intellectuals are rethinking, having been shocked out of their bubbles and feeling the need to understand what just happened. Clearly, it is not the case, as we heard in the last week of the campaign, that Trump supporters are garbage people who support Orange Hitler or whatever they said. There is something else happening.

As many have observed, class has played a much larger role in American politics than ideology. As social mobility stagnated on the lower two-thirds and riches and power flowed ever more to the top, the makings of a real revolt were becoming obvious. And yet even then, no one really knew it was possible. Maybe this election would turn out like all the others, rigged by insiders to perpetuate the status quo.

I see five main takeaways from the results and the effect on public mood.

**1. The discovery that you are not alone.** You only need to look at the county map of the country, nearly solid red but for large-population pockets on the coasts and a few others. That means that the ranks of the seriously discontent are much larger than the media was reporting. If you had doubts about policies over the last four years, you are not alone. You have been in the overwhelming majority all this time and no one told you.

**2. The realization that our overlords are a tiny minority.** Who are they and where are they? In media, upper echelons of the corporate world, government, NGOs and large foundations, and academia. They occupied all the commanding heights. And in one glorious day, they and we have discovered that this is not enough. A system of government needs public backing to be sustainable. The heights cannot command without a willing public.

**3. The possibility that the future can be better than the past.** It's been a very long time since average people have been genuinely convinced of this. It's been decades since the American middle class has gotten a real and lasting increase in income and living standards. We've had ever less freedom, and the last Trump administration was just getting started when it was cut short by a virus of suspicious origins and experimental methods of control. Now there is hope that we can get on track.

**4. The genuine appearance that dramatic change is coming.** If nothing else, the incoming Trump administration seems serious about ending censorship, controlling and curbing the administrative state, ending the migrant crisis, curbing the globalist hegemon, and doing something about waste, abuse, corruption, bloat, and ideological excess. All this will help get our lives back.

**5. The birth of a new freedom on the ashes of the old despotism.** This is the part that is most exciting. There is talk in the air about ending income taxes, curbing the central bank's power and reach,

empowering American manufacturers, and bringing the food supply closer to home. Patriotism seems legal again!

All of which brings the following to mind. Written in 1776, the words from the Declaration of Independence echo still:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

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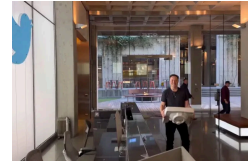
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