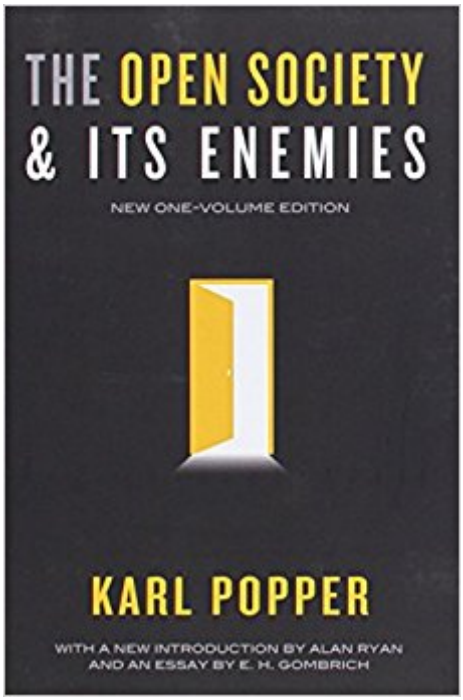
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The Open Society And Its Enemies



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Synopsis

One of the most important books of the twentieth century, Karl Popper's The Open Society and Its Enemies is an uncompromising defense of liberal democracy and a powerful attack on the intellectual origins of totalitarianism. Popper was born in 1902 to a Viennese family of Jewish origin. He taught in Austria until 1937, when he emigrated to New Zealand in anticipation of the Nazi annexation of Austria the following year, and he settled in England in 1949. Before the annexation, Popper had written mainly about the philosophy of science, but from 1938 until the end of the Second World War he focused his energies on political philosophy, seeking to diagnose the intellectual origins of German and Soviet totalitarianism. The Open Society and Its Enemies was the result. An immediate sensation when it was first published in two volumes in 1945, Popper's monumental achievement has attained legendary status on both the Left and Right and is credited with inspiring anticommunist dissidents during the Cold War. Arguing that the spirit of free, critical inquiry that governs scientific investigation should also apply to politics, Popper traces the roots of an opposite, authoritarian tendency to a tradition represented by Plato, Marx, and Hegel. In a substantial new introduction written for this edition, acclaimed political philosopher Alan Ryan puts Popper's landmark work in biographical, intellectual, and historical context. Also included is a personal essay by eminent art historian E. H. Gombrich, in which he recounts the story of the book's eventual publication despite numerous rejections and wartime deprivations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of the Modern Library’s 100 best nonfiction books of the twentieth century"Learned, subtly argued, and passionately written."--Sidney Hook, New York Times"No thinking person would be doing himself a service by neglecting Popper’s book."--Joseph Craft, The Nation"One of the great books of the century."--Times (London)"Brilliant. . . . It remains the best intellectual defence of liberal democracy."--Economist"Magnificent."--Hugh Trevor-Roper, Polemic"Few philosophers . . . have combined such a vast width of knowledge with the capacity to produce important original ideas as [Popper] did."--Guardian"A major work. Combining the clarity of thought of the trained scientist with lucidity of presentation, Mr. Popper has written an unusually thoughtful and provocative book."--Hans Kohn, Yale Review

"A work of first-class importance which ought to be widely read for its masterly criticism of the enemies of democracy, ancient and modern."--Bertrand Russell"Sir Karl Popper was right."--VÃƒÂ¡clav Havel"A powerful and important book. Dr. Popper writes with extreme clarity and vigour. His studies in Greek history and Greek thought have obviously been profound and original. Platonic exegesis will never be the same again. Nor, I think, will Marxist exegesis."--Gilbert Ryle

This deep read and analysis of the roots of totalitarianism, historicism and government begins be delving deeply into Plato’s Laws and The Republic. Your perspective on the meaning of these works and the origins of the Nazi Germany, the distinction between Big Government and Communism will likely never be the same. A man who claims he learns nothing from this book is either in deep denial or a complete fool.

A well-written, well-researched critique of Plato, Hegel and Marx and the dangerously flawed Historicism that runs through their ideas.Justifiably harsh on Plato, the ancient ideologue of Totalitarianism, who somehow remains revered to this day out of respect for being an "Ancient Scholar"...Torpedoes Hegel for being a paid poseur and charlatan, recycling the same Totalitarian ideas to serve the Prussian Monarchy.Even handed on Marx for being brilliant, humanitarian and well-intentioned, but nonetheless a victim of academic Historicism.

A thorough in depth analysis, and refutation, of the philosophical, religious, and historical foundation for Fascism and other forms of totalitarianism, "The Open Society & Its Enemies" is as relevant today as it was when it was written during WWII. This classic of political philosophy should be read

by anyone with a significant interest in classical and modern philosophy who wants to better understand the current rise in nationalism and xenophobia. Popper refutes many of the basic assumptions that are the foundation of western nationalism.

It’s one of a kind and an important source of laying out philosophies and their place in society. Learn about the "Open Society" and its enemies from this book, and then find others because the open society is at grave risk of disappearing, if it’s not too late already.

Popper’s work was written several decades ago, but he is a master at political theory (volume 2 focuses mainly on Karl Marx), and he his writing is clear and concise.

Popper is clever. Popper is clear. Popper nowadays still have to be read by every enlightened subject as an antidote against totalitarian ideology. But all this doesn’t preclude searching and finding both truth and inspiration in Hegel and Marx, that he criticizes for the consequences their theories had in 20h century history. But Popper has his shortcomings: his epistemology is ridiculously limited and limiting [where he tried himself to be a kind of "totalitarian dictator" in the Realm of Sciences]. And I’m not sure who in the long run will be considered philosophers of true genius: Popper or the great thinkers he criticized a century after they had gone.

In this volume, Popper argues against what he calls the prophesies of historicism, and in particular the historicist prophesies of Marx. Of course, Marx didn’t view his model of the progression of society as a prophesy but rather as a science grounded in observation. But Popper argues extensively that Marx’s historicism cannot be a science. However, one argument that Popper does *not* resort to is that history has proved that Marx’s socialism was inferior - simply because that would be resorting to an historicist argument!One key argument Popper puts forth against Marx is that his model of the progression of society failed to predict that there were more options open to society than just unrestrained capitalism and socialism - that is, Marx’s model failed to predict the interventionism (or social engineering) that derailed the drive toward socialism in the western world. Or perhaps it was not so much that Marx failed to predict interventionism, but rather that he simply denied its possibility. That is, Marx was certain that no amount of rational action could ever untrack the revolution from unrestrained capitalism to socialism - socialism was, quite simply, the fate of human society.And therein lies Popper’s distaste for historicism. He sees historicism not as harmless but as dangerous. It is dangerous precisely because it leads people to discard rational

thought and action in favor of submission to fate and destiny.Throughout, Popper advocates democracy. In his view, democracy is the most desirable of the political systems invented by humankind primarily because it lends itself to reform - to peaceful revolution. Another criticism he has of Marx is that Marx always left open the possibility that the socialist revolution would be violent if necessary, even if it required a violent overthrow of a democracy. In Popper's estimation, this would be begging for totalitarianism (if you were to violently oust the democratically elected representatives, who would you replace them with?!). In Popper's opinion, violent revolution should only ever be considered in cases where peaceful reform is not an option (i.e., in anything but a democracy).In wrapping up, Popper waxes philosophic with respect to reason. In doing so, he proposes an interesting definition of rationality: for Popper, rationality is a social process in which individuals participate to achieve consensus. In science, this consensus is on theory; in politics, this consensus is on action. This is in stark contrast to other notions of rationality, such as the Platonic notion that rationality is a personal achievement. Popper argues that the Platonic notion of rationality leads to elitism and aristocratic/caste thinking - it leads one to ask totalitarian questions such as "who should have the power?

Karl Popper was one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century. In The Open Society and It's Enemies he presents not only the case for democracy (an open society) but also the case against tyranny (a closed society), no matter how benevolent any given tyranny purports to be. Popper also explains why many people are still attracted to tyranical forms of government -- whether fascist or communist. Such people prefer order to freedom. One of the paradoxes presented by Popper is that some degree of inefficiency is endemic to democracy, whereas highly-efficient government -- which many people think they want -- is almost invariably tyrannical. This book is a must read for everyone interested in maintaining individual freedom and understanding the threats which it constantly faces.

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