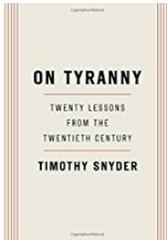


Lightly edited transcript of Professor Timothy Snyder on  
Bill Maher's program of March 2, 2017



BM: Your expertise is tyranny, so this is your busy season.

TS: Yes

BM: And you offer twenty lessons, but this is TV. Give us the top three.

TS: Okay, Let me give you 3 and a bonus.

The first is don't obey the shift; don't obey the drift in advance. Don't follow what everyone else is doing. When there's a special moment like the present one, figure out what you stand for and be yourself.

Number two: Defend institutions. This is a time when people like you and me and our friends say the institutions are going to save us. This is wrong. We have to save the institutions. They don't do it on their own. This is a moment of ask not what the institutions can do for me; ask what you can do for the institutions. Fill them out, support them. Don't expect them to be robots, because they're not.

Number three: Believe in truth. Without truth, we don't have trust. Without trust, we don't have the rule of law. Without the rule of law, we don't have democracy. So, people who are going for post fact, people who are against the truth, they're taking the direct line to killing democracy. It's the short cut to getting rid of democracy.

When we think about post fact we think about post modernism, then we think Berkeley and Begets and France and nice things, but what we should be thinking about, in all seriousness, is fascism. It's the fascists who said everyday late doesn't matter, details don't matter, facts don't matter. All that matters is the message, the leader, the myth, the totality. We should be thinking about the 1920s.

BM: Right. I made a little list of things about Donald Trump, which remind me of third world dictators.

1. You're a narcissist who likes putting his name on buildings.
2. You appoint your family members to positions of power.
3. Your rallies are scary.
4. You hate the press and use your own propaganda outlet instead.
5. You want to hold missile parades.
6. You use your office for your own personal financial gain.
7. You like other dictators and strongmen.
8. You claim minorities are the cause of the economic anxieties of the majority.
9. You lie so freely your supporters give up.

It's every one except dressing in a military costume. When is that coming, Doc?

TS: Yeah. Right. I'm not going to laugh at any of that because in your world it's several dictators. In my world where I come from it's the 1930s. Picking out a group of your neighbors and citizens and associating them with the worldwide threat, that's the 1930s. And what we have to remember about the 1930s, we think of Hitler and Stalin as super villains, but they're not. They could only come to power with some form of consent.

BM: Hitler was elected.\*

TS: Exactly. This is the way regime change normally happens. There's an election by the rules, more or less, and after the election, from within, the regime is changed, step by step, which, by the way, is the bonus lesson. The thing that I really worry about is a lesson toward the end of the book, is the Reichstag fire.

BM: Tell them what that is. Hitler gets elected in 1933. Elected

TS: Right. So, you're elected, you don't necessarily have policies that are popular. After the election there's a mysterious terrorist attack. You use that as the occasion . . .

BM: Hitler's henchmen burned down the Reichstag.

TS: We don't know who burned the Reichstag. The serious point is when the terrorist attack comes you will not necessarily know who did it, but what you can know is that certain kinds of leaders will use that moment to suspend your rights. So, when that moment comes, despite your fear and your grief, during your fear and your grief you have to mobilize and protest for your own rights, because the Reichstag fire is the oldest trick in the Hitlerian book. We cannot let that trick be played.

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\*Correction: Hitler was never democratically elected Chancellor. He was Appointed by President Paul von Hindenburg, though the Nazis did become the largest political party through democratic means. See <http://bit.ly/1fG3fIA>