

The Quantum Essays: Where are the checks on entropy in ..

Published: January 12, 2026, 11:16 pm

This is another in the [Quantum Essays series](#). Like most of the others, this one arose from discussions between my wife, Jacqueline, and me.

This Quantum Essay reflects our further discussions on entropy and the political economic consequences of the analogy between these issues. We think the issue is of some importance, which is why our discussions are continuing on this theme.

Other essays in this series are noted at the end of this post.

Entropy, in physics, describes the tendency of closed systems toward disorder and decay.

In this Quantum Essays series, I have suggested that equilibrium, which is the state where all motion ceases and where energy no longer flows, is indistinguishable from death.

Life, by contrast, exists in tension: between order and chaos, control and freedom, continuity and change. It survives by being open and by exchanging energy, ideas, and meaning with its environment.

The argument is that political systems are no different. They are living organisms, not machines. They survive through feedback, dissent, and contradiction and through the continuous renewal of legitimacy that comes from allowing difference to exist. In that case, the moment a democracy begins to close, to suppress the flows of thought and challenge that keep it alive, it begins to die. The direction of travel is always the same: toward equilibrium, toward stasis, and toward political death.

That is the question that now hangs over the United States. What checks remain, in that case, to resist the pull of entropy in a system where openness is being systematically dismantled?

Congress: the frozen core

Congress once embodied the messy vitality of democracy. Argument was its energy source. Conflict, within limits, kept the system alive. Now, it has become a frozen core. The House majority is consumed by performative obsequiousness. The Senate has degenerated into a procedural theatre of obstruction, but whilst motion continues, energy does not circulate. Nothing new enters; nothing generative emerges.

Congress now appears to be what, in physics, is called a closed system. These eventually reach thermal equilibrium. That is what the U.S. legislature now resembles: it comprises equal parts heat and inertia, cancelling each other out. The noise of politics is concealing the silence of real purpose. Entropy is rising as a result.

The Supreme Court: from arbiter to amplifier of disorder

The Supreme Court was meant to be a regulator of energy, converting the turbulence of politics into the stable currency of law. It no longer performs that role. Its recent behaviour has made it an amplifier of disorder, and not a moderator of it.

Partisanship has replaced reason. Secrecy has replaced transparency. In its eagerness to entrench ideology, it has abandoned its own feedback loop and the moral legitimacy that connects it to society. A Court that no longer interprets the law for living people becomes a mausoleum of justice and a promoter of injustice. It too is drifting toward equilibrium, as an institution still standing, but now lifeless.

The media: the collapse of signal into noise

The media was once the nervous system of the democratic organism. It detected imbalances, transmitted warnings, and corrected errors. That function depended on its openness and on journalists being free to speak, to probe, to hold power accountable.

Now, that system is being deliberately closed down. The attacks on Jimmy Kimmel and other talk show hosts are emblematic of this process. What once would have been comedy has become subversion in the eyes of an authoritarian movement.

Trump's supporters are not just offended by jokes; they are enraged by laughter itself because laughing at a politician is an act of freedom. When humour is silenced, when critique is punished, the feedback loops of democracy collapse. The system loses its ability to correct itself. Entropy deepens.

At the same time, the corporate media has internalised control. Its algorithms reward outrage, and not truth. Its ownership structures privilege profit over public purpose. And its institutions no longer exchange information with citizens; instead, they harvest their attention. What was a self-correcting network has become a self-referential machine, closed, overheated, and blind.

The universities: retreat into sterile equilibrium

Universities, the long-term custodians of thought, are also succumbing to entropy. Their openness has been replaced by anxiety. Scholars measure every word, fearing misinterpretation or retribution, and many live in fear, quite literally. Administrators prioritise brand protection over truth.

The university system, which was once a dynamic force in generating intellectual energy for society, is closing in on itself. The circulation of ideas is replaced by the recycling of credentials. The entropy of intellect, and the stiling of curiosity and courage, is perhaps the most dangerous of all. When the mind retreats, the society follows.

NSPM-7: authoritarian control as thermodynamic closure

The most chilling sign of systemic closure came in September 2025, when Donald Trump issued National Security Presidential Memorandum 7 (NSPM-7), a directive redefining dissent as domestic terrorism.

This document declares that critics of law enforcement, immigration policy and capitalism, and supporters of gay, ethnic and women's rights may all constitute threats to national security. It explicitly merges the language of patriotism with the apparatus of war. In essence, it criminalises opposition and militarises ideology.

From a quantum perspective, this is a profound act of entropy: it seals the system against new information. Dissent, which in any open society functions as energy input, is treated as contamination to be eradicated. Once feedback is outlawed, equilibrium follows. The system dies not in violence, but in silence.

The closing of the American mind — and the physics of death

Entropy in politics does not begin with collapse; it begins with control. Every attempt to perfect order, whether it be to eliminate uncertainty, doubt, or disagreement, brings society closer to equilibrium. That equilibrium may look like stability, but in truth, it is the moment before decay.

The suppression of Kimmel's satire and the authoritarian logic of NSPM-7 are not isolated acts. They are manifestations of the same process: the closing of the system, the sealing off of energy flows, the refusal of renewal. They are steps on the thermodynamic path toward death.

The remaining quantum points of coherence

If there is hope, it lies not in the great institutions, whether they be Congress, the courts, the media, or the universities, but in the quantum points of coherence still flickering in the civic field.

There are teachers who still provoke thought, and writers who still insist on truth, as well as communities that still practice care, and artists who still dare to make people laugh. They might be diminishing in number, and be dispersed and fragile, but they are still there. They let new energy in.

In quantum systems, coherence arises when isolated particles fall briefly into resonance, when disorder gives birth to fleeting order. If enough of those resonances connect, the system can self-organise anew. That is the hope: that scattered acts of courage and imagination might yet reopen the system before the equilibrium of its death arrives.

The choice: open or closed

The American experiment began as an open system, porous, argumentative, and improvisational. It lived through disagreement. Its founding premise was that liberty and energy are the same thing.

The danger now is that, in pursuit of control, it has closed itself. Each institution that once checked disorder now suppresses dissent. The feedback loops of vitality have been severed. The nation has entered a state of political thermodynamics: high heat, low motion, no renewal.

If democracy is to live, it must once again accept instability as its condition — the endless dance between order and chaos that defines all living systems. It must allow the unpredictable, the dissenting, the comic, the caring — for these are the energies that hold entropy at bay.

Otherwise, equilibrium will come. And equilibrium, as the physicists remind us, is indistinguishable from death. It would be game over for democracy.

Other essays in this series:

- * [***The Quantum Economics series*** \(this link opens a tab with them all in it\)](#)
- * [***The Quantum Essays: Observing and Engaging***](#)
- * [***The Quantum Essays: Quantum MMT: The wave function of sovereign spending***](#)
- * [***The Quantum Essays: Is equilibrium only possible in death?***](#)
- * [***The Quantum essays: Economics, the Big Bang and Rachel Reeves***](#)
- * [***The Quantum Essays: Quantum economics, discounting, and the cost of inaction***](#)

- * [*The Quantum Essays: Schrödinger, entropy, equilibrium, and the lessons for society*](#)
 - * [*The Quantum Essays: The meaning of life, negentropy, and the politics of staying alive*](#)
 - * [*The Quantum Essays: Democracy as negentropy: why fascism is the politics of death*](#)
-

Comments

When commenting, please take note of this blog's comment policy, [*which is available here*](#). ***Contravening this policy will result in comments being deleted before or after initial publication at the editor's sole discretion and without explanation being required or offered.***