

Introduction

In 1989, in the American journal *The National Interest*, Francis Fukuyama wrote how, “In watching the flow of events over the past decade or so, it is hard to avoid the feeling that something very fundamental has happened in world history.”¹ His conclusion was about the triumph of Western democratic liberal capitalism over communism. This triumph, if indeed it ever was one, by now ought to look to many like a pyrrhic victory.

The forces of liberal capitalism that he saw as representing the end of history—the end of any real choice of alternative models of political economy—have unleashed a powerful wave of anger directed at the winning elites. David Remnick, editor of *The New Yorker*, could not have expressed it better when he wrote on the morning of Donald Trump’s victory as President-elect of the United States: “The election of Donald Trump to the Presidency is nothing less than a tragedy for the American republic, a tragedy for the Constitution, and a triumph for the forces, at home and abroad, of nativism, authoritarianism, misogyny, and racism.”² Except, this was a tragedy that many should have anticipated. The documentary filmmaker Michael Moore did so by highlighting just how many people were being left behind by a liberal capitalist system that was destroying the social fabric they grew up in, and diminishing their career prospects and life dreams.³ The American Dream had become precisely that, a dream that could never become reality. Horatio Alger’s rags-to-riches fiction remains fictional.

In 2007 Naomi Klein highlighted how modern capitalism, what is often described as neoliberalism, grows out of various social and political crises, and out of the harm subsequently

caused to our social and political fabrics.⁴ In 2015 Wendy Brown argued against neoliberalism's attack on democracy,⁵ adding yet another voice to a long list of scholars and journalists who have warned us against the political consequences of economic neoliberalism, of the displacement of politics by economics.⁶

Trump's election has certainly sent shockwaves among progressives, but I am not an American. I have never lived in the US. I am from Canada, although I currently live in the UK. For me, living in the UK as an immigrant, it was the EU referendum that sent the first shock. It was not that this event revealed previously ignored injustices; it was more like a blow to the system. Just like the election of Trump, the Leave side's campaign was based on lies, fears, nativism, anti-immigrant racism, and anti-intellectual populism—fears that immigrants were stealing local jobs, taking away access to health care, that “experts” were good-for-nothing and out-of-touch, and that the EU was somehow some large authoritarian entity that defied the sovereignty of Parliament. The Remain campaign was not much better, and it is worth reflecting that the entire referendum was not about the national interest, but was about playing politics within the Conservative Party. David Cameron, who should go down as one of the worst Prime Ministers in the UK's history, held the referendum as a way to cement his position against the Eurosceptic wing in the Conservative Party. He lost. He resigned as PM. He left Parliament. He got the entire UK into a massive mess with no plan about what to do if he lost, and so he quit.

As a Canadian, I was eligible to vote in the referendum—which seems rather unfair since citizens from EU countries living in the UK could not. In addition to exercising my right to vote, I did what little I could. I donated money, wrote an op-ed for an international newspaper arguing the Remain case,⁷ and volunteered to help get out the vote. It was the first time I was out on the street as a political activist since I marched in London against the Iraq War. Before that, I protested tuition fee rises in Canada, logging in Clayoquot Sound, and engaged in lengthy debates with activist friends about capitalism, globalization, and democracy.

In those days of the anti-globalization movement and the Battle in Seattle (which I was unable to attend, even though I was frustratingly only hours away), there was a sense of anger and injustice against the forces of capitalism that were taking away our democratic rights, protecting the interests of capital at the expense of society. We debated the works of Naomi Klein and Noam Chomsky, visited Spartakus Books in Vancouver, and sought out copies of *Z Magazine*. I still remember seeing anti-NAFTA placards on lawns, including in front of one restaurant that had really good apple pie. Depressingly, none of the anti-globalization concerns have gone away, but in meeting Leave voters in the streets of a north-eastern town in England, I found that there was a visceral anger that was qualitatively different from that which I recall from the 1990s, even though many of the issues remain the same.

Arlie Russell Hochschild notes a similar anger in the US. In her book, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*,⁸ she argues that this anger is directed toward a political system that is seen as helping others, usually immigrants and minorities, and not the white working class, who feel that while they work hard, others are cutting in line, and the government appears to be on the side of these queue jumpers. Betrayal—the American Dream is being given to others—and anger at a political system that does not care about them are the driving forces of the Tea Party and alt-right movements in American politics (although religion also often plays a role). That many of these same people benefit from state welfare programmes or witness the destruction wrought on their communities by nefarious corporations is irrelevant: they distrust government a whole lot more and some are prepared to suffer in this life knowing that eternal salvation awaits them as good Christians.

For Hochschild, part of the reason for her book and her journey into Louisiana (where the book's fieldwork was carried out) was to try to understand these right-wing voters on their own terms. Part of what animated her book is the elitist left-wing dismissal of these right-wing rural voters. From this vantage point, the upper and lower classes are expected to

vote for their own economic interests, whereas the middle class (the centre and centre-left) vote according to normative concerns of universal significance. Hence, when low-income rural voters support a right-wing party whose policies clearly benefit the upper classes the most, they are being duped.⁹ Supposedly, the left-wing middle class, however, sees things as they are and makes the educated choice that benefits the greatest number of people.

This kind of progressive political elitism has a long history that can be easily traced back to Karl Marx and the important role of the intellectual who could point out the systems of oppression that those being oppressed could not see. Yet, in the case of neoliberal economic globalization, it is clear to people across a spectrum of demographics that something is seriously amiss. A large part of the left-wing anti-globalization movement was its open antipathy toward the neoliberal forces of an economic system whereby market forces, laissez-faire capitalism, and de-regulation are treated with reverence. The International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment policies and so-called aid in Pacific Asia caused lots of hurt in those countries that were forced to give up local accountability and instead acquiesce to the demands of an international neoliberal economic agenda. And a host of left-wing authors, from Naomi Klein to Noam Chomsky, highlighted a variety of injustices that seemed to follow from the misleadingly described post-1989 new world order, one that Chomsky pointed out looks very much like the old one.¹⁰

It was obvious to anyone who looked that, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of history, the march of capitalism was going to be very hard to rein in. Even the mainstream left got in on the act with Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, two brilliant politicians (at least at the time) who clearly understood that the political economy of the world was changing with globalization, but who got the answers wrong by succumbing to the vested interests of global capital.

When Gordon Brown was doing his UK tour during the EU referendum he spoke about how, because of the economic forces of globalization and the increasing interconnectedness

of our economies, the only way to push back and retain the ability to legislate effectively against a race to the bottom of deregulation and resist the narrow self-interests of large multinationals was to work collectively within the EU as a member-state. With this argument, Brown highlighted an important shift from the anti-globalization arguments of many on both the left and the populist right, whose views seemed to synthesize into variations of a strengthen-the-state mantra. Now the argument was not to strengthen the state, or to idealize small-scale direct democracy, but to strengthen our international institutions. The problem, however, is that politics happens locally and people need to see the positive effects of political decisions and feel invested and connected with both the political process and the outcomes. Local direct democracy is not really a viable solution—Gordon Brown was right in emphasizing the importance of our international institutions—and considering the usually abysmal local voting turnout in municipal and county elections,¹¹ we are deluding ourselves if we think people will suddenly change their voting turnout habits.

We have become disconnected from politics for a whole range of reasons.¹² Our connection with politics is grounded in our understanding of ourselves and of where we find ourselves in the world; but these groundings are always unstable, open to fluctuations of how we feel, who we want to be, who we think we are expected to be, what we believe we ought to get out of life, and how our communities never remain the same. Our groundings are, in effect, stories, authored by ourselves and others. We cannot control the stories, however much we may try, as each of our stories is always co-authored by others and through our moments of contact with the forces or structures of society. Our political and public sense of connection and investment follows from the narratives we construct and engage with in our negotiations with the world we find ourselves in. Our choices reflect our interpretation of these narratives. When the world starts to appear as if it is spinning outside of our narratives and thus undermining them, we are faced with difficult choices.

One choice that many appear to have made is anger—anger at the elites who have gained at the expense of the rest. It is very hard to understand the results of both the EU referendum and the Trump election without acknowledging that many voted as they did precisely as a means of attacking the system, to throw a spanner into the works and mix things up, to “drain the swamp” as Trump would say. The few Leave voters that I met were angry. Very angry. And even though their logic often made little sense (voting to leave the EU as a protest against Margaret Thatcher) and they harboured a self-righteousness that is ugly whatever economic or social class you belong to, it was not hard to understand—although our politicians do not seem to, at least not fully. The populists use it to their advantage, and the rest are struggling to find legitimacy and a voice in a post-truth world.

One of the arguments that politicians are having to address is a fairly simple economic one—that the working class is struggling, the middle class is shrinking, and the political elites are getting richer. The post-political careers of Tony Blair and Rudy Giuliani are no longer extreme examples of where the revolving door out of public service now leads, and of the riches available in a post public-service career. Blair reportedly can earn £200,000 for a single speaking engagement,¹³ and not long after leaving office Giuliani was already making himself a very rich man with his consulting firm earning over \$100 million within five years.¹⁴

In June 2016, YouGov UK noted how 31% of lower-middle-class to upper-middle-class members of society would be unable to pay an unexpected bill of £500.¹⁵ This statistic helped cement the idea of the “squeezed middle,” a term used to describe how the middle class is finding it harder to get by on existing salaries. For the traditional working classes, 41% would be unable to cover such a bill. Most alarmingly, the survey revealed that 14% of all respondents could not afford an unexpected bill of £100.

The story is similarly bleak in the US. In May 2016, the Pew Research Centre released a report pointing out how the American middle class in metropolitan areas is shrinking:

“From 2000 to 2014 the share of adults living in middle-income households fell in 203 of the 229 U.S. metropolitan areas examined in a new Pew Research Center analysis of government data.”¹⁶ In December 2015 they published the results of a survey identifying how the American middle class is “losing ground.” As they put it: “After more than four decades of serving as the nation’s economic majority, the American middle class is now matched in number by those in the economic tiers above and below it.”¹⁷ There is, in short, increasing income inequality.

We have, by now, all heard about the decline in local manufacturing, the outsourcing of industries, and the dwindling professional opportunities for the working classes. But one of the more concerning pieces of data is about mortality rates among non-Hispanic white Americans—they are rising. How, in one of the wealthiest countries on the planet, is that possible? To place this in context, one of the underlying narratives of the present age is how peaceful liberal democracies are. We live in a world where democracies don’t go to war with one another, and consequently, where violence is decreasing. This is the argument we find in Michael Doyle’s work on democratic peace theory,¹⁸ which suggests a solution to international war that nicely corresponds with the end of history thesis: the spread of liberal democratic capitalist states will yield a more peaceful world. More recently, Steven Pinker, in his book *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, goes further and argues that, “The decline of violence may be the most significant and least appreciated development in the history of our species.”¹⁹ His very lengthy book paints a picture of the human race as progressing from being somehow very violent (“What is it about the ancients that they couldn’t leave us an interesting corpse without resorting to foul play?”²⁰) to more peaceful. That he never defines what exactly he has in mind by the term violence, or that parts of his argument are based more on rhetorical flourish than the evidence he ostensibly provides (the Bible contains violent episodes, but that does not mean people were more violent back then), are only two problems in this narrative. The more significant problem in regard to

Brexit and the 2016 presidential election is that if we are living in such a peaceful world, why are the citizens in these countries so angry at the political establishment? If the world has become such a great and peaceful place that history has been “won,” what exactly is the problem? How do we square this hopeful vision of decreasing violence and peace with the rather ugly reality of the disproportionate deaths of African Americans by police, and the mortality rate of the American working class? As *The Washington Post* reported in regard to the former of these, African Americans are “2.5 times as likely as white Americans to be shot and killed by police officers.”²¹

In regard to the latter, Anne Case and Angus Deaton note in an often-cited article that the death rates of non-Hispanic white Americans between the ages of 45 and 54 have increased significantly. Or, to be more precise, they are not declining as they are among other demographic groups in the US and in other comparable countries, and since 1998 the mortality rate among this constituency has increased by “half a percent per year.”²² The group for whom this decline applies appears to be the white working class and those with at most an education level of a high school diploma. The correlation between education and mortality is by itself interesting, although clearly not causal. Rather, the article goes on to suggest that one reason for this increase in mortality could be due to increased economic insecurity:

Although the epidemic of pain, suicide, and drug overdoses preceded the financial crisis, ties to economic insecurity are possible. After the productivity slowdown in the early 1970s, and with widening income inequality, many of the baby-boom generation are the first to find, in midlife, that they will not be better off than were their parents.²³

Combined with increasingly weakened pensions, the American working class is suffering an epidemic. If there is a moment when the social contract is failing, this could be it, as the state is letting an entire segment of its population down. The contract, however, does not exist, as there is very little that people for whom the contract is not working can do, except

try to wreck the institutions of governance when given the chance, which Trump appeared to offer them. Importantly, this increase in mortality rates is counter to the idea, to the story, that we tell ourselves about Western liberal society. If our countries are so great, why the squeezed middle and the demise of the working class?

The tendency is to view these problems ideologically.²⁴ We read the numbers to suit our ideological predisposition, so we ignore proportionality and concentrate on the sum totals, or instead advance fictional notions of individual responsibility that ignore the structures of injustice and mitigate any possibility of collective responsibility. The solutions are thus fabricated according to our preconceived views of how to understand the problems, which means that we turn either to demanding more of individuals or searching for policy changes that government can enact to address whichever structures of inequality we hold responsible. In either case, the political system is not at fault, it is rather a question of implementation, of choice, and perhaps of political will.

However, politics has always been about the protection of some interests over others, and those with greater resources at their disposal tend to have the deck stacked in their favour. Living in a democracy does not necessarily mean that our political leaders really represent the people they are elected to serve. Rather, politics is a profession in which the goal is not service but the holding of public office. This is why people have so little faith in our politicians and why outliers like Trump can succeed. It also explains why Politics, Philosophy, and Economic graduates in the UK who make it into the high tiers of government appear inclined to regularly undermine the very education that got them there, emphasize the STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) as more economically important, and devalue the Liberal Arts in the process. By doing so they are protecting their status and damaging the chances of others to climb the same ladder. The same forces are also behind the anti-intellectual populism of the conservative right who have managed to tap into working-class anger. These forces also contribute to the

reaction toward antiquated socialist ideologies that have taken hold of the Labour Party in the UK. In each of these cases, it is people's anger at our political elites, plus the system that got them there and the culture which rewarded them, that provides the foundation for the convergence of right-wing ideology with working-class populism. The last time we saw such a convergence was with the rise of fascism in the 1930s (if we emphasize science and technology instead of politics and history in our education system, who would be able to notice?).²⁵

People are grasping at straws for leaders who appear either authentic in their beliefs and not as opportunistic politicians, or for people who appear to be outsiders and thus stand a shot of breaking up a system that has harmed, disenfranchised, impoverished, and disillusioned way too many people. Many who voted to leave the EU, and those who voted for Trump, were—I think it is fair to assume—not voting *for* something so much as they were voting *against* something and looking for an opportunity to make their voices heard. That doing so put the populist right and the traditional left together is one of the consequences of where our political culture and political economy have taken us.

It is in this vein that politicians who appear as obstructionist can be rewarded with re-election, because they are not taking the system for granted. This is the story of the Republican Party in the US, who have, time and time again, demonstrated that they are more interested in halting government than in actually governing.²⁶ Just as the EU referendum was not about the national interest, the election of Donald Trump is almost certainly part of the trajectory created by the Republican Party who have demonstrated themselves to be less interested in governing and working for the national interest and more interested in getting into political power; once in power, they do all they can to act like muckrakers. By thwarting the possibility of governance in a system that to many appears bankrupt, they can lay false claim to acting against the established interests, thus promoting their (patently false) anti-establishment populist credentials for the next election cycle.

Politics is failing us—that much seems clear. But who is this “us?” Claims to membership and collective identity are inevitably complicated claims to make. The polls regularly use all sorts of classifications—economic, age, religion, gender, education, geographical location, ethnicity (or “race”)—to help identify who votes for whom and what policies which people care the most about. But both the EU referendum and the US election revealed significant problems with these usual classification schemes. In the UK, the referendum brought together Conservative and traditional Labour voters. Rich and poor. In the US, while the politics of polarization clearly played its part in ensuring party (tribal?) loyalty, most of the polls got it wrong—almost all the major ones predicted a Clinton victory, or at least the likelihood of one. Was the problem here one of interpretation and of how polls are read and used publicly, of data, or that our traditional ways of identifying voting groups is out of sync with the way people vote? Or perhaps something even more fundamental, that the polls got it wrong because the way in which polls work or how data is collected no longer seem to function, that we are living in a different world; that it is no longer clear who “we” are, nor where to find “us.” Are our traditional categories fraying at the seams? How else to understand why people who hold so dearly to religious faith could vote for someone who clearly does not live up to any standard of good conduct according to any major religion (I am not aware of any religion that condones sexual assault, and rewards bullying or abusive behaviour). Yet, according to exit polls, 53% of women who voted²⁷ chose a misogynist who advocated sexual assault—this is just confusing.

As Gérard Araud, the French ambassador to the US, wrote on Twitter after the election of Trump, “A world is collapsing before our eyes.”²⁸ Indeed. A world is collapsing. It is not hyperbole to say that we could be witnessing the end of the post-war liberal order (although we can share at least some relief in the result of the Austrian presidential election). While this order came with a lot of negative baggage in its political economy, it also came with a lot of good intentions about

internationalism, pluralism, peace, and justice. This post-war order was built on the idea of hope for a better future. The GI Bill, the civil rights movement, feminism, and yes, even the anti-globalization and occupy movements, Black Lives matter, the creation of the NHS, all of these were products of this post-war order, even though they are also about trying to repair a broken world that emerged out of two World Wars and the Holocaust. But now, this world seems to be falling apart. As a political activist who marched with anarchists, socialists, and democrats, I always knew that the fight for a better world would not follow a straight line. There would be hiccups along the way. But that idea is now shattered. We are not living in any dialectic where crisis will eventually lead to gradual improvements toward a better world. We are, instead, rejecting this very idea, and are burrowing down into a false comfort zone of populist insularity and zero-sums.

The world that I felt I belonged to is falling apart, and I've got no home. I know I'm not alone here. Many of us feel homeless in a Brexit-Trump world. Yes, I've done well for myself, and I work in a top university. But that does not mitigate the fact that I too belong to a community, indeed to multiple communities, and from what I can tell by speaking with friends here and abroad, many of us are deeply shocked by where we see the world heading. Moreover, the standards of how we understand politics do not appear to be working to help make sense out of this ongoing crisis that so many of us feel. It seems as though we are on the wrong side of history—even if by slim margins, or in the US, a slim majority.

We are now living in a state of permanent crisis—crisis of faith, economy, violence, and of politics—where the extreme has become normalized. But how are we to understand this new world, one in which those who believe in the values of inclusivity, respect for diversity, openness, and compassion appear to have no place? Instead, our political leaders are taking us down a road of fear, racism, nativism, misogyny, and

closed-mindedness. Whatever happened to the world where we cared for others who are not like us?

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp
beside the golden door!²⁹

This book is written with two purposes in mind. The first is to try to make some sense of what appears to be a world that is falling apart around us. The second is to try to advance an argument about where we go from here. While it may be the pragmatic second purpose that is more appealing, we cannot begin to have that conversation in any meaningful sense if we do not address the first. Without understanding where we are and how we got here, we cannot explore where we go from here.

The challenge, however, is that it is not at all clear where “here” is. The liberal order that was seemingly rejected in both the US election and the UK referendum was not a peaceful world order. It was (and still is) a dangerous world, replete with wars, domestic violence, institutionalized racism and sexism, increasing rates of stress and anxiety, decreasing public investment in the building blocks of society, and sharply increasing wealth inequalities. But these are not the causes of our electoral and referendum results, they are simply indicators that there is something which continues to be very wrong in our world order. It is this more abstract yet ostensibly more fundamental of problems that I focus on in this book, and in a few specific ways.

The first of these is an examination of politics, and of how the current failings in our political systems are indicative of a liberal myth about what politics is about. In this discussion, I argue that the liberal myth of the origins of politics—our compact or contract that sets up the modern state—is a lie, and that as a consequence we have been looking for politics in all the wrong places.³⁰ Politics is necessarily conflictual, although

this does not mean that the option has to be violence. The “Love Trumps Hate” slogan is nice, but hopeless if it is to inspire a political movement. The activity of politics is about change, about making the world we live in a better place. Doing so involves negotiations, compromise, and disagreement but also respect and responsibility.

Second, the way we conceptualize what counts as knowledge in the service of politics has become tainted because of the extent to which complex methodological positions have become caricatured into seemingly dichotomous options—which are then reflected in our political choices—and in a misguided faith in anything that can objectively be called science.³¹ The significant errors in polling data in both the 2015 UK election and the 2016 US presidential election are not blanket indictments of the worth of positivist research, but are a serious indicator of how we understand such research, of the lack of reflexivity in such work, about how such research is used, and in how we have come to prioritize method over other forms of thinking. Debates about evidence are increasingly important in the public sphere, but they have taken on a new line, when evidence itself becomes irrelevant.

This approach has, it appears, been taken to new heights by Trump, although it was already in use elsewhere (including during the UK referendum when the Leave campaign regularly misled the public with, among other things, a complete lie about how much money the UK sends to the EU). As reported in *Esquire*, the Trump surrogate Scottie Nell Hughes, while speaking on the *The Diane Rehm Show*, “illustrated a defining principle of Trumpism: There’s no longer such [a] thing as fact, because anything is true if enough people believe it.”³² In her words:

Well, I think it’s also an idea of an opinion. And that’s—on one hand, I hear half the media saying that these are lies. But on the other half, there are many people that go, “No, it’s true.” And so one thing that has been interesting this entire campaign season to watch, is that people that say facts are facts—they’re not really facts. Everybody has a way—it’s kind of like looking at ratings, or looking at a glass of half-full water. Everybody

has a way of interpreting them to be the truth, or not truth. There's no such thing, unfortunately, anymore as facts.

And so Mr. Trump's tweet[s], amongst a certain crowd—a large part of the population—are truth. When he says that millions of people illegally voted, he has some—amongst him and his supporters, and people believe they have facts to back that up. Those that do not like Mr. Trump, they say that those are lies and that there are no facts to back it up.³³

The article went on to point out just how shocking this claim is:

This is an astounding claim. It's an attack not on Trump's detractors, but on the idea of objective reality. Modern society is built on the idea we can observe things in the world, use the scientific method to verify them and form a consensus that a certain set of things are true. This set of things constitutes the reality in which we live. Hughes, Trump, and his campaign have set out to undermine all of that in order to claim that the truth is anything they want it to be right now—as long as enough of the people who support them believe it.³⁴

The authors at *Esquire* are right to be concerned, but they miss the point that focusing on method will not resolve the problem. Methods are never politically neutral. The debate here is not about the scientific method, but about methodology. This is, in some ways, a more complicated topic, but without exploring the significance of how knowledge production works, we cannot have a political conversation about what facts are and about their relationship to political decision-making.

Third, now that we have the results of the election and referendum, what are we to make of them? Much energy is being invested in trying to interpret who voted for what and why. But all of this analysis is for naught if we have not provided a narrative in which to understand the results. What the results tell us is that there is something wrong with our politics, our elites, and our public discourse (our political culture). I suggest that we can interpret the results of the Trump victory and of Brexit as a vote for nothing. I am not suggesting that those who voted for either did not think they were voting for something, but rather that there was nothing upon which to base a reasoned decision to vote for because of

the vacuous nature of the campaigns. There certainly could, for example, be a case made against the EU (the EU Commission has a lot to answer for in its democratic deficit and lack of transparency and accountability), but this was never done, and there was no clear argument for what to do if Leave won because there was no idea of what to do should Leave win. That voting Leave could, for example, threaten the UK was not contemplated, nor was the status of all the EU workers in the UK, nor how to overcome lost access to the Common Market. It was all about telling people that everything will be fine (hence the whole “project fear” rhetoric from the Leave side, when the real fear was coming from them). The Trump campaign was just as bad, if not worse. I take issue with how the role of identity politics has come to provide the lens through which to understand these results and of how democracy has changed in ways that can undermine itself. I suggest that the role of identity in politics is being misunderstood. It is not multiculturalism or egalitarian liberalism or political correctness that are the issue, although they are all important. Rather, we need to look at the role of the state, and how the state is failing us.

In the final chapter, I explore where we can find politics, or rather how. There are, I suggest, three elements to politics: the relationship between knowledge and power, with a particular emphasis on the role of interpretation; political responsibility or the politics of responsibility; and the significance of narratives or meaning (hermeneutics). What I do not address in this chapter is the question of political space, but I will make a few points about this now.

It is a mistake to place our faith in the state as the final political space of significance. The state and its accompanying normative narrative of sovereignty is easily understood as being at the top level of our political spaces (other than perhaps the international).³⁵ However, the thing is that, for most of us, the politics that we are most likely to encounter are much more local, and the means by which we can participate in politics reflect as such. This is why movements such as the various Occupy ones are so important. They demonstrate that

it is through local actions that our political voices can be heard most loudly, most of the time. Students often study International Relations because they think that it is in state capitals and in the halls of international organizations where our political futures reside. They have a point in that these are important places. But they depend on how what they do matters for people and, in this regard, it is in our daily lives, which happen locally, that we encounter the consequences of their decisions. I am not suggesting that we need to think globally and act locally, although that often makes sense. Rather, I am suggesting that we need to be open to the possibility that there are different kinds of political spaces that we need to take seriously. These can be a city square (like Tahrir Square in Cairo),³⁶ a street (like Wall Street),³⁷ or even a farm (think of the Slow Food movement).³⁸

Before we begin, I want to add one last thing. This book is a response to what I take to be a serious political crisis. What this means is that the book has largely been the process of my working through how to find a world when I feel lost in the present one, as the forces of populism, nativism, xenophobia, misogyny, and parochial nationalism appear to be the currency of the day. Because the stakes are so high, there will no doubt be many commentators, academic and otherwise, who feel the need to step into the fray and provide some explanation of what went wrong, why Clinton lost and Brexit won. Many will also no doubt work on identifying and explaining the specific causes of Brexit and of Trump winning and Clinton losing. This is not that kind of a book.

First, in regard to the causal question, causality is a complicated concept in large part because it is not necessarily clear what we mean by the term “cause.”³⁹ It is a term that gets thrown around by neo-positivists and scientists who study the relations between variables, trying to identify why a particular event or result occurs. But the danger in many of these studies is that they end up simplifying a set of complex relations into a linear one. We see this approach every time some news report surfaces about a study pointing out the latest food that will either kill us or save us, as if isolating a miracle nutrient

makes sense for how our bodies function, which is absurd. No such miracle food or nutrient exists, although there is a lot of money to be made if people can be convinced that they do.⁴⁰

There can be all sorts of different ways of understanding what a cause “is,”⁴¹ and of the different types of knowledge that underlie what appear to be causal outcomes.⁴² Causes can be understood in linear ways but also as a varied set of conditions that provide the basis for something to happen, but do not preclude alternatives from also happening.

One of the arguments of the book is that the Brexit and Trump results are a consequence of a series of failures. There has been a failure of politics in multiple senses: the failure of understanding the ground and thus legitimacy of modern politics; the failure of political practice in its being overwhelmed by the logic of global capital; the inability of the state and its political institutions to manage the forces of global capital for the benefit of the majority of society, thus encouraging a further distancing and alienation from politics; and the failure to acknowledge a close relationship between methodology and politics. These various failures have demonstrated themselves not just in the narrow electoral success of the Leave vote in the UK and the presidential election of Trump, but also in the ways that the politics of identity have come to frame both these electoral victories and the responses to them. However, I do not suggest that these conditions had to have caused the results of the EU referendum or Brexit.

Instead, most of the argument in the book is not about identifying the specific conditions that contributed to Brexit and Trump but is rather a critique of existing, as well as potential, responses to these events, and how we understand these events. Thus, whereas we might turn to some kind of social contract argument to explain the conditions for justice and thus identify a response to Trump or Brexit in these lines, I argue that such a path would be wrong. In addition, I argue against the claim that somehow the post-structuralist turn has created the conditions for a post-truth world.⁴³ I also argue about the importance of identity, responding to claims that identity politics could be what got us into this mess.

Too much of our political and scholarly discourse continues to make what I consider to be basic errors, and it is time to stop, rethink, and start to think differently.

Subsequently, what concerns me is that the Trump election and the Brexit result are indicative of a much deeper problem within Western society that is by no means new (or possibly even unique), which became exceedingly evident in how Trump appeared to have “tweeted” his way into the White House, and how Leave won on an argument completely devoid of any evidence. The problem at issue is one about the relationship between knowledge and politics, and it gets to the heart of some thorny philosophical and political debates, including the science wars of the 1990s about relativism and post-modernism, the role of higher education, the connection between politics and economics, the nature of facts and evidence, the place of interpretation in our political discourse, and the ability to deploy normative arguments in a world where evidence is less important than narrative and identity. The method of this book is thus a combination of political theory and public commentary. Interwoven throughout the book’s more theoretical discussions and engagements with academic debates are references and quotes from popular statements of politicians, other public figures, and news reports, as these are the sources where we find our information that helps shape our political views. Consequently, it seems only logical to use them as important source material.

The structure of this book is, thus, mildly eclectic. I jump in and out of philosophical discussions and engagements with a range of source material. The purpose is to demonstrate how political philosophy can help us in these difficult times, but in a way that speaks to what we encounter in our everyday dealings. This is about making philosophical debates meaningful and accessible, and, hopefully, providing a voice, or at least an argument, that progressives like myself may find useful.

Notes

- 1 Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3.

- 2 David Remnick, "An American Tragedy," *The New Yorker*, November 9 2016.
- 3 Michael Moore, "5 Reasons Why Trump Will Win," <http://michaelmoore.com/trumpwillwin/>. Accessed January 27 2017.
- 4 Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2015).
- 5 Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015).
- 6 Some examples of this literature include Noam Chomsky, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and the Global Order* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998); Philip Mirowski, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown* (London: Verso, 2014); Robert Pollin, *Contours of Descent: US Economic Fractures and the Landscape of Global Austerity* (London: Verso, 2005). See also William Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism: Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition* (London: Sage, 2017); Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society* (London: Verso, 2014); Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe, eds, *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
- 7 Ilan Zvi Baron, "Jews Were Europeans Even before the EU. That's Why U.K. Jews Should Vote 'Remain'," *HaAretz*, June 20 2016.
- 8 Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2016).
- 9 This is the conclusion found in Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas?* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005). I would like to thank Brian Black for helpful discussions on this point.
- 10 Noam Chomsky, *World Orders Old and New* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).
- 11 Thomas M. Holbrock and Aaron C. Weinschenk, "Campaigns, Mobilization, and Turnout in Mayoral Elections," *Political Research Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (2014); Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, "Local and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections" (Plymouth: Elections Centre, Plymouth University, 2016). See also BBC, "Elections 2017 Results: Tories Win Four New Mayors," www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-39817224. Accessed May 6 2017.
- 12 A classic that explores and tries to explain this detachment or disconnect is Robert D. Putnman, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and*

Revival of American Community (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

- 13 Luke Heigton, “Revealed: Tony Blair’s Worth a Staggering £60m,” *The Telegraph*, June 12 2015.
- 14 John Solomon and Matthew Mosk, “In Private Sector, Giuliani Parlayed Fame into Wealth,” *The Washington Post*, May 13 2007.
- 15 Ben Tobin, “One in Three Middle-Class Brits Would Struggle to Pay a £500 Bill,” YouGov, <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/06/08/third-middle-classes-would-struggle-pay-sudden-500/>. Accessed January 24 2017.
- 16 Pew Research Centre, “America’s Shrinking Middle Class: A Close Look at Changes within Metropolitan Areas” (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Centre, 2016), 5.
- 17 Pew Research Centre, “The American Middle Class is Losing Ground: No Longer the Majority and Falling Behind Financially” (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Centre, 2015), 5.
- 18 Michael W. Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 2 (1983); “Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part 2,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 12, no. 4 (1983).
- 19 Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: A History of Violence and Humanity* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 836.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 4.
- 21 Wesley Lowery, “Aren’t More White People Than Black People Killed by Police? Yes, but No,” *The Washington Post*, July 11 2016.
- 22 Anne Case and Angus Deaton, “Rising Morbidity and Mortality in Midlife among White Non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st Century,” *PNAS* 112, no. 49 (2015): 15078. Since publication, Gelman and Auerbach have contested the findings on the grounds of aggregation bias. Case and Deaton have acknowledged that the consequences of age-adjusted mortality rates do yield a difference for women in the 45–54 age group, but outside of this difference they stand by their findings. Andrew Gelman and Jonathan Auerbach, “Age-aggregation Bias in Mortality Trends,” *PNAS* 113, no. 7 (2016), “Letters.” Anne Case and Angus Deaton, “Mortality and Morbidity in the 21st Century,” *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, BPEA Conference Drafts, March 23–24 2017.
- 23 Case and Deaton, “Rising Morbidity,” 15081.
- 24 Dan Jones, “Seeing Reason: How to Change Minds in a ‘Post-Fact’ World,” *New Scientist*, November 30 2016.

- 25 I am not suggesting that the structural conditions that existed prior to the rise of fascism in Europe are repeating themselves. But there are some similarities that should give us cause for concern.
- 26 There are too many examples here to mention, but which could start with the Whitewater scandal (or non-scandal) in the 1990s, and the more recent refusal to support President Obama's pick for the US Supreme Court. But perhaps the most famous internationally significant examples are the 2011 and 2014 crises over the US debt-ceiling, where Congress risked the US government not paying its debt.
- 27 "2016 Election Exit Polls," *The Washington Post*, November 29 2016.
- 28 "Après Brexit et cette élection, tout est désormais possible. Un monde s'effondre devant nos yeux." Anthony Bond, "French Ambassador to the US Says the 'World is Collapsing' as Donald Trump Looks Set to Become President," *Mirror*, November 9 2016. Harriet Agerholm, "Donald Trump Wins: French Ambassador to the US Reacts by Posting Tweet Declaring the End of the World," *Independent*, November 10 2016. (The Twitter post was subsequently deleted.)
- 29 These are the final lines of Emma Lazarus's sonnet, and can be found inscribed on a plaque at the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty in New York. See the US National Parks Service website: <https://www.nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/emma-lazarus.htm>. Accessed September 25 2017.
- 30 There are many criticisms of the social contract tradition—too many to mention here—but one that shares some similar features with the account I will advance can be found in Samuel Chambers' book *Bearing Society in Mind*. See in particular his discussion on pages 21–22 where he argues against the liberal idea of individuals creating a political order, and the accompanying assumption of an apolitical order existing out of which a political one can emerge. Samuel A. Chambers, *Bearing Society in Mind: Theories and Politics of the Social Formation* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014). One important philosophical critique of the social contract is Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). I will return to Cavell via Havercroft in a subsequent chapter. See also the discussion of Cavell in Andrew Norris, "Political Revisions: Stanley Cavell and Political Philosophy," *Political Theory* 30, no. 6 (2002). An important feminist critique of the social

- contract is Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- 31 Even an academic professional association has got into this game. See Jeffrey C. Isaacs's writings about APSA and DA-RT: Jeffrey C. Isaacs, "Further Thoughts on DA-RT," www.the-plot.org/2015/11/02/further-thoughts-on-da-rt/. Accessed January 27 2017; "For a More Public Political Science," *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 1 (2015).
 - 32 Jack Holmes, "A Trump Surrogate Drops the Mic: 'There's No Such Thing as Facts'," *Esquire*, December 2 2016.
 - 33 Ibid. See (or rather, listen) also to *The Diane Rehm Show* of November 30 2016 (especially from minute 14:40 onwards): Diane Rehm, *How Journalists Are Rethinking Their Role Under a Trump Presidency*, podcast audio, *The Diane Rehm Show*, 49:072016, <http://thedianerehmshow.org/audio/#/shows/2016-11-30/how-journalists-are-rethinking-their-role-under-a-trump-presidency/114095/>. Accessed January 27 2017.
 - 34 Holmes, "A Trump Surrogate Drops the Mic."
 - 35 See, for example, Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, revised ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). I have, however, questioned this view: Ilan Zvi Baron, "The Continuing Failure of International Relations and the Challenges of Disciplinary Boundaries," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 43, no. 1 (2014). See also Warren Magnusson, *The Search for Political Space* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).
 - 36 Jeroen Gunning and Ilan Zvi Baron, *Why Occupy a Square: People, Protests and Movements in the Egyptian Revolution* (London: Hurst & Company, 2013).
 - 37 Carlo Petrini, *Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should Be Good, Clean, and Fair*, trans. Clara Furlan and Jonathan Hunt (New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2007). In addition to the farm, the kitchen can be treated as an important location of politics, on both feminist grounds and for wider reasons pursuant to the consequences of our food choices.
 - 38 David B. Grusky et al., eds, *Occupy the Future* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).
 - 39 For a discussion of causality in the social sciences see Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations:*

Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics (London: Routledge, 2011); “Causal Claims and Causal Explanation in International Studies,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* (2016).

- 40 See Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013); Julie Guthman, *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011).
- 41 See, for example, Stephen Kern, *A Cultural History of Causality: Science, Murder Novels, and Systems of Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- 42 See, for example, Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, “Must International Studies Be a Science?,” *Millennium* 43, no. 3 (2015).
- 43 Helen Pluckrose, “How French ‘Intellectuals’ Ruined the West: Postmodernism and its Impact Explained,” *Areo* (March 27 2017).