

The Mask It Wears: US Liberalism's Commitment to Imperialism

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American liberals, Samuel Moyn wrote last year in *Dissent*, have never broken 'with the exceptionalist outlook that cast the United States as uniquely virtuous', but having Trump in the 'cockpit of American power' will reveal 'just how terrifyingly normal a nation we are, with our populist jingoism and hawkish foreign policy'. The bipartisan support for the president's bombing campaigns shows that little has changed in this respect, however. As Trump ordered strikes on Syria in April last year, Fareed Zakaria hailed the 'big moment': 'Donald Trump,' he said, 'became president of the United States last night.' As Trump dispatched his 'shiny and new' missiles to Syria a year later, Anne-Marie Slaughter, a former Obama apparatchik and president of the New America Foundation, tweeted that it was the 'right thing' to do. 'It will not stop the war nor save the Syrian people from many other horrors,' Slaughter conceded, and 'it is illegal under international law.' But 'it at least draws a line somewhere & says enough.'

'The deterioration of the intelligentsia,' Arthur Koestler wrote, 'is as much a symptom of disease as the corruption of the ruling class or the sleeping sickness of the proletariat. They are symptoms of the same fundamental process.' One clear sign of intellectual infirmity is the desperation with which centrists and liberals, removed from the cockpit of American power, forage for ideas and inspiration on the lumpen right. The *New York Times's* op-ed page lured Bret Stephens, a climate-change denier, and Bari Weiss, a campus agitator known for persecuting Arab scholars, away from the Murdoch-owned *Wall Street Journal*. The *Atlantic* hired, then a few days later fired, Kevin Williamson, a prose stylist at the *National Review* who suggests that women who have abortions – a quarter of all American women – should be hanged. In this free-for-all, 'thought leaders' rise without a trace, at great speed and with little ballast. Jordan Peterson, a YouTube evangelist who believes that feminists have 'an unconscious wish for brutal male domination', was hailed in the *New York Times* as the West's 'most influential public intellectual' and elicited respectful attention from *New York*, *Atlantic* and *Esquire*.

The most audacious surfers of the bien pensant tide, however, are wealthy and influential stalwarts of the 'liberal order,' whose diagnoses and prescriptions dominate the comment pages of the *Financial Times*, the *New York Times* and the *Economist*. They depict the tyro in the White House as an unprecedented calamity, more so evidently than the economic inequality, deadlocked government, subprime debt, offshored jobs, unrestrained corporate power and compromised legislature that made Trump seem a credible candidate to millions of Americans. Hoping to restore their liberal order, journalists, politicians, former civil servants and politically engaged businessmen jostle on both sides of the Atlantic in an air of revivalist zeal. Shortly after Trump's victory, Third Way, a think tank run by a former aide to Bill Clinton, launched New Blue, a \$20 million initiative to recharge the vital centre. In April it was revealed that billionaires have been funding Patriots and Pragmatists, a private discussion group of pundits affiliated with the Obama and Bush administrations. In Britain, a centrist political party with a treasure trove of £50 million has surfaced. One of its patrons, Tony Blair, explained in the *New York Times* last March that 'for liberal

democracy to survive and thrive, we must build a new coalition that is popular, not populist.' A reinvigorated centrism, he wrote, had to acknowledge 'genuine cultural anxieties', not least on immigration. The same month, Blair laid out £10 million for Renewing the Centre, a 'non-party platform' under the auspices of his Institute for Global Change, and hired Yascha Mounk, a lecturer at Harvard, to lead its fight against 'false populism'. In *The People v. Democracy*, Mounk repeatedly echoes Blair. 'Defenders of liberal democracy,' he writes, 'will simply fan the flames of populism if they disregard fears about ineffective border controls or dismiss the degree of public anger about current levels of immigration.' Just as Blair argues that there is no point in 'appearing obsessive on issues like gender identity' – presumably to avoid further wounding the 'white working class', the new holy cow of chastened metropolitans – Mounk indicts a spoiler 'left' for being damagingly obsessed with identity politics, cultural appropriation and shutting down free speech.

An 'anti-totalitarian liberalism,' Moyn warned in 2006, as liberal democrats waged war on Islamofascism, 'has become the favoured approach of many political elites in Western democracies'. It seems an ineradicable intellectual reflex as Mounk resurrects in his book the popular oppositions of the Cold War and the war on terror: liberal democracy v. authoritarianism, freedom v. its enemies. Framing these Manicheisms not as geopolitical challenges but as the West's domestic problem, he suggests a quasi-solution: an 'inclusive nationalism', which Obama and Macron have already articulated in their speeches. We need to focus on what 'unites rather than what divides us', whereas the left is guilty of a 'radical rejection of the nation and all its trappings'. But how does one rebuild a 'collective form of belonging' in the racially and ethnically heterogeneous West? Mounk concedes that 'we cannot recreate the threat of communism or fascism.' Nevertheless, 'we can remember that civics education is an essential bulwark against authoritarian temptations.' Students, taught 'disdain for our inherited political institutions' and encouraged to be suspicious of the Enlightenment, ought to be trained to be 'proud defenders of liberal democracy'. 'Rhetoric matters,' he insists. Hillary Clinton, for instance, 'needed to convince voters that she was passionate about changing the status quo'.



These and other miscellaneous insights, hailed by the *New Yorker* as 'trenchant' and the *Guardian* as 'extraordinary', are useful largely in confirming the persistence of the ancien régime in Atlanticist editorial boards, political science departments, think tanks and television studios. Blair, meanwhile, lucratively counselling despots and plutocrats abroad while avoiding citizen's arrest at home, is no longer a viable leader of global change. But his project of renewing the centre appeals viscerally to the anti-totalitarian liberals for whom the collapse of the Berlin Wall confirmed once and for all that there is no alternative, and who were consequently blindsided by Trump. These exponents of deregulation, privatisation and pre-emptive wars are the ones most susceptible to Mounk's fables, in which America was moving towards the 'realisation of its high-minded conception' before the way was blocked by an ogre. 'Then came Donald Trump,' Mounk declares, a president who 'openly disdains basic constitutional norms'.

The qualifier 'openly' suggests that the most objectionable thing about Trump may be his discarding of the veil that conceals the scramble for power and wealth among the traditional ruling classes. Mounk does not consider the possibility that the official mendacity concerning illegal wars and assaults on civil liberties may have made some people sceptical about the norms of liberal democracy. He is tactfully silent about the way some leading liberal democrats – Blair, but also Clinton, Lagarde, Schröder, Hollande, Rajoy, Renzi, Cameron and Osborne – are continually caught in the revolving door between business and politics. He doesn't mention either that it was Obama who, as Moyn has put it, 'enhanced the powers of a presidency, which is now in the hands of a charlatan', or that in his effort to appease the Republican far right, Obama deported immigrants at a

higher rate than Trump has so far. Macron, another of Mounk's cherished liberal democrats, has, while pushing extensive privatisation, unfurled a policy on migrants and refugees so harsh that the Front National celebrates it as a 'political victory'.

There is nothing new about such pragmatic patriots aiming to beat right-wing populists at their own game. Contrary to Mounk's morality tale about liberal democracy, mainstream parties of the centre left as well as the right have deployed the methods of what Stuart Hall called 'authoritarian populism' ever since the oil shocks and the recessions of the 1970s and 1980s. Hall coined this term in the late 1970s to describe 'the rise of the radical right under Thatcherite auspices' from the ruins of 'the social-democratic consensus'. With capitalism afflicted by an unresolvable structural crisis, fresh populist consent had to be mobilised – often through moral panics about immigrants – for the imposition of harsh neoliberal policies. Thirty years later, even New Labour resorted, towards the end of its tenure, to authoritarian populism. As an article in the *Utopian*, an American web magazine, pointed out in 2010, Blair had 'dragged Britain into the Iraq War' on the basis of blatant falsehoods and then 'adopted the most restrictive anti-terror legislation in Europe'. There was an 'authoritarian streak' in both Blair and Brown, who 'ratcheted up coercion' because of 'their failure to make real economic improvements'. Economic growth, 'heavily centred on the financial industry', was 'achieved at the price of ever-new presents to bankers and the super-rich'. As a result, 'Britain's abject underclass has actually continued to grow' and many in the 'disaffected white working class' had either drifted away from electoral politics or embraced such radical rightists as the BNP. 'Labour's populism,' the article concluded, 'is a desperate attempt to win back this milieu.'

The author of this combative and prescient analysis – of how the centre had failed to hold and rough beasts started to slouch towards Bethlehem long before Trump made his run for the presidency – was Yascha Mounk. In 2010 he deplored Blair's 'desperate pandering' to the far right and the 'super-rich', and seemed to sympathise with those on the British left who 'think that it's high time to give New Labour the mercy shot'. Working now to rejuvenate Blairism, Mounk re-enacts the original sin of his employer and many other superannuated centrists: the replacement of principle with triangulation.

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Samuel Moyn's career is one of reversed affinities: from youthful enchantment with the muzak of the Third Way to rediscovery of *L'Internationale*, from eager collaboration with power to tough-minded scrutiny of it. In 1999, during Nato's bombing of Yugoslavia, Moyn went to Washington DC to work as an intern on Clinton's National Security Council. Today, he is a prominent presence in the intellectual culture of the American left, which, denied representation by a mainstream media busy execrating Trump and boosting Never Trumpists, has suddenly flowered in new periodicals (*Jacobin*, *Viewpoint*, *Current Affairs*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*) and in the revitalised pages of the *Baffler*, *Boston Review*, *Dissent*, *n+1*, the *New Republic* and the *Nation*. Sceptical of zealous anti-Trumpism, Moyn has chosen – in a time of 'transition from an era of liberal ascendancy to one of liberal crisis' – to excavate the 'egalitarian ideals and practices' that a triumphant neoliberal capitalism drove underground.

Back in 1999, Moyn was bewitched by the idea of America administering justice to the world's afflicted and benighted. He wasn't alone. The 1990s were prodigal with illusions generated by the collapse of communist regimes, the retreat of social democracy in Europe and the abandonment of socialist ideals in postcolonial Asia and Africa. The ethical vacuum had been filled by human rights, which were entrusted, as Moyn wrote, with 'the grand political mission of providing a global framework for the achievement of freedom, identity and prosperity'. It was in 1999 that Blair announced in Chicago: 'We are all internationals now, whether we like it or not.' Western values and interests had miraculously merged, and it was imperative to 'establish and spread the values of

liberty, the rule of law, human rights and an open society' – by force, if necessary. The first Gulf War, ostensibly fought for the human rights of Kuwaitis, had already helped crystallise a creed in which national sovereignty was no longer inviolate. Human rights, commanding universal approval, came in useful in trashing the principle that had given small countries some protection against superpowers during the Cold War.

Intellectual, moral and legal backing for the New World Order came from a variety of sources. Human Rights Watch supported Washington's disastrous military foray into Somalia in 1992. Jürgen Habermas persuaded himself, briefly, that the US could create a global cosmopolis in the spirit of Kant. John Rawls, transplanting his theory of justice into the realm of international relations, declared in 1999 that societies that violate human rights rightly provoke economic sanctions and military intervention. Liberal peoples, who are naturally indifferent to imperial glory, can justly wage wars of self-defence on 'outlaw' states. The synergy between the aims of the US State Department, human rights advocates and military humanists grew more intense after 9/11. Philip Bobbitt, counsellor to several American administrations, and muse to Blair and Cameron, asserted in *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History* (2002) that 'no state's sovereignty is unimpeachable if it studiously spurns parliamentary institutions and human rights protections.' In *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, also published in 2002, Samantha Power outlined the correct response to the world's evildoers: American unilateralism untrammelled by international institutions. Trumpeting Bush's pre-emptive assault on Iraq, Michael Ignatieff recommended in 2003 a new American empire whose 'grace notes are free markets, human rights and democracy, enforced by the most awesome military power the world has ever known'.

The United States, Power asserted as Obama's nominee for US ambassador to the United Nations in 2013, 'is the greatest country on Earth', and 'the leader in human dignity'. She promised that she would 'never apologise for America' and also pledged to 'stand up for Israel and work tirelessly to defend it'. The following year she tweeted a picture of her and Henry Kissinger enjoying a baseball game at Yankee Stadium, and told the *New Yorker* that 'as time wears on, I find myself gravitating more and more to the G.S.D. [Get-Shit-Done] people.' This also seems true of Ignatieff, Power's former colleague at Harvard's Carr Centre for Human Rights Policy, who outlined 'permissible' forms of torture in the *New York Times*; his recommendations (which included 'keeping prisoners in hoods') appeared inconveniently just as the first pictures of a hooded Iraqi prisoner emerged from Abu Ghraib. Ambitious academics such as these have been especially keen to propose American resolve and virtue as a solution to various problems from hell. But it is also the case that human rights, lacking secure legal and philosophical foundation, are prone to appropriation by imperialist regimes as well as their victims. Once framed as indivisible from the spread of free markets and other good things necessary to the design of Pax Americana, the promotion of human rights could be represented as part of the Pentagon's mission and as a natural corollary of the Washington Consensus – just how shit gets done. It also helped that human rights at the end of history offered a seductive 'anti-politics', which, Tony Judt lamented in *Ill Fares the Land*, 'misled a generation of young activists into believing that, conventional avenues of change being hopelessly clogged, they should forsake political organisation for single-issue, non-governmental groups unsullied by compromise'.

Moyn was one of these activists, but has since fruitfully disavowed his youthful romanticism. His work can be read as one long clarification of the way in which the responsibility to protect became indistinguishable from the right to bomb or blockade perceived enemies (Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria), the right to nurture 'friends' (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel), and the right to be passive in the face of 'market fundamentalists' as they boosted 'the global rich higher over their inferiors than they had ever been'. In *The Last Utopia* (2010), he attacked the self-congratulatory notion, vended

by Ignatieff and others, that awareness of the Holocaust's horrors after the war helped consecrate human rights in a 'revolution of moral concern'. For one thing, Moyn writes, 'there was no widespread Holocaust consciousness in the postwar era.' And few people directly cited the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights in the 1950s and 1960s. The discourse of human rights became popular only in the 1970s. Intellectuals, particularly in France, used it to replace their faith in socialism and Third Worldism, and to consecrate an anti-totalitarian liberalism. Politicians such as Jimmy Carter weaponised it in a new ideological and moral offensive against the Soviet Union.

Moyn's new book shows how human rights, as well as enabling American militarism, acquiesced, as a 'powerless companion of market fundamentalism', to the global 'explosion of inequality'. It was in the 1970s that the human rights movement came together, with its particular infrastructure, bureaucracy and fundraising programmes, into what David Kennedy in *The Rights of Spring* (2009), his acidulous memoir of human rights activism in Uruguay in 1984, called the 'smooth and knowing routines of professional advocacy'. Kennedy, recalling time spent in the offices of Human Rights Watch in the Empire State Building, describes the way in which, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Western human rights groups honed their strategy of 'naming and shaming from a great height'. This model of human rights became hegemonic, though it was far from being universal. In South Africa, for instance, left-wing anti-apartheid activists from the 1970s onwards used the language of rights to demand a broader democratic transformation as well as to defend the victims of state brutality.

What differentiated the Western model from many Asian, African and Latin American networks of women's groups and indigenous peoples, or alternative development and environmental organisations, was its indifference to 'economic and social rights': what Moyn defines as 'entitlements to work, education, social assistance, health, housing, food and water'. Focusing on the violations of individuals' rights by states, human rights groups valuably documented the crimes of the Contras in Nicaragua, the army and death squads in El Salvador, and state terrorists in Guatemala. But they were largely indifferent to the abuse of power by non-state actors: the kleptocratic oligarchies that emerged in Asia, Africa and Latin America throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Nor did they have much to say about the terrible effects of the structural adjustment programmes implemented by the IMF and the World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s. Human rights politics and law, Moyn argues, may have sensitised us 'to the misery of visible indigence alongside the horrific repression of authoritarian and totalitarian states - but not to the crisis of national welfare, the stagnation of the middle classes and the endurance of global hierarchy'.

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Moyn's stern appraisal may not appear new to long-standing critics of Western moral rhetoric in the global South. Anti-colonial leaders and thinkers knew that the global economy forged by Western imperialism had to be radically restructured in order even partially to fulfil the central promise of national self-determination, let alone socialism. Western liberals were widely perceived as 'false friends', as Conor Cruise O'Brien reported from Africa in the 1960s, and liberalism itself as an 'ingratiating moral mask which a toughly acquisitive society wears before the world it robs'. Distrust of the Western discourse of human rights was likewise constant and deep. The Indonesian thinker Soedjatmoko challenged its presumption of universal morality, pointing to the global inequalities perpetuated by the champions of human rights. Arundhati Roy spoke in 2004 of an 'alarming shift of paradigm': 'Even among the well-intentioned, the expansive, magnificent concept of justice is gradually being substituted with the reduced, far more fragile discourse of "human rights"' - a minimalist request, basically, not to be killed, tortured or unjustly imprisoned. As a result, she argued 'resistance movements in poor countries ... view human rights NGOs as modern-day missionaries,' complicit in the West's attempt to impose an 'unjust political and economic structure on the world'.

Some African-American activists saw from the outset that human rights, in their hegemonic American formulation, were not meant to facilitate a 'politics of fair distribution'. Even as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was being drafted in the late 1940s, W.E.B. Du Bois observed that, as Moyn puts it, 'human rights inevitably became bound up with the power of the powerful.' As Carol Anderson showed in *Eyes off the Prize* (2003) and *Bourgeois Radicals* (2014), the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), helped by Du Bois, appealed in 1947 to the newly established UN to acknowledge African-Americans as victims of human rights violations, where violations were defined in this case not only as slavery, Jim Crow and denial of voting rights, but as discrimination in criminal justice, education, housing, employment and access to healthcare. Du Bois and other civil rights leaders echoed the argument of many anti-colonial activists that legal and political rights were impossible to achieve without economic security, and that a mere ban on discrimination would not address centuries of devastation. They ran into vigorous opposition not only from white supremacists among southern Democrats and conservative Republicans, but also from their supposed allies: the Truman administration and Eleanor Roosevelt, for example, who told Du Bois that he was embarrassing the United States before the Soviet Union. Some worried that the demand reeked of socialism. None of them wanted the UN to have any influence in the domestic arrangements of the US. Eventually, the NAACP caved in to the defenders of white supremacy, and sidelined Du Bois. Abandoning its own broad definition of human rights, the NAACP settled for the narrow aim of legal equality. Not surprisingly, deep inequalities in education, healthcare and housing persist to this day: the logic of a human rights movement born and nurtured under the American imperium.

In *The Last Utopia*, Moyn mentioned Du Bois's attempt to internationalise the plight of African-Americans and to define institutionalised racism as a human rights violation, but he did not acknowledge the significance of Du Bois's failure to achieve these things, or indeed the many valiant and doomed attempts in the global South to transcend racialised political and economic hierarchies. Moyn now acknowledges that his previous analysis was incomplete. In *Not Enough*, he more effectively provincialises an ineffectual and obsolete Western model of human rights. As he puts it, 'local and global economic justice requires redesigning markets or at least redistributing from the rich to the rest, something that naming and shaming are never likely to achieve.' Since the human rights movement 'cannot reinvent itself with new ideals and tools', he argues, it should 'stick to what it does best: informing our concepts of citizenship and stigmatising evil, without purporting to stand for the whole of "global justice"'.

Moyn's book is part of a renewed attention to the political and intellectual ferment of decolonisation, and joins a sharpening interrogation of the liberal order and the institutions of global governance created by, and arguably for, Pax Americana. In *A World of Struggle: How Power, Law and Expertise Shape Global Political Economy*, David Kennedy blames humanitarian interventionists and international lawyers, among other globalists, for bringing forth a world that is 'terribly unjust, subject to crisis, environmentally unwise, everywhere politically and economically captured by the few'.¹ Martha Nussbaum recently denounced the United Nations 'system' as 'grotesquely flawed and corrupt, totally lacking in democratic accountability, and therefore devoid of any procedural legitimacy when it comes to imposing law on people'. The loss of legitimacy seems more devastating in the case of the West-led human rights movement, for which severe self-reckoning and downsizing seem unavoidable today. Having turned, as David Rieff put it recently in *Foreign Policy*, into a 'secular church of liberal globalism', the human rights movement has become a casualty of the worldwide backlash against liberal globalists. A principled minority long suspicious of Western NGOs has been joined by opportunistic chieftains of majoritarian movements. Erdoğan has jailed the chair of Amnesty International Turkey. Amnesty International India had temporarily to close its offices in Bangalore in 2016 after it was assaulted by Hindu nationalists accusing the charity of 'sedition'. Netanyahu has deported the director of Israel and Palestine

Human Rights Watch. In Hungary, Orbán seems determined to expel George Soros's Open Society. As Trump frankly admires autocrats and refuses to pay even vice's meagre tribute to virtue, the human rights movement is facing, as Rieff writes, 'the greatest test it has confronted since its emergence in the 1970s'.

The days when young people transposed their political idealism into the vernacular of liberal internationalism seem to be behind us. Young men and women are more likely today to join domestic political upsurges against neoliberalism than to fall for a human rights anti-politics miraculously placed beyond political economy. They can hardly avoid noticing the great chasm that now exists between the continuing official commitment to human rights and their brazen infraction in relations everywhere between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak. Moyn's own book, probably his last word on the last utopia, looks at democratic vistas beyond the horizons of human rights and a liberalism parasitic on varying evils – communism, Islamofascism, Trumpism – for its self-definition. His timing seems right. 'It is as if the main problem for liberal democracy were its enemies,' Moyn wrote in 2006, introducing a collection of Pierre Rosanvallon's writings, 'as if there were no need to ponder the historical variations and untried possibilities of democracy.' Twelve years later, Trump has inadvertently forced open political and economic possibilities across the ideological spectrum; the Thatcherite assumption that there is no alternative is no longer tenable. Moyn, in *Not Enough*, senses that the crisis of neoliberalism presents an intellectual and political opportunity. He recovers forgotten moments from the long postcolonial effort to extend to economics and geopolitics the principle of equality that liberals regard as legitimate only in the political realm. He lingers on the proposals made by poor countries in the 1970s for an international economic order that could protect them from the depredations of rich countries and multinational corporations. He describes at length the thinking behind European commitments to national welfare states in the postwar era. This is not nostalgia, of the kind Tony Judt felt for the social democracy of his youth. Nor is it Third Worldism, as a touchy reviewer of Moyn's book in the *New York Times* charged. Rather, Moyn wants to reinstate socialism – which was, after all, the 'central language of justice' globally before it was supplanted by human rights – as an ethical ideal and political objective.

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This may seem like a quixotic project. The scale of the left's defeat in recent decades – whether measured in a moribund labour movement, privatised essential services and utilities, economic inequality of Gilded Age proportions, racial resegregation, or the backlash against feminism – cannot be concealed. But then the ideals of equality and redistribution never seemed more attractive than when liberalism, having promised universal prosperity and greater democracy, plunged into the slaughterhouse of the First World War, followed by the deepest economic slump in history. The fortunes of socialism have yet again risen as the structural malaise of capitalism is diagnosed more and more clearly by its victims, and conscious collective intervention rather than the invisible hand appears to be the only viable solution to an unfolding environmental catastrophe.

'Socialism,' the *Wall Street Journal* nervously reported late last year, 'has moved from being a taboo because of its associations with the Cold War to something that has found rising appeal.' Predictably, the ideological police of the liberal order is working hard to reinstitute the old taboo. Denunciations of a supposedly almighty and fanatical left flow as frequently from the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *New York* and *Atlantic* as from Breitbart, and detestation of 'social justice warriors' unites figures as seemingly disparate as Mark Lilla, Steven Pinker, Elon Musk, Niall Ferguson and Jordan Peterson. Bernie Sanders's insurgent campaign confirmed, however, that socialist ideals exist, beyond the experience of communist tyranny, as what John Stuart Mill called 'one of the most valuable elements of human improvement'. Certainly, that curious global conjuncture in which neoliberal capitalism and technological leaps forward guaranteed

endless progress, and a tiny elite passed off its interests as universal norms, has passed. The appeal of equality as a legal claim and democratic norm has grown and grown – and is paradoxically attested to by anti-establishment uprisings derided as ‘populist’ threats to liberal democracy. It is unlikely to be defused by attempts to rebuild the liberal order on Macron-style yuppie populism, inclusive nationalism, pragmatic patriotism or any other expedient of an intellectually insolvent (though materially resourceful) centrism. Moyn’s book offers no alternative programme of institutional reconstruction or mass mobilisation. But its critical – and self-critical – energy is consistently bracing, and is surely a condition of restoring the pursuit of equality and justice as an indispensable modern tradition.

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P.S.

Review of:

he People v. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is in Danger and How to Save It by Yascha Mounk
Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World by Samuel Moyn

Original title “The Mask It Wears”

London review of books

<https://www.lrb.co.uk/v40/n12/pankaj-mishra/the-mask-it-wears>