# Introduction: the importance of trust for democratic politics, and why the populist right and post-Marxist left want to eliminate it

21st century politics are utterly bizarre. Despite relatively few people engaging directly with extremes, we seem to have been transported to the 17th century world of Matthew Hopkins, Witchfinder General. On one side we have a puritan, compassion-free, vengeful, punitive regiment of unsmiling moral police determined to suppress all trace of old sinful ways and to purge wicked traditions, contemptuous of due process and untarnished by presumption of innocence. They face a pugnacious mob of snarling, swivel-eyed, snaggle-toothed peasants with pitchforks, impervious to reason, disdainful of calls for calm, scornful of authority, oppugnant to the Riot Act, and utterly convinced by their preachers that they are beset by every kind of sprite, gargoyle and demon that ever featured in a story book.

To talk of political trust in these circumstances is heroic. Like the humane, sherry-tippling squire of 1647, we are trapped in a pincer by two terrible Manichaean movements, who agree only on the immanence of the apocalyptic struggle of Good versus Evil, cooperate only to drown moderate voices in a torrent of manufactured invective. The impediment under which we labour today, unlike the hapless squire of yore, is that ideas spread far more quickly and effectively with networked digital technology. And the technology that both sides use to automate their mobs is increasingly defended as a means by which society can be run devoid of trust. It wasn't so long ago that trust was seen as the glue that held societies together and allowed them to prosper (Fukuyama 1995). Now, Puritans and Peasants alike see it as a dangerous vulnerability to be transcended.

## THE PURITANS AND THE PEASANTS

The post-war period was marked by the massive growth of the intrusive state. This made the practical project of steering the large and unwieldy governmental

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infrastructure increasingly salient (Deutsch 1963, xxvii), as it took unprecedented shares of national income and the private property of its citizens with an efficiency and bureaucratic indifference that would have been the envy of medieval despots (McCloskey 2010, 331–332). The struggle to control the new Leviathan cultivated "a time of brittle cynicism about the activities of politicians," as it says on the back cover of Bernard Crick's brilliant *In Defence of Politics*, which advocated politics as a social activity for allocating resources and decision-making, essential to sustain a community grown too complex and plural to be governed by tradition or ideology (Crick 1964, 24).

Since its publication, the state has grown further while the political situation has evolved, becoming both more complex and less pragmatic than Crick recommended. First, there was a shift from class- and solidarity-based ideologies, to those, such as neoliberalism and Rawlsian liberalism, which valorised individuals and their choices. This, to some commentators, transformed social politics into the politics of personal prosperity, in which politicians "are exposed to pressures from a society in which the ties of habit have been loosened and agreement on what is appropriate conduct dissolved. The censure of public opinion remains, but it has become more capricious and is formed all too often by disappointment over the non-fulfilment of material expectations which it may not be within the power of the politician to satisfy" (Johnson 1980, 136; and also Urbinati 2015).

Secondly, particularly following the political protests of 1968 (Bourg 2017), and the American civil rights movement, perceptions of the purpose of politics seemed to change from the allocation of scarce resources, where the aim is to find compromise or the win-win, to rights and wrongs, where the only acceptable result is victory, and defeat is but a prelude to resistance. We might contrast the two attitudes using the terms *getting-things-done politics* and *beggar-thy-neighbour politics*. In the latter, "narratives of distrust, conspiracy, betrayal, and fear thrive in discursive vacuums … because narrative is one way of focusing and containing perceived risks and threats" (Warren 1999, 341).[1]

Thirdly, in Crick's day, the educated and the wealthy alike skewed to the right of politics, while the poorer and less-educated tended left. By the 2020s, the educated were firmly on the left (Piketty 2021), creating new cleavages between the educated elite and the unlettered masses (now bedfellows), spawning tensions within both right and left. On the left, *bien-pensant* intellectuals marginalised working class institutions and attitudes. The right struggled to square cultural conservatism with the free-and-easy manners of the

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[1]   This book does not consider political violence, but it seems plausible that the heightened rhetoric of beggar-thy-neighbour politics is more likely to lead to a situation where violence would appear to some political actors to be the only way of preventing outcomes branded as unacceptable.

hyper-wealthy (a tension memorably depicted in Alan Hollinghurst's novel *The Line of Beauty*).

And fourthly, especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union, it became clearer that the working class had unaccountably rejected its historical destiny as the nemesis of capitalism. This was a problem for the left: the metaphor of struggle had worked well, evoking images of two mighty forces, the bourgeoisie and proletariat, confronting each other, gaining victories, rallying after defeats, waving flags and so on. Yet this now seemed absurd, as the workers rather preferred liberty, patriotism and opportunity within a civil society.

## The Puritans

A new style of leftism was needed, which gradually emerged as the intellectual elite insulated itself from the disappointing proletariat, which it now despised. It put down its Marx, and picked up its Gramsci, nursing its wounds in various cultural institutions, universities, art galleries, civil service bureaucracies and NGOs (Embery 2021, 18–22, 47–49, 98–99; Mounk 2023, 97–111; Rufo 2023, 36–52). It created and dominated an ecosystem of "pressure groups," "creatives" and "community groups" that purported to represent "civil society," so that not only did it manage to take over many branches of government administration, it also became a spurious "interface" with the citizenry (Walden 2020, 157–176).[2] For some non-obvious reason, many new leftists also became stand-up comics.

The bourgeoisie was not smashable, but it was nice enough to be embarrassed and shamed. Victimhood became the means; it was enough to show that one had been badly treated, neglected, traduced or otherwise held back in one's own opinion. Civil society was asserted to be a racket that denied social justice and diversity, and so civility was rejected in manners as well as social philosophy. In countless committees, well-meaning moderates were shouted down, and being polite and a little cowardly, they quailed. Whereas the class struggle had been about the competition for political and economic power, the

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[2]　See https://dnco.com/work/transport-for-london for a priceless example, where "public consultations" about the new names of London Overground lines took the form of intensive workshops with "writers and creatives" exploring "themes of decolonisation, queer histories, intersectionality and young London's perspectives," "interviewing leading historians, academics and transport specialists delving into topics such as LGBTQ+ histories, East End migration and the fascinating world of London slang and linguistics," leavened only by "150 customer intercepts, hearing from everyday Londoners about what makes the Overground special." In other words, the "consultation" was designed to produce a desired outcome, which it duly did.

new Puritans demanded obeisance in behaviour, language and thought, shifting from class war to culture war, and making far more progress.

   Their struggle was grounded by uncompromising loathing for their own societies. Incredibly, at the beginning of the COVID pandemic, one British academic was desperate that her own university *didn't* develop a vaccine. "If my university is the first to develop the vaccine, I'm worried that it will be used as it has been in the past, to fulfil its political, patriotic function as proof of British excellence" (Cousens 2020). In the event, the excellence of British (and German, Swedish and American) pharmaceutical companies (and their multinational researchers) did result in vaccines within months, which was certainly a cause of pride, and for everyone else of celebration. Pride in the national flag might get a rock band into trouble. "Oasis are the band of choice for flag-shaggers and Reform voters – it's remarkable how often their fans have the butcher's apron [i.e. the British Union flag] on their Twitter bios, just as Noel [Gallagher] had it painted on his guitar" (Price 2024). Flag-aversion and contempt for ordinary fans, if not the crudity, are also evident in this diatribe from a graduate of Germany's "inherently racist education system."[3]

> Germany hosted the football World Cup [in 2006] and it quickly seemed to infect almost everyone around me with an enthusiasm for the alleged greatness of the reunified country. … Never before had I seen so many black-red-gold flags waving from windows, hanging in cars, painted on cheeks. All the symbolism and pride in being German that had been reserved primarily for neo-Nazis … had suddenly become mainstream. … When Germany won the World Cup in 2014, the national team were welcomed with a public victory celebration in the heart of Berlin, sponsored by major German brands and broadcast live by state channels. A journalist colleague rightly criticised this "warrior-like self-aggrandisement" of the national team … . The presence of players from dual-heritage families on the German football team doesn't really change the racist dynamic attached to this national fan culture. … I, for one, will be doing [in the 2024 Euros] what I have done since 2006: hoping that the German football team – again one of the favourites – lose their opening matches and get kicked out of the tournament as quickly as possible. (Aydemir 2024)

It is worth emphasising that the author hadn't been attacked or suffered racist abuse from football fans; she simply objected to people enthusiastically supporting their country's team.[4] Thus the Puritans.

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   [3]   The author is German-born, of German-born parents, of Kurdish-Turkish extraction (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatma_Aydemir).

   [4]   In the sequel, she didn't get her wish, and the Germans made it through to the quarter-finals before elimination. In praising his team, the German manager was quoted as saying "We are a country that is too sad in too many situations, with a dark perspective on things, and I hope this symbiosis can create something. We are

**The Peasants**

Modern society is fraught with dangers imagined and real (poverty, warfare, totalitarianism, terrorism), but the constitutional protections of liberal democracies are increasingly impenetrable. "If any power is to be effectively given to the people-as-population of a large and complex modern society, this can be done only by means of institutions and procedures that are intricate to the point of being baffling" (Canovan 2004, 245). The Peasants, or, as the German word has it, *Mistgabelmob* (pitchfork mob), arise where complexity seems to undermine common sense and straightforward moral nostrums, as when organised criminals use the painstaking safeguards of the legal system to avoid conviction, or the welfare state seems to reward those who make no contribution.

The Peasants are populists, therefore, but of a certain type. They revel in vulgarity, associating effete metropolitan ways, good taste, high culture and urbanity with the subversion or exploitation of community and communal norms. They are outraged by those who take social determinism more seriously than moral responsibility. They suspect the Brahmin class, not unreasonably, of looking down upon them, while, by virtue of its wealth and social standing, being insulated from the changes it imposes upon everyone else. Yet Peasant leaders often have impeccably Brahmin CVs: in the US, Ted Cruz went to Princeton and Harvard Law School; Steve Bannon to Georgetown University, Harvard Law School and Goldman Sachs; Ron DeSantis to Yale and Harvard Law School; and J.D. Vance to Yale Law School. For a (dated) critique of the British elite, see (Walden 2020, 72–89).

Peasant populism was facilitated by the same political changes that created the Puritans. Donald Trump may seem like he just fell out of a coconut tree, but Michael Sandel predicted the appeal of his noxious politics as early as 1996 (Sandel 1996; also Gray 1995). He is really the (hopefully) end point of a process of the decline of the Republican Party from business- and liberty-friendly establishment party to paranoid rabble, through McCarthy (Hofstadter 2008b), Goldwater (Hofstadter 2008c), Buchanan (Stanley 2012), Gingrich's Contract With America and the Tea Party.

There are different ways of defining populism, but whether we do it ideologically (pitting a homogeneous "people" against an arrogant elite – Müller 2017; Rummens 2017), strategically (in terms of the methods of gaining power, especially by a charismatic figurehead with an almost mystical connection to the "people" – Weyland 2001), or sociologically (in terms of the rhetoric and

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stronger with unity, when we think about what we can do together; together with your neighbour you are stronger. This unity here felt good." The general mood was lighter than our misery-guts hoped (Connolly 2024).

practice of low politics – Ostiguy & Roberts 2016), today's Peasants get their va-va-voom from the manifest unpalatability of the Puritans. Yet the attack on "elites" in the name of the "people" undermines getting-things-done politics. Peasant populists turn out to be neither very disciplined nor good at running things, and they are most comfortable with opposition and ideological animus.

Mark Sedgwick suggested a helpful characterisation of the intellectual roots of the "radical right" (Sedgwick 2019, xxiii–xxiv), which I have adapted to apply to Peasant politics (even if we doubt that President Trump has read Spengler, Schmitt or Gramsci).

1. *Declinism*: the Spenglerian doctrine that the West is in decline.
2. *Emergency*: in the current sociopolitical context normal politics won't cut it. It is a state of emergency and we need a politics of the exceptional (an idea of Carl Schmitt).
3. *Manichaeanism*: again following Schmitt, a fundamental political division between friend and enemy.
4. *Anti-elitism*: political elites are thwarting the people.
5. *Gramscian metapolitics*: aiming for cultural hegemony (Bates 1975), establishing the Peasant view as common sense.

Thus the Peasant.

Interestingly, the Puritans can be sketched analogously, disclosing their similar roots.

1. *Rejectionism*: the West is uniquely evil, and its past actions are responsible for most of the political and geopolitical ills of our age. Alternatively, "the West" is merely a cultural construct. It has no independent existence, because "the modern West owes much of its cultural DNA to a wide range of non-European and non-white forebears" (Mac Sweeney 2023, 6; and also Quinn 2024). However, "as a conceptual framework, it has provided a justification for Western expansion and imperialism, as well as ongoing systems of White racial dominance" (Mac Sweeney 2023, 6), thereby biting the hand that fed it.
2. *Emergency*: identically to the Peasants, as in the myriad declarations of "climate emergency" (Hulme 2019).
3. *Manichaeanism*: again identically.
4. *Conflict between elites*: the present political elite dominates and oppresses minorities, and is to be replaced by a vanguard which will dismantle the *Ancien Régime*'s racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist and colonialist structures.
5. *Gramscian metapolitics*: as the Peasants, *mutatis mutandis*.

## A Vital Caveat

This book is about actors on the political scene, those actively planning and seeking political effects: politicians, special advisors and think-tankers, journalists, activists (and slacktivists), social media influencers, campaigning bishops, trade unionists, demonstrators, leaders of NGOs, politicised artists and novelists, "community leaders," party members, lobbyists, politically-conscious educators and social scientists, party funders, and so on. It is *not* about voters or citizens.

You might vote for the Peasants because you are appalled by the Puritans, and do not trust mainstream politicians to keep them out; or for the Puritans as the most implacable opponents of the Peasants. You might vote Puritan because their ideas chime with your disgust for racism, homophobia and sexism, or Peasant because their messages about the failures of government and taking back control resonate. That does not make you a political actor. Voters and citizens react to debate, but they are not the target of my argument. They are not passive, and may hold some responsibility for the decline in political trust and civility, but gauging its extent is not the purpose of this book.

The characterisations are perhaps vague; Peasant and Puritan are more styles of politics, almost psychological profiles, than thought-out ideologies. It is a sensemaking exercise on my part. The main point is: neither trusts.

## THE POST COLD WAR REDISCOVERY OF TRUST

The demise of the Soviet Union was an indirect spur to the discovery of trust as a sociopolitical issue. The collapse of the governing ideology in Eastern Europe revealed the lack of civil society institutions that could mediate between persons and build social trust (Krastev & Holmes 2019). Meanwhile, there were a few hubristic claims about the ideological triumph of secular liberal democratic capitalism, most famously in Francis Fukuyama's blockbuster *The End of History* (1992). This was a somewhat misunderstood book which argued that liberal democracy provided people with recognition, dignity, liberty, security, equitably-spread prosperity and public services, a set of benefits that no other form of political organisation had ever achieved or could achieve. Deirdre McCloskey made a similar point from a longer perspective when she argued that, while some democracies are thriving and others in decline, life in the West is basically pretty good (McCloskey 2010, 118–120).

Yet these advantages ended neither history nor politics. Concern shifted to what has been called social (sometimes human) capital, the basic "lubricant" of civil society and the economy (Arrow 1974, 23). Now that liberal democracy was, for the moment, the only game in town, questions emerged about how a plural, free, open and increasingly non-religious society could function

without collapsing into conflict. Trust was seen to be the key, and Fukuyama's follow-up to his misfiring blockbuster was, interestingly, a discussion of social capital (1995).

The turn of the century saw a slew of worries about individualism undermining community (Putnam 2000). Fukuyama urged that "trust arises when a community shares a set of moral values in such a way as to create expectations of regular and honest behavior" (1995, 153). There was much discussion of a "crisis of trust" (Seligman 1997, 165; O'Neill 2002, viii, 4–5, 16–17; Uslaner 2002; Rotenberg 2018, 1–3; Skelton 2019, 85; Timothy 2020, 152), and some suggested that the task of political science was to understand why withdrawing trust was "a sensible response to the world" (Hardin 1999, 40). My own investigation around that time identified a few tricky areas (typically involving authority or expertise) where trust was being asked to do a lot of work, because expectations of beneficial outcomes were too high, and cynicism was an easy resort. However, I concluded then as now that across society trust was not in short supply (O'Hara 2004).

The interplay between Fukuyama's two books is interesting. The social capital that he lauded in *Trust* presupposes the order created by civil society in liberal democracies (much of his later work focused on social order). Yet intellectual and political elites scorn that foundation, blithely assuming that democracies can continue to be pleasant, tolerable and trusting, even as Puritans and Peasants, in their different ways, work to undermine the ordered, bourgeois life which furnishes our prosperity and comfort. The "end of history" was rather the prelude to a new phase of history by other means.

## THE ARGUMENT

In this book, I shall look at trust as a factor in the prosecution of politics, in both its getting-things-done and beggar-thy-neighbour guises. I make no pretence of objectivity – I prefer the former style to the latter. I shall argue that many of our self-styled "progressive" ideologies are destructive of trust and aim to make it redundant. Meanwhile, a milder small-c conservatism nurtures the trust essential for getting-things-done.

Peasant-on-Puritan knockabout, with right-wing populists ranged against "progressives," has reduced the space for trust. In broad terms, there is widespread resistance to Puritan politics, with its dreams of social control and contortions of moral dilemmas and attitudes. In return, the Puritans don't trust citizens to make the right decisions about how to run their associations, manage climate change, and so on. Having colonised many institutions, particularly educational and governmental ones, they have put themselves in a position to make technocratic decisions behind the scenes.

Populism can be tough to get off the ground, because "the people" are naturally highly heterogeneous. As Hermann Hesse put it a century ago, "Who is the people? Is it a street speaker or is it those who listen to him; is it those who agree with him or those who brandish their cudgels and shout him down?" (Hesse 1972, 84). Yet a potent oppositional group can coalesce around dislike of technocracy and being bossed around, especially when there appears to be no other route to object. Because the Peasants respect no institutions, they look well-placed to confront and defy the Puritans in their institutional fortresses.

More moderate politicians who want to make institutions work to practical benefit lose appeal because the institutions, for the discontents, are the problem. Moreover, plenty of establishment moderates are Puritan fellow travellers, broadly in agreement on specific matters (such as equality, racism or climate change). They deal asymmetrically with the extremes; they build a *cordon sanitaire* around Peasant parties of the right, but, in their struggle to impose reasonable measures to discourage discrimination, they license the illiberal pursuit of excessive Puritan absolutism. Put another way, *they cannot be trusted to curb the Puritans*. The Puritans and their fellow travellers, in short, enable the Peasants, creating the conditions in which they flourish, and *vice versa*.

## WHAT TRUST BUYS: THE EXAMPLE OF BREXIT

Where trust has broken down, politics can't properly be done, just as wars cannot be won if no-one ever surrenders. Brexit is one of the totemic issues dividing Puritans and Peasants, and the botch that was made of it was entirely down to the lack of trust and trustworthiness in polarised British politics.[5] The getting-things-done political task was to craft a post-EU project that would build on the advantages of returned sovereignty, while retaining good relations with the EU, the UK's nearest neighbour, largest trade partner, and closest geopolitical ally.

Why was it so bungled? I would say the lack of trust: between Leavers and the Remainer establishment; between Remainers and voters; between the Conservative Party leadership and its troops; within the Tory leadership itself; between the Tories and the Labour Party; between the Labour leadership and Parliamentary Party; between the Parliamentary Labour Party and

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[5]   I should declare my own position. I voted Remain, more because of the risks of leaving, than from any great love of the EU. I also opposed a referendum, an utterly flawed way of making decisions and establishing consensus (O'Hara 2006). But, as one was held and the result pretty clear, the decision to leave had to be respected, if politics was to be seen as a trustworthy profession. A second referendum should have been out of the question.

the membership; within the Remain group. For the Parliamentary mess, see Wager (2021). The EU didn't help; its sole aim was to punish Britain for leaving, thereby making a mockery of Habermas' argument (2012, 40–41; 2015, 40–42) that the Lisbon Treaty democratised the EU by making it possible to leave.

Article 50 was triggered too early by Remainer Theresa May because she felt she had to demonstrate her trustworthiness to the Leavers in her party. She tasked figures she did not trust (David Davis, Liam Fox and – demonstrably the least trustworthy politician around – Boris Johnson) with carrying out the negotiations. Davis and Johnson reneged on that trust by failing to negotiate seriously and resigning the moment a withdrawal agreement looked on the cards. May demonstrated her lack of trust in the three by sidelining them with officials. The cross-party Parliamentary Remain majority, egged on by the wretched Speaker John Bercow, got absolutely everything wrong because it was unable to unite in a purposeful coalition, making Johnson the only plausible Prime Minister by the Summer of 2019. This was a triumph of beggar-thy-neighbour politics and, in Euro-lingo, *un petit-dejeuner d'un chien*.

What might have happened, had trust not been on short rations? The political class might have pulled together, not in agreement, but behind a democratic and constitutional process. Those parties with large Leaver factions should have committed to leaving. The next election was due in 2020, giving each party time to work out a precise negotiating position to put before the electorate in its manifesto. Labour might have wanted to keep close to the EU for its social benefits, while the Tories might have promoted free trade, and UKIP could aim to cut immigration, for instance. Consistent Remainer parties like the Liberal Democrats or Scottish Nationalists might have decided to campaign for a second referendum or even to reverse the decision. It would have been a struggle in most parties to produce such manifestos, but groups of people who trust each other can make the necessary compromises.

Election called, manifestos presented, a new Parliament would have a mandate to trigger Article 50 and negotiate something specific (or to call the whole thing off). The meaning of Brexit, unclear during the referendum, would have been decided by the election, and the project would be the major task of that Parliament. The EU, wanting to punish Britain, would doubtless still have negotiated in bad faith, but the UK would at least have had clear goals and a mandate to push for them.

There are many other such areas. The response to COVID is an obvious one, which involved a complex trade-off between citizen trust of government, citizen trust of science, government trust of science and scientists, scientists' trust of government, everyone's trust of the media, as well as the Puritan/Peasant divide which in some countries even politicised the pandemic suppression measures, and on top of that the influence of social media and misinformation,

and on top of that issues about the reliability of statistics in some countries, and on top of that the point that levels of uncertainty for policymakers were extraordinarily high. As this is a work of philosophy, not political science or sociology, I won't delve into this; see Devine et al (2021) for an early survey, and Seldon & Newell (2023, 181–240), Agar (2024, 345–350), Egerton (2024, 55–59) and Sylvester (2024, 152–154) for early assessments of the British response. A trusting political culture would at least allow coordinated and depoliticised responses (although even then they may be based on erroneous science).

## THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

The Puritans and the Peasants are both corrosive to democratic politics. In the literature, the Peasants get the worst of it (Mounk 2023, 17–18, for quantitative evidence). Few writers of any quality are prepared to go on the record and defend Trump, Farage, Le Pen, Cruz, DeSantis, Wilders et al., while the conspiracy theories that are catnip to this bizarre tribe are easily dismissed. Academics are appalled when young people are "radicalised" by the far right, and write hand-wringing articles on how to stop it, while doing their best to radicalise their students on the Puritan side. Yet when we ask why the Peasants thrive in public life, few commentators are able to admit the unpalatable truth that they are widely preferred to the Puritans.

Hence this book is focused on the Puritans and their fellow-travellers. That does not mean that I don't condemn the Peasants; I do, but that is less of a lonely task. I have tried elsewhere to show how the small-c conservatism I outline in this book is opposed to right-wing populism (O'Hara 2021), but in general I assume without proof that the Peasants are unfit for office and inimical to trust, and therefore cannot provide solutions to the serious problems democracies face. They have no jointly coherent positive agenda, disagreeing, for example, on membership of the EU, support for Ukraine, and women's and gay rights. They also don't really know what to do about, say, immigration; they oppose it, but are unable to work out how to stop it. That makes them far less effective politically than the Puritans, who get things done thanks to their strategic "long march" through our cultural institutions (only in Eastern Europe have the Peasants successfully taken over the machinery of the state). The Peasants worry me far less than the Puritans. Hence the substantive arguments about unfitness for office and injuriousness to trust will be targeted at the Puritans only, in Part III.

It is not a binary, and I suspect relatively few people are firmly committed to either side. I tend to agree with Yascha Mounk that most citizens, ambivalent about politics, broadly want our diverse societies to succeed (2022, 18), but don't see why guilt, sanctimony and intolerance are required for the purpose.

The book falls into three parts. An opening chapter will look at political trust, and how the Puritans and the Peasants propose to wish it away. Part I of the book will review the nature of trust. This is foundational work, and could be skipped if you want to get straight into the politics, although my analysis of trust is a crucial premise for many of the political arguments. Part II will lay out a traditional Burkean small-c conservative ideology, to show how it both depends on, and fosters, trust in a tight circle. Part III will look more critically at how various prominent strands of Puritan thought undermine trust. In conclusion, the need for trust in plural and competitive democracies will be discussed, looking in particular at the political projects it would enable.

This book is itself part of a loose and unintended trilogy, the fruit of a project that grew out of hand. This is the middle part, appearing first. A conceptual opening would be an analysis of trust and how it operates in society; this is condensed into Part I here, with many lacunae, caveats and promissory notes which I hope will be made good later. The closing work would focus on the "trust dividend": what could and should be done with trust restored and shored up in Western democracies.