

... to fear, but to re...
bomb metaphor, above all,
Monday clock started the year
appeared, illustrates our pref-
st-case thinking. It not only
ding detonation, but offers an
inexorably ticking towards an
re. Life seems to be a race to do
fore it's too late. Sky News, for
plays a "Brexit Deadline" clock
adcasts (53 days, 5 hours, 34
24 seconds, as this goes to
ew Yorkers can gaze up at the
t Clock in Manhattan to see the
country's economic (ill) health.
his perception of time a "teleo-
", an apt description for how
out the relationship between
d the future.

ulture of fear is perpetuated
th a kind of reflexive guilt-
g, with those who don't heed
arnings of experts being chas-
cklessness and even immoral-
authority of science in the
of good and evil, society
oking, sunbathing, booz-
ilk, eating poorly and not
point is not to endorse the
and safety "one mad",
at the substantive point
ority aims to frighten
urning the banal or
fe - the use of las-
cups is another
es that are com-
s they pose to

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... using the
out where fear and
and where they are leading
Martin Luther King and Nelson
lodestars of moral action, heroic ideals of frat-
nity who condemned their tormentors without
resorting to hate. None of which is to suggest
that Nussbaum ignores the specifics of our own
political moment, but there is a lacklustre qual-
ity here; her prose, and even ideas, seeming
mismatched to the urgency of it. Nussbaum's
point about the socializing "experiences of art",
for example, "when people come together to
sing or dance, or to act a play together, or even
to sing along with the CD of *Hamilton*", may
be nice in a sappy way, but it is hardly serious -
especially since Nussbaum doesn't really
explain how the arts could bridge the gulf
between people who, in the US at least, regu-
larly denigrate each other as either "fascists" on
the one hand or "cultural Marxists" on the other.

She does not point to protest movements
and grassroots organizations - such as Black
Lives Matter - as the incubators of a more hope-
ful politics, in which notions of the common
good may be reborn in embodied action, and
where feelings of individual helplessness are
transcended by collective power. And she does
not avoid moving away from her poetic vision
of politics based on love, hope and faith to detail
a theory of justice for the liberal-democratic
state based on the opportunities all citizens
must have - life, bodily health, affiliation, play,
control over one's environment, and so on - for
a society to count as even minimally just. Most
radical, perhaps, is her proposal for a manda-
ted three-year national service programme,
where young people would be sent across
America to engage in good works - elder care,
child care, infrastructure projects - to create a
sense of solidarity and the common good (inci-
dentally, Fukuyama also suggests this in his
new book, *Identity: Contemporary Identity Pol-
itics and the demand for recognition*).

... argument that in "an era of shrinking
... we simply lack the manpower to
... essential services", may make
... David Cameron's "Big
... the idea of national ser-

When...
Vital Center,
liberal democracy,
national enemies - fascism
nism to the left. I used
a global context.

President Clinton is using the phrase
domestic context. What does he mean by it? His
[Democratic Leadership Council] fans probably
hope that he means "middle of the road", which
they would locate somewhere closer to Ronald
Reagan than to Franklin D. Roosevelt. In my
view, as I have said elsewhere, that middle of
the road is definitely not the vital center. It is
the dead center.

Twenty-one years on, the dead centre still
seems unable to come to life. Nussbaum's
book, for all of its impressive philosophical
skill, and kindly ethic, represents a kind of
zombie liberalism, one devoid of fresh, or even
practical, political thinking that reckons
with the inequalities and material agonies -
wage stagnation, unaffordable housing, pre-
carious jobs, and cuts to public services, for
example - bearing down on the 99 per cent.
And while statements like "build a wall!"
"repeal Obamacare!", "£350 million a week",
"Take back control!" are absurd, dishonest or
abhorrent, they are... something, and, elector-
ally, something always beats nothing.

Nor has there been any attempt to face up to
the fact that over the past few years it has been
liberals, as well as demagogues on the Right,
that have relied on the politics of fear, if only
because, as the political thinker Corey Robin
pointed out in *Fear: The history of a political
idea* (2004), "like terror, "possess[es] an
easy-indebility", requiring "no deep phi-
losophy, no leap of reason, to establish its evil:
Everyone knows what it is and that it is bad".
But if, as the recent flurry of books have
argued, democracy is facing its doomsday, it
won't do to presume that with a bit more emo-
tional tinkering here and there we may return

... time before populism
... other, liberals must
... of why people
... cracy at all,
... of civility
... le, and
... could
... of

*Edmundson
but
improver*