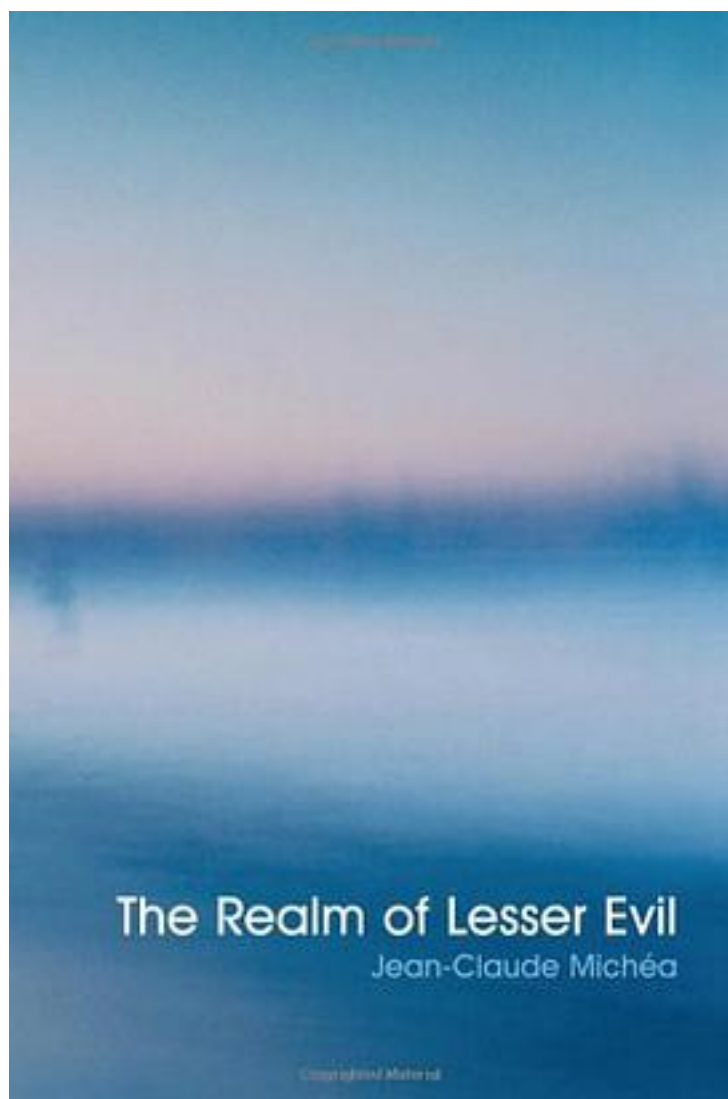


Realm of Lesser Evil



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Winston Churchill said of democracy that it was ‘the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.’ The same could be said of liberalism. While liberalism displays an unfailing optimism with regard to the capacity of human beings to make themselves ‘masters and possessors of nature’, it displays a profound pessimism when it comes to appreciating their moral capacity to build a decent world for themselves. As Michea shows, the roots of this pessimism lie in the idea – an eminently modern one – that the desire to establish the reign of the Good lies at the origin of all the ills besetting the human race. Liberalism’s critique of the ‘tyranny of the Good’ naturally had its costs. It created a view of modern politics as a purely negative art – that of defining the least bad society possible. It is in this sense that liberalism has to be understood, and understands itself, as the ‘politics of lesser evil’. By unravelling the logic that lies at the heart of the liberal project, Michea is able to shed fresh light on one of the key ideas that have shaped the civilization of the West.

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