

INDIANAPOLIS

Review

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KEATING

YOUR COUNTY'S SOCIAL
CAPITAL SCORE

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The Anglo-Saxon Declaration Lifting the Anathema of Whiteness

“Wherever men seek to frame polities or constitutions which are intended to safeguard the citizen, be he rich or be he poor, on the one hand from the shame of despotism, on the other from the misery of anarchy, which are devised to combine personal liberty with respect for law and love of country — wherever these desires are sincerely before the makers of constitutions or laws, it is to this original inspiration, this inspiration which was the product of English soil, which was the outcome of the Anglo-Saxon mind, that they will inevitably be drawn.” — *Sir Winston Churchill*

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes: and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security.”



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A FUTURE THAT WORKS

Our mission is to marshal the best thought on governmental, economic and educational issues at the state and municipal levels. We seek to accomplish this in ways that:

- Exalt the truths of the Declaration of Independence, especially as they apply to the interrelated freedoms of religion, property and speech.
- Emphasize the primacy of the individual in addressing public concerns.
- Recognize that equality of opportunity is sacrificed in pursuit of equality of results.

The foundation encourages research and discussion on the widest range of Indiana public policy issues. Although the philosophical and economic prejudices inherent in its mission might prompt disagreement, the foundation strives to avoid political or social bias in its work. Those who believe they detect such bias are asked to provide details of a factual nature so that errors may be corrected.

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Leo Morris: Rest in Peace

(July 7) — Leo Morris, columnist for The Indiana Policy Review these last six years, died yesterday the owner of a distinguished 50-year career in journalism, most of it with the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel. His honors included the Hoosier Press Association's award for Best Editorial Writer and being named a finalist in editorial writing by the Pulitzer Prize committee.

There was talk of giving him a Sagamore but the talk came back that he might refuse it. He was cantankerous that way, knowing too well the character of some who had won it.

Surprisingly for an introverted writer with a down-home look, Leo was regularly asked to be a television guest and had developed an admirable speaking style thanks to the Toastmasters (an editor forced him to join as a condition of employment). He was said to be a good dancer.

He leaves a huge hole in what he termed his "so-called" profession. It can be said that Morris was the last real journalist left in Indiana. He grew up in newsrooms where facts were hung on a frame of "who, what, when, where, why and how" and left there to dry without embellishment. He was a master copy editor who came of age on desks where breath-pause commas were exorcised in bloodily fought rewrite sessions.

He was a newsman's newsman and a wordsmith.

Born to a coal-mining family in eastern Kentucky, Leo, whose opinion was sought by governors, had a right to tell a rags-to-riches story. But he gave the credit to his hard-working parents who when the mines closed eschewed welfare and packed up their children for an



Leo Morris (1947-2023)

unfamiliar life an unfamiliar city
an unfamiliar state.

Having begun his education waiting for the library buses that visited rural Kentucky, his range of knowledge and depth of reading were unmatched. Yet, he loved Hallmark Christmas movies. Watched them year round.

Those who treasured Leo most knew him to be jarringly honest. That may be a great journalistic attribute but one can imagine how it might shorten one's list of friends. That honesty hit like an anchor thrown

overboard. The conversation would stop, we would be forced to back up and think about what we had said.

A friend tells an anecdote that well describes this experience. A professor returned his student's paper with the admonition, "Perhaps you need to read your words aloud, slowly and in a calm voice, and then tell me what you think they mean."

Leo's death leaves us adrift. The staff and readership of The Indiana Policy Review miss him greatly as does his weekly bridge club, two institutions where the conversation is in need of his monitoring.

This last year, Leo helped found a small group of friends dedicated to trying to find the truth about various and troubling things. Leo was its leader, fashioning the rules of discussion on the Socratic Method, that is, the presumption that wisdom begins with the realization that you know nothing at all.

Leo thought of himself that way. His writing, though, gave him away. You can honor his memory by visiting our website at www.inpolicy.org and searching for the keyword "Morris." There is a wealth of wisdom there from a man whom you can think of as your dear, dear friend. — *tcl*

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Our Anglo-Saxon Heritage: Reality, Imagination or Conceit?

“We know what works — the Anglo-Saxon model of liberty, property, law and capitalism. And we know where it works — everywhere it's actually applied.” — Dame Margaret Thatcher

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In these unenlightened times, a new Dark Age for certain, even the designation “Anglo-Saxon” has faced cancellation. The term itself has been declared racist in Great Britain and the Animal Farm sheep have bleated it here on our shores. How does one respond to such nonsense, other than ignoring it entirely?

By reading real history, of course, and not the kind cut from whole cloth by the deconstructionist revisionists who insist on purging any historical memory that does not fit the narrative. Remember Barack Obama’s frequent reference to the narrative? I concluded he meant how he wanted things to be, not how they actually were.

Fortunately I developed an interest in the Anglo-Saxons of early medieval England and the heritage they ostensibly passed down to us Americans. In full disclosure, I have always found the so-called Dark Ages fascinating in blatant disregard for the common prejudice against those 500 years or so of western history. Even their name shouts prejudice; they are dark only insofar

as our knowledge of those years is minimal. *We* are in the dark; *they* were not. Think Charlemagne and the early Holy Roman Empire, probably my favorite period of study. Some, although not I, buy into the idea of the Irish saving civilization during Europe’s descent into cultural barbarism, over-hyped by half, but with another fact in evidence that the age was not so dark.

As my interest turned to post-Roman Britain and its emergence as an Anglo-Saxon kingdom, it stalled with the difficulty in keeping all the Edwards, Edgars and Æthelstans straight, let alone that strange Æ letter they called an ash tree. But I am nothing if not too stubborn to admit defeat so I soldiered on, eventually being spurred into serious reading by Daniel Hannan’s “Inventing Freedom: How the English-Speaking Peoples Made the Modern World” in which he traces our love of liberty back to the Angles and Saxons.¹

That started a reading journey which eventually encompassed about a dozen histories and historical novels as well as two college class lecture series available by audio recording. I don’t pretend these books to be the best ones nor exhaustive on the subject, just as the ones I read. It is also important to note that the list was developed looking backward and not the result of a systematic reading plan. Regardless, it was the path I stumbled along.

To establish a baseline on the Anglo-Saxon period, I chose Marc Morris’ “The Anglo-Saxons: A History of the Beginnings of England 400-1066.” Morris has written several histories of the Norman and Plantagenet kings, books which I hope to get to eventually, but I started with him here.²

The paragraphs to follow are not necessarily chronological but are thematic. My goal is to stitch them together in a way that a picture of Anglo-Saxon culture emerges and how that culture influenced the United States, both during its founding and yet today. Each book referenced

¹ See my review of this book in the winter 2018 journal.

² Jennifer Paxton’s “Anglo-Saxon England” lectures for the Great Courses series is another useful survey of the period.

is one I have read at some point in the past.

The compass to guide my reading journey was this question: What did the Anglo-Saxons bequeath to us 21st century Americans?

My first insight was that England was a nation forged by war, war between differing European tribes and ethnic groups. England as a unified kingdom came about through war, almost continual warfare from the moment the Romans evacuated the island in the fifth century until the Norman conquest in the eleventh.³ It can be confusing to sort out the various bands of Celts, Germans, Scandinavians and even Irish that proposed to rule part of or all the island. The Anglo-Saxons emerged victorious but it was a close run thing.

Little of the earliest years of the post-Roman period is known with any reliable certainty. The Arthurian legend is mostly just that, but not all legend in my opinion. There were battles, many of them between Romanized Celts and German invaders, but the records are from later compilations at monasteries.⁴ A case can be made for an historical Arthur, a warlord probably from the west country, as Dorsey Armstrong proposes in her Great Courses lecture series entitled “King Arthur: History and Legend.”

Eventually, the Saxon and other Germanic invaders were successful throughout most of what is now known as England but it took several centuries. The map of England at the time showed multiple Saxon kingdoms with fluid borders and with dominance shifting among Northumbria (in the north), Mercia (west midlands) and eventually Wessex (west and south). Then came the Vikings,



Alfred the Great, King of the Anglo-Saxons from 886 until his death in 899.

first as raiders and then as rulers over the north and east of England.

Historical certainty improves by the eighth and ninth centuries large part due to the importance given then and now to a West Saxon king known as Alfred the Great. His grandfather’s kingdom of Wessex (West Saxon) eventually came to rule the south and west parts of the island but by Alfred’s time was under military pressure from Danish Vikings. Alfred came to reign at a very dark hour for Wessex but he brilliantly achieved military superiority and then used his authority to reorganize the kingdom into one of fortified towns for defense. This

era of relative peace allowed him to

initiate an educational renaissance similar to the Carolingian one on the continent. Military victory set the stage for cultural ascendancy. Historian Paul Hill’s “The Viking Wars of Alfred the Great” recounts all this in a year-by-year chronology. Suffice it to say that there were a lot of battles between the Saxons and Danes, and Hill covers them all.

After Alfred the Great’s successful campaigns to enlarge Wessex hegemony, the job was far from finished. The battle of Edington is generally viewed as the turning point but perhaps not, important as it was to Saxon survival. One counter theory has been advanced by historian Michael Livingston in his “Never Greater Slaughter: Brunanburh and the Birth of England.” His thesis is that this battle, one I knew nothing about prior to reading the book, was the day that England was born as his subtitle suggests. The battle site is not firmly established although Livingston has a strong case for his site on the western coast near

³ The warfare did not end with William the Conqueror as nearly every subsequent king faced revolt by his nobles, presumptive claimants to his throne and nearly continuous war with France over vassalage.

⁴ Bede’s “The Ecclesiastical History of the English People” is a near-contemporary monastic source as is a collection of histories known as “The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles.” I can’t claim to have read these other than in brief excerpts.

Chester. What happened is well known, as Alfred's grandson Athelstan decisively defeated an alliance of Irish, Vikings and Scots determined to prevent Saxon control of Northumbria, the last Danish kingdom in Britain. The Saxon victory established an England that looked a lot like the England of today but, alas, Athelstan and his successors were not able to hold it. No matter, Livingstone contends, as Brunanburh "wasn't a lasting victory for England, but it was a victory that meant England could last." Bernard Cornwell agrees and he certainly writes enough about this era. From this point on, the polity is typically referred to as Saxon rather than Anglo-Saxon as the early distinctions become blurred through dynastic intermarriages and Wessex's successes.⁵

Speaking of Bernard Cornwell, his fictional "The Saxon Chronicles" series based on the Saxon-Dane wars is quite popular but a little too much a "Game of Thrones" environment for my taste. I've read two of the 13 published and may at some point return for a third go.

The protagonist is a fictional Northumbrian, half Saxon/half Danish lord who fights reluctantly for Alfred the Great. The series lasts into Æthelstan's reign but apparently ends prior to the Battle Brunanburh. It is fiction and it sells, hence 13 volumes to date. Maybe I will try the last one and skip all the sturm und drang that keeps the series going for its fans.⁶

Now things get confusing again as the Danes appear to have risen from defeat to rule all England. Best known is King Canute, who mockingly ordered the tide to stop. Eventually the denouement occurred. Alfred's line died out and we all know what that means: civil war. Enter William the Conqueror and the Anglo-Saxon era

gives way to the Norman/Angevin periods and their French influence.

It must be noted that the development of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms and civilization was advanced by the concurrent Christianization of England. Some of the battles were between Christian and pagan rulers with religious motivations involved. Lesley Smith in "The Making of Britain: The Dark Ages" focuses on the importance of the Christian-pagan collision, both politically and spiritually. The importance of Christianity in the evolving Anglo-Saxon heritage cannot be overstated.

So we now have an England but who were these proto-English? With all these invaders and battles and shifting borders, what emerged from this ethnic melting pot? Working backward, one sees Norman supplanting Dane supplanting Anglo-Saxon supplanting Britanic Celt supplanting whomever. This suggests a mix of ethnicities dominated by successive conquering groups. Brian Sykes in his "Saxons, Vikings, and Celts: The Genetic Roots of Britain and Ireland" objects to this interpretation and produces genetic data to support his claim.⁷

Sykes, a geneticist, undertook a project to map the ethnic heritage of the British Isles through voluntary DNA samples. What he found was that the predominant bloodline was Celtic, not Anglo-Saxon or Danish or Norman as one would expect. His explanation for this was that every group after the Britanic Celts came as war bands to raid and then stayed. Since war bands were almost exclusively male, wives were needed and they were found conveniently among the native inhabitants of the conquered regions. At least this is his explanation for the predominance of Celtic

⁵ Trying to distinguish Angles from Saxons from other Germanic invaders is not an exact science as scholars argue over its historicity both in terms of the German tribal origins and their integration with each other and the British natives. It reminds one of George Kaufman's quip about one man's Mede being another man's Persian. To the victors go the spoils, so it is Saxon England from here on.

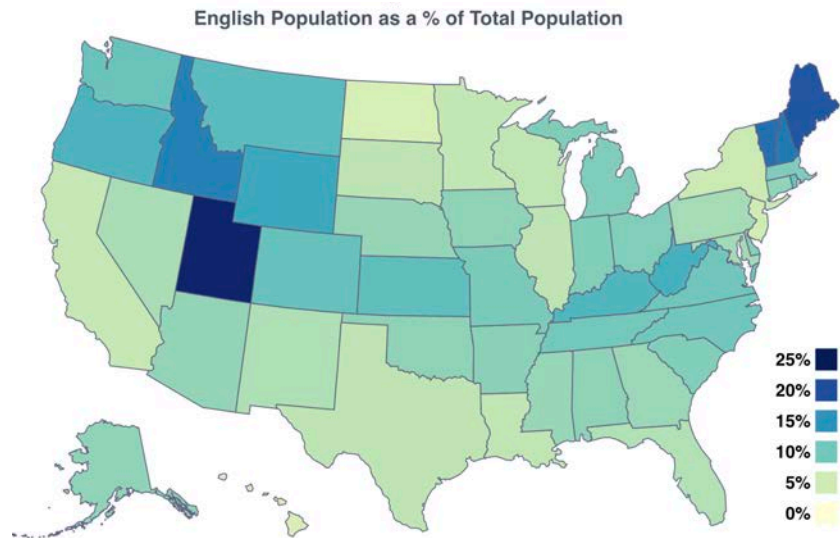
⁶ Historical novelist G. A. Henty builds a tale around Alfred's Danish war in "The Dragon and the Raven." "The King's Hounds" by Martin Jenson is similarly themed historical novel but set during the reign of King Canute.

⁷ Sykes is best known for his "Seven Daughters of Eve: The Science that Reveals Our Genetic Ancestry," a book that purports to trace all females to one of seven original mothers. Y chromosomes and mDNA are beyond my non-scientific ability to understand but I find it interesting that this pushes us toward and not away from Biblical accounts of our origin.

genes in modern England's inhabitants. Even though there are very few Celtic words in modern English and even fewer Celtic place names in England proper, it can be said that Britannic Celts won the ethnic war after losing all the battles. Anglo-Saxon apparently does not mean simple ethnicity if Sykes is to be believed.

We know quite a bit of useful information on the quotidian lives of these proto-English. One useful document is the Domesday Book, compiled by commissioners for King William I to support taxation and, no doubt, redistribution of land holdings from suspect Saxons to reliable Normans. It is not an easy read but I found a modern version by Michael Wood entitled "Domesday" which now sits on my bookshelf. The focus is on manors and villages and real estate, the major sources of tax revenue in those days. Even though the survey was post-conquest, it verifies that economic activity at the local level was mostly unchanged from pre-conquest days. Anglo-Saxonism survived the Norman conquest.

Economic activity for the pagan Anglo-Saxons was marked by the seasons, whether lunar or solar, for a very practical reason: agriculture. Planting and harvesting set the tone of the year. Eleanor Parker in her "Winters in the World: A Journey through the Anglo-Saxon Year" carefully overlays the Christian liturgical calendar on the existing agricultural one in a way that inseparably unites the two for the early English people. She does it by season, beginning with the darkness of winter, and references Anglo-Saxon poetry extant today to describe life in the early Middle Ages as the year marched on. The early English lived in awe of nature's progress throughout the year and in reverence of its Creator. There was no artificial separation of church and state for these hardy folks. It was only natural that key liturgical feasts, particularly commemorating events in the life of Christ, should direct their work and worship



Source: World Population Review, January 2023

patterns. The movement of the sun, its solstices and equinoxes, marked the center point of each season and not its beginning as we observe today. Not coincidentally the solar calendar aligned with key liturgical feast days.

Parker's excursus on the significance of March 25 is particularly interesting. We are too sophisticated today to appreciate the mysteries assigned to this date but it marked for them the Creation, the Incarnation, the Crucifixion and the expected Second Coming. They didn't get distracted by sophistry over calendars and dating systems; they simply stood in wonderment, content to let mysteries be mysteries. And they went about their seasonal work of sowing and reaping.

Many of their feasts are still observed today, particularly in England. Lady Day, Candlemas, Midsummer, Michaelmas, Lamas, etc., don't resonate with us Americans, to our misfortune. Yet they still affect our calendar even if we are no longer allowed to refer to December 25 as Christmas, Christ's Mass.

While an Anglo-Saxon culture was emerging, its unifying factor was a common language amongst the various kingdoms. Most have heard the claims of the classical education adherents pushing Latin as the foundation for their grammar-logic-rhetoric trivium approach. They

cite a fact that approximately 70 percent of our modern English words derive from Latin roots. Perhaps, if one simply tallies all the listings in Webster. But what about the words we use in everyday conversation? In reality the 70 percent share belongs to Old English or Anglo-Saxon, not Latin. The reason is rather obvious when one thinks about it. To the Anglo-Saxons both before and after the Norman invasion, Latin was the language of the church's liturgy and the courtly nobility but in the villages and manors English prevailed and continued to serve as the language of daily affairs. It is worth noting that the Norman conquerors learned English; the peasantry never learned Norman French.

Linguistic scholar Hana Videen has written a fascinating book ("The Word Hord: Daily Life in Old English") that walks us through a year of village life through the lens of the words they used to describe things. Many of those words are still with us, albeit in modified form. Old English was a very Germanic language with all the inflections and such so it is almost unrecognizable to us today. (Don't confuse Old English with Chaucer's Middle English or Shakespeare's early Modern English.) Still, it survives as Videen demonstrates. I enjoyed this book so much I bought it after borrowing a library copy.⁸

Here is an illustration of how Old English has morphed into its modern descendant. We all learned about pronoun cases—subjective "I" and objective "me" and possessive "mine" — in elementary school. What we were not required to learn was a similar set of cases for nouns. Old English had four noun cases: nominative, accusative, genitive and dative. If you hated learning grammar in your elementary school days, just think how much worse it would have been for our young forebears over 1,200 years ago. Ancient

Greek and Latin were no better so it wasn't simply a German thing. Modern German still uses noun cases, making a complicated language even more so in my opinion.

Pronunciation was simpler in Anglo-Saxon times, at least as best I can tell. The Great Vowel Shift that occurred with the transition from Middle to Modern English deserves much of the blame for this.⁹ Some linguists see this as the result of French pronunciation invading common English and a popular reaction against that. Geoffrey Chaucer may not have recognized a reading of his "Canterbury Tales" with these changes.

But if you want to see Anglo-Saxon Old English in our language today, look to the word roots.¹⁰ These roots, especially of words we use frequently throughout the day, largely harken back to pre-Conquest times. Videen's book is an excellent primer to see these roots even where they aren't immediately obvious at a quick glance. Anglo-Saxon influence predominates.

A unique culture and language are blessings to us to be sure, but it is in the political category where the greatest influence endures. The Founders liked to point back to the Roman Republic for their model of government and there is some truth to this, more than just naming the upper house the Senate. A better argument can be made that our Senate can also hearken back to the Saxon witan, the assembly of nobles and major landholders which met to advise the king and to approve taxes.

Even after 1066 and rule by Norman-French overlords, much of the local political structure remained. Local government was largely undertaken by local landowners in an assembly called a folkmoot or something similar. Saxon kings were content with devolution of local

⁸ See the fall 2022 journal for a full review of this book.

⁹ If you want to know why the same vowel can have different pronunciations or the same pronunciation can be assigned to different vowels or diphthongs, here is your culprit.

¹⁰ On a personal note, I have found this rule to work well with New Testament Greek. without any formal Greek training, I audit classes at a Lutheran seminary. I have found I can follow the lectures, which frequently use Greek phrases and full readings to emphasize theological points, by ignoring the last several letters which are the inflections of gender, tense and case. Fortunately as an auditor, I am ungraded.

government to local subjects. This is not to say it was fully democratic with universal suffrage but it was singularly democratic for its era. Alfred the Great's reorganization of his kingdom recognized this in his formalization of the shire and hidage system.

What amazes me is the tradition of electing kings, sort of. The Germanic practice of primogeniture was maintained although mediated by the wotan, which approved the new king. Even Alfred the Great's son Edward was "chosen" as king by the "wise men" or wotan as Morris reports. This is not to say things always proceeded smoothly and with acclamation; there were dynastic quarrels and the ever-present Danish threat to help stir an unsettled pot but there was "no divine right of kings" advanced by Wessex royalists.

This election of the king disappeared with the Normans and did not return until the Glorious Revolution of 1688 codified the supremacy of Parliament, including Parliament's right to elect the king. The Saxon homeland of Germany went through post-Carolingian convulsions until the Great Bull of 1356 institutionalized the election of the Holy Roman Emperor, but it limited the electors to seven. Even after election, the emperor — Holy and Roman and Imperial — was constrained by the need to call imperial diets or reichstags to raise an army or tax the member states. One can argue that Anglo-Saxon England was nearly unique in this practice, the constitution of the Holy Roman Empire notwithstanding.

Not to put too fine a point on it, we can look back to Anglo-Saxon England for the nativity of our democratic institutions. It is not too much of a stretch to see the wotan as a progenitor of our Congress, both the Senate and the House of

Representatives. The folkmoot looks a lot like our local governments and the Saxon shire system resembles our state system. Maybe I am pushing the analogy too far but I do see a semblance of causal relationship. Remember that our early colonists and Founding Fathers were almost all English by country of emigration.

Russell Kirk agrees with this assessment, or perhaps I should say I agree with his. In one of his lesser-known works entitled "America's British Culture," Kirk asserted that the reason the 13 colonies developed governmental institutions on the British model is because that is all they knew. They spoke English, they already lived under English law and they adopted common English customs. It was no accident that we modeled the mother country.

Eventually emigration to America included other European and non-European groups but not to the exclusion of the English. A map on page 8 of national backgrounds of current Americans by state reveals the extent that this nation of immigrants transformed into Americans identifies as English; only about one in eleven Hoosiers so identifies.¹¹ But remember, this background is by country of emigration and Sykes research has shown that the English are ethnically still Celts and not Angles, Saxons or Danes. That does not make them any less Anglo-Saxon by heritage, just not genetically or racially so. Even non-English immigrants were absorbed into the great melting pot that was early America, seeing this nation as one of opportunity due to economic freedom and personal liberty.¹² They wanted what they saw here. One can and should conclude that we Americans are Anglo-Saxon by political heritage even if not by ethnicity.

Our Founding Fathers understood that distinction. The term "rights of Englishmen" was

¹¹ See the Wikipedia article entitled "English Americans" for historical data on this. But note that the percentage has dropped significantly since the 1980 census, perhaps because of immigration but also because of an increasing propensity of responders to report multiple ancestries. Melting pot, perhaps?

¹² My ancestors came to the U.S. to find agricultural land and to escape Prussian absolutism, not to transplant it.

heard often during the 1760s and 1770s as American colonists demanded to be treated equally to their cousins in Great Britain. It was a popular rallying cry but more useful in a rhetorical sense than in a realistic one.¹³ Still, our forebears took pride in their Englishness and the rights it bestowed. These rights were established by Parliament in 1689 and adopted in America's Constitution as the first ten amendments. What needs to be said is that this was nothing more or less than a reversion to an Anglo-Saxon polity that had been lost with the succession of continental dynasties on the English throne.¹⁴ It was the triumph of John Locke's political philosophy over that of Thomas Hobbes.

So back to Dan Hannan. Are we Americans faithful descendants of the so-called Dark Age Anglo-Saxons? He makes a strong case for including all of what he terms the "Anglosphere," those nations and peoples that were part of the British empire and speak English, as the philosophical descendants of those Alfreds, Edgars and Æthelstans. This thinking is hardly popular today given the fevered deconstruction of our history. It is an easy target for all those embarrassed by being part of western civilization and its cultural heritage. However, when the shouting stops, if it ever does, some simple questions should be asked:

- Which cultures offer the highest level of democratic institutions?
- Where does individual liberty flourish?
- Where does one find maximum economic freedom and its concomitant high levels of personal income?
- To what extent do traditional western values, especially Judeo-Christian ones, still matter?

Hannan answers each of these questions with a resounding "only in the Anglosphere." His thesis

gets some independent validation in what is known as the Inglehart-Welzel world cultural map.¹⁵ This map is a scatter graph of the nations of the world plotted against two axes: survival versus self-expression values and traditional versus secular values. In layman's terms, the vertical scale plots the extent of secularization replacing religious adherence in the nation while the horizontal shows the prevalence of individualism over family and clan identification.

Conveniently for this discussion, the map groups English-speaking nations as one cluster. This "Anglosphere" is at the far end of the individualism scale while in the middle of the religion-secular scale. For reference's sake the map shows non-English Protestant Europe as much more secularized than the Anglo-Saxon nations and Roman Catholic Europe as less individualistic. So far the support for Hannan's premise appears solid enough. If you want to find maximum individual liberty with reasonable support for traditional religious values, the Anglosphere is where you should live. I have oversimplified this but it is a reasonable conclusion to draw.

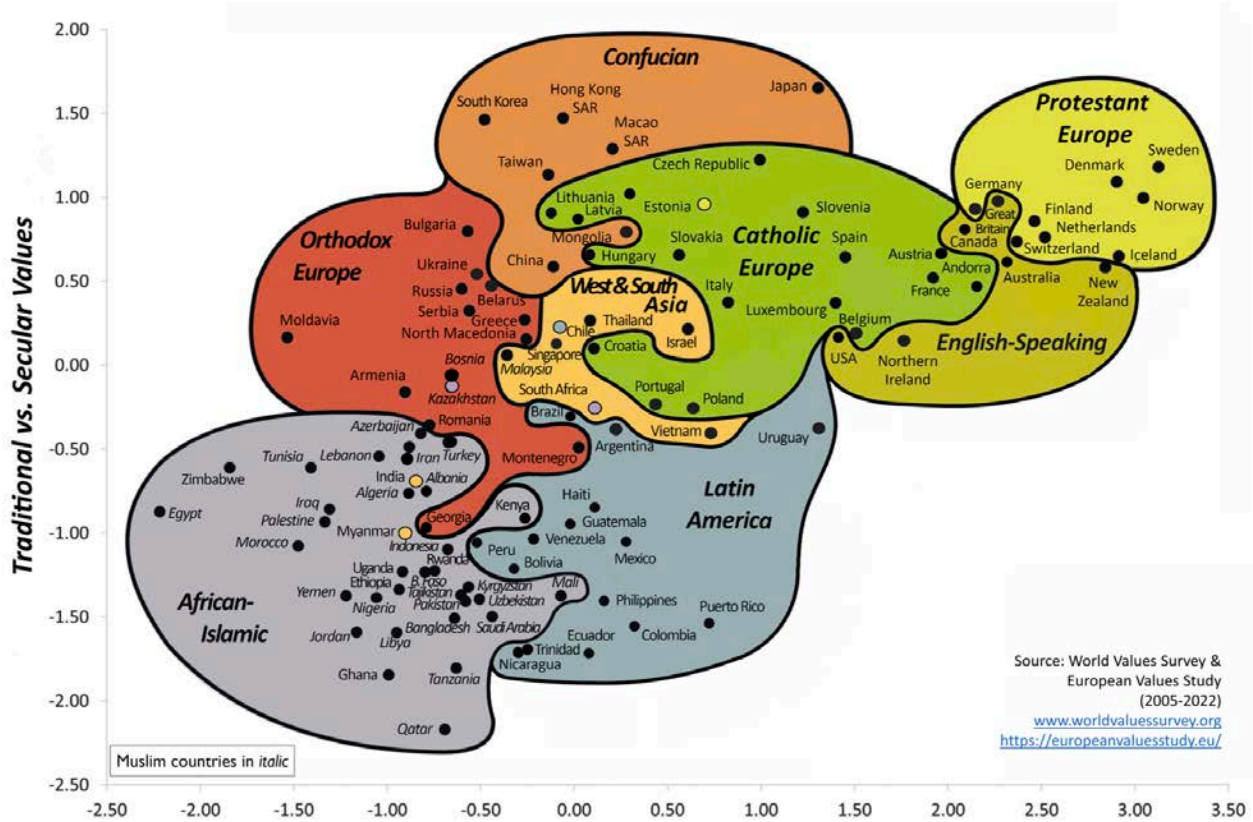
Discomfiting are the shifts that have occurred in the last 20 years, shifts that do not bode well for us as a nation. The USA has shifted from moderately religious to moderately secular, all the while being left behind by other English-speaking nations and Protestant Europe as they move further along the individual liberty scale. To be clear, our liberty score hasn't changed while the others have significantly improved but that is damning by faint praise. I will leave things at this rudimentary observation as it deserves further study and by someone with a better background in sociology than mine.

My conclusion is that Hannan is right, at least mostly. Our English language, while looking quite

¹³ One argument advanced by King George's ministry in response to petitions by the colonies was based on the theory of virtual representation which claimed that all British subjects, at home or in the colonies, were effectively represented in Parliament even if not enfranchised as voters. See Gordon Wood's "Power and Liberty," reviewed in the Fall 2022 Journal.

¹⁴ See Michael Barone's "Our First Revolution" for a good case in support of this hypothesis or go to the winter 2018 journal for my essay entitled "The Origin of Our Liberty."

¹⁵ See p. 12. There is a Wikipedia article on this map, of course, but you can go to the source at worldvaluessurvey.org



The Inglehart–Welzel Map illustrates the relative cultural position of the English-speaking peoples representing the Anglo-Saxon heritage. It is a scatter plot based on the World Values Survey and European Values Survey. Moving upward on this map reflects the shift from traditional values to secular-rational ones and moving rightward reflects the shift from survival values to self-expression values. Traditional values emphasize the importance of religion, parent-child ties, deference to authority, absolute standards and traditional family values. People who embrace these values also reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide. Societies that embrace these values have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook. Secular-rational values have the opposite preferences to the traditional values. Societies that embrace these values place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable. — *Wikipedia*

different from the Old English spoken in Saxon England, can clearly trace its parentage. Our calendar has shifted seasons by about six weeks but the basic liturgical-agriculture structure remains even though we are an industrialized economy and have moved so far from God. We act like the Anglo-Saxons of old even if we may not look like them physically.

What we owe these Anglo-Saxons most is their nascent political system that involved election or

ratification of kings and administered as quasi-representative assemblies at the national and local levels. Or perhaps I should strip away the structural layers of this political system and expose its foundation: liberty. The Declaration of Independence is clear on our liberties being endowed by God and the Constitution, through the Ninth and Tenth amendments, validates this by limiting government’s usurpation of personal liberty.¹⁶ One could even further back in our

¹⁶ One can certainly argue that the Ninth and Tenth amendments have become largely irrelevant due to a powerful centralized national government and Deep State bureaucracy but that is a debate for another time. Suffice it to say that we are moving away from this heritage, as the Inglehart-Welzel map shifts document.

history to the “Mayflower Compact” for a contractual statement of what these newcomers expected to build together in Massachusetts.

The mother country has not forgotten her debt either. Britain’s two greatest prime ministers of the twentieth century recognized the importance of their nation’s Anglo-Saxon background.

Winston Churchill in his “The History of the English-Speaking People” waxed eloquently as usual but makes an important philosophical observation:

“Wherever men seek to frame polities or constitutions which are intended to safeguard the citizen, be he rich or be he poor, on the one hand from the shame of despotism, on the other from the misery of anarchy, which are devised to combine personal liberty with respect for law and love of country — wherever these desires are sincerely before the makers of constitutions or laws, it is to this original inspiration, this inspiration which was the product of English soil, which was the outcome of the Anglo-Saxon mind, that they will inevitably be drawn.”

Dame Margaret Thatcher expressed a similar thought, although in fewer words than Sir Winston and with an eye to the practical:

Then the Gods of the Market tumbled, and their smooth-tongued wizards withdrew

And the hearts of the meanest were humbled and began to believe it was true

That all is not gold that glitters, and two and two make four

And the Gods of the Copybook Headings limped up to explain it once more.

— Rudyard Kipling,

“The Gods of the Copybook Headings”

“We know what works — the Anglo-Saxon model of liberty, property, law and capitalism. And we know where it works — everywhere it’s actually applied.”

Dan Hannan would agree with that statement. It is the overarching point of his

book. The Anglo-Saxon model is not based on genetics but on the principle of constitutional government, at least in embryonic form. When he looks back to the earliest Anglo-Saxon days, he sees a popular selection of the tribal chieftain who ruled under an implied contract with his people. This contract supported a common law approach to personal and property rights and a sense of equal standing under the law. This may be a stretch but everything begins somewhere in imperfect form. Its preservation and nurturing over the centuries redounds to our benefit today.

That is our Anglo-Saxon heritage. It is not ethnic nor racial nor genetic. It is philosophical, a belief system based on individual liberty and representative government. The Founders instinctively knew that as they built a new nation on a new idea of a written constitution designed to limit government.

And the beauty of this heritage according to Hannan? It is available to all if only they are willing to try it. ♦

Social Capital in Indiana

Indiana residents and policymakers concerned with the breakdown of social capital can compare their county with others in the state.

Maryann O. Keating, Ph.D., a resident of South Bend and an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is co-author of “Microeconomics for Public Managers,” Wiley/Blackwell. A version of this essay originally appeared May 17, 2023 [adamsmithworks](#). Reprinted here with permission, all rights reserved.



In 1831, Tocqueville, a traveling French scholar, identified America’s reliance on civil society in preserving its way of life. This view was somewhat shaken by evidence presented in Putnam’s 2000 book, “Bowling Alone,” describing how we have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbors, and democratic structures. Putnam concluded that our stock of social capital has declined, impoverishing both our lives and our communities.

In 2018, almost 20 years after Putnam’s book, The Joint Economic Committee issued a study on the withering of family and associational life in the U.S.¹ The Committee ranked states and counties using available measures of social capital. A Social Capital Index was calculated separately for all 50 states plus Washington D.C. and for all counties across the country. Variation within a state is as important as inter-state comparisons.

The Committee’s goal was to inspire a focus on social capital and its relationship to economic and social life. The text of the report admits that social capital challenges are inherently elusive, and not exhaustively captured by these indexes. Thus, the authors do not attempt to prove how correlated

subcomponents of its Social Capital Index are theoretically related.

Consider one additional problem with rankings by state (including D.C.) and county: population. The top 20 states, ranked in terms of social capital scores, consist of only 9 percent of the American population, while 29 percent of the population lives in the bottom 20 states. The Committee was able to present Social capital percentile scores for 2,992 out of 3,142 U.S. counties, containing 99.7 percent of the American population. However, nearly six in 10 (59 percent) of Americans live in the bottom two-fifths of counties, compared with just 24 percent living in the top two-fifth percentiles.

Despite its limitations, “The Geography of Social Capital in America” is a useful resource. It allows Indiana residents and policymakers, concerned with the breakdown of social capital, to become aware of how Indiana compares with the U.S. in general. Furthermore, the report highlights the variation in social capital between counties within Indiana.

The following represents the types of indicators the Committee used to compile the Social Capital Index:

Family Unity — Share of births in the past year to unmarried women. Share of women ages 35-44 who are currently married (and not separated). Share of own children living in a single-parent family.

Family Interaction — Share who reports a child spending at least 4 hours per weekday watching TV or on electronic devices. Share who reports reading to a 0-5-year-old child every day.

Social Support — Share saying they get the emotional support they need only sometimes, rarely, or never. An average number of close friends reported by adults. Share of adults reporting they and their neighbors do favors for each other once a month. Share of adults reporting they can trust all or most of their neighbors.

¹ “The Geography of Social Capital in America,” SCP REPORT NO. 1-18.

Table 1. The Social Capital Index: 10 Highest Ranking States plus Indiana *

State	Family SCI	Family Unity	Family Inter- action	Social Support	Community Health	Insti- tutional Health	Collect. Efficacy	Phil- anthropic Health
Utah	1	1	8	1	10	30	8	1
Minn.	2	5	10	2	11	1	10	2
Wiscon.	3	16	9	3	7	2	21	3
N. Hampshire	4	11	3	11	5	6	4	6
Vermont	5	15	1	5	2	21	1	40
Colorado	6	6	5	12	17	12	23	4
Maine	7	26	2	6	9	22	2	23
Nebraska	8	7	13	9	15	4	18	11
Iowa	9	10	14	7	13	3	16	15
South Dakota	10	19	20	4	8	11	26	9
Indiana	23	29	21	21	25	14	29	26

Source: *The Geography of Social Capital in America, SCP REPORT NO. 1-18.* <https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/republicans/socialcapitalproject>.

Community Health — Share of adults who report having volunteered for a group in the past year. Share who reports having attended a public meeting in the past year. Share who reports having worked with neighbors to fix/improve something in the past year. Share of adults who served on a committee or as an officer of a group. Share who attended a political discussion or took part in a demonstration. Included in county data: the number of non-religious non-profits and religious congregations per 1,000 residents.

Institutional Health — Average who vote in presidential elections. Average who mailed back census reports in 2010. Share of adults reporting some or great confidence in corporations to do what is right. Share of adults reporting some or great confidence in the media to do what is right. Share of adults reporting some or great confidence in public schools to do what is right.

Collective Efficacy — Violent crimes per 100,000.

Philanthropic Health — Share who reports having donated more than \$25 to a charitable group in the past year.

* Note that The Social Capital Index: the 10 Highest Ranking States plus Indiana (Table 1 above) uses seven sub-indexes to calculate a given state’s Social Capital Index, and the numbers can range from 1 to 51 with 1 representing the highest ranking for social capital.

** Note that the Social Capital Index for Counties in Indiana (Table 2 beginning on following page) is based on four sub-indexes and the numbers represent the percentiles scored for an individual county with reference to the total of all U.S. counties. Percentile numbers classify observations from 1 to 99; a higher percentile in Table 2 suggests a higher level of social capital. A negative one entry refers to outlier observations beyond those used in determining national percentiles. ♦

Table 2: Social Capital Index for Counties in Indiana **

County	Overall County SCI	Family Unity	Community Health	Institutional Health	Collective Efficacy
Adams County	79	94	63	63	-1
Allen County	46	43	31	69	32
Bartholomew County	65	67	44	65	62
Benton County	73	51	81	69	-1
Blackford County	64	41	57	57	91
Boone County,	89	94	42	89	93
Brown County	71	28	54	82	97
Carroll County	74	68	56	66	83
Cass County	62	35	48	63	89
Clark County	27	50	21	69	8
Clay County	47	72	52	62	13
Clinton County	65	65	54	63	55
Crawford County	66	43	61	72	68
Daviess County	70	90	55	43	58
Dearborn County	81	65	46	87	92
Decatur County	57	47	58	63	-1
DeKalb County	67	67	50	60	72
Delaware County	38	38	40	46	34
Dubois County	77	88	70	84	24
Elkhart County	36	53	34	51	19
Fayette County	34	15	55	55	-1
Floyd County	63	47	29	80	63
Fountain County	64	42	67	72	-1
Franklin County	83	80	50	80	95
Fulton County	76	62	65	69	86
Gibson County	76	79	56	71	69
Grant County	29	8	46	47	55
Greene County	69	60	62	46	95

Hamilton County	92	98	26	93	96
Hancock County	82	85	35	83	89
Harrison County	75	66	54	74	82
Hendricks County	73	82	18	84	58
Henry County	57	23	51	54	97
Howard County	46	26	41	73	38
Huntington County	78	86	62	66	71
Jackson County	60	61	57	64	40
Jasper County	56	55	47	63	-1
Jay County	73	57	78	56	75
Jefferson County	33	11	62	57	-1
Jennings County	45	61	34	59	24
Johnson County	57	69	23	73	37
Knox County	68	59	58	56	83
Kosciusko County	56	65	42	61	38
LaGrange County	79	99	64	23	87
Lake County	21	15	22	65	14
LaPorte County	42	24	38	54	57
Lawrence County	48	54	55	52	29
Madison County	43	31	31	60	48
Marion County	2	8	54	60	1
Marshall County	67	58	56	61	74
Martin County	53	34	77	68	23
Miami County	57	58	48	39	71
Monroe County	47	62	38	49	33
Montgomery County	50	76	63	53	15
Morgan County	58	57	39	70	-1
Newton County	71	75	39	61	85
Noble County	63	60	43	47	87
Ohio County	81	86	67	74	-1
Orange County	71	59	74	67	-1

Owen County	68	86	62	50	-1
Parke County	63	33	71	45	93
Perry County	62	48	56	59	70
Pike County	85	90	70	81	59
Porter County	70	71	22	75	79
Posey County	72	66	57	84	42
Pulaski County	78	84	79	64	48
Putnam County	68	59	64	43	90
Randolph County	67	30	70	58	97
Ripley County	82	77	74	67	87
Rush County	76	60	71	67	87
St. Joseph County	34	27	31	67	23
Scott County	60	79	49	49	40
Shelby County	36	35	39	59	24
Spencer County	93	95	76	82	99
Starke County	62	61	36	52	79
Steuben County	71	58	55	61	92
Sullivan County	64	43	67	54	75
Switzerland County	57	18	70	77	-1
Tippecanoe County	38	53	26	39	35
Tipton County	78	79	48	79	71
Union County	73	72	69	67	-1
Vanderburgh County	28	20	48	57	18
Vermillion County	60	25	71	63	70
Vigo County	37	25	48	44	42
Wabash County	71	46	70	61	91
Warren County	54	29	48	76	-1
Warrick County	71	84	29	78	49
Washington County	52	47	54	57	-1
Wayne County	33	17	55	52	32
Wells County	83	75	50	81	97

White County	82	92	63	59	83
Whitley County	76	62	51	75	94

Sources: The Geography of Social Capital in America, SCP REPORT NO. 1-18.
<https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/republicans/socialcapitalproject>.

Fort Wayne's Downtown 'Doom Loop'

City government has subsidized nearly a million square feet of new commercial space at a cost approaching a billion dollars in local, state and federal subsidies in various forms.

Jason Arp, for nine years a trader in mortgaged-backed securities for Bank of America, has represented the 4th District on the Fort Wayne City Council for the last eight years. Craig Ladwig is editor of The Indiana Policy Review, a quarterly journal established in 1989 to focus on state and municipal policy.



Arp

Ladwig

A friend, a longtime political observer here, quipped that if Fort Wayne city councilmen were going to pretend to be investment bankers, we should elect smarter city councilmen. That has proved woefully prescient as workers and businesses nationwide are abandoning downtown offices for more flexible, safer and more efficient remote work. Fort Wayne's downtown real estate is particularly at risk of collapse just at a time when the political class is blindly investing in it.

Over the last decade, Fort Wayne government has subsidized nearly a million square feet of new commercial space at a cost approaching a billion dollars in local, state and federal subsidies in various forms. Those include tax abatement, tax credits, tax increment financing (TIF) bonds and direct cash payments. A detailed distribution is

available in "Eco-Devo Promises; Let's Unwrap Them" in the winter 2019 Indiana Policy Review.

And yet, we are within weeks of a mayoral election and neither candidate has mentioned any of that, what is the most serious fiscal challenge to our city since the Depression. Surprisingly, they haven't even bothered to blame that all-purpose bugaboo COVID, which was only the last blow in a series of events that overcame the crass political ambition that has guided downtown development to this point.

Some background: Commercial real estate pays a heap of local taxes. If its market collapses, there will be a sure drop in city revenue. That means either more taxes from other sources (you) or reduced services — police, streets, schools.

A study earlier this year from the Graduate School of Business at Columbia University says this could result in municipal fiscal crises when federal COVID aid shrinks: "At that point, some municipalities may find themselves entering in the doom loop scenario. The magnitude depends on the elasticity of migration to local tax rates and public-good spending (streets, public safety, etc.)"¹

What is a "doom loop"? Last week, Indiana citizens had to depend on the faraway Washington Post to tell them that a national tech firm just cut a quarter of its office space in the tallest office building in their state.²

"All across the country, downtowns, office spaces and shopping centers are at risk of becoming ground zero for a new economic hazard: the urban doom loop," the newspaper reported. "The fear is that a commercial real estate apocalypse could spiral out and slow commerce, wrecking local tax revenue in the process."

The Post's Rachel Siegel says economists are most worried about midsize cities such as Fort Wayne that have fewer ways to offset the blow "when a company slashes office space, the sale price of a building craters or a downtown turns

¹ Stijn Van Nieuwerburgh. "The Remote Work Revolution: Impact on Real Estate Values and the Urban Environment." 2023 American Real Estate and Urban Economics Association, Presidential Address, Columbia University, New York.

² Rachel Siegel. "How the 'Urban Doom Loop' Could Pose the Next Economic Threat." The Washington Post, Aug. 28, 2023.

into a ghost town." She goes on to describe the steps in an urban "doom loop":

1. With more people working from home, companies rethink their leases or pull out of them altogether.
2. That drives vacancy rates up and makes it harder for landlords to attract new tenants or sell buildings for a healthy price.
3. Then property owners struggle to pay off their mortgages or clear other debt.
4. Business districts dry up, stifling tax revenue from commercial properties or employee wages.
5. Shoppers and tourists have fewer reasons to venture downtown to eat or shop, choking off spending and forcing layoffs at restaurants and retail stores.

We think a doom loop has already begun here. In 2005, an eight-story office tower in downtown Fort Wayne with 140,000 square feet of space sold for \$28 million.³ It now sits on the tax roles assessed at \$8.5 million. That is less than \$58 a square foot (compared to \$70 a square foot for an average residential home here). The long story short is that when these rebar-and-concrete investments go south, they don't recover.

Also, we believe the experts who say that 30 percent or more of office space in our city already

is likely vacant. Worse, city councilmen here knew or should have known this when they were directly and indirectly funding that million square feet of new commercial space. But that was done without independent market tests. The heavily subsidized projects were pushed through by a rent-seeking industry of lawyers, contractors, engineers, architects and suppliers of concrete and rebar, many of whom were contributors to city political campaigns.

Rather, we were told that the tax breaks and tax-insured bonds necessary to build the new office space were sound investments. The risk was justified, they said, by future demand, the evidence for which turned out to be fabricated and misleading especially in regard to downtown commercial properties.

To summarize, both mayoral candidates, one on council and the other in the mayor's office, remain tight-lipped — and understandably so. Both were enthusiastic supporters of these boondoggles, and it will soon be apparent that their bad judgment has cost Fort Wayne property owners and taxpayers dearly.

But what is done is done. The challenge now is to identify the policy errors in order to restore Fort Wayne's economic health. It will be a big job requiring honest leadership, that and the advice of real, not political, investment bankers. ♦

³ The building was formerly occupied by a regional office for Wells Fargo Bank but now holds an accounting firm and a loan office.

The Consequences of a National Debt

Congress alone has the power to guarantee fiscal sustainability and U.S. credibility. Congress alone bears the responsibility for deficits and the national debt.

Barry and Maryann O. Keating, Ph.D.s., economists and adjunct scholars of the foundation, put together this summary of the nation's debt situation for the use of the membership.



The U.S. national debt consists of Treasury liabilities accumulated as a result of federal government deficits in which its annual expenditures exceed tax revenue.

When the government spends more than it collects in tax revenue, the Treasury, with the Federal Reserve acting as its fiscal agent, borrows money to finance the resulting deficit. The federal budget deficit in fiscal year 2022 was \$1.4 trillion, the fourth largest in U.S. history. At the end of the

fiscal year (FY) 2022, the accumulated national debt was \$31.420 trillion, about 97 percent of Gross National Product (GDP). The national debt is backed only by the credibility of U.S. taxpayers to meet future interest payments and principal.

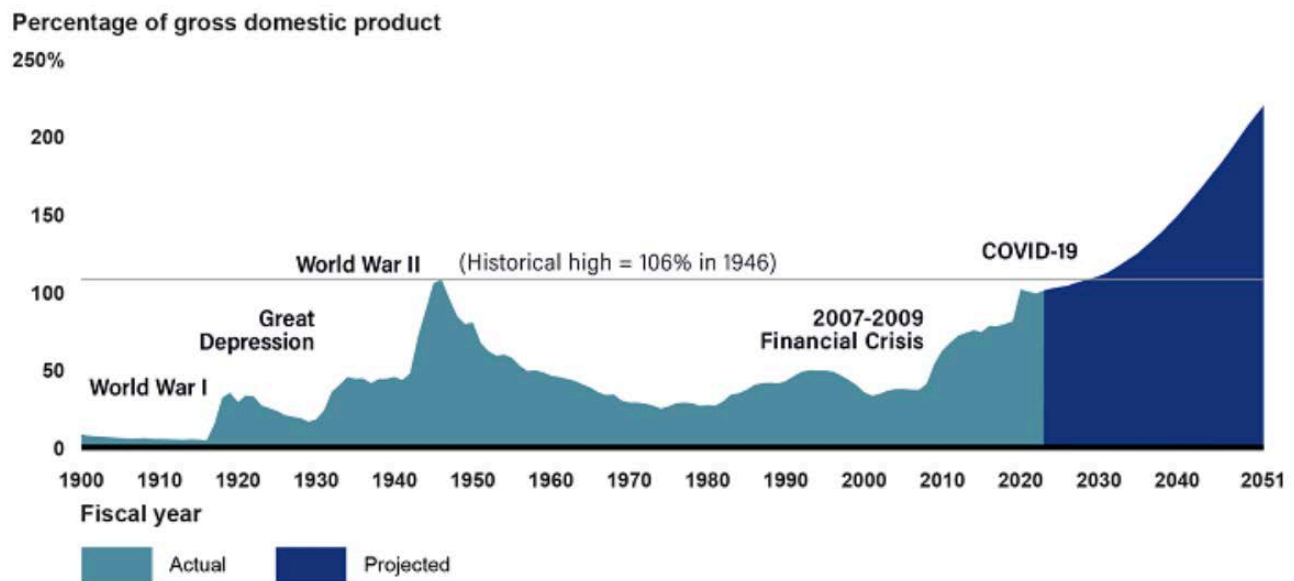
Every fiscal year since 2002, the federal government has run a deficit—meaning spending exceeds its revenues—and thus has added to its debt.

Any nation that increases its public debt at a rate exceeding its growth in national output [GDP] eventually becomes unable to meet its responsibility for servicing its existing debt, not to mention an inability to ensure the delivery of public services and to defend itself against foreign aggression.

In other words, it is possible to mortgage future earnings, but debt cannot grow at a rate higher than that of expected future earnings.

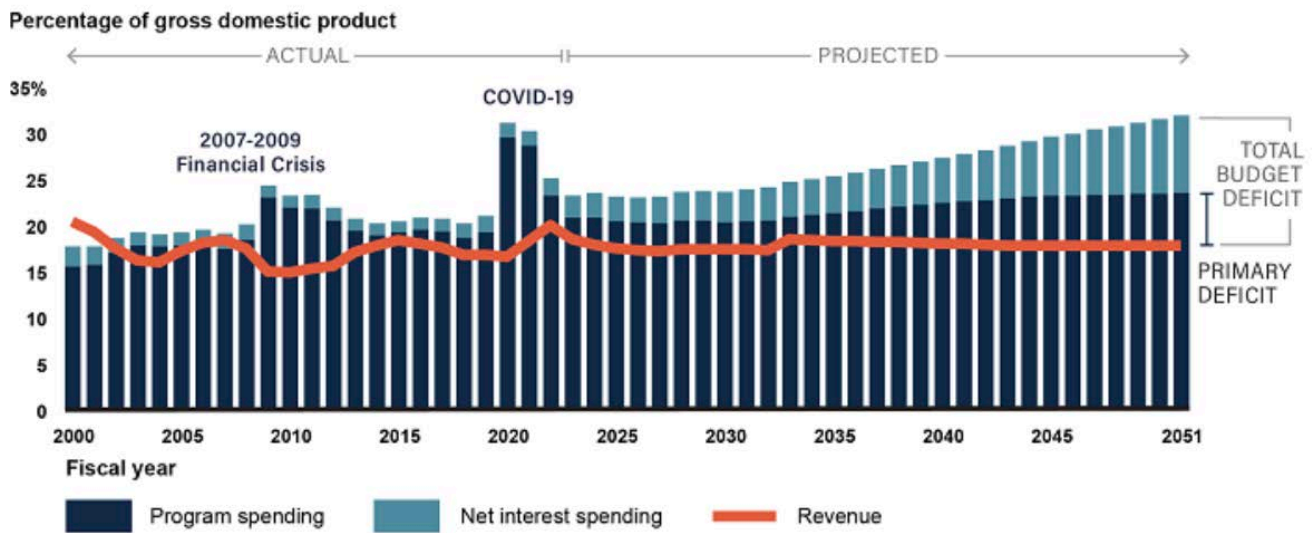
The U.S. Government Accountability Office, no less, warns that the federal government faces an unsustainable long-term fiscal future (The Nation's Fiscal Health GAO-23-106201, May 8, 2023). Projections from the Office of Management and Budget, the Treasury, the Congressional Budget Office, and GAO show that current fiscal

Figure 1. Past, Present and Projected Federal Debt as a Percentage of GDP



Source: Congressional Budget Office data and GAO simulation. | GAO-23-106201

Figure 2. The Total Budget Deficit Is Increasing At An Increasing Rate



Source: Congressional Budget Office data and GAO simulation. | GAO-23-106201

policy is unsustainable over the long term. Debt held by the public is projected to grow at a faster pace than the size of the economy. Debt is projected to reach its historical high of 106 percent of GDP within 10 years and to continue to grow at an increasing pace. GAO projects that this ratio could reach more than twice the size of the economy by 2051, absent any changes in revenue and spending policies.

The National Debt is Growing Faster than Gross Domestic Product

Figure 1 shows that U.S. National Debt represents an increasing percentage of GDP. This means that Federal debt is growing faster than the growth rate of national output. The extreme case is when funds required to service national debt approach a significant percentage of a country’s annual output [GDP].

Fortunately, U.S. national debt thus far is sustainable because domestic and international individuals, institutions, and countries appear willing to hold Treasuries sold by the FED, and present interest payments on the debt are manageable.

Low levels of inflation relevant to other currencies, plus the ability of residents to pay taxes and of government to collect them, continue

to make dollar-denominated U.S. Treasuries attractive.

In 2014, 34 percent of total debt was foreign-owned but has since fallen. As of December 2022, the FED and other government agencies, such as the Social Security Administration, hold 39.47 percent of the debt and foreign holders account for 23.29 percent. The five countries owning the most US debt are Japan, China, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Luxembourg. The reduction of foreign-owned debt does not necessarily indicate a decrease in interest payments due. Also, competitive returns relative to other assets are essential to maintain the willingness of foreign and U.S. residents and institutions to hold U.S. Treasuries.

Congressional approval for raising the debt ceiling merely gives Congress the ability to increase Federal government deficits and, by default, requires the FED to issue more bonds and/or monetize deficits resulting in inflation. National survival and sovereignty require that total funds needed to service debt be significantly less than GDP. Going forward, what assurance do we have that U.S. discretionary and non-discretionary federal spending including net interest on the debt will be aligned with tax revenue?

Budget Deficits Show No Sign of Decreasing

Figure 2 compares Federal expenditures with IRS tax revenue. Figure 2 indicates that federal program spending as a percentage of GDP has been increasing but present and future tax revenue remains in the 15 and 20 percent range.

Not only is the dollar cost of servicing the national debt increasing but is expected to increase as a percentage of GDP. Net interest spending will continue to increase because of higher levels of overall debt. In addition, higher interest rates would further increase the cost of servicing the debt. Another concern is that any increase in returns to Treasuries could crowd out private investment contributing to decreased growth in GDP.

Some combination of revenue increases or spending cuts over time are inevitable. Several tax deductions and credits must be eliminated. The public generally accepts the need to meet prior commitments but may be unwilling to fund increasing expenditures.

They can reduce their tax liabilities by choosing to reduce hours and years in labor force participation. Therefore, it is unlikely that tax revenue as a percentage of GDP can be

significantly increased; higher tax rates inhibit private investment as well as reduce labor force participation.

It is possible, however, that optimizing tax rates and increasing GDP will yield more tax revenue.

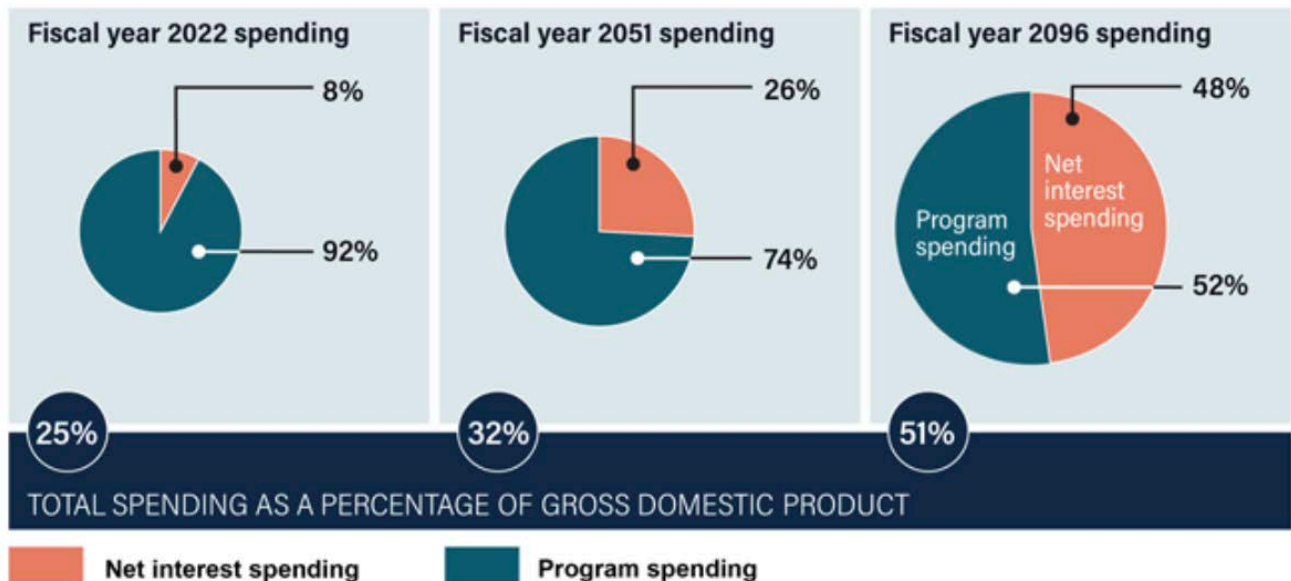
Insuring national defense and public security have priority over a balanced government budget. However, to maintain government credibility the Federal government must forego chronic budget deficits. This requires a reduction in the rate of growth in government expenditures.

National Debt Payments as a Growing Percentage of Federal Expenditures

If current policies remain in place, non-discretionary debt payments are projected to approach half of all Federal expenditures by 2096. Figure 3 suggests that, given these projections, tax revenues as a percentage of GDP required to meet Federal obligations as early as 2051 must rise from approximately 25 percent currently to 32 percent.

Furthermore, the percentage of Federal expenditures required to service debt will rise from 8 to 26 percent.

Figure 3. As Federal Government Size Is Increasing, the Percentage Spent on Programs Is



Source: Congressional Budget Office data and GAO simulation. | GAO-23-106201

Who is Responsible for Deficits and the National Debt?

Congress alone has the power to guarantee fiscal sustainability and U.S. credibility. Congress alone bears the responsibility for deficits and the national debt.

U.S. residents are merely bystanders. Having paid premiums from their first job at 16, they are now being told to expect reduced Social Security payments in the 2030s. Many realize, as well, that a real transfer must ultimately be paid to foreign holders of U.S. debt. These transfers to foreign debt holders will take the form of goods, services, and property unless Treasuries can retain their value, adjusted for inflation and exchange rates.

Representatives in Congress allocate their time and efforts responding to interest groups. The present need and honorable thing to do is to focus instead on the underlying concerns of the American public. Ironically, this may be the most expedient thing for Congress to do, given the public's loss of credibility in Congress to address deficits.

Congress must get a handle on drivers of annual deficits both in terms of tax revenue and federal expenditures in line with national priorities. The Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 merely suspended the debt ceiling until January 2025 in return for small changes in the trajectory of deficits and debt. Increases in some discretionary spending was capped, and work requirements were issued for programs such as food stamps and Medicaid.

This will likely reduce the 2025 deficit from 5 percent to approximately 4.5 percent of GDP, still higher than that of Spain, France, the U.K., Australia, Japan, Italy, and the Netherlands.

Fiscal responsibility should be a routine matter not a short term stopgap due to crises. This requires that Congress veto unsustainable entitlements, maintain the real incomes and savings of those active in the labor market, and restore the fiscal credibility of the U.S.

We need to elect representatives that subscribe to a balanced Federal budget or at a minimum to deficits that are less than the percentage growth in GDP. ♦

Dick McGowan

*Right and wrong depend on culture;
the context of society provides the
standards for judging the difference.*

Richard McGowan, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, has taught philosophy and ethics cores for more than 40 years, most recently at Butler University.



Plato, Culture and Cognitive Development

If anyone need question the relevance of great texts to modern society, the simplest response might be to ask for an explanation of this statement: “There is no good or evil, there is only power.” Astute readers of J.K. Rowling know that the statement was made by Professor Quirrell in the climactic scene of the first book (291). The statement suggests that no standards exist for judging good and evil; judgments of good and evil are relative to the person with power.

Plato saw the problem Rowling sensed. In the early dialogue, Euthyphro, Socrates asks Euthyphro, “And we end a controversy about heavy and light by resorting to a weighing machine?” The two then attempt to find a ‘weighing machine’ for questions concerning “the just and the unjust, good and evil, honourable and dishonourable.” (7c-d, Jowett trans) Socrates hopes to coax Euthyphro to accept that standards do exist for judging good and evil.

In other words, Plato’s writing speaks to the central theme of the wildly popular Harry Potter series, namely, finding a way to determine good and evil. Harry Potter resonates with human experience, but then, so does Plato’s writing; they both deal with the common problem of ethical relativism.

I will show that Plato’s writing, especially his Meno, is consistent with modern research of Perry et al into intellectual and moral development.

First, I provide brief, general remarks about Platonic scholarship. Second, I offer a brief purview of Perry’s research on college students. Third, I analyze Meno in light of that research. I also suggest other instances which show that Plato’s work is consistent with modern psychological research. If my analysis is correct, Plato’s work allows people to understand both themselves individually but also their cultural environment.

Plato’s writing is a form of “hidden authorship” in that he does not state clearly and directly the positions he himself holds. Esteemed Platonic scholar, Gregory Vlastos, wrote of his own work that “Most of these essays are efforts to crack puzzles in Plato.” (p. vii) A better approach to understanding Plato’s dialogues might be to ask how Plato expects a reader to develop intellectually and morally by encountering a dialogue. Maybe the dialogues are less about philosophic thought and more about the progress of the reader. What if Plato were offering a process, i.e., pedagogical exercises, rather than a product, i.e., refined, systematic, philosophic positions?

Lawrence Kohlberg suggests as much. When speaking of Socratic dialogue, Kohlberg identifies several convictions of Socrates: “virtue is knowledge of the good,” “the reason we think the good cannot be taught is because the same good is known differently at different levels and direct instruction cannot take place across levels,” and “the teaching of virtue is the asking of questions and the pointing of the way, not the giving of answers.” (xxix) For Kohlberg, the Socratic method exists as a raising up of its readers “beyond the relativistic view that everyone has his or her own ‘bag of virtues.’” (xxix) If Kohlberg is correct, then a person could hardly expect a Platonic dialogue to provide resolution to substantive philosophic questions. No wonder Vlastos comments on the puzzles in Plato’s writing or that Plato’s dialogues appear to reflect the typology offered by Kohlberg.

More unexpectedly is how closely Plato’s work reflects the research of William Perry and his

cohorts at Harvard's Bureau of Study Counsel. Perry and his co-researchers set out to "illustrate the variety in students' response to the impact of intellectual and moral relativism." (7) The investigators researched the way students coped with the different and divergent ideas and experiences that college life presented. Attention was especially on first-year and second-year students. Perry commented that they did not expect to see "orderly comparison. However, we gradually came to feel that we could detect behind the individuality of the reports a common sequence of challenges to which each student addressed himself in his own particular way." (8, Perry's italics) Having observed the possibility of a common sequence, the researchers determined a scheme of development and tested it for validity.

They found nine distinct positions of intellectual development with the most developed stage being that of Position 9, wherein "the student experiences the affirmation of identity among multiple responsibilities and realizes Commitment as an ongoing, unfolding activity through which he expresses his lifestyle." (10) Four main stages avail themselves and the stages are analogous to Kohlberg's stages inasmuch as the highest levels require a commitment to some sort of non-contextual, universal standards for judging right and wrong.

At the lowest stage, dualism, a person holds "the simplest assumptions about the nature of knowledge," wherein the "world of knowledge, conduct, and values is divided as the small child divides his world between his family and the inchoate outside." At this stage, "Morality and personal responsibility consist of simple obedience." (59) In a classroom setting, that means obey the teacher and learn what the teacher says to learn since the teacher is the authority, the arbiter of right and wrong, true and false. At this stage, learning is essentially passive, a product of memory. The view of the student is that there is one right answer; as a consequence, ambiguity causes anxiety in the student.

Of course, professors are agent provocateurs where ambiguity is concerned. They want

students, including the dualists, out of their comfort zone. Handled successfully, the classroom can aid movement to multiplicity, where the student attempts to preserve the model of a right-wrong world but allows that the teacher is not the know-it-all of the initial stage. However, to accommodate the world view, the student maintains the dualism and believes that the teacher is ignorant or that the right answer has yet to be discovered. The student still believes that there is a right answer but the professor just does not know it.

For educators in the humanities, though, experiences with students in the stage of multiplicity are career hazards. Educators in the humanities grade papers where the single, correct answer is elusive. When students see that some areas of learning appear to lack a definitive, one, right answer, students often think of "Authorities as imperialistically extending their biases and prejudices over the underdog's rightful freedom." (Glossary) As Perry put it, "no judgments among opinions can be made." (Glossary) Professors might put it this way—at their own risk—"You are free to believe something that is wrong." My students have often heard that they are free to believe they can fly, but if acted upon from the sixth floor of a building, the belief can only be held for a few seconds.

The more intense students often react with anger toward the authority though I suspect the reaction has more to do with internal frustration than directed disdain for the person of the authority or what she or he holds as beliefs.

Multiplicity does not have to be the last stage of a student. There is hope: "the bridge to the new world of comparative thought lies in the distinction between an opinion (however well 'expressed') and a supported opinion. If the classroom environment can produce this response in the student, higher reasoning 'kicks in.'

The problem is that 'support' means supported relative to the situation, since "all knowing and all valuing is contingent upon context." (134) People who accept the thought that all knowing and valuing are contextual reside in the stage of

relativism and, if my experience with students is reliable, it is the characteristic stage of most college students. When asked if ethics can be taught, most students default to cultural relativism. They say things like “Moral standards are general rules that are meant to guide accepted behavior”; ‘ethical’ means “most people in the society believe that it is a good or correct idea or behavior”; ethics allows us to “conduct ourselves in a manner that is socially acceptable”; and my parents “made me understand what was right not only to them but also what was right in our society.” (R. McGowan, 73-4; see also R, M, K McGowan)

In short, right and wrong depend on culture. The context of society provides the standards for judging right and wrong. Perry remarks that unbearable disorientation is the lot of any person who views all knowledge as contingent. He suggests that a person could follow one of three paths in an attempt to deal with disorientation: avoid its negative consequences by denying any meaning beyond the present, become a “self-avowed opportunist,” (134) exploiting each situation to satisfy self-interest, or make an attempt to transcend relativism by understanding the “social responsibility that springs from compassion.” (134-5)

The first two options are not growth-enhancing. The person who would “deny any need for meaning beyond one’s immediate, passive responses” (134) does not stray from the comfortable life the person knows. Further growth is precluded by that life-style choice. The person who actively and intentionally pursues a self-centered lifestyle and uses his or her talents on behalf of self-interest grows selfishly, not socially. Those options present confined judgments, either relative to the surrounding environment or relative to the self. Those options, therefore, avoid the necessity of “a reiterated choice between courage and despair” (32) that would lead a person to the stage of commitment, which “refers to affirmations: in all the plurality of the relativistic world-truths, relationships, purposes, activities, and cares in all their contexts—one

affirms what is one’s own.” (135) Affirmation is risky business, though.

Perry on several occasions remarks that development “involves risk, subjective and objective.” (178) When professors produce cognitive conflict in the classroom and challenge the student to leave the ‘comfort zone,’ they invite students to take risks that would change their identity—and changing an identity is a risky thing. Faced with a challenge to their identities, people have the “wish to retain earlier satisfactions or securities...and most importantly, the wish to maintain a self one has felt oneself to be.” (52) Any challenge to a world view, including an understanding of the person’s place in the world, “express the work of considerable psychic energy.” (49) Many people, including students, simply do not wish to pursue that line of work.

Such is the case with Meno and his famous paradox: “How will you look for something when you don’t in the least know what it is? How on earth are you going to set up something you don’t know as the object of your search? To put it another way even if you come right up against it, how will you know that what you have found is the thing you didn’t know?” (80d) Meno is the picture of skepticism about attaining knowledge; he represents an absolute refusal to learn. If Meno’s implicit argument stands, searching for knowledge is either unnecessary or impossible. Rather than search for knowledge as an independent thinker, Meno wants to be told answers that he can memorize. Meno, whose name is a play on the Greek, ‘mneme,’ the verb which means ‘to remember,’ does not do the hard work associated with learning. By contrast, the uneducated, unschooled slave in Meno does. Meno believes learning a function of memory and therefore essentially passive. How can Socrates respond to him?

Socrates responds patiently with the myth of recollection. If the slave is neither educated nor schooled, yet arrives at a true opinion, then “isn’t it immediately clear that he possessed and had learned them during some other period?” (86e) In other words, the slave was born with all the

knowledge he possesses and it is a matter of recollecting the knowledge. For Meno, who thinks learning is a function of memory, the idea that people recollect knowledge is satisfactory.

But Socrates says of true opinions that “They run away from a man’s mind; so they are not worth much until you tether them by working out the reason. That process, dear Meno, is recollection, as we agreed earlier.” (98a) Of course, recollection, i.e., memorization, is nothing like working out the reason why. Memorization is a lower form of cognitive activity whereas “working out the reason,” i.e., critical analysis, is among the higher forms of intellectual development.

Plato knows, as Perry shows, that people often react in anger when their ideas are challenged or when they are challenged to think. In Meno, Anytus threatens Socrates: “My advice to you, if you will listen to it, is to be careful. I dare say in all cities it is easier to do a man harm than good, and it certainly is so here.” (95e) When the freed prisoner returns to the cave, “would he not provoke laughter...and if it were possible to lay hands on and to kill the man who tried to release them, would they not kill?” (Rep., 517a). The Analogy of the Cave suggests that the role of the teacher will meet with the sort of resistance found in a classroom.

However, resistance and anger need not be the lot of students. The slave in Meno demonstrates openness to learning, thereby exhibiting, or modeling, the process of advance. At the highest levels of intellectual development, the ‘committed person’ “affirms what is one’s own” (Perry, 135) and consequently takes responsibility for learning, and for moral choices.

That level is not reached by any character in Meno, nor is the question of advance to the higher stage even posed. But Meno is a precursor to the great Republic. In the latter, Socrates sees in Glaucon a person of considerable talent. If Glaucon advances beyond relativism, what path will he choose? Will he deny there is any meaning beyond the present and settle into relativism? Will he affirm his own judgments while recognizing

the interests of others? Or will he become a “self-avowed opportunist,” (134) exploiting each situation to satisfy self-interest?

It is a question explored in the Book IX. Socrates argues against Glaucon’s becoming a tyrant, whose every whim can be acted upon and fulfilled. Plato presents an extended argument for the life of a critical thinker, the person who understands the “social responsibility that springs from compassion.” (134-5) Book IX is a pitched battle against the ‘self-avowed opportunist,’ akin to the final scene of the last Harry Potter book.

Plato’s dialogues are consistent with the most recent psychological research on intellectual and moral development. Hence, reading Plato can help a person understand not only the internal development of such contemporary work as the Harry Potter books, but Plato’s texts can also help a person understand the phenomena of those books. To put the matter simply, encountering core texts like Plato’s induces self-knowledge and self-development, enhances an understanding of the world around us, and promotes “the social responsibility that springs from compassion.”

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Censorship at Fishers Library Is Nothing New

(Aug. 29) — With turmoil rising in 1780s France and a revolution in the near future, the royalty and the wealthy plus the clerical hierarchy — in other words, the 3 percent of the population who held power — drafted edicts to limit the spread of ideas. They censored the press. In another time, Hitler had his Kristallnacht. In current day China and today's Russia, governmental censorship on the free flow of ideas diminishes any possibility of either country's millions of people to gain liberty. In China, one of my students doing missionary work could not share a Bible with people. She was told she'd be imprisoned. A person reading the New Testament (a banned book in some schools) can see how people with new ideas were treated.

And long before that era, philosophers with their critical minds and analytic capability, were treated poorly. The Pythagoreans were persecuted and killed; Socrates committed state-ordered suicide by drinking hemlock, and Aristotle fled Athens, "Lest Athens sin against philosophy again."

Therefore, the flap in Fishers regarding library books is old hat, to use an old metaphor. The Star reported that "Social conservatives' control of Fishers' library and school boards has led to controversies that are now bleeding into city politics," as though a sense of decency and respect for the maturing minds of children is not on the liberal agenda. And really, censorship is a non-partisan policy. Nor is it merely an Indiana problem.

The famous "To Kill a Mockingbird" was challenged in Waukegan, Illinois, and Verona, New York., for the use of a derogatory word referring to blacks. In 1981, the book was challenged by Warren Township because it "represents institutionalized racism under the guise of good literature." Schools banned the book in Santa Cruz, California; Glynn County, Georgia;

Muskogee, Oklahoma; and as late as 2006 in Brentwood, Tennessee. The book was banned due to racial slurs that "promote racial hatred, racial division, racial separation, and white supremacy." Brentwood was only following the 1995 treatment of "The Color Purple," which presents a "negative image of black men." Other books, such as "The Perks of Being a Wallflower," were banned because the content included drug use.

A brief look at the location of the towns mentioned above suggests that social conservatives are not the only people who challenge the books found in a school library. In fact, among the 100 most banned books are "Of Mice and Men," "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," "The Great Gatsby," "The Grapes of Wrath," and "Ulysses." George Orwell's "1984" has also been banned as well as Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse Five."

Of course, it is not only library books for young people that gets censored. People have been fired for using the word "niggardly," which means "reluctant to give or spend; stingy; miserly." An aide to D.C.'s mayor lost a job for using the word. The mayor realized his mistake and brought the person back. While the word sounds like a racial slur, the slur and "niggardly" do not even have the same root, let alone meaning.

And the elephant hiding over there in the corner is the uncensored use of the racial slur being sung by "hip" pop groups. If the racial epithet can get a book banned by a library, what's to be done about so much pop music? Young people ought not get mixed messages from people in authority or they will learn to distrust authority. And the people who are in the best position to give consistent messaging and thus, provide stability to maturing minors are their parents, not some school board or library board. While institutional boards may make good decisions, the people who influence children the most are their parents.

Parents, liberal and conservative, normally want children to be exposed to ideas in an age-appropriate way. The people most responsible for what children read are their parents. They must

be aware of what their children are reading. Schools are responsible for children, too, and should introduce age appropriate literature of all types. That does not mean scrubbing the library. Introducing “banned” books at the right age can help students understand the world as it is and offer young people some capability to reason through different ideas. In fact, enhancing students’ capability to reason is why colleges often invite diverse speakers to their campuses.

However, when colleges and universities do invite speakers to campus, people — deans, administrators, and students and others working on knowledge elimination — often shout down the invited speakers. There is no question that the speakers are age appropriate for a college audience, it’s just that many do not want anyone to hear the ideas of the speakers.

Social conservatives have no monopoly on censorship. Censorship is non-partisan.

A Last Word on Fathers Day

(June 28) — In light of news in the Indianapolis Star shortly before Father’s Day, it is appropriate to revisit data on child abuse. The Star had a story regarding the death of toddler Oaklee Snow, whose body was found in a dresser drawer. The next day, the newspaper covered the death of two-year old Erieomairy Dingu, who was beaten to death. In the former case, charges were brought against Oaklee’s mother and her boyfriend. In the latter case, charges were brought against the girlfriend (now ex-girlfriend) of the little girl’s mother.

The two cases have some similarities to national data on child-abuse fatalities, typically the result of neglect or physical violence.

For one thing, the death of the two young girls involved their mothers. Neither child’s death involved the father but that is “normal.” Most child-abuse deaths involve mothers rather than fathers. Fathers, acting alone, committed 13.5 percent of child-abuse deaths in 2021 and another 1.9 percent of child-abuse deaths acting in concert with a non-parent. The data represent a decrease in percentage from the year 2020.

Mothers, acting alone, perpetrated 29.5 percent of the child-abuse fatalities and another 11 percent when acting in concert with a non-parent. Those data show a slight increase from 2020.

Child-abuse deaths involving both parents was at 22.5 percent of the total fatalities in 2021.

In other words, parents, who are to love and care for their children, are the most likely to kill them. Child-abuse fatalities involve parents, singly or together, 80 percent of the time.

The cases of Oaklee and Erieomairy are atypical in that, nationally and in Indiana, more boys than girls are abused to death. Boys represented 59.4 percent of the child-abuse fatalities and girls were at 40.5 percent, with .1 percent unknown. The preceding data differ slightly from the 60 child-abuse and neglect fatalities that occurred in Indiana during the same year, 2020, according to the 2021 Annual Report of Child Abuse and Neglect in Indiana. Indiana abuse and neglect victims were ‘only’ 55 percent male and 45 percent female, a disparity that goes unreported.

The perpetrators of physical abuse deaths in Indiana numbered 16 male and 10 female whereas those responsible for child-neglect deaths were 32 women and 15 men. The data for Indiana, similar to national data, showed parents, alone or together, responsible for the overwhelming majority of child-abuse and neglect fatalities. As well, mothers and females perpetrated more of the fatalities than fathers and men, again, a pattern consistent with national data on child abuse.

Statista reported that in 2021, about 233,918 perpetrators of child abuse were women, compared with 213,672 male perpetrators. The data show little by way of change in patterns over the last 20 years: women have victimized children more than men.

One of my sons (my editor) pointed out that women are around children more so it can be expected that they do most of the abusing. But that’s like kicking the crutches of a person with a broken leg and then asking why the person can’t stand up. In the old days, fathers were not “allowed” to be with their children. In fact, when

the women's movement became more aggressive, home births became popular. For those births, a midwife performed the role of the (male) doctor. Men were cut out of the process.

That changed with more egalitarian policies put in place. Hence, I did with one child what my Dad could not and did not do with eight. When Cass was born, I was there with his Mom and him.

Also, custody decisions favored women like crazy so men were prevented from being with their children. One reason I was an ardent, early feminist was for my children. If women were paid the same as men, then men would not need to work long hours to support a family. Instead, they could be with their children (one reason I chose to be an educator).

Over the years, courts have changed the policy of favoring the mother in custody disputes; nonetheless, 65 percent of custody decisions award custody to mothers. Happily, as in Indiana, court decisions are guided by what's best for the child — and what is typically best for the child is joint custody.

Approximately 51 percent of court decisions award joint custody to the parents. The prevalence of joint custody decisions is a big improvement from years ago when courts treated fathers as pariahs. A bigger improvement would be the complete absence of treating children badly.

Gender Identity Tattletales?

(June 12) — In 1982, my wife Barbara and I were expecting our first child. We were both apprehensive and excited. Our excitement, however, was closely matched by the obstetrician's excitement. "I just got a new machine, the latest technology for understanding pregnancy. It enables me to see inside the womb. Do you mind if I use it to see how you are doing, Barbara?"

We consented, and he performed an ultrasound scan of our first child. Ultrasounds in the early 80s were novel, so no protocol existed. The doctor asked, "Do you want to know the sex?"

Barb and I did not discuss the question much: we'd be poor parents if some person relatively unknown to us knew more about our child than we did. We were responsible for that child, not the obstetrician.

When I wrote for a parenting publication, I offered the same counsel. When parents go to a parent-teacher conference, there should be no surprises. Parents should not be told by a teacher of something important and surprising about their child's education. They should already be aware of their child's development.

Indiana Senate Bill 354 could have been guided by this view that the parents should be in the know about their children, even if, like the obstetrician, they would be hard pressed to know more about the developing child in utero without the equipment and expertise of a medical professional. The obstetrician understood, though, that he was obligated to make that knowledge available to us.

Senate Bill No. 354 required "a public school . . . to notify the parent of an unemancipated minor" if the student discloses "to an employee or staff member information" concerning the "student's gender identity or gender expression." As well, notification of a parent is required if the student "changes, expresses a desire to change, or makes a request to change the student's name, attire, pronoun, title, or word to identify the student . . . that is inconsistent with the student's biological sex at birth."

In other words's senate is grappling with problems the trans trend has created for educators. Indiana is not alone inasmuch as other states, e.g. Missouri, Wisconsin, Florida and Massachusetts are contending with the issue of disclosure. In many of those states, the matter has risen to a legal solution, not a school "fix."

The Indiana ACLU had this to say about the matter of disclosure: "This bill targets any student who may choose not to conform to traditional norms about gender by requiring school staff to share private information and even speculation about students' gender identities with other school staff and parents." The ACLU's language

suggests that gender identity is a choice, implying that transitioning and sex-change operations are, like liposuction and other procedures, medically elective.

The Indiana ACLU also said “This bill forces teachers and administrators to act as ‘gender police’ by requiring them to monitor students for signs of gender nonconformity and report suspicions.” The ACLU distorts the language — “disclosure by the student” is not the same as “monitoring.”

Finally, on the matter of privacy, the ACLU overstates the case. Privacy is not an absolute right. In my teaching career, several students came into my office and talked to me about taking their own lives.

I was obligated by rules and, by my reckoning, morality, to get professional help

for that student. Walking the student to the counseling center was mandatory. On his graduation day, one student thanked me and said he would not be alive were it not for my help.

The ACLU overstates the case for non-disclosure but recognizes a real problem that a minor child may face, namely, hostility at home. Parents, told by school officials of their child’s disclosure regarding ambivalence about biological identity and “gender identity,” may deliver negative consequences to the child.

However, if the school officials do not disclose, they appear to distrust handing the responsibility for the student to the parents. If so, then they have assumed the responsibility for the student’s “gender identity.” I suspect they have neither the time nor budget, let alone the inclination, to assume that responsibility. ♦

Eric Schansberg

Coolidge thought it was more important to kill bad bills than to pass good ones. Acts of omission are typically harder to value compared to acts of commission, especially with government where the benefits of activism are typically obvious while its costs are subtle.

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Calvin Coolidge Rethought

Amy Shlaes writes history and biography that connect to economics. I had already read her detailed book on "the Great Society" and her excellent book on "the New Deal." She's always thorough and insightful. Her 2013 biography of Calvin Coolidge will provide too much information for many readers. But for those who enjoy economic history, "Coolidge" is helpful and interesting. I had already read and reviewed Garland Tucker's book on the 1924 election. With the 100th anniversary of Coolidge's inauguration as our 30th president on Aug. 2, I wanted to read and write about his noteworthy presidency.

Along the way, Shlaes shares some cool little details: Coolidge's great-grandfather paid \$31 in 1842 for preferred seating on a pew at church (14). The middle name of Coolidge's grandfather was Galusha after a two-term governor of Vermont. At one point, Galusha was paid to cut off the ear and brand a C on the forehead of a criminal (probably for counterfeiting). The Coolidge family had a recipe for "Scripture cake" with 12 ingredients based on a variety of Bible verses (15-16). And the

nature of telegraph messages is that they tended to be abrupt and abrasive: saving money with shorter sentences; all capital letters; "stop" instead of periods for punctuation (171).

It was a different time in many ways. Coolidge's 16-year-old son died from a freakish blister infection that would have been easily treated today.

The federal government was much smaller then. Spending is 90 times greater today, even controlling for inflation (which they didn't have in the six years when Coolidge was president). But some things were the same — e.g., interest group politics (burgeoning at the time) and concerns about federal government spending and debt (their problems were largely from World War I). Technological advance was also impressive. Suburbs and skyscrapers made their debut. Movies added sound. Cars and phones became prevalent. Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic. And Coolidge lit the first national Christmas tree using electricity.

Why has Coolidge continued under the radar of history? In terms of substance and public policy, he was a minimalist president and opposed the growth of government — not to mention dramatic expansions of the State. He thought it was more important to kill bad bills than to pass good ones. Acts of omission are typically harder to value compared to acts of commission, especially with government where the benefits of activism are typically obvious while its costs are subtle.

In terms of style, Coolidge didn't have a big personality; some presidents have drawn attention to themselves through charismatic personality. He doesn't get any credit from being associated with Mount Rushmore which started when he was president. (He advocated that Teddy Roosevelt should join Lincoln, Jefferson and Washington.)

"Silent Cal" was a quiet man who was famously terse. But quality trumped quantity; he meant what he said and said what he meant. He was the last president to write his own speeches. He was the first president to make heavy use of radio. And

Larry Reed notes that Coolidge still holds the record for presidential news conferences — one every five days in office. (Wouldn't it be nice to have a president who talks less and speaks to the press more?)

Unfortunately, presidential historians often rate Coolidge below-average. But aside from statist ideology and an ignorance of economics, there is no reason to consider him anything less than above average. In fact, the most compelling claim about him is that Ronald Reagan was our best president since at least Coolidge.

Shlaes sees this as a shame and compares Coolidge favorably to other presidents. Like John Adams, he served as Vice President and saw the office as insignificant on its own merits. Like Adams and Washington, he was uncomfortable with high society. Like Washington (and others before FDR), he refused a third term. Like Lincoln, he lost a son while president; he frustrated advisors with his thoughtfulness on policy but acted decisively when he moved. Like Teddy Roosevelt, he ended a period of rank corruption. Like Wilson, he favored international diplomacy. Like Harding, he valued consistency and predictability in policy. And so on.

But the closest comparisons are Grover Cleveland and Ronald Reagan. (In fact, Reagan replaced Truman's portrait in the White House with Coolidge's.) All three held a minimalist view of the federal government. (Reagan worked with a bipartisan Congress and inherited a much larger government that could not easily be reduced to earlier standards.)

Coolidge and Cleveland both vetoed tiny expenditures on items that are amazing by today's norms: flood victims and farm subsidies. In both cases, they did not see the expenditures as an ethical or constitutional role for the federal government. When should the government take money from *x* to give to someone else? (Coolidge did support some tariffs and farm subsidies, although he famously vetoed the McNary-Haugen farm bill twice.) The extent to which his administration pored over the budget to save

money is impossible to imagine now: the Weather Bureau not sending out postcards with forecasts anymore; post office bags switching from red, white, and blue to gray; and white string instead of red tape (yes, red tape) to wrap documents (323).

Coolidge and Reagan both embraced the reality of supply side economics and its relevance in contexts where high marginal tax rates were impeding the economy — and ironically, squelching tax revenues. The theory describes the supply-side impact of cuts in tax rates: encouraging "supply" in the economy through greater work effort, entrepreneurship and innovation, as well as reducing tax avoidance and tax evasion. (Tax cuts also have "demand-side" implications that are more famous: more money in our pockets results in greater investment and especially consumption.) Andrew Mellon called this "scientific taxation" in his efforts to increase tax revenues. Coolidge and Mellon worked with a Republican Congress to cut the top marginal tax rates from 73 percent to 25 percent. Reagan worked with a strongly-Democratic House to reduce the top rate from 70 percent to 28 percent.

Amazingly, federal government spending was roughly the same (about \$3 billion) when Coolidge left office in 1929. In this, he was emulating the fiscal conservatism of Harding who reduced spending dramatically (from WWI levels). The economy boomed throughout his administration. "If Coolidge was a Scrooge, he was a Scrooge who begat plenty." (6) The increased revenues from decreased tax rates resulted in budget surpluses every year — and the federal debt was reduced by more than 20 percent (from \$22.3 billion to \$17.6 billion). This data also contradicts the tenets of Keynesianism that began to dominate for 50 years, starting with Hoover and then FDR. (Today, if we froze federal spending, we could have a balanced budget within a decade and would be far more likely to avert a debt crisis.)

Ironically, the budget surpluses led to calls for increased government spending. Along with Coolidge's lame-duck status (in 1927, he

announced he would not run for another term), Congress began to press for more expenditures in a manner that would soon manifest as much larger government under the big-spending social-engineering of Hoover and FDR. (Spending doubled under Hoover and the role of government exploded under FDR's New Deal.)

Coolidge and Reagan both took controversial stands to confront powerful public-sector unions. In August 1981, President Reagan fired the air traffic controllers who went on strike, while Governor Coolidge fired the Boston police in 1919 for striking. In both cases, compromises were available but not chosen. To Coolidge, these were not strikers but deserters. His conclusion:

"There is nothing to arbitrate . . . nothing to compromise . . . here are no conditions under which the men can return to the force . . . There is] no right to strike against the public safety by anyone, anywhere, anytime." (167, 174)

Wow! In both cases, the interest group complained, but the public was supportive, especially in the context of the Russian Revolution for Coolidge, and a tough economy for Reagan. With his response to the strike, Coolidge became a key national political figure, leading to his election as Vice President in 1921.

In some ways, the 1924 presidential race was one of the most interesting in American history — with two Conservatives (Coolidge and the Democrat John Davis) and one Progressive (Senator Bob La Follette). This campaign and its context are the subject of Garland Tucker's fine book, "The High Tide of Conservatism."

Conservatism had been successful under Coolidge. And most of the nation was tired of Progressivism after Wilson (including a really tough economy in 1919-20, with unemployment up to 20 percent and GDP down by one-sixth).

Still, there were enough voters to warrant a Progressive candidate. (La Follette earned 16 percent of the vote; won his home state; and finished second in 11 others.) But the Dems thought it wiser to also go with a conservative. Davis described himself as a "classical liberal" and later opposed both FDR and his New Deal. In 1924, not surprisingly, Coolidge won easily: 54-29 percent over Davis in the popular vote and 72 percent of the electoral vote. (Some of the statewide numbers are amazing: Davis won 97 percent in South Carolina, but less than 10 percent in five states, including California.)

Coolidge was born on July 4th and as president, gave the commencement address at all-black Howard University in 1924. He extended full citizenship to Native Americans. He handled the scandals of his predecessor with integrity and consistency, defending the office of the presidency with strong but modest leadership. The economy was strong throughout his administration. He didn't have much international or domestic drama to address. So, the standard opportunities for presidential greatness were not available to him — as they were to Reagan with the Cold War, the worst economy since the Great Depression and the "malaise" of the Carter years.

Still, Coolidge was a fine president by any objective standard — and arguably, one of our best. ♦

Mark Franke

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Immigration, Part I

(Aug. 21) — This is a sad tale but with a happy ending. It is also a fairy tale subsumed in the gothic horror novel that is our immigration mess.

It's about one immigrant who did everything he could legally to become a permanent resident of the United States and was thwarted time and time again until this summer when he finally was granted legal reentry to the United States and reunion with his wife and three children.

Here's the timeline he faced. He began his application for residency five years ago. A year and a half later it was approved. One year after that he was given a week's notice to return to Mexico for an interview, where he learned a few months later that he had to resubmit his application and be reinterviewed. That was nearly two years ago.

The family retained an immigration lawyer, whom I guess helped, but it still took two more years. Washington D. C. is horribly inefficient; just imagine what things are like in Mexico City.

Finally, he received governmental approval to immigrate to the United States. He wisely decided to go to the immigration center at the border town of Matamoros, where he could walk across the bridge and take a U. S. domestic flight to return to Fort Wayne. Except, of course, for a new technical delay that held him on the Mexican side of the border. This time it was only weeks instead of months, but still.

Granted, originally he was brought into the United States illegally as a minor. He held a job, married and had children. He chose to submit to the legal process for permanent residency rather than continue to live in an "illegal" or

"undocumented" status (choose the terminology your bias prefers).

Think of the thousands who daily cross the Rio Grande and then are subjected to the tender mercies of federal, state and local governmental officials. I wonder if these thousands see the hypocrisy of northern big city mayors who loudly support open borders until overwhelmed Texas communities transport them to the unwelcome arms of these same mayors. The lucky ones get put up in posh Manhattan hotels while most others get shuffled around.

Welcome to the dysfunctional reality show called the United States of America.

I am fed up with the political circus that is the immigration debate today. Extremists on both sides of the issue have frightened serious thinkers away from proposing and enacting a reasonable solution in line with our republican (small r) ideals. From my vantage point, and I am not alone in this, the two parties appear quite happy with the current state of affairs. It provides campaign fodder for inciting "the base," which is political obfuscation to mean the most motivated primary election voters. They fear a resolution that would rob them of a ten second sound bite to use in a campaign TV commercial or an exclamatory headline printed on a postcard.

Meanwhile, legitimate immigrants bear the full weight of the law simply because they believe that the law deserves obedience. My friend is not the only one who has suffered for trying to do the right thing. A recent discussion among a small group of friends produced several similar anecdotes.

Am I being unfair? Perhaps, but I don't think so. After all, the 535 members of Congress were elected to solve problems while protecting liberty. Have you seen much of either lately? And let's not ask why our current president, who promised to unite the nation, hasn't shown any unifying leadership on this . . . or anything else for that matter.

"Give me your tired, your poor, [y]our huddled masses yearning to breathe free." So declares Emma Lazarus' poem inscribed at the base of the

Statue of Liberty in New York harbor. Of course Ellis Island is not where the very real problem of uncontrolled immigration exists. It just takes longer there, a lot longer, than a quick dash across a shallow river.

These surely are the times that try men's souls but I don't want to become one of Thomas Paine's sunshine patriots who shrinks from service to his country when things get difficult. But what can we do? My friends and I developed a comprehensive package of immigration reforms that would establish "a high wall with a broad gate," as one of our group described it, but it has no chance of passage given the ossified state of Congress.

The Continental Congress of Paine's day also was every bit as inept as our current Congress but then it didn't have any real authority, a problem alleviated only with the adoption of the Constitution. That Constitution, which enumerated significant powers to Congress, still has writ today. It's time those 535 paladins actually did something positive.

It makes one frustrated enough to support term limits. May I suggest a term limit of 30 days?

Immigration, Part II

(Aug. 28) — Immigration may be a difficult problem but that does not preclude a solution — that is, assuming there is the political will to affect such a solution.

The political morass is beyond my comprehension or ability to navigate. That frees me to think unencumbered for possible solutions. Fortunately, I hang out with a group of friends who like to focus on what can be done rather than what can't. Several weeks ago we spent a couple of hours trying to arrive at a workable and reasonable proposal to solve this mess.

Any proposal would balance the following set of criteria: recognizing America's heritage as a nation of immigrants; realistically assessing our social network's ability to absorb a given level of immigration; meeting the needs of the American economy for entry level and professional workers; and ensuring entry only of those who have been qualified.

That should be easy enough.

At some point in the discussion, one of our group suggested metaphorically constructing a high wall with a wide gate. What he was envisioning was an immigration control process that minimized the illegal entries while expeditiously processing the legal ones. A brilliant trope my opinion, but then the devil is always in the details.

The group was not shy about offering details for consideration.

One member, who clearly had given much thought to this, offered a comprehensive package of proposals. The foundation for his system-in-waiting is an e-verify process that would require employers to access before hiring any new workers. Records for all legal workers, both citizens and visa-holders, would be accessible for instant lookup. Employers would be required to verify the worker before hiring and, as this is a government program, be subject to significant fines for non-compliance.

One objection sure to come is the inclusion of citizens in this database. The privacy choir is sure to be heard on this. While understandable, employers already have access to confidential employee information for the purpose of reporting income and tax withholding. It is the age of Big Brother — remember that started in 1984 — and this system just won't work without all workers in it. Confidentiality protections can be built and enforced.

I think the genius of this idea is a restricted amnesty provision for current illegal workers to apply for inclusion in this system without a risk of legal repercussions. Rather than calling this the politically charged name "amnesty," I prefer labeling it an "armistice." It is time we all admit the reality of the current state of affairs and consider a practical and achievable fix for all those "undocumented" workers who are contributing to our economy.

Note that this would set a hard deadline for compliance. After that date those not registered would be subject to immediate deportation. This will work if the guarantee to those who register is

credible. It requires trust, something in short supply today.

The economy's need for more workers can be addressed by new immigrant workers who desire to come to America for job opportunities. A more efficient system for approval and placement is essential. There are too many entry-level jobs as well as skilled and professional positions not being filled by citizens. The "Help Wanted" signs are everywhere.

The system must also accommodate those temporary workers who have no desire for citizenship or permanent residence. Seasonal farm workers fall into this category. Work visas should be liberally and expeditiously granted to these workers. Entry and exit records would assure compliance.

Beyond this new verification system, there are some other immigration issues which must be addressed. The path to citizenship should be reassessed and perhaps shortened for those who have been here for years, gainfully employed and with no criminal record.

The proposed package is not without controversial provisions, such as eliminating automatic citizenship to any baby born within our borders. I don't know if this is a problem in reality or only in theory. The Center for Immigration Studies, self-proclaimed as "low-immigration, pro-immigrant," estimates about one in 12 U. S. births are to illegal immigrants. The center concedes that this might be an undercount.

But here is the problem with eliminating this right to citizenship: the Fourteenth Amendment. Given our toxic political scene, it is hard to conceive of any constitutional amendment that could get two-thirds support in Congress and then be ratified by three-quarters of the states. Flogging this dead horse will only be a distraction from the achievable aspects of this package.

Then there is the issue of offering government benefits to illegal immigrants. The data on the cost of this is confounded by too many studies seeming to prove what the sponsors want proved.

Can it work? We think so. Can it pass? Probably not, at least in the alternate reality that exists in the halls of Congress. But somebody needs to do something, and soon.

Air Conditioning — The Cause of All Our Woes

(Aug. 14) — I have finally figured out the root cause of all our woes — air conditioning.

I am deadly serious about this. Consider just two travesties wreaking havoc across our landscape:

First, school start dates. My teacher neighbor started the first full week of August and her school was not alone. The school where I volunteer won't start until Aug. 16 but they are an outlier, not that even a mid-August start date is defensible.

I'm no scientist but I believe early August is smack in the middle of summer as our calendar informs us.

There was a time in my hometown of Fort Wayne when schools couldn't start well before Labor Day due to the simple fact that the largest employers, the heavy industries on the east end, did their shutdowns in August. That's when family vacations occurred.

We had the same issue at the university where I spent my career. Summer classes needed to end by July 31 or thereabouts so that the professional schools such as business and engineering could accommodate these students and their family vacation schedules. The exception to this were the graduate classes in the school of education, whose full-time teachers had most of August available but couldn't start in late May. They still can't start in late May but neither can they go deep into August.

Without air conditioning, which we did not have in my school days, no one would have seriously considered beginning school in early August. Football players had to report on Aug. 15 but the rest of us stayed on vacation or made several weeks' more income from our summer jobs.

The politics of education need not be recounted here. Suffice it to say that the school districts seemed to incrementally shorten the school days and find a myriad of reasons to cancel days. I still don't know what an "in service" day is. Eventually the General Assembly stepped in and decreed a 180-day year with make ups required. As in all legislation we bear, it resulted from political pressure by voting groups as national test scores frog marched in the wrong direction. I've oversimplified this but you get the point.

A friend, a retired elementary school principal, told me when the 180-day law took effect that schools could offer the same amount of instructional time on a Labor Day to Memorial Day calendar if they simply returned to the previous longer school day. My recollection is of an 8-3:30 school day. The nearby elementary school system's day is about three-quarters of an hour shorter, which adds up over nine months.

If I were arbiter of the universe, I would make an even trade of those daily minutes for a two-week extension to summer.

My second point to introduce into evidence is the perniciously pervasive operation of the federal government. Does anyone seriously think that politicians and bureaucrats would hang out in Washington D.C. in July and August if it weren't for air conditioning?

I won't be granted a Ph.D. in political science for this analysis but I have concluded that much of the assault on liberties would not have happened if Washington shut down for the summer as it used to. Sure, there are those with advanced degrees who will point to the post-Civil War period or the New Deal or the Great Society as the tipping point when the federal government grew exponentially. Maybe, but then wasn't air conditioning becoming standard in governmental buildings during the Great Society years?

President John Adams went home to Braintree during the summers and handled any communication needs by postal service. The Republic survived.

The early Congresses met from December to March and then went home to carry on with

productive lives. The Indiana General Assembly still, theoretically at least, is a part-time legislature with constitutional constraints on how long they can meet. Surely it is no coincidence that Indiana has fewer government intrusions into our private lives . . . and pocketbooks . . . than many other states.

One can only dream about a Washington with plugs pulled on the A/C generators. No feverish regulation writing, no interminable committee hearings, no inane press conferences. After all, even today's press is too smart to stand out in the D.C. heat to grab a 30-second sound bite from some attention-starved congressman or senator.

Progress is not always beneficial. There is a John Lennon song that contains a line that fits me here: "You can say I'm a dreamer," and then he adds, "but I'm not the only one." Unfortunately for us dreamers, no complacent 21st century American would give up air conditioning just to get a longer summer or more liberty.

Marx was wrong. It is air conditioning that is the opium of the masses.

Dumbing Down by Knowing Too Much

(July 24) — Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information? "The Rock" by T. S. Eliot

We live in an age of sensory overload. We are tied to gadgets that bombard us with snippets of information which are simply endless data points that never seem to tie together. Whether 30 second sound bites on TV, single sentence news headlines crossing the chyron or, worst of all, short videos on those ubiquitous social media outlets, it never ends.

We are told everything. We learn nothing.

In the quote above T. S. Eliot bemoans such a state of affairs as if he were living today. He wrote those lines in 1934 as part of a pageant to raise funds for the building of new churches in Depression era London. I owe thanks to author Simon Winchester who used this quote to introduce his latest book, "Knowing What We Know: The Transmission of Knowledge from Ancient Wisdom to Modern Magic."

Eliot recognized a hierarchy of human intellectual achievement. It is supposed to work like this: We gather bits of information that can be assembled into a new piece of knowledge that, when added to our base of accumulated knowledge and with sufficient contemplation, becomes wisdom.

Plato listed wisdom as one of the four virtues which lead to a moral life, the highest human achievement. I can only wonder what Plato would think if he could observe our society today. The cynic Diogenes, Plato's philosophical nemesis, might find himself quite at home but I can hardly credit that to be a good thing.

I first encountered this kind of hierarchy when I spent several years early in my higher education career as a manager in the university's IT department. This was the era of the relational database's ascendancy. These huge databases were built on a simple mathematical model designed to hold essentially unlimited amounts of simple pieces of data. Pulling related data out in a report was designated the information level. Integrating multiple databases at a high level to support managerial decision making was called the knowledge level. Sound familiar?

I have oversimplified but the same hierarchy is at play here as in the more general intellectual level referenced by Eliot above. The major difference is the addition of a granular data level at the bottom and the absence of a wisdom level at the top, unless the frightening advent of AI counts. It makes one wonder if there were some created universal system for human intellectual activity moving mankind upward from simple observation to absolute truth.

I realize my analysis flies in the face of current educational wisdom that technology obviates the need for students to process information themselves. Reading, writing and computation are antiquated tools no longer useful in a digital world when you can just look it up on the "artificially intelligent" computer. True, but that portends a different problem in future decades as this generation will not have the ability to advance intellectually from information to knowledge to

wisdom. You can't lose what you never had. There are no shortcuts to wisdom.

Eliot's poetry has been likened by literary experts to that found in the Psalms. The Psalms were written as poetry and perhaps lose some of that effect in translation. But not all of it; my church chants a psalm each Sunday. Chanting rather than reading somehow gives the words more vibrancy and the meaning greater impact.

Look to these lines of Eliot for this effect:

The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;

He then asks this question: "Where is the Life we have lost in living?"

Good question, that.

To some he may have seemed a twentieth century Luddite, decrying the technological advances made during his lifetime. Now think of our lifetime or that of our children and grandchildren. How much knowledge or wisdom comes from these perpetual interruption machines we all carry? Virtually none, I would suggest.

I am trying hard not to be hypocritical about this. I have a cell phone although with the ringer permanently turned off. Still, I find it hard not to check it every time I feel a buzzing sensation in my back pocket. I gather lots of information from it, most of which I forget within three minutes or less.

My grandchildren cannot imagine a world without cell phones, tablets and social media. I can, and miss it.

Eliot asked the following question and I will leave it to you to answer it for yourself. You can guess how he and I would respond.

"With all the technological advances and change, is mankind happier or wiser than he was 100 years ago?"

Summer Vacations for the 'Retired'

(July 17) — I spent my professional career in higher education administration, specifically in

the enrollment and finance areas. What that meant was summer was my busiest time with students to enroll, orient and bill, and then there was the fiscal year closing accounting work. Other than a few days over the course of the summer when I got by without wearing a tie, summer was a salt mine.

My wife was an elementary school teacher back when our children were still at home and summer was her downtime, down to the extent that she went into school for only a few hours each day to prepare for the upcoming year. What she wanted to do was go “on vacation,” a term I dread.

First, there was the failure to communicate to her the fact that summer was my busiest time of year. As a division executive I had to enforce a rule that limited summer vacations for the rank-and-file staff. We tried our best to let each administrative department give every staffer a week off but that didn’t always work. I could not in good conscience take a vacation in summer while preventing all those hard-working people from doing the same.

Leadership is simply a matter of leading by example. Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion.

So my wife and children took most of their summer vacations with my parents, who loved to travel. Thank God for them, backstopping my moral deficiency as a parent — a deficiency not absolved by blaming the job.

Now I am retired and no longer can blame the job or my boss or the enrollment calendar. The truth of the matter is that I still don’t get the idea of summer vacation. It just doesn’t seem right.

Here’s the root of the problem: My wife spent her professional career in elementary education as a teacher and principal. Those folks are manacled to a calendar and a bell; everything is scripted for nine months. It is easy to understand why a teacher looks forward to the freedom of summer, even those like my wife who worked throughout the summer driven by her professionalism.

Meanwhile my professional career was blighted by regular travel with airports and hotels and highway driving.

Do you see the problem? My wife’s idea of a rewarding retirement is to travel extensively since she did not have that opportunity to do so in her career. My goal in retirement is to never leave my property. I want to dwell safely under my own vine and fig tree, as Old Testament Israel did during the reign of King Solomon.

And so we have the Bible up against my wife’s plans for our retirement. Divinely inspired or not, the Bible runs a distant second in this race. It is instructive to recall that my wife was an elementary school principal; she is used to getting her way by fiat. It comes as no surprise that we have done substantial travel in these latter years.

I write this as we are on the coast of Lake Michigan where our daughter and her family spend the summer. A good time is being had by all, except for me of course, as I worry about the grass back home growing beyond normal cutting length and the missed meetings of my not-for-profit boards. So I am stewing in angst while the rest of the family is having what sounds like fun in the other room.

I guess you can officially retire, which means simply that you no longer draw a paycheck, without really retiring mentally. It’s been ten years since I was offered the opportunity to retire by my erstwhile employer of nearly 40 years. I have yet to adapt. I have increased my involvement with my church and other charitable organizations to the point that I “go to work” nearly every day.

After those 40 years of wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase, I now wear old clothes and carry a tool bag and a paintbrush. Being a volunteer maintenance man at my church’s school is rewarding beyond anything I could have anticipated. First, I leave each day having finished a project or two. That almost never happened back in the day. Second, I can’t describe the reward of going into a classroom and fixing something a young child broke and being hugged by the students as I leave. That never happened at the college level, but probably that was a good thing.

Enough of that. Here I am wasting time on the shore of Lake Michigan and there is a school gymnasium that needs painting and teachers need work done in their rooms before school starts up again in early August.

And what is that all about? First day of school on August 16? But that's the topic for a future rant.

Major League Baseball, If You Can Afford It

(July 10) — Now that the patriotic observances are past, it's time to turn to another pillar of Americanism—baseball.

Despite the combined efforts of the Commissioner, the club owners and the players union to price Major League Baseball (MLB) games beyond the financial wherewithal of middle-class Americans, there are those idealists like me who just won't give up on our national game.

I grew up with baseball, its being the only sport in those halcyon days that had organized competition in the summer. That was important only because my love of baseball had been nurtured every weekend by the Saturday Game of the Week with Buddy Blattner, Pee Wee Reese and Dizzy Dean. Even more important was my weekly trip, 25 cents allowance in hand, to the neighborhood convenience store to buy several pieces of the worst bubblegum ever but each coming with a handful of player cards. Collecting baseball cards was a young boy's *raison d'être*.

My son has taken over the baseball collecting franchise in our family, having started as a teenager. My collecting has been limited to cards of the Fort Wayne TinCaps, a High A level team that sees me in the stands for nearly every home game. Fortunately I can buy that season's complete set in the team store at the stadium, sans bubblegum.

I am not quite ready to give up on the major leagues but they are certainly trying my patience. Even though I pay an annual fee in excess of \$100 to watch every MLB game, I find it frustrating

with all the special deals they are making with streaming services for exclusive broadcast rights that include blacking those games out.

I don't begrudge someone's maximizing income if the market bears, but part of that market is my pocketbook which is under increasing strain. A friend, who sits across the aisle from me at the TinCaps, is a diehard Cincinnati Reds fan. Some games are not televised locally due to these special deals. Fort Wayne is considered a "local" market for the Reds (and Tigers and White Sox and Cubs) so we are blacked out on MLB and now occasionally on the local cable channel as well.

And so I get most of my baseball fix in downtown Fort Wayne watching young players pursuing their dreams. It is pleasing to watch these players develop over the season. The bittersweet part of watching a talented young player perform well is that eventually he will be promoted to AA. But that is the point of the minor leagues.

What is especially irritating about my hometown team is its affiliation with the San Diego Padres, a team I have absolutely no interest in following. Maybe that is OK for me as the Padres use talented minor leaguers primarily as trade fodder as they pursue an illusive World Series championship by dumping hundreds of millions on superstars. How is that working out for them? Check the standings.

We, the season ticket holders, try to follow TinCaps alumni even though very few play for the Padres. One local favorite, nicknamed "Goldilocks" by a beer vendor for his long hair, is a starting outfielder for the Pittsburgh Pirates. The publicity department of the TinCaps used to show a pre-game video about former TinCaps now playing in the major leagues called "From the 260 (the telephone area code) to the Show." They don't do that anymore, perhaps because there are so few Padres to highlight?

I will confess to a strong bias on this. First, I am an American League fan. Second, I don't acknowledge the legitimacy of any team that did not exist in 1951 or that has changed cities since

1959. Don't ask me why those dates but note that they bookend the greatest decade in my lifetime.

To affirm me in my prejudice, I just read six books about baseball in the 1950's. Roger Kahn's "The Boys of Summer" was not one of them but it probably deserves a reread. Baseball then was almost exclusively a New York City affair, with nine of ten World Series boasting one or both teams from there. I became a Yankees fan back then due to the TV and newspaper coverage they received and remain stubbornly loyal to this day.

Regardless of what MLB is doing to baseball to make it unaffordable, I can still go to my hometown minor league ballpark 60 plus times every summer. I arrive at least 30 minutes before game time and walk the concourse. I know most of the ushers and other game day staff, and it is interesting to hear what gossip is going around. And that is what it is—gossip—the ushers having no better insight than I. I guess none of us has a seat in the boardroom . . . probably because the only boardroom that matters these days is at MLB HQ in Manhattan.

Freedom Is a Risky Business

(July 3) — "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

These concluding words to the Declaration of Independence are not as recognizable as "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" but they deserve to be. Think about what the 56 men gathered as the Second Continental Congress just did.

They declared the independence of all 13 colonies from the King and Parliament of Great Britain but those were only words. Words, however, that represented treason against the crown and subject to the ultimate penalty should their enterprise fail.

And fail, it almost did on numerous occasions. Even the indomitable George Washington had his moments of despair after battlefield losses, and he

lost nearly every battle he fought. Compound this with an inept and impecunious Congress that wouldn't and couldn't provide adequate food, clothing and shelter for his ragtag army and one wonders how Washington persevered.

If Washington had ever become a prisoner of war, he would have been tried for treason and possibly sent to London to be hanged, drawn and quartered. Don't ask what that form of execution entailed; it was horrific.

By signing their name to the Declaration, the same fate awaited all 56 of them should their revolution fail. Pledging their lives was not some empty gesture. They understood that affirmation to be literal.

These were not desperate men with nothing to lose. They were lawyers, merchants, farmers and other prosperous citizens. There was even a schoolteacher in the group. They chose this path, risks and all.

Did they wake up the next morning and feel doubt about what they just did? Probably as they were only human. Yet only one recanted after being incarcerated by the British army, perhaps due to the conditions of his imprisonment or his failing health.

As you might expect, there are multiple pages to be found on the internet listing the signers and their fates. Likewise, there are "fact checkers" who debunk much of what is claimed. Regardless, these men and their families were at risk and many suffered, if not directly attributable to their role as signers then certainly due to the war they intentionally provoked in the name of independence.

The risk to them was real. Thomas Jefferson was governor of Virginia when a British army moved westward from the coast and threatened the capital, Richmond. Jefferson took to the hills, literally, to avoid capture. I am not a Jefferson fan — that's my wife's job in our household — but I can't fault him for running. He was a marked man without doubt and could not expect gentlemanly treatment from the British commander Benedict Arnold, a man with an enormous grudge to settle.

Return to their pledge at the conclusion of the document. Some gave their lives. Many more gave their fortunes. Only one gave his sacred honor.

Would those same percentages hold today if confronted by tyranny? Hardly. While I know of no one who has lost his life defending liberty, the daily news is replete with people being canceled from jobs and other aspects of their pursuit of happiness. Too many, I fear, willingly sacrifice their sacred honor to go along with woke dominance of our culture and society. I understand why human nature prefers to take the easy way out when faced with a difficult choice between unpleasant alternatives. It is only the normal reaction.

Fortunately for us, those 56 men in 1776 were not normal in any sense of the term.

One more clause of their pledge deserves mention: “[W]ith a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence.”

There were certainly outsized egos in the room as well as an eighteenth century’s form of self-made men. Yet they still appealed to God to protect them in their moral cause. Even the deists and agnostics, Jefferson being the parade example of both theological positions, signed on to that prayer.

One can argue that it was a time when religion was nearly universal in society but that just doesn’t get to the root of it. My sense is that they truly believed that God was on the side of their righteous cause and would intervene to assure its success. Perhaps the deists, who believed in a clockmaker God who wound up the universe and then went on to other divine responsibilities, were following along in the spirit of the moment. Or perhaps a prick of conscience reminded them to cover all bases, theologically. Regardless, they all signed.

Would we today line up to sign this document and assume the risk of loss of lives, fortunes and reputations? I will leave that question open-ended for now but it bears reflection on July 4 if no other time.

Gender — the Triumph of Error

(June 26) — I routinely try to ignore national news channels but admit to scanning a daily feed of headlines. What I am seeing beggars credulity. One of the top news stories is gender affirmation/gender reassignment/gender whatever issues among young children. Young children?

The battle lines are clearly demarcated. In numerous locales parents are pitted against teachers and school administrators over what the children will be taught and whether parents should be kept in the dark. This is not a condemnation of all schools and all teachers, but there are way too many incidents to dismiss it as an aberration. At least I know of no such controversy in my corner of Indiana and my conceit is that sanity will continue to reign in the Midwest.

So why is this question even on the table? Whose children are they?

The home has been the structural foundation of our civilization and most others. Parents are the pillars of the home with the nurturing function incumbent in such a role. What gratifies parents more than watching the young persons they love most mature into responsible adults?

I hardly believe that all parents are perfect; I certainly have not been. Yet each parenting failure can lead to a useful lesson for both parent and child. No one wants to make the same mistakes his parents made during his childhood. We strive to be better grandparents than we were parents. Such is the strength and weakness of human nature, when tempered by an attitude of forgiveness.

Given that, how much influence and control do we as parents wish to default to the state and its school system?

I like the response of Gomez Addams from “The Addams Family” television show to the truant officer’s complaint that his children were not in school. “Ridiculous. Why have children just to get rid of them? I’m opposed to the whole nonsense.”

The significant increase in home-schooling and enrollment in private and parochial schools suggests that there are a lot of Gomez Addamses out there. Parents are doing what Americans do when they disagree with prevailing conditions; they vote with their feet.

Who could have foreseen this?

A 19th-century theologian, Charles Porterfield Krauth, advanced a theory of how doctrinal error enters the church. It is a three-stage process. First, the error simply asks to be tolerated, a belief or practice held in private but free of condemnation or persecution by the orthodox. Once toleration is established, the error demands equality, viewed as equally valid and as true as orthodox doctrine. Finally, error supererogates a position of superiority which it condemns and persecutes that which has been accepted doctrine for centuries.

Notice how everything has been stood on its head. Wrong is right and right is wrong.

It is not simply a matter of denying all universal truth; it is a newly established universal truth that brooks no questioning. The putative persecuted have become the persecutors. Welcome to our brave new world where natural law is not only irrelevant, it is proscribed from the public square.

Krauth's interest was doctrinal, reflective of the church's confession. He has proven right as nearly all fundamental Christian doctrine has become challengeable if it fails muster with our upside-down cultural norms. The profane trumps the sacred.

Disney's film "Fantasia" has a wonderful illustration of how this relationship is supposed to work in its segment set to "Night on Bald Mountain." The animation behind the orchestral music shows all sorts of demons running amok in the world at least until a church bell rings and a procession of the faithful walk to worship by candlelight. The demons decamp.

It is now "Fantasia" in reverse. Krauth never could have envisioned how his theory would dominate secular culture less than two centuries later. My parents, teenagers during the

Depression, could not have seen this coming. I can scarcely credit it myself, especially given the warp speed of this moral inversion. It goes way beyond Hegel's dialectic. No synthesis has evolved. Instead antithesis becomes thesis and accepts no challenges. The dialectic door is slammed shut. Krauth eclipses Hegel.

So I ask the question again? Whose children are they? How can anyone argue that the state's interest supersedes the rights . . . and duties . . . of parents? Those who do must live in the world of "Animal Farm" or "The Village of the Damned" where children are controlled by others than their parents. Parents are irrelevant and even potential obstructionists if they were to be allowed influence with their own children.

We are in danger of no longer living in the "land of the free." It's time to remember that we also live in the "home of the brave" and just say no to this statist, anti-liberty trend. Our children and grandchildren deserve nothing less from us.

'Tis the Season of Patriotism — and Liberty

(June 7) — This is the season of patriotic display on my cul-de-sac. Three important patriotic holidays occur within a six-week period: Memorial Day, Flag Day and Independence Day. I call this the patriotic pause, a pause to reflect.

Several years ago one of the neighbors suggested we put a few small flags along the street to mark the summer holidays. A few soon doubled in number and eventually all neighbors joined in. Memorial Day saw 97 flags across the 15 houses, except for one house that, quite suspiciously, forgot to put them out. That homeowner will undergo the neighborhood version of water-boarding at our next weekly stag confab around a backyard shuffleboard court. It goes without saying that his blatant un-Americanism will be forgiven if he brings the bourbon.

Our flag tradition is just one thing we do to maintain our family-like relationships up and down the street. Ours is a mix of empty-nester retirees and young families with children at home.

We attend different churches and some not at all, we don't all vote the same in November and our hobbies are varied. That "diversity" is irrelevant in our unity of loving our neighbors as ourselves.

This mini season of three holidays reminds us of another unifying attitude; none of us want to live in any other country. That hardly means we are happy with the direction our nation has been taking but it is here in the USA where we enjoy the liberty to attempt peacefully to change that direction.

That is the symbolism of the flag. It is both abstract and concrete, tangible and intangible. It represents the past and future while flying gloriously in the present.

Consider these holidays in turn.

- Memorial Day is the most retrospective of the three. We look back on all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf. Veterans are popular with the citizenry again, thank God. Appreciation of veterans waxes and wanes over time but I sense a genuineness now.

- Flag Day shows us the reason these veterans did what they did. The flag is a very real symbol to them, reminding them during the most dangerous times of why they were there. Flags have always served as rallying symbols on the battlefield, from the medieval need to designate the location of the lord to the regimental flags of the American Civil War, visual symbols that the regiment was still intact. Just read battlefield accounts of how the flag was never allowed to fall so long as one soldier was left alive. Losing the flag was the ultimate failure, an act nearly as egregious as cowardice.

- Independence Day concludes the patriotic pause but it represents our patriotism's metaphysical birth. The new nation declared its independence in 1776 but that was just talk until the Continental Army backed it up by winning the war. Its symbolism was essential to maintaining morale in that underfed, under-clothed and under-appreciated group of true patriots.

In that respect the Declaration of Independence may have been an intangible

gesture but still a critical one to the war's outcome. Its tangible benefit was anchored in its appeal to our unalienable, God-given rights. Governments may come and go, may be benevolent or malevolent, or structured in multiple ways but they still are transient. Natural rights, rooted in natural law laid down by our Creator God, are universal and eternal.

Declaring our independence from the King and Parliament of Great Britain is now only symbolic in the 21st century. I doubt King Charles represents an existential threat to our nationhood. What remains central to us as Americans are the threefold rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Those rights are the reality of the symbolic flag. We pledge allegiance to those principles, albeit in slightly different language. The Pledge of Allegiance should be more than simple recitation; it should rededicate us and inspire us to act out its ideals.

Can we do that, given the state of our national discourse? Can we live as if America were still "one nation under God"?

It is too easy to blame the politicians in Washington, as repugnant as their words and deeds may be. We did elect them, after all. Thomas Jefferson warned that "the government you elect is the government you deserve." But then he was not above the down-and-dirty political shenanigans of his day. I have found it is best to treat Jefferson under a "do as I say, not as I do" rubric.

It comes down to us, John and Jane Q. Public. How? Don't ask me. I'm as discouraged as everyone else. I am equally susceptible to a sense of powerlessness in the voting booth.

Then I look at the 97 flags lining my street and I recall those memorable lines of the Declaration. Liberty is worth fighting for, on the battlefield and in the voting booth. ♦

The Bookshelf

Knowing What We Know

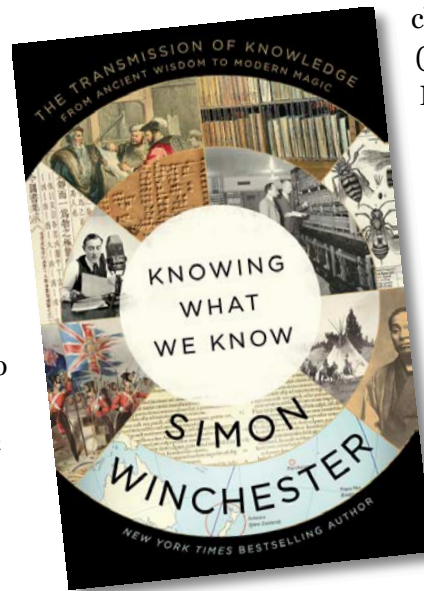
Simon Winchester is an irritating author I love to read. He is one my wife also enjoys so we tend to listen to audio recordings of his books on long drives to visit family. It is his topic selection that attracts me; his two books on the origin of the Oxford English Dictionary may be my favorites for teaching me something I knew absolutely nothing about. Or maybe my favorite is “The Men Who United the States,” which treated such events as the Lewis and Clark expedition and the transcontinental railroad.

What I find irritating is his irrepressible urge to lecture us on billions of years of geologic history and Darwinistic evolution. The earth seems to keep getting older in his books but that may be an unfair accusation. Still, I tire of it.

“Knowing What We Know: The Transmission of Knowledge from Ancient Wisdom to Modern Magic” (Barnhill Press 2023, 383 pages plus brief notes, \$28 hardcover at Amazon) begins with a similar lecture but then proceeds on to deliver an immense and immensely fascinating recitation of historical factoids that Winchester ties together quite neatly. His thesis is to provide an historical overview of human knowledge’s journey through history.

Formal education is his first theme. This of course demands extensive reading which requires access to books. That takes him to the development of libraries and specifically encyclopedias.

In this day of Wikipedia and Google, only we boomers can recall the days of the door-to-door encyclopedia salesman and the financial sacrifice made by working class parents to improve their



children’s educational advancement. (And does anyone remember the Funk & Wagnall’s which were sold one book at a time through grocery stores?) One can only marvel at the intensity applied to the development of the first ones. It wasn’t just the writing of the articles; a classification system was needed as well as a cross-referencing system. Simple alphabetization or subject matter organization? It is no wonder that the first ones took decades to publish.

Winchester considers the proximate cause of our media-reliant source of knowledge to be the technological advances in communication. How transatlantic cables revolutionized news reporting is a point I think I can agree with. The only gripe I have with this section is his near-worshipful respect for the journalistic integrity of the New York Times. He does fault them for being misled by false intelligence prior to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 but considers this an aberration. He fails to mention its buying into a similar false bit of intelligence, the Steele dossier, and its complete subservience to the 1619 mantra. The book was published this year so he should have been aware of this repudiation of the NYT’s claim for objectivity.

Another section is devoted to the efficacy and usefulness of propaganda by talented practitioners. Some anecdotes do not compliment the human tendency to allow the ends to justify the means. He uses several wartime examples, such as the British “fake news” of German atrocities against babies in World War I, to show how effective propaganda can be. He also takes on modern marketing as a commercial application of propaganda. Until I read this book, I did not know it was a brilliant marketing campaign that convinced American consumers that bacon and eggs were the healthiest option for breakfast rather than a simple repast of toast and coffee.

Artificial Intelligence receives its share of Winchester's attention as he leads up to this modern phenomenon by way of the histories of GPS and the Google search engine and eventually arriving at GPT (generative pre-training transformer). One illustration I particularly liked was the experiment of asking AI to complete Shelley's sonnet Ozymandias. Giving the tool only the first three lines, the resultant poem was interesting but departed from the original.

Winchester is fascinated by the polymaths of history, the paragon being Bertrand Russell in Winchester's opinion. What place is there for them in a world ruled by artificial intelligence? Could they even exist? Why bother to know anything anymore? Good questions.

He can't but help ending with a contrarian viewpoint. What if AI does not atrophy the brain but liberates it? If the tedious work of memorizing facts and doing simple calculations are done for us, will it free our minds to actually think?

Will it allow us to be better human beings? Can we attain the ultimate enlightened state, that of true wisdom?

I would counter Winchester's with this question: Can we risk finding out?

Recommendation: Winchester is always interesting and informative although his tendency to wander about can irritate the impatient. Be prepared to accept his politics, which don't necessarily align with those of this foundation. ♦

Backgrounders

Richard Moss, M.D., a surgeon practicing in Jasper, was a candidate for Congress in 2016 and 2018. He has written “A Surgeon’s Odyssey” and “Matilda’s Triumph,” available on amazon.com. Contact him at richardmossmd.com or Richard Moss, M.D. on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



The Jasper Wildcats — A Way Forward

(June 30) — I joined Jasper nation on the long voyage up to Victory Field in Indianapolis, the epicenter of Indiana and of Indiana baseball, to support and applaud our young stalwarts, the Jasper Wildcats, at State, a great team from a great town with a great tradition and legacy. My family and I were among the more than one thousand fans that made the three-hour journey so that our team, the best of their year, the pride of their families, the glory of their school and community would know they were not alone. Twenty years ago, when I first settled in our little hamlet, the notion of making such an excursion to watch a high school baseball game would have been unthinkable. But no longer, for I have seen the light. Wildcat baseball is simply the best damn baseball around.

I have had a lifelong allegiance to baseball, a function of the neighborhood, or should I say, the borough in which I grew up, for this was no ordinary place. Indeed, there the Bronx, giants and titans walked among us, and immortals battled, for in that place was Asgard, the center of the universe, the home of the greatest sports franchise of all time, the New York Yankees. I had emerged over many years in the thrall of Yankee fandom, watched in awe the legends of the game, the great heroes of my youth, adorned in regal pinstripes, wielding bats as imperial scepters, punishing and dispatching would-be challengers to their throne, collecting their triumphs and trophies as predictably as the passing of the

seasons and the rising of the sun. Indeed, to be a Yankee fan, it seemed, was to live in eternal light. I tracked the box scores and standings religiously, papered my walls and ceiling with images of Yankee greats, most especially, my boyhood idol, Mickey Mantle, and made regular pilgrimages on the No. 4 train to their hallowed temple, the Vatican of baseball, Yankee Stadium . . .

But over time, my attraction to the sport, especially the Major League version, waned, the devotion of yesterday, that majestic river of affection and reverence reduced to a trickle, barely noticeable in the stream of life’s drives and obsessions. I no longer cared much about the game, paying heed only, perhaps the odd chance the Yankees found themselves at play in October. No, the old pieties had withered and gone.

The reasons were, perhaps, obvious. What with the scandals, the free agency, the galactic salaries, the steroids and strikes, the body piercings, tattoos, grills, braids, pony tails, and facial hair, the massive egos, the arrogance, fist pumping, and showboating, the questionable conduct on and off the field — why patronize a throng of tattooed, body pierced, pampered and whiney multimillionaires playing half-heartedly?

But I had found something far better: crisp, accomplished, and exhilarating baseball played by clean cut, fresh-faced, well-behaved athletes with egos in check, competing for the love of it, representing their families and communities, their school and town, and in a magnificent ball field — right here at Ruxer Field in Jasper.

It was here where the fundamentals of the game were taught and practiced, with often flawless execution: fielding, pitching, hitting, and base running, pressuring opponents, wearing down pitchers, forcing errors, taking advantage of mistakes, eking out victories or winning lopsided contests — and in all the ways available to them: on the mound the field, at the plate and on the base paths, bunting, stealing, moving runners over, hit and runs, walks, squeeze plays, sacrifices, base hits, and, yes, the towering drive or extra base hit. Year in, year out, our team was there: competitive, determined, bristling with talent and

well-honed skill, and intent on winning. Drilled by their coach of 36 years, a throwback from a tougher (and better) era; he demanded excellence and got it, teaching his young wards, as they referred to it, the “Jasper Way.”

Our players carried themselves with dignity and grace on the field and off like they used to in the majors. They wore their pinstriped uniforms proudly, exuding confidence but not cockiness, which they kept under wraps. They were a disciplined, well-trained lot, their inspired play, their positive values and devotion to team and town, plainly evident – and all in a beautiful and grand ball field.

Now this was baseball . . .

It is, perhaps our small towns, tossed and scattered across the heartland, where we have our greatest opportunity to salvage the American republic. Here, we hold fast to the formerly mainstream verities of hearth and home, faith and family, God and country.

Here, we cling to the customs and mores of a commercial republic, based on the principles of liberty, limited government, and private property rights. We uphold such quaint notions as sacrifice, dedication, and the pursuit of one’s dreams, all nurtured in an ambience steeped in the Judeo-Christian ethos, family, church, civic associations, and community.

We recoil from the 60-year assault on our culture and civilization by the Left, and its noxious ideologies such as critical race theory, radical feminism, and transgenderism. We shudder at the horrendous damage and moral anarchy that has culminated in widespread illegitimacy, dysfunctional families, welfare dependency, drug addiction, and criminality. We are aghast at the relentless indoctrination of our youth in our entertainment, films, social media, and, especially, our schools and woke churches. Yet, there remains an appetite to stand athwart the cult-Marxist wave and preserve our way of life.

At the national level, it appears we are broken, hopelessly divided between two competing visions, but we may succeed on a local level, and, perhaps, at a state level certain red states. It is locally, though, where we can attend school board

meetings, petition our county commissioners, and lobby our city councils. Locally, we are best positioned to defend our beliefs, and preserve the sanctities and traditions that bind a community and a society, and allow a people to thrive and flourish. Here, we can best defend American values and Western civilization, and begin the long march through our institutions – to retake them – or create new ones. The spiritual rot is deep, the chaos profound, and surely it begins at the head, but there remain shoots of life, sprigs and seedlings of truth, beauty, and goodness across the vast expanses of the continent, and, yes, they flourish in small towns like Jasper.

So, this New York transplant became a devoted Wildcat baseball fan. And their loss at State was as painful to me as anyone. But I know our boys will be back. They are, after all, the Jasper Wildcats, the New York Yankees of Indiana high school baseball.

Maryann O. Keating, Ph.D., a resident of South Bend and an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is co-author of “Microeconomics for Public Managers,” Wiley/Blackwell.



A Plea for Law and Order

(Aug. 31) – When Hoosiers gather to discuss local government expenditures, polarization kills conversation. Comments like, “We absolutely need more bike trails,” and “It’s the potholes, stupid,” do not help. Why not start with principled limits on government, a recognition of scarce tax revenue and a locality’s particular concerns?

Consider four groups that successfully direct local funds to preferred projects:

- Firms who want the public to assume the private cost and risk of doing business; they argue that this is essential for job creation and economic development.
- Nonprofits wishing to transfer substantial resources towards social issues; they argue that this is the only way to maintain law and order.

- Organizations concerned with preserving the natural environment; they argue in terms of the earth's long-run sustainability.
- All those earning salaries in association with the above groups.
- Interest groups seeking to direct local funds to their preferred projects function legitimately, but they crowd out issues benefitting the public in general. Hoosiers have generally given priority to public safety, education, public health, bridges and highways, water quality and adequate sewage treatment.

Local officials do not function well as the final arbiter of what a community needs, and self-appointed experts in the form of interest groups often do a great deal of harm. There is no right recipe for local government, and, even with free elections, mistakes will be made. But is it too much to expect those writing laws and making policies to try to work out a system for maintaining general norms of justice?

“Whose Justice?” some ask, “Commonly-held values no longer count.” Of course, they do. Individuals long for safe, stable and peaceful neighborhoods, and can act together even if they do not think alike. We should expect the government to promote conditions and remove obstacles to promoting safe communities. The challenge is achieving this with a minimum of civil coercion and within the prerogatives of democratic government.

Totalitarian regimes can be relatively stable in pursuit of evil ends. Therefore, we are reluctant to impose any comprehensive view of civil behavior, thinking that this represents a lack of respect for certain people. However, this destroys justice for anyone. Justice is motivated and consists of appropriate relationships with other people, and a government fails to the extent that it does not provide or promote justice.

Policymakers need to distinguish between behaviors that must be tolerated in a free society and those that lead to civil decay. Then, we will hold everyone responsible for obeying local laws and ordinances. For example, no one gets to set

up tents on public property without permits and shoplifters can expect to be punished.

Fifteen Indiana counties rank in the 90th percentile or higher among all counties in the U.S. in terms of fewer violent crimes per 100,000 residents. Of course, within these top-ranked counties, there are pockets of disorder. As well, there are pockets of order in 5 out of 92 Indiana counties ranking below the 15th percentile nationally in terms of violent crime. Hoosier communities have different needs and traditions. Overall, we need to restore the priority of self-government where citizens can realize their particular concerns.

Too often, meaningful public celebrations in Hoosier towns have been discontinued, supposedly due to civil disorder. Yet, non-government organizations still retain the ability to sponsor publicly attended events, admittedly charging high entrance fees to cover private security costs.

However, a functioning democratic society is re-invigorated through celebrations of civic holidays and traditional community events. Besides the ever-present small group of disruptors, what other factors preclude 4th of July celebrations and summer street festivals? Evidently, officials believe that they personally have more important events to attend, no doubt out-of-town. Or, are decision-makers distracted by interest groups and unwilling to allocate scarce revenue in providing security for public events? Police officers parading around in cool motorcycles and leather jackets impress 7-year-olds. However, teens and older would respect highly visible pairs of cordial officers deterring or apprehending anyone getting the least bit out-of-line at nominally priced public events.

Suppose local officials began to value and support small services like warning sirens benefitting all residents rather than granting large benefits to special interests. Such towns might even be willing to reinstate traditional high school basketball tournaments between Christmas and the New Year. ♦



Thomas Hoepker, Sept. 11, 2001

The Outstater

A Mayoral Campaign to Nowhere

(Sept. 4) — If you are following the mayoral campaigns in Indianapolis these past few weeks you know how grim is the future of our capital city. As has been written before here, both the Democrat and Republican are speaking out for gun control, the code words for “I’m going to focus on inanimate objects and ignore crime if it has a racial component.” Their incessant and pandering television ads on that point are an embarrassment to a once proud city.

These two pasty, privileged white guys insult our intelligence by dragging in front of the cameras hapless relatives of intra-racial murders. This is a grindingly unsubtle message to black voters that the candidates care about them — at least to the degree that they will give them a television spot after their son or brother is murdered.

And there is material for a lot of television spots. Indianapolis is on track to record 192 homicides for the year, 96 murders so far and 284 shootings. Neither candidate wants to say this out loud but the great number of those murders and shootings are black-on-black crimes. Indeed, the slight drop in the numbers this year can be explained by the sad thought that perhaps the city is running out of young blacks to shoot at each other.

It is cynical to assume that the candidates are focused on what their consultants tell them will

get them elected, not on saving lives. But depending on the year, blacks are 30 to 40 times more likely to be murdered than their white peers. Nationally, blacks are 12.5 percent of the population but 53 percent of the murder victims.

If you were running for mayor of Indianapolis wouldn’t you make those percentages known instead of broadcasting the maudlin and obvious point that mothers and sisters bereave their loved ones? Moreover, wouldn’t you be curious about proven ways to lower violent crime now instead of chasing hypothetical “root” causes later? William Otis of Georgetown University Law Center has the right take on this:

“So if we thought — to pick a phrase out of the air — that black lives matter, what would we do? We wouldn’t knock down statues or re-name streets or hold long-faced academic symposia about 1619. We would reduce the murder rate. We would do what we know works to accomplish this: 1) hire more police (not administrators) rather than defund them; 2) do more aggressive policing rather than less; 3) focus on the specific neighborhoods where crime is concentrated; and 4) lengthen prison sentences for those convicted of violent crime before rather than after it escalates into murder.”

It may be that the leaders of the crime-burdened communities want to avoid the appearance that they have been unable to manage such a critical issue.

But to borrow another point from Otis, the Ku Klux Klan was never as effective at putting black lives at risk as the Democrat (and perhaps Republican) mayors of our cities.

In any case, considering the life-and-death nature of the problem, there has been little meaningful cooperation with the police. All we get is a rehashing of the decades-old racial narrative of victimhood and power denied — a corrosive attitude that eventually will affect public safety in the city at large.

It’s going to take some courageous leadership to overcome all that. It doesn’t appear that Indianapolis has it.

Don't Just Stand There, Join Something

(Aug. 18) — Hoosiers take for granted what economists call “social capital.” We have been aswim in it throughout our state’s history, beginning with our pioneers and settlers and continuing into our period of industrialization and innovation.

You might assume, then, that social capital is something we can draw upon without additional effort. You would assume wrong. The supply is dwindling.

Still, those who come to Indiana from other parts of the country invariably are impressed by the quality of people here, our social capital. A visitor and friend remarked upon ordering at a fast-food restaurant in northeastern Indiana that the young woman behind the counter seemed to walk out of a television commercial — her politeness, charm, industry and, perhaps most importantly, her capacity to cooperate toward common aims.

There is a related story that the executives of another restaurant chain noticed that one of their stores was doing 20 times the business of similar stores in other locations. It took them a while but by elimination they discovered the reason: An elderly waitress of uncommon social capital was drawing in customers and keeping them loyal day in and day out.

This kind of person is not created overnight. It takes generation upon generation. Two members of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, economists Maryann O. Keating and Barry Keating, are studying how it happens — or doesn't.

In a new book, *Rebuilding Social Capital* (Acton Institute, Christian Social Thought Series), they explore the role of social capital in our communities. Their concern is that it is declining.

“For many Americans today, there are fewer and fewer enduring loves, demanding loyalties and cultural ties,” they write. “Fewer people live where they were born. Families are less stable.

Individuals become self-absorbed. This takes place against a background of perpetual dissatisfaction and critiquing of institutions.”

The Keatings cite a study by the Joint Economic Committee, “The Geography of Social Capital in America,” that ranks states and even counties by their social capital score using available measures of social capital (the criteria is explained in the upcoming fall journal). Indiana ranks a disappointing 23rd in the nation. You can look up your county’s score here.

Another, courser indication of lost social capital would be the number of homeless (weather conditions being equal). Indiana does relatively better there. Our Dr. Richard McGowan reports that Indiana ranks among the states with the lowest number of homeless (8 per 10,000 people compared with California’s 44 per 10,000).

What’s at stake? We are warned that quality of life, constitutional democracy and markets all function well only when they can live off several centuries of accumulated social capital.

Another warning: Avoid political solutions that involve government, which consumes or exploits social capital rather than creates it. There is a relationship, though: Government depends on social capital to run efficiently while social capital cannot be built without freedom of association and speech guaranteed by government.

Oddly promoters in the Chamber of Commerce and legislative mold rarely bring up the state’s social capital, preferring to sell tax rebates and bonding schemes. Perhaps that is because it is difficult to take political credit for social capital. For building it is an individual thing requiring a willingness to dedicate time, to accommodate differences and to cooperate in the interest of productivity and achievement regardless of who gets the credit.

The good news is that there is no limit to the number of small social-capital “factories” you can start in your community — book and bridge clubs, corner pubs, 4-H projects, neighborhood associations, Bible studies, hobby and study groups, sporting interests, even golf foursomes. It is there, and not staring into a smart phone or

pursuing a graduate degree, where we learn to be good citizens, to be good people.

So keep your ears open for something that sounds interesting. Form a new group or join an existing one. The future of our country depends on it.



Helmholtz (after the collision)

A Tale of Two Artworks

(July 31) — How’s the culture war going? Well, I have the perfect seat for it — on a favorite bench in the middle of Freimann Square in downtown Fort Wayne.

There, on the southwest corner of the square, is Gen. Anthony Wayne, hero of Fallen Timbers, his horse with one front leg raised signifying that the rider had been wounded in battle. The statue, the work of George Gainer in 1917, had to be moved in 1973 from its preferred location, which became a park named for the city’s first black councilman.

Score one for the progressives.

On the other end of the square is “Helmholtz,” an example of Soviet-era “girder art” (steel rubble being the most readily available artistic material in post-war Leningrad). The statue, although only dedicated in 1986, is referred to as “iconic” by the one side in the local culture war, a group of literati associated with the Fort Wayne Museum of Art.

The other side, though, was fond of relating Helmholtz to a car wreck (a criticism with an ironic twist that will be explained in a moment). At its dedication, the editor of the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel had this to say: “Those responsible for bringing the likes of Helmholtz to Fort Wayne would be surprised and hurt if they were told that a great number of their neighbors consider them arrogant, self-satisfied members of a pretentious elite afflicting this community with a particularly meaningless form of radical chic.”

The war was on.

The action began in the early morning hours of Father’s Day 2013. The director of facilities for the Fort Wayne Museum of Art took the first call from police; there had been an accident; Helmholtz had been attacked, perhaps fatally, by a Chevrolet Silverado. The 6,000-pound pickup and its driver were relatively uninjured but the 20,000-pound Helmholtz was flattened. Here is the tearful account of the museum vice president:

“After a night of presumed revelry, we know that he (the Helmholtz attacker) eventually turned south on Barr Street, crossing Main Street at a speed which left him no time to realize Barr Street terminates almost immediately. His pickup swiftly hurtled over the curb, skidded across the park, and pummeled straight into Helmholtz’s left foot. The truck’s power lifted the leg and the momentum of the vehicle twisted Helmholtz until he could no longer stand.”

Score one for the traditionalists.

But Helmholtz, it turns out, was extravagantly insured. And the museum staff was determined to get the community’s joking behind them and restore the work to what they imagined was its glory (although set a few hundred feet farther back from the street). Estimates were that it would take a year and \$20,000 to repair. Well worth it, the museum crowed, Helmholtz forever!

So, victory for the progressives, and know that it extends far beyond Freimann Square. This is only a small battle in what the French art critic Pascal Bruckner calls a global “conquest of art.” What looks like art is not art, he writes in a

recent *City Journal*, and what doesn't look like art is art. The ruling class will tell us which is which.

“Some hold that we can no longer revere classics in painting, sculpture, literature and music, since the creators worked in a racist, patriarchal and colonial era,” Bruckner warns. “It is time to clean the Augean stable, they say, to have done with any reference to High Culture.”

Sitting on my bench I look across at the general, sword in hand, astride his faithful steed “Impetuosity” and ponder his fate in the culture war. He won the battle that opened the West to settlement. In the process, though, his men killed three dozen or so Native Americans (“savages” he called them) and he is said to have pinched a few “serving wenches.”

His days on Freimann Square are numbered.

Criminology for the Clueless

(July 25) — We lost interest in the gun-control debate a couple of decades ago when one side began piling up incontrovertible data that crime was not the fault of inanimate objects but rather of a society that left fatherless young men aimlessly roaming the streets at night. The pile is about to my waist now.

At the same time, the argument of the other side required only that you unquestioningly accept the blood libel that white people are somehow at fault. Here is Heather Mac Donald writing for the Manhattan Institute:

“For the past two decades, the country has been talking about phantom police racism in order to avoid talking about a more uncomfortable truth: black crime. The best way to lower police-civilian contacts in inner-city neighborhoods would be to radically lower the crime rate there.”

And here is a summary of the research coming across my desk this week:

- A 1999 study examined 13 different gun-control policies, including waiting periods, registration, background checks, bans on assault weapons and other guns, the death penalty and harsher penalties for committing a crime with a firearm. The only policy reducing

the number and severity of mass public shootings was to allow victims to defend themselves with permitted concealed handguns.

- In Canada and Britain, countries with tough gun-control laws, the percentage of burglaries where the resident is at home is about 50 percent. In the United States, with fewer restrictions on gun ownership, the rate is 13 percent.
- A study synthesizing all prior research in the United States and Canada found registration to be of no benefit in reducing any type of firearms misuse.
- Retail theft has increased 90 percent since 2018, driven not by economic hardship but by organized gangs taking advantage of woke management, lax prosecution and reduced penalties. Robberies and burglaries cannot be far behind.

Yet, as one-sided as the debate has been, few politicians dare frame it as such. Instead, it rolls on as if it were an honest disagreement among the civic-minded.

It is nothing of the sort. Gun control has never worked outside the most brutal of totalitarian regimes — Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia, Pol Pot's Cambodia. Indeed, it is hard to resist the cynical thought that the goal is to make it easier to march us off to camps where our wedding rings and gold fillings can be collected before we are dispatched for the greater good.

But let's assume that the political class has just fallen into a bad habit of using the words “gun control” as code for “I'm unserious about reducing crime if it has a racial component.”

Our columnist Dr. Richard McGowan, writing about the recent murder of State Trooper Aaron Smith, notes the reluctance of the politically inclined to mention an obvious pattern in crime. It is that blacks kill police officer in larger proportion to their population than other demographic groups — much larger. We call it prudence, not profiling, when the description of a suspect fits someone nine times more likely to assault you.

That would seem to demand tactical application. But no, again it is not to be mentioned in polite company and certainly not in regard to law enforcement. Police officers determining who might be dangerous to themselves and others, are placed at a disadvantage.

We are seeing this play out in the campaign for Indianapolis mayor. Both the Republican and Democrat promise to fight for gun control (ergo, to be unserious about crime). And, predictably, they promise to spend more tax money to pursue the always elusive “root causes.”

It was interesting, then, when a third party entered the picture, one totally objective, nonpartisan and independent. What would such a party make of Indy’s twin crime-fighting mayoral hopefuls?

Not much. Gimlet-eyed insurance executives are unimpressed with the politicizing of a life-and-death issue. The Broad Ripple Village Association, which endorses the mayor’s gun-free zone, is having trouble finding coverage for its events, according to Axios Indianapolis.

“Insurance companies want to see a permanent boundary,” Axios assumes, “but Broad Ripple hasn’t settled on one because a small security barrier would exclude some bars and restaurants and a large one would make it harder to stop weapons from passing through, increasing the risk of shootings.”

Oh snap, how did we miss that? Insurance companies don’t want to be on the hook if someone decides to . . . well, ignore the mayor’s campaign strategy, succumb to root causes and shoot the place up? Actuary science might prefer actual protective measures— a virtual wall, perchance, or policemen with both eyes open, or criminals surrounded by armed, law-abiding citizens.

This is a cultural war, and we are losing it.

Viva la France — Or What’s Left of It

“Only resolute and urgent action will avert it even now. Whether there will be the public will to demand and obtain that action, I do not know. All I know is that to see, and not to speak, would be the great betrayal.” — Enoch Powell’s “River of Blood” speech (1968)

(July 3) — We have spent three generations now trying to help those seen as more vulnerable, less advantaged, less privileged, or however you want to say it. But watching from afar the ethnic civil war in France this summer, it is clearly time to help others as well — those with the resolve to protect our civilization, our liberty, our identity, whether or not they be advantaged, privileged, or however you want to say it.

France is coming to that realization too late. It now knows that mass migration is a thing, not just good intentions gone awry. It changes countries inherently. It reverts to the world’s default setting — envy, violence, misery, chaos, injustice and systemic poverty. Hollywood may romanticize the indigenous world, but try living in it for a while. You will be on the next boat to France — or America, or what you imagined once was America.

An interview during the debacle that was the Afghanistan withdrawal sticks in the mind. A Taliban officer was asked why if the end of the U.S. presence was so welcomed by his countrymen were so many stowing away on U.S. rescue flights. His answer: “Who wouldn’t?” And back in Indiana, lest you think our officials will protect us from such insanity, Gov. Eric Holcomb blithely welcomed these random Afghans as if they were Italian shoemakers, Swedish farmers or Japanese gardeners.

Let’s return to the events in France, namely a week of violent rioting ostensibly over a fatal traffic stop. There are hundreds of thousands of immigrants arriving every year. Forty-one percent of them are from Africa, the population of which is expected to double in the next generation. They are no longer coming to work in the tomato fields to begin a generations-spanning climb into the middle class. They are coming to join a

burgeoning, welfare-fueled diaspora stuck in the cities, “stuck,” meaning their young men and women see no place for themselves in the high-tech yuppie world there. Violence and gangs rule, a clash of civilizations.

That last is the important part: Unlike the story of immigrants of the past two centuries, they are not melding into the host civilization, becoming what it means to be French or American or British. And a report released by the French Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies this spring found that a third of the people in France now are either immigrants or immigrants’ children or immigrants’ grandchildren.

So, are we going to learn from this?

Thomas Sowell famously observed that each new generation born is in effect an invasion of civilization “by little barbarians, who must be civilized before it is too late.” Today, half of them are learning they deserve special reparations of one sort or another and the other half is learning that if you are raised in a home deemed “privileged,” if you compete on merit in school and in the workplace, if you make a Christian marriage, you are expected to stand gladly in line behind political designated groups for jobs, education and housing. It is no wonder they laugh at what we call our founding principles.

The Left both in France and America would treat the rioters as a victim caste, one championed in Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson’s dissent in *Students vs. Harvard College*. Justice Clarence Thomas responded that such a view was unfathomable to him: “It is an insult to individual achievement and cancerous to young minds seeking to push through barriers, rather than consign themselves to permanent victimhood.”

To raise such concern is to invite denigration as a racist or the case of Thomas, the stooge of racists.

That must change. We have a right — literally — to describe the vision we have for our nation, our identity, a right to be alarmed at what we have seen this last week on the streets

of Marseille, Nanterre, Lille, Toulouse, Pau and Lyons.

There are those in the ruling class who have used their power to encourage mass immigration solely as a means of advancing ideology or merely to feed resentment. Now they are using riots. They should prepare to explain themselves to a nation falling apart.

If they cannot, there is a word for that, too. It is “treason,” or however you want to say it.

They Ain’t Going to Study War no More

(June 29) — Indiana University as most large American universities has adopted the position that there are certain subjects, however actual, that should not be seriously studied. War would be one of them. British colonialism would be another. Why?

By “seriously” it is meant that there is a history course that makes an effort to assemble a factual framework rather than follow a politically defined narrative. That is nowhere apparent in flipping through the I.U. catalogue. I hope I’m wrong.

But ask about, say, expertise in a specific battle of the American Revolution and you are likely to get a specialist in Protestant settler atrocities against native American corn farmers.

Here, to give you a feel for the history faculty, is a sampling of thumbnails that the department lists as its experts on the 19th century (a period you would have thought was defined by war and colonial struggles rather than gender studies):

- “Senior Research Fellow, the Kinsey Institute for Research in sex, gender and reproduction; affiliate professor, Department of Gender Studies; adjunct professor, Department of American Studies.”
- “Empire; coloniality (sic); slavery; race and gender in Latin America; Caribbean history; digital humanities.”
- “Modern South Asia; world architecture and urbanism; British imperialism.”
- “Comparative labor and working class history; race and ethnicity; U.S. immigration history; Gilded Age and Progressive Era; U.S.

women's and gender history; U.S. cultural and intellectual history."

- "Nineteenth century United States (social and cultural aspects); women and gender."

You are right to suspect that there's not much military history in those large woke brains. Nor is the faculty likely to have anything nice to say about the British Empire or American exceptionalism.

Those two historical categories deal primarily with a group, i.e., men, purged from Bloomington lectures. As historian Tami Biddle observes: "Many in the academic community assume that military history is simply about powerful men — mainly white men — fighting each other or oppressing vulnerable groups."

And there's no money in it. Indiana University receives boats full from China in the form of research grants (most of it for the hard sciences), plus graduate study support and foreign student tuition (see Margaret Menge's essay in the Fall 2020 Indiana Policy Review). The Chinese Communist Party is seemingly uninterested in Americans learning about military history, especially its tactics and strategies.

In 2020, the head of Yale's history department declared that it would no longer teach any history not based on "questions of gender, class and race, and only to the degree it confronted Western Civilization and modern capitalism.

"In centers of learning across North America, the study of the past in general, and of wars in particular, is in spectacular eclipse," concludes the historian Max Hastings. And the director of the Center for National Defense, Thomas Spoehr, adds this, "The presumption in much of modern academia appears to be that: 1) only warmongers would teach about war; and 2) most military history, like much of history, is a tool of institutional oppression and control."

As for colonialism, British historian Dan Hannan has put together a list of facts that would shock the Bloomington student body. Among them is that under British rule Kenya's infant mortality declined from 400 deaths per thousand in the 1920s to 145 in the 1950s, and in Uganda

and the Gold Coast it halved. Wakanda, please know, is just a comic book.

Try to find on the Bloomington campus the professor who will tell you that Great Britain in suppressing the Atlantic slave trade lost more than 5,000 lives in addition to giving up 2 percent of its national income annually for 60 years? That, by the way, remains unmatched worldwide in foreign policy expenditures — a point of historic interest, you would think.

"The idea that the British Empire was a way to loot the colonies would have been met with incredulity by the colonial office throughout the 19th century," says Hannan. "It was forever fighting a rearguard action against taking on expensive new responsibilities at the behest of missionaries and do-gooders. If the empire was an exploitative machine, it was a spectacularly inefficient one."

The economist Lord Peter Bauer spent a lifetime collecting data on those nations supposedly exploited by colonization. He found them economically ahead of uncolonized nations with comparable resources. The reason, Hannah says, is that the ideas the colonizers instilled — rule of law, private property, free speech, free association, free worship, free competition, habeas corpus — turned out to be advantageous to the colonized.

Those are ideas that Bloomington now finds troublesome — reason enough apparently to wipe clean the history of the white men who believed in them.

Keeping Up Is a Crunky Trip

(June 25) — Going through the morning's digitals, a headline caught my eye: "Big Pokey, of Houston's Legendary 'Screwed Up Click' Dies after Collapsing at Juneteenth Show." Am I wrong to have questions?

Please understand that I am of an age accustomed to being out of sync, and I probably wouldn't need to ask too many younger than me before someone could explain the headline. Nonetheless, the disconnect was jarring. I felt I should check it out myself.

First of all, one is sad for Big Pokey’s family. At this writing, the cause of his demise is unknown pending toxicology. We do know that he was one of the last of the founding members of the musical group Screwed Up Click, a good number of whom having been murdered, incarcerated or overcome by recreational drug use.

Screwed Up Click we learn is a story in itself, although I’m not certain from whence the “legendary” comes. The group achieved regional fame in the early 1990s under the leadership of hip-hop personage DJ Screw.

Mr. Screw . . . how does one say this . . . “invented” the instrumental technique known as “Screwed and Chopped” or “Slowed and Thrown.” This, if you can follow, is a method of defeating the exact engineering of expensive audio equipment by scratching and otherwise distorting the output so as to replicate the sounds of a fire at a large zoo.

Anyway, the only part of all this of which I was dimly aware was the Juneteenth part. It began appearing uninvited on my Google calendar several years ago. The holiday, depending on your point of view, appears to be either a day set aside to hate white people or a day to celebrate Republicans having freed the slaves of Democrats, take your pick.

Listening to Big Pokey’s masterpiece “Fire,” I assume he was celebrating the former but I cannot be sure:

*Build an empire, the boss of the street game
Stack it up real pretty, I’m sicking all my
change
Fame is a trip, people can back stab you
Gotta watch your back, cause somebody could
grab you
Stay on no cases, and counting the big faces
They’ll be working for your vote all kinda
places
The glock stay crunk, and lit up at all times
But it make it heavy, that’s why I’m getting
mine*

Who can improve on that?

Still, we can hope that this next generation learns to merge disparate cultures, races, nationalities, communities, musical styles, whatever a way that preserves their unique arts, customs, charm — what is truly beautiful in them rather than what is merely narcissistic or purposely abrasive to the others. And we can hope they can do so without succumbing to envy, resentment or hatred of their neighbors, some of whom inevitably will have made better life choices.

For all of his talent, Big Pokey, aka Milton Powell (1975-2023), may he rest in peace, did not move us in that direction.

Let’s Hear it for the Midwest

(June 21) — There are many social and political threats these days against which we are asked to stand — too many in fact. So I have chosen just one: I stand against Midwest denigration, if the word is still allowed. We live in a wonderful place with an inspiring story and we need to say so.

To begin, I recommend my colleague Andrea Neal’s book, “Road Trip: A Pocket History of Indiana.” It will give you an accurate base on which to evaluate how we got where we are.

Also, there is David McCullough’s “The Pioneers.” He builds his book around the promise in the great Northwest Ordinance of secure property, the promise that brought my forefathers here and likely yours as well.

More general is John Lauck’s “The Good Country.” Lauck covers the Midwest at its zenith, the Midwest where the prairie was cultivated in an amazing 50 short years and the wondrous prototypes of the automobile, telephone, electric motor and more were built, all turning America into the richest, most advanced nation in the world only 150 years from its founding. There had been nothing like it in the history of the world.

Most important, it was a period that put on display the values of our great-great grandparents, values which still guide us and our children (in diluted form alas). This from Wilfred McClay in the current Claremont Review of Books:

“The American Midwest during its prime was the most democratically advanced place in the world, with a civic culture that prized education, literature, libraries and the arts, and sought to distribute an awareness and appreciation of them as widely as possible. It developed a ‘common democratic culture’ in which ‘Christianity, republican law and order, market culture, civic obligation and a midwestern-modified gentility of manner largely prevailed.’”

Some of us take the Midwest personally. Our families have been here since before the Northwest Ordinance. It is the only place we’ve ever wanted to stay, where we understand the people, where the pace is right.

But in adulthood it has been at first a puzzle, then a concern and finally a disappointment that others who grew up here do not share that allegiance. They seem embarrassed by the Midwest and take every chance to demonstrate Babbitt-like that their tastes in fashion, entertainment and travel rise above the provincial.

My co-workers at a corporate newspaper were careful to differentiate themselves from “the locals.” They were blind to schemes mounted by distant financial interests promoting a “big city” vibe downtown (at three times the assessed value). The city treasurer, meanwhile, was boning up on municipal bankruptcy law.

Ironically, I have found that the most sincere Midwest loyalty is often found in friends who moved here from elsewhere and “went native,” who had experienced alternate, supposedly more sophisticated lifestyles and chose ours instead. Indeed, much of what the East Coast considers sophisticated was incubated here in Lauck’s “Good Country.”

Harold Ross, for example, founder of the epitome of sophistication, *The New Yorker* magazine, is a midwesterner (well, perhaps more Great Plains). Here are some other examples of sophisticates whose hearts remained with the great middle of our country — all natives who found fame and fortune

but remembered us fondly and with admiration (at least most of the time):

Sinclair Lewis, Damon Runyon; Cole Porter; Hoagy Carmichael; Earnest Hemingway; Mark Twain; Frank Lloyd Wright; Ray Bradbury; Miles Davis; David Mamet; Garrison Keillor; Carl Sandburg; James Dean; Kurt Vonnegut; Grant Wood; T.S. Eliot; John Huston; Charlie Parker; Georgia O’Keeffe; Orson Wells; Laura Ingalls Wilder.

A favorite is Nancy (née King) Zeckendorf, who reached the heights of New York City ballet and became a fixture in philanthropic circles but got the money to attend her first dance lessons selling earthworms at the side of a road in western Pennsylvania.

Does that tell you something about the character that abounds here?

Finally, I have a word picture. It is of a ficus tree, a semi-tropical species popular with the managing elite of Miami, the headquarters of that newspaper I mentioned. The corporate types shipped in dozens for their offices here.

These particular ficus trees, however, didn’t take to Indiana light. Gradually, month by month, year by year, a few more leaves would yellow. Occasionally, as if with a sigh, one would fall as you sat in the board room awaiting another round of diversity training.

But corporate never gave up on the ficus. They were in the architectural floor plans, after all, so nobody dared take them out. Towards the end of my tenure the ficuses stood forlorn — mangy flora from a foreign land.

Some wanted to replace them with geraniums or peonies but they didn’t have the authority.

White Flight from Downtowns

(June 9) — “So go downtown; Where all the lights are bright; downtown waiting for you tonight; downtown you’re gonna be alright; downtown, downtown,” or so Petula Clark sang in 1964.

Indiana's major cities, as we note in the upcoming quarterly journal, are losing their regular citizens. "Regular" citizens? Yes, the kind that pay taxes, hold full-time jobs, buy things, look to one day owning secure property, perhaps raising a family and not getting mugged regularly.

But that is not the reality we are meant to see. We are to imagine a continuing influx of Baby Boomers, forever young and in need of night spots, artistic venues, museums and sports stadiums, all within a safe, pleasant walk to a pricy but cute studio apartment.

Wishing, however, does not make it so.

Downtowns are limited real-estate niches and have been since the 1980s despite billions of dollars in economic development. Our Sam Staley, an urban specialist now at Florida State, told it like it was in an early Indiana Policy Review: "The chief accomplishment of some (development projects) is to offer a more stimulating lunchtime environment for downtown office workers who have commuted in from the suburbs."

And more recently, Aaron Renn, an urban policy consultant based in Indianapolis, thinks that the downtown eco-devo game is near an end:

"The dirty little secret is that a lot of these places have been growing their youth populations by hoovering up the children of their hinterlands. To the extent that urban population growth is dependent on intrastate migration in these states with declining working-age populations, at some point there are just plain going to be a lot fewer youngster to move to the big city."

Indianapolis is the poster child for this folly. Since 2000, about 95 percent of the metro area's net migration has come from outstate, Renn says. About half of the state's counties are projected to lose population by 2050 with Indiana projected to add only 100,000 15-44 year olds by 2050 "Even if 100 percent of them, or even more than 100 percent of them, are in Indianapolis, this still implies a fairly modest growth rate," he argues Renn.

So what would actually benefit Indiana's major cities?

Again, it's something of a secret. That's because to mention crime in a post-George Floyd America is to be bigoted. In fact, though, public safety is about all a downtown needs to prosper. But to fix it people would have to be arrested and prosecuted in uncomfortable racial proportions, or so FBI data indicates.

Nonetheless, we try to keep tabs on crime for the safety of our membership, and here are two new works that bring us up to date:

"The Culprits Behind White Flight," a New York Times op-ed by Princeton professor Leah Boustan, while confirming that the big-city exodus is serious, brushes it off as old-fashioned prejudice. But "Untenable: The True Story of White Ethnic Flight from America's Cities" by Jack Cashill of the American Spectator has a different take:

"What drove people from the leftist strongholds were two related phenomena: the hysteria generated by the liberal media and the draconian response to that hysteria by local authorities. Those who can flee oppression, flee. Even the woke. To anyone paying attention, which excludes most of the major media, crime was a driving factor (of the exodus). With the police in blue cities handcuffed during and after the George Floyd summer of 2020, murder rates shot up at a pace not seen since the 1960s. For the woke to protest crime, however, was to sound altogether too MAGA. Better to just add a wing to that summer cottage and call it home."

That or put some more Petula Clark on the Crosley. — *tcl*



“The Battle of Cowpens,” painted by William Ranney in 1845, shows an unnamed patriot (far left) saving the life of Col. William Washington.

INDIANAPOLICY

Review

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