

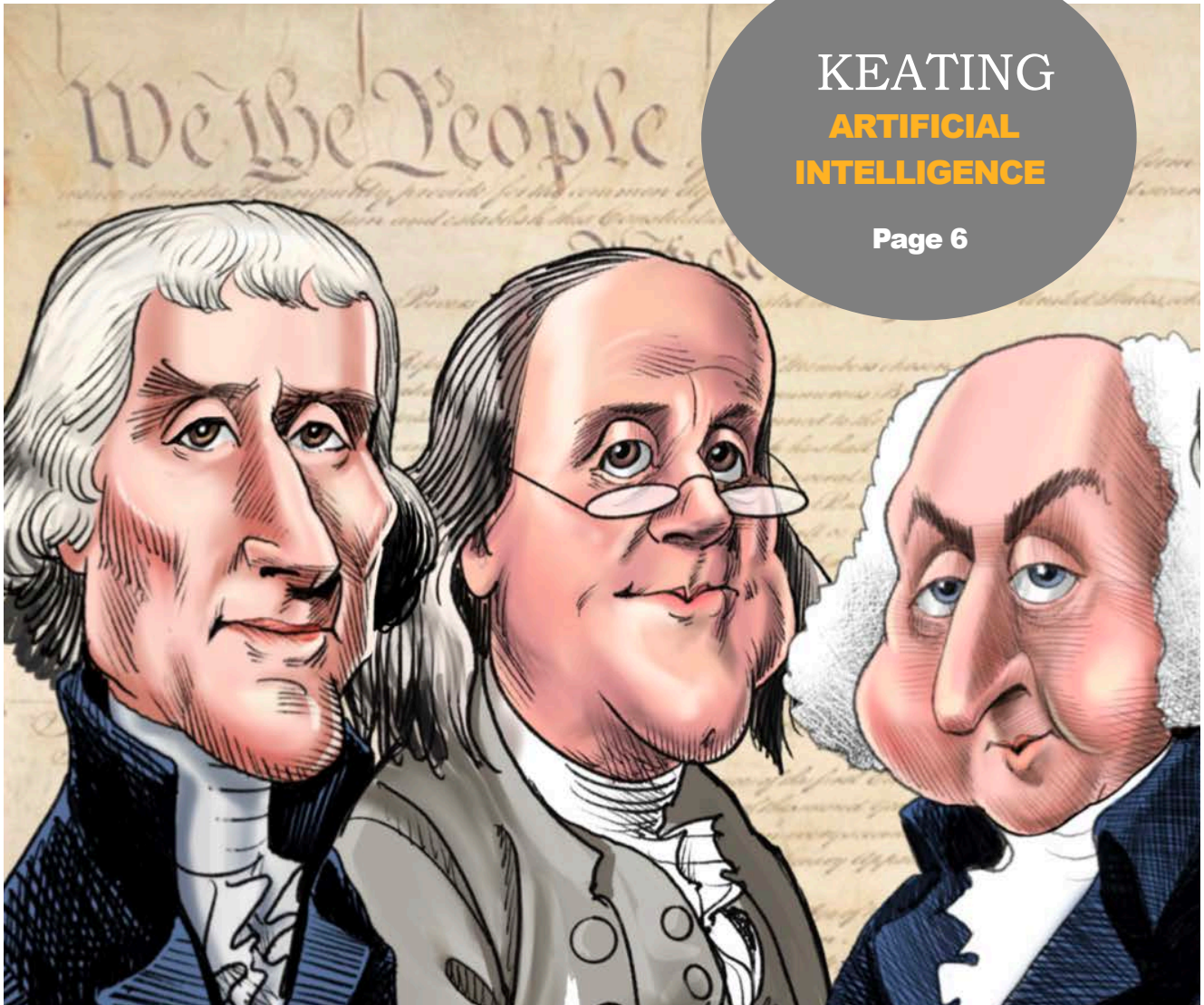
INDIANAPOLIS

Review

Spring 2024

KEATING
**ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE**

Page 6



A Return to Founding Principles What Would They Do?

With both a presidential election and the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence approaching, we examine issues facing the state through the lens of the Declaration and the Founders.

“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.”



Vol. 35, No.1, Spring 2024

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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Charles S. Quilhot

Byron S. Lamm

T. Craig Ladwig

The Indiana Policy Review Foundation is a nonprofit Indiana corporation, established in January of 1989 and recognized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Its officers and staff can be reached at: PO Box 5166, Fort Wayne, 46895; director@inpolicy.org or under the “contact us” tab at www.inpolicy.org. The foundation is free of outside control by any individual, organization or group. It exists solely to conduct and distribute research on Indiana issues. Nothing written here is to be construed as reflecting the views of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation itself or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before the legislature or to further any political campaign.

Wednesday Whist

IU Tenure and the Heidt Memo

We applaud the Indiana Legislature's revolutionary attempts this session to reign in group-think and lockstep tenure in the university system. It's about time.

We call it "revolutionary" in the sense the Founder's used the term and as it is explained in our newly published "Indiana Mandate: A Return to the Founding Principles." It is not a rebelling against anything, it is a revolving back to where it should be.

And thus thanks to some courageous legislative leadership the tradition of tenure revolves back, however haltingly, to its centuries-old purpose, i.e., to encourage and protect diversity of thought rather than continue an academic tyranny.

It has been a long time since you could say that about Indiana University's Maurer School of Law in particular. How do we know? We've been tracking it for more than three decades. During that time you would have felt lucky to draw a faculty advisor to the right of Malcolm X.

Robert Heidt, a professor there and a member of its admissions committee, documented the sorry situation in a series of articles for us citing a memorandum he wrote in 1996. The subject was the school's wildly discriminatory and self-demeaning affirmative action policy:

"The admissions committee maintains a de facto quota for the minimum number of certain minorities that it insists be enrolled in each entering class," Professor Heidt wrote. "And to fill that minimum quota the Admissions Committee has been willing to leap-frog minority applicants over more accomplished, qualified and promising non-minority applicants. While the same could be said for virtually all law schools, almost none is as willing as we to admit minority applicants with relatively poor credentials."



PROF. ROBERT HEIDT

Heidt said that more than 75 percent of the minority applicants at IU who were admitted with lower standards were from out-of-state. There have been years where fully two minority applicants were admitted for only one denied, a substantially better ratio than enjoyed by non-minority applicants.

Yes, you read that right; The policy of the state-funded university for many years had been to prefer significant numbers of under-qualified out-of-state students over as qualified or more qualified in-state students.

Heidt brought receipts in the form of charts comparing year-by-year admission rates and LSAT scores in dozens of other states. For example, in 2000, IU Law admitted 67 students with LSAT scores below 150 (more than 9 percent of that year's class). Neighboring Illinois admitted only 16.

(In February this year, Indiana University President Pamela Whitten expressed concern to U.S. News & World Report that the Senate's action would impede her institution's ability to compete with other states in attracting faculty talent. Hah!)

Heidt's memorandum was placed on the desks of the then IU president and chancellor. Only one or two faculty members and no administrator acknowledged receipt — too hot to handle.

The position had been summed up nicely in Justice Clarence Thomas's earlier dissent in *Gratz vs. Bollinger*: "The law school (Michigan University) is not looking for those students who despite a lower LSAT score or under-graduate grade point average will succeed in the study of law. The law school seeks only a facade — it is sufficient that the class looks right; even if it does not perform right."

Thanks to Professor Heidt, everybody in the Indiana university system saw what was going on. They had reason to know it was stupid and went along with it anyway — group-think run amok. Aren't supervisory boards and legislative

committees supposed to be looking out for these things?

Flipping through pages of the 1992 version of “Indiana Mandate” you see the pattern of malfeasance beginning to form. It’s a feature not a bug. That is the way university oversight has been handled these 30 years — with eyes tightly closed.

Please know this is not rocket science. We have written about other examples recently:

- Last week: In 30 years or so years if you don’t give K-12 classroom salaries a priority, in 30 years or so you will have fewer k-12 teachers, and especially fewer good ones.
- And earlier: In search of tuition dollars how many tens of hundreds of students from China can be admitted to Indiana universities without somebody wondering about their incentive to surveil and subvert?

● And now: If your practice is to admit mediocre law students, pretty soon you will have a mediocre law school.

But again, we like to think things are looking up. It was greatly encouraging this time around that someone other than a lone professor stood up to speak the truth, to challenge the wrong indeed, a majority of the Indiana Senate did so. Agreed, some problems take longer to solve than others, but three decades would seem sufficient to address at least one or two.

We detail 75 such issues in the new “Indiana Mandate.” Plenty of them are non-partisan and some are even self-evident. The legislators got their copies earlier this month. The state elected offices and the media got theirs a couple of weeks ago. You can buy yours now.

Let’s get busy, we can’t wait another 30 years.
— *tcl*

How to Order ‘Indiana Mandate’

You can now order “Indiana Mandate: A Return to Founding Principles” at the member price of \$19.54 at [Amazon.com/books](https://www.amazon.com/books). With both a presidential election and the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence approaching, the Indiana Policy Review, through the lens of the Declaration, examines 75 of the most critical issues facing Indiana. (Don’t forget gift copies for July 4th.)



Help Us Host a Book Signing

We have begun scheduling signing parties in advance of July 4th celebrations and the upcoming 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Tell us who you want to invite and pick a time, date and place. We’ll do the rest, asking nationally syndicated cartoonist Gary Varvel or one of our other contributors to join you for a wide-ranging discussion of the Declaration and Indiana issues. Contact our office for help with the details (260/417-4094).

Wednesday Whist.....	3
IU Tenure and the Heidt Memo	3
Artificial Intelligence: A Good Thing	6
Is Artificial Intelligence a Form of Cheating?.....	7
At Work in Classification	9
Used as a Tool	10
Concerns About and Regulation of Artificial Intelligence	11
A Return to Founding Principles.....	13
Mark Franke	15
Trump as Andrew Jackson, Biden as Buchanan.....	15
The Dawn of Artificial Intelligence	16
1776 — A Failed Experiment?.....	17
The Sovereignty of Conscience	18
The Generational Divide.....	20
Compromise Is Hard.....	21
The Bookshelf.....	23
Powers and Thrones: A New History of the Middle Ages	23
To Rescue the Constitution: George Washington and the Fragile American Experiment	24
German 1923: Hyperinflation, Hitler’s Putsch, and Democracy in Crisis.....	25
1923: The Crisis of German Democracy in the Year of Hitler’s Putsch	26
The Coddling of the American Mind	26
Backgrounders	30
Jesus: Socialist? Capitalist? It’s Complicated	30
The Dems and Their Biden (and Harris) Problem	31
The GOP and the Abortion Trap.....	32
The Travail of a Letter-Writer	34
Domestic Abuse Revisited	35
Is Disparity a Choice?	36
Diversity Comes to Jasper	37
The King’s Hawaiian Example.....	39
The Outstater.....	41
No, Dr. Whitten, We’re Not ‘Equal’	41
An Eternal Education Conundrum.....	42
Inside Journalism: What to Know	43
Equity? Here’s a Position for You.....	44
The Sole Proprietor Is Passé.....	45
A Word for You Old Fellows	46
No Saving Small-Town Journos	46
The Government Shell Game.....	47
The ‘Popobawa’ Election Analysis.....	48



Photo credit: Harvard Law School Center on the Legal Profession

Artificial Intelligence: A Good Thing

Do Great Masters Cheat When Using ChatGPT?

Barry Keating, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is Professor Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame.



Johannes Vermeer, the artist, produced about 35 works that are attributed to him with relative certainty. His most famous painting is arguably *Girl With A Pearl Earring* (1665). Centuries after his death Vermeer remains one of the most popular artists to have ever lived. When the National Gallery in London closed because of the pandemic they opened their collection to online viewers; one of the 20 most viewed works during that period was a Vermeer. It's clear from the

small volume of his paintings and the care with which they were executed that Vermeer worked carefully and slowly. There are some, however, who believe Vermeer “cheated.”

The criticism centers on Vermeer's use, or alleged use, of “enhanced tools.” The only reason any criticism or notice of Vermeer's work exists today is because he is considered one of the greatest painters of the Dutch Golden Age. However, along with other artists like Hans Holbein and Diego Velázquez, he stands accused of using something other than his trained eye and a set of brushes. These three Masters are accused of using “optics” to achieve the precision that appears in each of their works (D. Hockney, *Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters*, expanded edition, Aery, 2006).

When it was emptied after his death, Vermeer's workshop did not contain any optical devices. However, he did know one of the first lens makers in Holland and that same individual was the executor of Vermeer's estate. This suggests that Vermeer might have learned how to use optics to produce his paintings. Because his works seem to have been completed in the same room, they may

have required optics that were not easily transportable.

In 2013, Tim Jenison, an American, produced a documentary entitled *Tim's Vermeer*. In it, he describes how he attempted to duplicate Vermeer's *The Music Lesson*, completed in the artist's preferred work site. Jenison feels confident after completing this reproduction that he has demonstrated the techniques employed by Vermeer (*Tim's Vermeer*- Wikipedia).

The optical tool that Vermeer and others are suspected of using is called a camera obscura. Although Jenison considers various techniques, he initially employed a camera obscura in his Vermeer reproduction. Some art historians dispute the idea that Vermeer's work is based on the use of such a device, but it is worthwhile to consider the hypothesis.

A camera obscura entails a darkened room with a small hole in one wall that allows light to enter the device and project an image of what is outside on the opposite wall. An optical lens may be placed in the hole and that would sharpen the projected image. The use of such a lens was introduced well before the time Vermeer was painting in the 17th century. The image conceivably could be projected on canvas and used by an artist as a template for an extremely detailed painting.

The question we wish to examine here is, "If indeed he did employ the camera obscura as a tool, was Vermeer cheating?" Is it cheating to use a device of some sort to achieve an effect that others see as pleasing or useful? Should art critics discount *Girl with A Pearl Earring* as less pleasing if the result was "only" achieved by using an optical tool? Centuries of art critics and art lovers seem to speak with a single voice; Vermeer was a Master regardless of his technique.

Is Artificial Intelligence a Form of Cheating?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the development of computer systems to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as

visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages. Consider the use and benefit of Artificial Intelligence (AI) built into your automobile.

If you have a car that was purchased within the last ten years, it includes a sophisticated AI system that goes by many names depending on the car's manufacturer. Subaru calls their system EyeSight; Honda has Sensing 360; Toyota has Safety Sense, and so on. Most of these systems are very much alike. EyeSight involves a set of data-gathering sensors coupled with a decision-making AI algorithm. EyeSight has the ability through Lidar, a laser light detection system, along with dual front-facing color stereoscopic cameras to "see" and sense objects (cars, motorcycles, people, horses, etc.) in front of the car. The system classifies the objects, estimates their distance, senses their movement, and finally makes a decision on whether to take some action; all of this takes place in the blink of an eye. Actions taken by the AI might include visual and auditory warnings to the driver, reduction in engine speed, or the application of brakes.

One of the most common uses of AI systems in automobiles is "intelligent cruise control." This use of AI allows the driver to set a desired speed while allowing the system to detect vehicles (or people, animals, etc.) in front of the car and make necessary adjustments such as slowing down, speeding up, or stopping altogether. The system constantly classifies any objects in front of the vehicle, assigning them a category based on the system's training, and then takes appropriate action.

How does the accident-avoidance system classify a situation as one that might result in an accident? The system collects data, applies a set of rules, classifies the threat, and finally takes appropriate action. If you have ever felt your car brake automatically, you have benefitted from the AI system.

Are you cheating if you use adaptive cruise control or accident avoidance? Yes, in one sense,

you are cheating. When these systems are enabled, you are not in complete control. You have transferred some of the elements of safe driving to the AI system. Many drivers cheat all the time when they drive; their AI systems are always enabled.

Now, consider taking a grade-school student aside and teaching him or her to use ChatGPT, a natural language processing tool driven by AI technology. This is just one way to enhance the learning process and pique student interest.

The situation, we pose, is the following: students have been assigned a project in ecology. Our student chooses to learn and write about jackrabbits that live in the high desert of Idaho with special attention to how they survive harsh winters and omnipresent predators. There are full-semester college courses on how to prompt ChatGPT to get desired results, but in this example, merely one type of prompt is employed, namely, the “persona prompt.”

To use this prompt our grade school student “tells” ChatGPT to take on a persona, in this instance a jackrabbit. The AI processing tool is instructed to answer all questions as if it were a jackrabbit. The student can then interview the jackrabbit and collect information on any topic within the Jackrabbit’s domain: where and when it sleeps as well as dangers from intense desert cold and predators. Imagine having a Jackrabbit that knows everything you need to know for a school project and one that will answer all your questions.

Computers use algorithms, a set of rules desired to calculate or assess problematic situations. Suppose we introduced the student in addition to ChatGPT to another set of AI algorithms called Firefly. We ask this AI

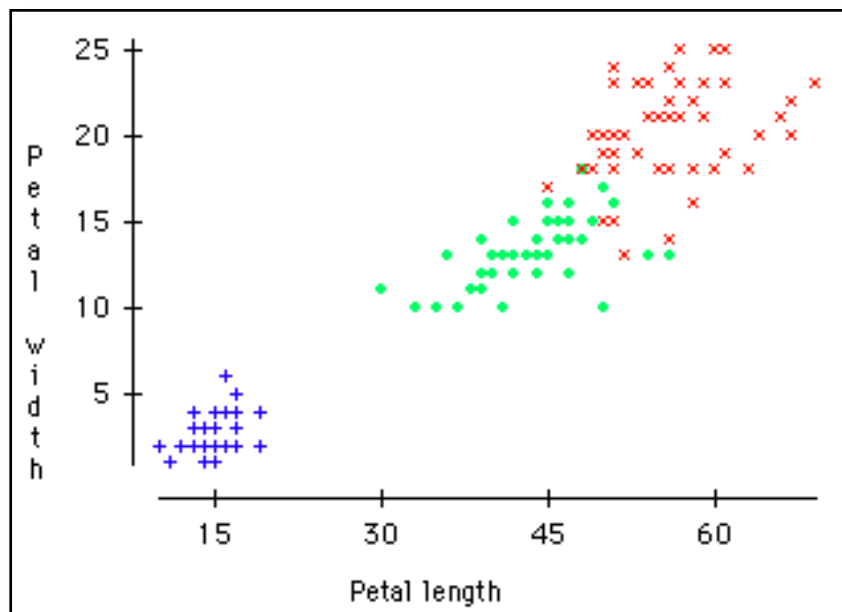


Figure 1. This figure is drawn using R. A. Fisher’s original Iris data set from his 1936 article (R. A. Fisher (1936). “The Use of Multiple Measurements in Taxonomic Problems.” *Annals of Eugenics*. 7 (2): 179–188.)

application to produce a drawing of a jackrabbit in the Idaho high desert during winter with snowcapped mountains in the background. Within a few seconds, the AI displays 20 options from which to choose. We then request Firefly to rearrange the graphic of the image chosen such that the jackrabbit is larger and the mountains, smaller.

Be aware of the response a student might receive on submitting his or her ChatGPT and Firefly-assisted jackrabbit project. Some schools have specifically prohibited any use of ChatGPT and other schools have had to contend with instances of plagiarism resulting from non-cited AI techniques. If you believe that any one of the discussed situations represents cheating (i.e., Vermeer’s alleged use of some form of a camera obscura, the use of an automobile accident-avoidance system, or the use of a persona prompt in ChatGPT), all three tools should be avoided. However, to clarify the nature of alleged cheating, it is useful to understand how AI works by examining one of the many classification algorithms used.

At Work in Classification

Assume that we wish to use Artificial Intelligence to begin to classify a set of one type of flower as belonging to one of three possible varieties. Ultimately, this classification algorithm can be employed to sort any population of these flowers as well and even more quickly than a human person. Note that this problem is very much like asking the accident-avoidance system to either apply or not apply brakes; both tasks represent a classification decision.

Our flower example lends itself to one type of AI algorithm, namely classification. A classification algorithm is only one of many types of AI algorithms. You might be inclined to ask “Is there one best classification algorithm that we could employ all the time?” That would be like asking a carpenter “Isn’t there one best carpenter’s tool that could be used all the time?”

Any carpenter would explain that all the tools on his/her belt are “good” tools for their intended purpose. The hammer is excellent for driving nails but the measuring tape in the belt is not useful when used with a nail. Even within the domain of “hammers” there are sledgehammers, tack hammers, ball-peen hammers, etc. AI algorithms work in the same manner; different types of algorithms serve different end goals but within each type of algorithm there remain many differences. One characteristic that all AI algorithms have is that they have been trained on large amounts of data, hence the term “big data.” These algorithms go by the names of Artificial Intelligence (AI), data mining, big data, analytics, machine learning, and predictive analytics. Nuances distinguish these sets of algorithms, but they may all be thought of as synonyms for AI.

Figure 1 is an attempt to classify 150 plants in the Iris family; there are three possible classes:

Setosa Iris

Versicolor Iris

Virginica Iris

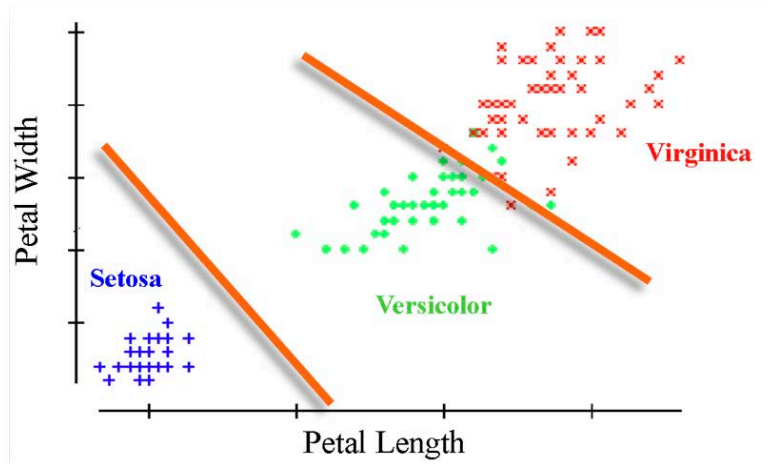


Figure 2. Fisher did not diagram the results of the linear classification algorithm he described in his original article, however, we have produced the diagram using software that finds a line that is “best” at separating the different clouds of points.

Can we develop a classification algorithm that could in the future successfully sort all irises into one of three categories based on subtle differences? This very situation gives rise to one of the first and simplest of the classification algorithms: the linear classification algorithm.

To sort the flowers, we use two “attributes” of each plant: petal length and petal width. If, after measuring, we graph our results, it would look like that presented in Figure 1.

We have identified each of the 150 plants by taking and plotting measurements in terms of two attributes. The cluster of blue crosses in the lower left represents the *Setosas*, the green dots in the center of the diagram represent the *Versicolors*, and the red ones in the upper right are the *Virginicas*. R. A. Fisher, the noted statistician who created this example, stated that a simple linear classifier (that is a simple straight line) works very well at classification if the correct attributes are chosen (*Annals of Eugenics*). It appears that the attributes chosen in the Iris example given truly differentiate between three classes; therefore, the straight-line linear classifier performs well. The linear classifiers (i.e., the straight lines in the diagram) that perform best would look like those separating the three clusters in Figure 2.

The straight lines in Figure 2 show the border between the different classes of Iris. With this information we would code a rule that matches the diagram; the beginning of the rule would look like this:

```
If petal width > 3.272 - (0.325 * petal length) then class = Virginica
Elseif petal width...
```

It is this rule that would be applied to sort new instances of flowers; the use of the once-estimated rule would make sorting go very quickly. Note that the coded rule that matches the linear classifiers in the diagram would not perform a perfect sort. Some plants would be misclassified. That is a characteristic of classification models (and all AI algorithms); they do not predict perfectly. They may, however, predict much better than a human and in less time. In his example, Fisher used only two attributes: petal length and petal width. Could we enhance the classification accuracy by using more than two attributes? The likely answer is yes. Could we enhance the accuracy of the classifier by using a nonlinear classifier? Again, the likely answer is yes. Most classification algorithms have the desirable characteristic of arriving at an answer quickly once the “rules” are estimated, although some AI algorithms work more slowly. More than one algorithm may be used at a time; that would be called an “ensemble” and ensembles tend to be very powerful indeed. The classification mechanism in automobile accident-avoidance systems is most likely an ensemble using information gained through multiple algorithms.

All AI algorithms predict something; those predictions arise from the large amount of data that the algorithm has been trained on. The training of an algorithm and its application is another article entirely.

Used as a Tool

AI has the potential to develop applications for both the private and public sectors that could significantly increase our standard of living. For example, some insurance companies presently assign a probability based on classification

attributes to flag fraudulent claims. Those claims with the highest probabilities would be candidates for further and deeper scrutiny to prevent fraud. Do the AI fraud detection systems perfectly flag fraudulent claims? No, but they do increase the likelihood that insurance companies catch fraudsters cost-effectively resulting in lower insurance premiums for the rest of us. The very same tools (most likely a classification algorithm or ensemble of classification algorithms) could be used by public agencies to economically identify tax frauds.

Table 1 shows some of the types of AI applications currently used by private businesses. Interestingly, each of these common uses for AI in the private sector has a potential analog in the public sector.

Much of the internet remains unavailable to ChatGPT; even so, the information that it has access to is enormous. ChatGPT was requested to project 10 reasonable uses for AI in the public sector based on currently available applications in both the private and public sectors. Table 2 lists these potential uses for AI in the public sector as generated by ChatGPT.

Table 2: A List of Suggestions (in blue) made by ChatGPT for possible uses of AI in the Public Sector:

1. Data Analysis and Insights

- AI can analyze large datasets to extract valuable insights, helping policymakers make informed decisions based on data-driven evidence.
- Predictive analytics can be used to forecast trends, enabling proactive decision-making.

2. Fraud Detection and Prevention:

- AI models can be employed to detect fraudulent activities in public programs, such as social welfare, tax, or healthcare, minimizing financial losses and ensuring the proper allocation of resources.

3. Customer Service and Chatbots:

- AI-powered chatbots can handle routine inquiries and tasks, providing citizens with

instant access to information and services.

- Virtual assistants can assist citizens in navigating government websites, filling out forms, and accessing relevant information.

4. Public Safety and Security:

- AI can be utilized for predictive policing, analyzing crime data to identify potential hotspots and allocate resources more effectively.

• Facial recognition technology can aid in identifying and tracking criminal suspects.

5. Healthcare Planning and Management:

- AI can help optimize healthcare resource allocation by predicting disease outbreaks, identifying high-risk areas, and improving overall healthcare planning.
- Automated diagnostics and image analysis can enhance medical diagnostics and treatment planning.

6. Traffic Management and Urban Planning:

- AI models can optimize traffic flow and reduce congestion by analyzing real-time traffic data.
- Predictive modeling can aid in urban planning, helping cities anticipate infrastructure needs and adapt to population growth.

7. Education and Personalized Learning:

- AI can be used to develop personalized learning platforms, tailoring educational content to individual student needs.
- Analytics tools can help educational institutions assess performance and identify areas for improvement.

8. Cybersecurity:

Examples of AI Use by Private Businesses

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banking & Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fraud Detection • Cross Selling Opportunities • Upselling Opportunities • Customer Retention • Retail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price Optimization • Promotional Effectiveness • Customer Insight • Merchandise Planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil, Gas, & Utilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment Failure Prediction • Drilling Optimization • Seismic Analyses • Production Forecasting • Manufacturing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warranty Cost Reduction • Supply Chain Optimization • Quality Assurance • Process Improvement |
|---|---|

Table 1. Predictive Analytics: What It Is and Why It Matters:
https://www.sas.com/en_us/insights/analytics/predictive-analytics.html

- AI-based cybersecurity solutions can enhance the protection of sensitive government data and infrastructure by identifying and mitigating potential threats in real time.

9. Policy Analysis and Simulation:

- AI models can simulate the impact of policy changes, helping policymakers assess potential outcomes and make more informed decisions.

10. Natural Disaster Response and Management:

- AI can aid in predicting and managing natural disasters, enabling faster and more effective response efforts.

Concerns About and Regulation of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) should be viewed as a supplementary tool; it is one tool among many that may be used appropriately and effectively. But it is a very powerful tool.

Universities are treading very carefully in the use of AI as a learning tool because we are in the initial stages of use. At the same time, universities seem committed to teaching students about AI and allowing students to learn how to use it to

their advantage. According to an article in Notre Dame Magazine, “Artificial Intelligence is the simulation of human intelligence processes by computers using algorithms to break down vast amounts of data. The almost-instantaneous results – text, photos, videos, computer codes, music, and more – look and sound like they were produced by humans.” Further, “The University’s AI policy recommends that professors become familiar with AI tools and take advantage of learning opportunities offered on campus (M. Fosmoe, “Students, Faculty Cautiously Embrace AI as a Supplemental Learning Tool”, Winter, 2024, 6-9).”

One concern about AI holds little weight; that is the fear among some that it will replace humans and cause significant unemployment. Centuries of experience in the production and provision of services have taught us that innovations cause some jobs to disappear but create many new forms of employment. If this were not the case, unemployment would have been rising monotonically since the Industrial Revolution. That has not happened; structural or temporary unemployment does result from new tools being used but, as the night follows the day, new forms of employment replace the old.

The question of regulating AI is problematic. The government has chosen in the past to regulate anything that could cause harm to third parties. We regulate automobiles, aircraft, pharmaceuticals, and a host of other productive “tools” because they could be used in harmful ways. Does AI fall into this category of regulations?

Consider just two regulatory issues. First, ownership rights need to be redefined as AI combines material from a variety of sources. Do the legal rights to use sources belong to the originators of the material or the AI codes that have transformed them? Secondly, although AI tools can be developed to protect teens from the harmful effects of social media, some Americans as well as congressmen are calling for immediate AI regulation. The sense is that social media platforms employ AI algorithms that are addictive and provide harmful images and information. Governments will undoubtedly implement regulations to establish cybersecurity standards, prevent malicious use of AI, and address safety risks associated with AI applications.

It is not the case, however, that AI requires regulation in terms of job displacement and overall economic impact. Long-term job displacement is an unnecessary justification for AI regulation. In a vibrant economy with a skilled labor force, any job displacement will be temporary and in little need of protection beyond the present social safety net. Unfortunately, the government will also likely consider the effects of AI on competition and monopoly. With the already widespread use of AI, it would seem that intense competition and innovation will be more likely to diffuse market power across many sectors of the economy rather than concentrate it.

If we don’t explore the uses of AI and learn how to harness its power, we risk falling behind both as individuals and as a nation. ♦

A Return to Founding Principles

Craig Ladwig, director of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is a veteran journalist with editorships at the Kansas City Star, the Washington Times and Knight Ridder News in Fort Wayne. This is the introduction to “Indiana Mandate: A Return to Founding Principles.”



“We can avoid the cataclysm anytime we choose to, by returning to reality, to reason, to ‘the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.’” — Notre Dame’s Robert Reilly in his “America on Trial: A Defense of the Founding”

In youth, the best of an American generation begins by thinking of the words of the Declaration of Independence as well-meaning suggestions for another time. Later, some become aware that the words hold ageless wisdom and are not suggestions but rather, as the Declaration itself says, self-evident truths. It is well into adulthood, however, before the few – too few – realize that they must apply those truths anew for the sake of their own children.

A daunting challenge, one I am grateful that contributors took up for our “Indiana Mandate: A Return to the Founding Principles,” now on sale at [Amazon.com/books](https://www.amazon.com/books). They have used the Declaration as a lens to assess Indiana state and national public policy. I can think of no better way to ensure our state’s prosperity and the freedom of its citizens than a careful reading of this work. Clearly, Indiana has a role to play in the great reawakening of the American people.

Don’t misunderstand. None of this is new. The truths illustrated on the following pages are

indeed self-evident. Such aspirations have risen in the hearts of men throughout history and everywhere in the world. But with precious few exceptions, of which we are blessedly one, they were crushed by a ruling elite driven by base greed or envy. The resulting cultures tend to devalue freedom of speech, religion and property.

So that is the first thing that makes our Declaration special — it survived. More than that, it survived to be put in action as the inspiration for an extraordinary republic built on the rule of law and not of men. We owe that not to flowing language but to valiant men and brilliant military tactics. Study the pivotal battles of Saratoga and Cowpens. The Colonial Army, on American ground, man for man, was better and smarter than the British Army.

Second, the words touched men’s hearts — and continue to do so centuries later. The scientist Paul Colinvaux, author of *The Fates of Nations*, searched for a clinical description that perfectly captured the aspiration of humankind, one that included the political dimensions that all men wish for in their country but also were general enough to allow for variety in individual and cultural tastes:

“I suggest that a gathering of American revolutionaries wrote down such a definition more than two hundred years ago. Scientifically, their words can be rewritten to say that the human niche is bounded by a set of inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

That fortuitous gathering in 1776 led a revolutionary movement in a country of both immense challenge and immense opportunity. To help meet those challenges, those gathered had in their libraries the great economic and philosophical works of their time or, for that matter, of all time.

Please know that on these pages we call them “revolutionaries” and not “rebels.” They were not rebelling against anything, certainly not the



foundational principles of England. On the contrary, they wanted their situation to revolve back to where it was before King George III upended it with a tyrannical hand.

Again, nothing new. Britain's Dan Hannan, former member of the European Parliament, notes that the goals of the Declaration rested on the principles of England's Glorious Revolution of 1688. It generally continued the natural rights long claimed by British citizens, although we like to think we improved on them. But the Signers, subjects of the same crown until ink touched paper in the old Philadelphia State House, sought only equality.

And while we are cutting fine historical points, the colonists didn't start the war. The decision of the Royal Governor of Virginia to try and disarm them by removing a public store of gunpowder and weapons was the last straw for the patriot militia. That affront to their liberty (what prompted the Second Amendment to their Constitution) made clear the intentions of the crown. A year and a half later the Declaration was signed.

Several of the essayists in this book argue compellingly that there is a divine element to this history. And even a sociologist, the Austrian Helmut Schoeck, agrees that the Founders were guided by primarily Christian tenets. He documents in particular that the Christian understanding of envy as a mortal sin and not something to be institutionalized has proven a

boon to all societies that have embraced it — including our own until recently.

Also on the secular side, the British historian Arnold Toynbee would call the signers of the Declaration a “creative minority,” the most successful in history. By that he means those few individuals who meet the challenges of their age selflessly by inspiring rather than compelling their countrymen to follow an innovative lead. Tom Bethell, author of *The Noblest Triumph*, would add that it was not incidental that a great number of these Founders were landowners and understood what role private property plays in both prosperity and liberty.

Let's pause for a moment to consider how rare all of this is. Such men and women introduce solutions by moral example and reasoned discussion, solutions from which the mass of their fellow citizens would benefit but otherwise would be incapable of discovering or affecting.

Where else does this happen — did this happen? Most societies, democracies or not, are governed by a dominant minority, again one that rules by force and in its own interests. And that is true of the hundreds of civilizations Toynbee examined in his iconic *A Study of History*. Such societies, he warned, “die from suicide, not from murder.”

But they are the default, we are the exception — or so we will fervently hope this semi-quincentennial of the Declaration's signing. ♦

Mark Franke

Mark Franke, M.B.A., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review and its book reviewer, is formerly an associate vice-chancellor at Indiana University-Purdue.

Trump as Andrew Jackson, Biden as Buchanan



(*March 12*) — It is a matter of discipline with me to avoid listening to political speeches. They are hardly edifying and the current trend is a pronounced one toward less and less enlightenment each time a politician rises to his legs and starts talking. Last week's State of the Union address by President Biden accelerated the velocity in that direction if the news reports, all with their own biased spins of course, are indicative.

Instead, I spent the time taking refuge in historical reflection. To avoid total depression when considering this election's offering of candidates, I found solace in looking backward through our history to find times that were not all that much different from ours. There have been tightly contested and bitterly controversial elections before; 1800, 1824, 1860 and 1876 come to mind.

As I contemplated those elections, what caught my fancy was not the similarity of circumstances but the resemblance of candidate characteristics. Which presidents in the past remind us of our current two?

Donald Trump's was the easier character to match so I will start with Joe Biden.

My immediate Biden thought turned to James Buchanan. Both served at a crisis time in our nation's history when we were tearing ourselves apart through vitriolic speech and a tendency toward violence. Buchanan failed miserably in keeping the nation together and my opinion of Biden's record is no better.

Another similarity is that both men seemed unduly subservient to their cabinet level and other federal officers. When the cabinet room is overpopulated with extremists and incompetents, that does not portend well. Buchanan's reputation was to have deferred to his cabinet on all important decisions, and Biden's track record suggest the same *modus operandi* as he has a proclivity for doubling down on the most controversial policy ideas the extreme left of his party can dream up.

My list could be longer but getting to Donald Trump is an irrepressible urge.

To find Trump's historical example, Andrew Jackson's case proved too good to pass up.

Andrew Jackson was viewed as the candidate of the common man, standing against the coastal elites who controlled the presidency. Prior to Jackson, every elected president was either a Virginia planter or a Massachusetts Adams. It was the eastern economic and intellectual aristocracy against the rough-and-ready settlers in what was then called the West, everything past the Appalachians.

At Jackson's inauguration his supporters scandalized polite society by tramping through the White House without formal invitation, treating it literally as the "People's House." They were the early nineteenth century deplorables, surely in love with their guns and their religion.

Old Hickory did not disappoint them as president. He took on the National Bank, the epitome of the "swamp" of that day. He faced down his political opponents, sometimes with physical threats, and caned a presumptive assassin to the point of death.

Donald Trump has never fought a duel; Jackson fought at least three and survived. Nor has Trump ever horsewhipped a United State Senator like Jackson tried. Trump's weapon of choice is his tongue, a weapon Jackson was not unwilling to use. I won't quote Jackson here; you can find his most outrageous ones with a simple internet search.

One final similarity is intriguing to consider. Jackson lost the 1824 election but contested the

outcome. He claimed the election was stolen from him by East Coast elites. Sound familiar? Now look to his rematch with Adams in 1828, an election he won by a landslide. I will need to wait for November to learn if the same outcome holds.

If my Jackson-Trump comparison has any value, it will be with the MAGA crowd which sees Trump as a populist hero fighting to restore democracy to the common people. The major difference between Trump and Jackson was that Old Hickory was effective in advancing his agenda while Trump can point to precious few political victories during his term.

I had another thought about a Donald Trump historical doppelganger, one that will be more palatable to the Trump-haters. Aaron Burr never became president, not for lack of trying, and he got every bit as much metaphorical hate mail as Trump gets.

Burr was involved in his own election controversy in 1800 when he refused to concede to Thomas Jefferson, the apparent winner. Congress eventually put paid to Burr's ambition as did Mike Pence to Trump's.

Burr also was accused of instigating insurrection but acquitted by a jury based on a literal reading of the Constitution's language on treason. Trump's insurrection trial may, should, come down to a literal reading of the Fourteenth Amendment. Too bad for Trump that he doesn't have John Marshall as the presiding judge as Burr did.

Too bad for all of us that we don't have John Marshall on today's Supreme Court.

The Dawn of Artificial Intelligence

(March 4) — It seems one can't pick up a newspaper or journal without seeing a major piece on artificial intelligence. Until perhaps a year or so ago, I hadn't even heard the term except in science fiction and now it gets more Google hits than Taylor Swift's antics at a Kansas City Chiefs football game — the Taylor Swift phenomenon being something else I hadn't heard of until

recently. I don't really live in a cave but I would like to.

To illustrate, "Bad Chatbots Pose New Threat on Web" was a recent headline in the Wall Street Journal. I didn't read the article, not wishing to send myself even deeper into my personal Luddite purgatory.

It's everywhere. Even my word processor automatically inserted "intelligence" as soon as it recognized I was typing "artificial." How did it know it was the next word I had in mind? Is my thinking so transparent or is the adjective artificial no longer used in any other context? I know the latter can't be true because my long-time friend, the best man at my wedding, just got an artificial knee replacement. But he is of my generation so perhaps we geezers still have literary rights to the adjective since we would never use it to modify the noun "intelligence."

In the interest of full disclosure, I am writing this on a laptop computer wirelessly connected to the internet. My document is automatically saving itself to the cloud, wherever that might be. Maybe there are Biblical legions of angels sorting out all the nonsense we humans write or calculate into spreadsheets. I hope so, because at my age I need all the artificial support I can get . . . although my knees are still working naturally.

As much as I want to hide from this all, I realize that it presents a real and present danger to our civilization if it gets into the wrong hands and is used for the wrong purposes. Human history does not provide comfort regarding that probability. For every altruistic humanitarian in the world, one can't but fear there is a demented, hate-driven sociopath seeking an opportunity. Reading too much history can be depressing.

I am privileged to serve as a judge each year at the American Legion's national oratorical contest for high school students. This requires that I go through sexual abuse training before being approved for this year's contest, the training focusing largely on recognizing when physical abuse might be occurring. That training is depressing enough, knowing that our children are threatened with potential physical abuse, but now

AI becomes another tool in these predators' toolbox. How do we protect our children from that?

Am I an alarmist, a twenty-first century Chicken Little? I try to stay optimistic but I have young grandchildren who will live with this after I depart this mortal coil. I can't protect them from the grave, or can I?

While we certainly should strive to keep our children safe, I wonder if we are going about all wrong. The term "helicopter parent" isn't heard much anymore but a "no risk" parenting approach still exists. It goes beyond participation trophies for the littlest ones; it continues into adolescence as kids are faced with a choice between over-structured, adult-supervised activity or excessive isolated screen time on digital devices. Kids can't be kids like we were back in the Eisenhower years. We improvised unsupervised play using anything that was to hand, creatively imagining whatever caught our fancy.

Did we get hurt? On occasion, yes. But never seriously other than one broken arm which gave my neighbor bragging rights for about a month. He lived.

As politically incorrect as this statement is, children who grow up in a traditional family with mother and father are much more likely to get there — there being a wholesome life filled with enough resilience to overcome the stuff that hits the fan. Provided, of course, these parents allow their children to learn to face adversity and overcome it.

Author Greg Lukianoff touched on this issue in his book "The Coddling of the American Mind." He posits three great untruths that have retarded the development of the younger generations. One he calls the untruth of fragility, a belief that any challenging situation is to be avoided at all costs rather than confronted and resolved. It prevents children from maturing through experience and therefore leaves them unequipped to face the uncertainties of adulthood.

Lukianoff wrote this in 2018 before the advent of AI and I am not aware of his addressing the AI threat in any recent books. I am sure others have

and will; Barnes & Noble will soon have a whole shelf devoted to this topic if not already. A quick search of the B&N website produced over 5,000 hits including the title "Artificial Intelligence for Dummies."

I think that says it all.

1776 — A Failed Experiment?

(Feb. 21) — Presentism is one of the pervasive evils in our brave new world. It is the new orthodoxy to examine history under a filtering lens that subjects all events and people to our modern conceits.

And it is not surprising that everything in the past falls short at some point. Perfection, you see, is the minimal standard for these modern-day Torquemadas . . . a perfectionist standard decreed by some woke politburo meeting somewhere other than here in flyover country.

Our nation's founding has taken a beating as its few imperfections glare so brightly that its many triumphs are pushed into an ideological outer darkness. That leaves our founding documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, as symbols of liberty and opportunity nearly everywhere but here.

No matter that our Constitution is the longest surviving written document of its kind. It should be dismissed if not entirely discarded because it was written to protect slavery, as the 1619 Project would have us believe. If that were true, the Constitution failed at that since slavery has been outlawed since the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865.

The Founding Fathers were no more perfect than we are but they collectively applied a genius unequaled in our history. In a perfect world the slavery issue would have been dealt with in 1787 without compromise but we humans have made this world very much imperfect. Compromise was the crucible at the Constitutional Convention with the hope, not misguided, that the imperfect could be made perfect, or at least better, through the governmental institutions created by that document. Witness the 13th Amendment.

Why is that simple principle, that imperfect human beings strove to make things better as best they could, under such attack today? Is our democracy, foundationally dependent on the Constitution, in serious trouble? It isn't just the silliness of the "1619 Project"; too many Americans appear ready to consign the American system to the dustbin of history. Why is that?

My monthly discussion group recently took on the issue of our democracy's future. Is it past saving? Do enough people care to make the effort to save it? Or has it simply outlived its usefulness in a modern world fundamentally different from that of 1776?

When 60 percent of Americans have little or no confidence in our political system, as a recent Pew study reported, it's difficult for the other 40 percent to maintain their confidence. Our group, holding life membership in the 40-percent club, is not ready to concede defeat. The task of restoring confidence in the American system is daunting but we believe now is the time for undaunted courage, to steal a phrase from Steven Ambrose.

Being undaunted in our optimism, we had to ask if things are really this bad. Americans have earned an international reputation over the past two and a half centuries as a people who are determined and resilient. We pulled together after Pearl Harbor and 9/11 despite underlying political differences. These two events were clearly seen as existential threats to our being. Perhaps we are reaching that point again, the threat this time coming from within our nation rather than from without.

It required multiple generations to degrade from the patriotic love of the Greatest Generation to the nihilistic attitudes prevalent among too many Millennials and Generation Z'ers. We should be prepared to work through at least that many more generations to restore trust in our system.

No matter how many it takes, it must start now with those who are in school and still forming attitudes that will accompany them into adulthood. Maybe we ought to make the Broadway musical "1776" required viewing for

high school seniors in their mandatory government classes. Or perhaps "Hamilton" would be a better received choice due to its musical score.

My group believes that we Constitutional supporters have a secret weapon — our political DNA. It was this DNA that brought about the colonial revolt, when Americans saw their inherent rights as Englishmen being trampled. Jefferson's soaring prose in the first paragraphs of the Declaration captured this sentiment as well as anyone could have.

If our DNA metaphor is correct, that DNA still resides in our collective psyche awaiting its metaphysical call to arms. To paraphrase the first-century rabbi Hillel: If not us, whom? If not now, when?

The group is willing and eager to take up the challenge to redeem America's ethos by speaking out in public and private settings, telling the amazing story of America's contribution to democratic government. The American story will get out, one way or another.

And our current day censorious presentists? George Will wrote in his book "The Conservative Sensibility" that today's present will be tomorrow's past, being looked back on with the same ignorance and arrogance by a future generation.

The Sovereignty of Conscience

(Feb. 12) — When should one's conscience have the final say in a dilemma? Or must it answer to a higher authority? And if such a higher authority exists, what is it?

Last week I was part of a discussion with a roomful of students enrolled in a seminar focused on the relationship between church and state during the Reformation. These were all graduate students in their fourth year of pre-ministerial study. The focus of the course was the writings of Martin Luther directed to the princes and people of Germany as the Reformation expanded beyond theological debate into the political and military realms.

The triggering event was a decision by the Emperor Charles V to apply the military arm of the Holy Roman Empire against those territories, such as Luther's Electoral Saxony, which had sided with the reformers and against the Roman Catholic Church. The question for the Evangelicals was this: Is it a violation of moral law to take up arms to defend against the imperial army?

Luther's theology emphasized a citizen's duty to obey the government even when it is evil and persecuting the faithful. This is the Fourth Commandment, to honor one's parents and superiors. It assumes, perhaps simplistically, that the governmental authority is acting either in accordance with or at least not in violation of moral law.

But what if that line is crossed and imperial law contradicts moral law? Who is to be the judge of that?

Which leads us back to the conscience.

The debate would end here if it weren't for the fact that one's conscience is just that, one's own, and therefore subjective. If given free rein, wouldn't it lead to complete autonomy of the individual and complete chaos in society? We would be living in Hobbes' state of nature and probably not living to a ripe old age.

Conscience must answer to a higher authority if it is to be employed for the good of society. That higher authority is natural or moral law. We used to be reminded of this when courthouses posted the Ten Commandments in their lobbies until the Supreme Court put a stop to that in 2005. One can still see the Commandments in the Supreme Court building, legally displayed because they are in what is called an "historical context."

It's comforting to know that "Thou shalt not kill" has a historical context.

Assuming a right-guided conscience will align with moral or natural law, what happens when human or positive law conflicts? My classmates spent 30 minutes debating this, citing decisions faced both back in the Reformation era and more recently in American history.

Was the American War for Independence justified on the basis of natural law, as the Declaration of Independence claims, or was it an immoral rebellion against legitimate authority? Once independence was declared, was it a citizen's duty to take up arms and fight? That was no easy question for those new Americans.

Here's a tougher one: Were the Confederate states wrong by moral law to secede to preserve slavery but justified under positive law to resist the invading northern armies? Again, where did the loyalty and duty lie for the small farmers in the south? Does the positive law of their state, legislating secession and armed resistance, trump the moral law against slavery?

I'm glad I have never had to face a dilemma like that, but then maybe I did. I was of draft age during the Vietnam War. Was American involvement in that war immoral or just poorly designed policy? It was during this era that the term "conscientious objector" entered the popular vocabulary of the day.

A more relevant question exists for us today. Is there a distinction between a government that permits or even encourages evil and one that compels its citizens to act against conscience? State gambling operations are an example of this. The State of Indiana spends a lot of money promoting its gambling programs yet we are free to refuse to buy lottery tickets. By refusing, we resist without rebelling. That may help us sleep at night but what if our neighbor has a gambling problem, one that is being urged on by the state?

The past is always a useful teacher for the present so what can be learned from those troubled consciences in the sixteenth century? The Evangelical territories decided they could and should defend themselves militarily. Martin Luther agreed with that decision even though he had preached passive subjection in the past. A line had been crossed; the human law of the Empire placed itself in direct violation of the natural law of God.

Conscience spoke clearly to the Evangelical princes, even if it took work to get to that point.

The past won't always give us a plain answer but it can help us formulate the proper questions.

The Generational Divide

(Feb. 1) — It is simply a fact of life that each generation rebels against its predecessors. I will leave it to the psychologists or sociologists to explain why that is and why historically these generations tend to get the rebellion worked out of their system in early adulthood. Maybe it's the children and the mortgage that cause a reevaluation of the perfect over against the practical. Reality will win out.

I wonder, though, if that generalization is no longer holding true. Many of my age believe that the current generational fissures are unbridgeable chasms capable of overturning our traditional American cultural norms. It's nearly impossible to trust that things will work out for the better when all we hear is doom and gloom.

Can it be as bad as all that?

When in doubt about the truthfulness of a proposition, I look for people willing to discuss it with me. I choose friends with whom I have never talked about this particular issue before. I don't want to hear the same old, same old. The last place I want to find myself is in an echo chamber.

So I sought out friends from different generations from each other's and from mine, in this case what are known as generations X and Y, the latter better known as the Millennials. The sample size for each generation was exactly one, hardly meeting even the most lackadaisical scientific standards but still not meaningless for my purposes.

One friend is of my children's generation, Generation X if I understand the taxonomy correctly. He grew up in west central Indiana in a small city but now lives in Fort Wayne. He told me what he misses most are front porches and sidewalks. These two things represent to him the neighborliness of his childhood. It was a comfortable and secure space for him.

As we talked, it occurred to me that he was describing the same kind of neighborhood I remembered from my childhood. And I am a Baby Boomer so we are crossing a generational divide that perhaps no longer exists. As I think back to the kind of home life my kids had, living in a suburban housing subdivision, it was similar to my own from way back in the Jurassic 1950's.

If I am honest with myself, I must admit that this younger friend may be wearing the same rose-colored glasses that I do. Regardless, it is instructive that he sees a utopian childhood that is lost yet still one that he wants for his children. I should be able to field test his opinion with my own married children. They read these columns occasionally so I'm sure I will hear from them if I am off base.

The second interviewee, if I can call him that, was eager to talk about these things. He is a Millennial, a young father with substantial contact with the next generation. I believe these kids are called Generation Z, now moving through high school and college and into adulthood.

His observation is that the Generation Z young people are reacting against the cultural and political excesses of the Millennials and their fellow travelers in the cultural wars. He senses that this reaction is becoming more virulent as they rebel against the nihilistic philosophy of their older siblings. His insight reminded me of the pendulum on our grandfather clock, moving relentlessly from one extreme of its path to the other. At least that analogy is better than that of Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum" and its impending doom.

Now the above statements are all generalizations, and all generalizations are false including this one as Mark Twain quipped. Remember, though, that generalizations are not meant to be immutable natural laws but simply observations about what is most often true. Absolute certainty is hard to come by; we all have learned to live our lives using our best judgment of what we see and hear and then drawing the optimal conclusion. "You can observe a lot just by

watching,” as my favorite twentieth century philosopher Yogi Berra instructed us.

So I will take my two friends’ observations to heart and operate on their validity, if and until I see adequate evidence to the contrary. Both of my friends are serious students of the human condition, well read and disciplined thinkers, so I don’t expect to be disabused of my trust in their perspectives.

Since I tend toward the optimist side of the optimism/pessimism continuum, I prefer to find reasons for hope rather than despair. I pray my Millennial friend is right in his prediction about the pendulum, but the curmudgeon in me would like to figure out how to stop the pendulum at that sweet spot my Generation X friend wants to relive for the benefit of his children and my grandchildren.

Compromise Is Hard

(*Jan. 16*) — Well, another Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives is in trouble with the most extreme of his own party. The bipartisan budget deal reached by Speaker Mike Johnson and Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, presumably with White House blessing, is too repugnant for these true believers to swallow.

In the interest of fair disclosure, I admit to agreeing with the Freedom Caucus’ principles. Something has to be done about the annual multi-trillion-dollar federal deficits and the ever increasing national debt load. It is simply unsustainable, the voodoo economics of the new monetary theory notwithstanding.

It is the Freedom Caucus’ tactics I disagree with, and the political strategy informing these tactics. Their calculus must be based on the razor slim majority the Republicans hold in the House and the need for their acquiescence on any deals. Fine, except that the Democrat controlled Senate and the Democrat White House also must be parties to any agreement.

Speaker Johnson finds himself on the horns of the same dilemma as his predecessor: Satisfy the Freedom Caucus and lose any hope of Senate passage or negotiate something passable within

the Senate and be stymied by parliamentary maneuvers on the House floor. You need to be half crazy to want that job.

Not that the Democrats aren’t equally responsible for Congress’s systemic inability to pass a budget. Since their party colleagues on the Senate side appear willing to pass the compromise, they could vote for it in the House and put the Freedom Caucus on the irrelevancy shelf.

One must assume that they would rather score potential political points by letting the Republicans dangle from a very breakable limb. They know their history. If it comes to another government shutdown due to a failed budget, the Republicans will get all the blame. A national media hostile to the Republicans will see to it.

So what can we do? My answer to that is to look backward in order to see the way forward, and there is no better time in the past than the Founding Fathers era to be instructed on how to make democracy work.

The Constitutional Convention should be studied by all elected officials as a prerequisite for taking office. It will be informative and humbling, even given our 21st century egoism. The convention can be summed up with this verdict: We have a constitution because 39 men saw compromise as a reachable path to a higher good.

Nearly every issue contained a fault line that threatened to open an unbridgeable chasm. Yet somehow these determined and opinionated men found enough common ground to reach agreement. A lot of horse trading went on, both openly and privately. What I wouldn’t give to have been there as a fly on the wall while these debates occurred.

Sometimes the compromise reached seemed to antagonize everyone. Consider the Great Compromise, the one which still arouses righteous anger among our current day presentists who judge all past actions by present standards and biases. It involved slavery, of course.

New England, the commercial center of the nation, wanted federal sovereignty on trade issues both internal and external. Trade wars between

the states were just one of the failures of the Articles of Confederation. These states were also home to some of the most anti-slavery sentiments in the land.

Southern states, all based on agricultural economies dependent on slave labor, didn't want federal interference with their agricultural exports and their importation of foreign goods. But they wanted federal hands-off slavery even more.

Why would these incompatible viewpoints find reconciliation in any kind of agreement? The New Englanders agreed to a 20-year period of no federal regulation of the slave trade, something that had to be obnoxious to many of them. In return they gained assurance of uniform trade legislation and tariffs across and among all the states.

Should New England have refused such a compromise as abhorrent to their moral philosophy? If they had, would the southern states

have left the convention and formed their own confederacy 70 years earlier than what actually happened? Is tolerating a current wrong to mitigate its future evil impact a moral thing to do or is it just a deal with the Devil? The question of moral agency has occupied philosophers for centuries and I don't presume to have anything original to add.

The on-going budget contretemps in Congress is an important issue but it hardly rises to the level faced by our founders in 1787. We can only speculate what would have happened in Philadelphia back then absent the Great Compromise but it is not unreasonable to posit a breakup of the constitutional convention and no United States of united states. They saw it through to the end, and we all benefit from their perseverance.

We Lilliputians might learn much at the feet of those Brobdingnagians. ♦

The Bookshelf

Powers and Thrones: A New History of the Middle Ages

I get tired of hearing on a regular basis that our democracy is threatened. It may be but not by the Supreme Court's ruling against administrative overreach or by the voters electing a Republican candidate. Our democracy was hard to come by and purchased at great cost. It didn't magically appear because some Alladin found a magic lamp; it took centuries for a liberty-based philosophy of government to reach a mature statement in the Enlightenment and several centuries since then for its application to work itself out.

My reading this past quarter was organized, sort of, around a desire to create a storyboard of American democracy. I knew it didn't start in North America. I could have gone back to democratic Athens or republican Rome but the siren song of the Middle Ages called.

I probably spend too much time reading medieval history but I can't help myself. There is much to be admired in that period and much that would improve our society today. But as my wife constantly reminds me, there were also many bad things like the bubonic plague, infant mortality, rampant violence and abject poverty. Still, I can fantasize about the fairy tale aspect of those times.

Historian Dan Jones' "Powers and Thrones: A New History of the Middle Ages" (Viking 2021, 578 pages plus notes, \$17 paperback at Amazon) is a comprehensive survey of this fascinating period. He begins the book with the fall of the Western Roman Empire and continues up to the first days of the Reformation.

The early chapters appear to proceed chronologically but then he diverts from that to have each chapter address a theme, although a

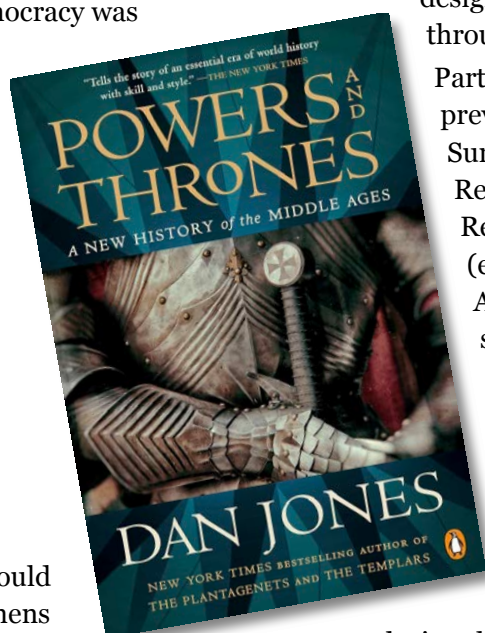
timeline remains in the background. I didn't explain that well so I will try again by using an example. In Part III "Rebirth" covering the High Middle Ages, he begins with the Mongol conquest of Asia and eastern Europe but follows this with chapters on Merchants (European trade with the Far East), Scholars (founding the first universities) and Builders (construction of castles and the great cathedrals). He stays within the designated period but jigs and jags through it rather than

Part IV "Revolution" reverses the previous order by focusing on Survivors (the great plagues), Renewers (the emergence of the Renaissance) and Navigators (exploration of Africa and the Americas) before ending the section and the book with the first years of the Reformation. It actually makes more sense than my description of it.

He covers the unpleasant and politically incorrect events such as the Crusades with a respectable evenhandedness,

placing them within historical context. The conquest and pillaging of major cities (Rome, Jerusalem, Constantinople and others) feature prominently, perhaps too much so, but Jones shows how these were frequent occurrences with the good guys and bad guys changing teams over the course of this thousand-year period. One gets the message that such violent destruction inheres to human nature and is not attributable to any single band of nationalistic or religious fanatics.

Jones concludes with a succinct statement of his theme, that the Middle Ages were a bridge between antiquity and modernity, a time of preparing mankind for a new world no one could predict. His list of irreversible events includes the printing press, discovery of America, fracture of the church, demographic changes caused by the black death, and the rise of humanism in art and philosophy. In these he sees parallels with the 21st century and the radical changes we are



experiencing. “It was clear something had been lost and was never coming back” is Jones’ verdict of the Middle Ages. Will our progeny a hundred years from now say the same about our world?

It can be argued that the philosophical apex of modernity was the Enlightenment with its classical statement found in America’s Declaration of Independence. Our Constitution might be considered the practical application of the Declaration’s principles. Sure, this is an American-centric view but that’s where we live.

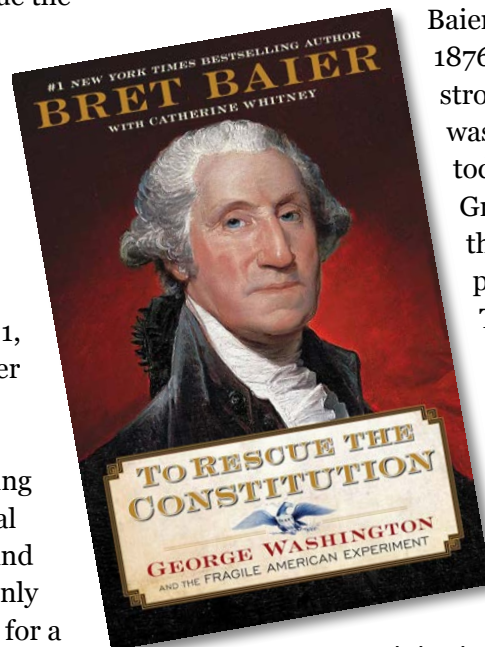
To Rescue the Constitution: George Washington and the Fragile American Experiment

The story of the writing of the Constitution is an intriguing one, part soap opera and part instructional case study on democratic governance. Journalist Bret Baier, author of the “Three Days” series of popular histories focused on key incidents in our history, has attempted to address this period in his “To Rescue the Constitution: George Washington and the Fragile American Experiment (Mariner Books 2023, 323 pages plus notes, \$16 hardcover at Amazon) which is written as a prequel to his “To Rescue the Republic: Ulysses S. Grant, The Fragile Union and the Crisis of 1876” (Custom House 2021, 333 pages plus notes, \$20 hardcover at Amazon). These books must be read with the understanding they were written by a TV journalist, using his craft to summarize key historical news events in an accessible style and within a time limit. This is meant only as a mild criticism; anyone looking for a serious academic study of either event won’t find it here. The casual reader, however, will find these two books easier to read than those denser tomes.

Baier expands each subject into mini biographies of the two main characters. While frustrating for a reader like me, wanting to get to

the main issue, it serves the author’s purpose in pointing to these two great men of history as the key to things turning out OK. In the case of George Washington, his clear strategic thinking combined with personal bravery served him well through the dark days of the War for Independence and then again during the early years of the republic. Grant’s simple determination to achieve the ultimate goal carried him through the dark days of the Civil War when almost everyone, other than Abraham Lincoln it should be noted, was calling for his head and then again in the election crisis of 1876.

Like most biographers, Baier is sympathetic to his subjects. This is quite noticeable in his defense of Grant’s presidential record on Reconstruction and his principled determination to see that the 1876 election dispute was settled in a democratic manner. Not that Grant doesn’t deserve our acclaim for his steady hand during this period of unrest, but perhaps Baier goes just a little bit overboard.



Baier’s extensive reporting of the 1876 election controversy is the strongest part of the Grant book. It was a partisan time, equal to today’s extreme partisanship, yet Grant resolutely desired to see the right man elected even if it proved to be the Democrat Tilden. Three states submitted conflicting election results, leaving the final vote count in the balance. Grant eventually brokered an eleventh-hour deal that involved which slates of electors would be counted for president in exchange for allowing these

states to determine the winners in their gubernatorial races. And the federal troops of occupation, at least what the Southerners thought them to be, were withdrawn in exchange for state guarantees of black civil rights. Did it work out? Maybe not in the long run considering black civil rights were still an issue during my childhood, but it prevented a second civil war, considered a real

possibility at the time. As Baier wrote, for Grant it was always about saving the Union—the war, his presidency, the 1876 election compromise.

Baier's treatment of Washington is more conventional in its respectable level of hero worship but that is welcome in this iconoclastic age. His was a steady hand during the war and again during the constitutional period. Baier emphasizes the dependency the other Founding Fathers had on Washington, looking to him when political leadership was needed in the 1780's. My only complaint is that the book spent too much time summarizing his previous life at the expense of this decade but that is picking nits on my part.

Both Washington and Grant demonstrated political courage, using their reputations as their collateral, to move the nation past threats to its very existence. Baier makes this point.

Again, these are popular histories and not academic ones. There are no footnotes, replaced instead by journalistic style quote attributions. But then these books are not aimed at university history departments. The casual reader will get decent historical summaries and learn a thing or two about the most important summer in our history as well as about a relatively unknown election crisis with more at stake than either 2000 or 2020.

While America had a hundred-year history of democratic government in 1876, other nations have not been that fortunate in their hours of crisis. Germany's Weimar Republic is one such example of the fragility of democratic institutions when under stress. Two books, both focused on the pivotal year of 1923, were released last year. Each takes a month-by-month approach to telling the story of a nation and a people struggling to survive.

German 1923: Hyperinflation, Hitler's Putsch, and Democracy in Crisis

It's easy to think of that year only in terms of the Nazi attempt to take over the Bavarian

government but fortunately Volker Ullrich's "German 1923: Hyperinflation, Hitler's Putsch, and Democracy in Crisis" (Liveright Publishing Corporation 2023, 342 pages plus notes, \$21 hardcover at Amazon) does not limit itself to that. The book opens with the French military occupation of the industrial Ruhr valley to enforce reparation collections, payments Germany's weakened economy could not make. This broke through the last defense against hyperinflation, as the national government just cranked up the printing presses to the point where prices were doubling every day.

Ullrich does a good job of recounting the passive resistance German industrialists and worker unions used as a weapon against France. The campaign ultimately failed as France refused to back down and was supported, mostly at least, by her British and Belgian allies.

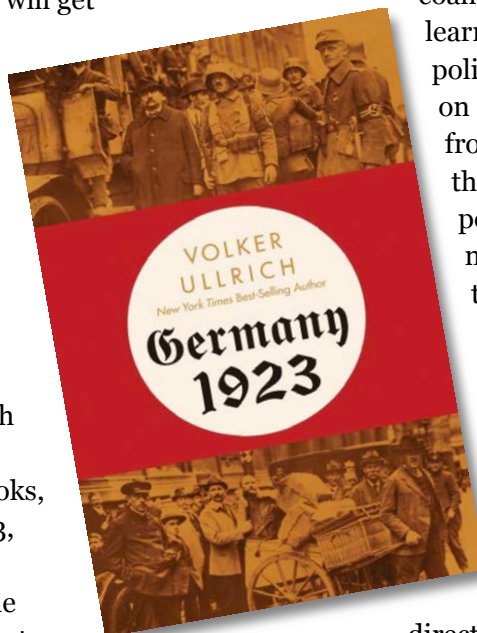
Ullrich then covers the political negotiations as the centrist parties looked both to the moderate right and moderate left to form a governing

coalition. There is a lesson to be learned from this—many of the politicians were more focused on driving their opponents from power than confronting the serious economic and political issues facing their nation. Ullrich explains how the small parties held unnatural power in these negotiations as they provided the last handful of parliamentary votes to legitimize a cabinet.

Hitler's putsch is there of course but we also learn of a failed Soviet-

directed coup to turn the state of Saxony communist. It would appear that the left was even more inept than the right in overthrowing a government, at least in 1923.

The frightening aspect of this all was the constant call for the Reich President to give dictatorial powers to the chancellor to keep him in



office without a Reichstag majority. Friedrich Ebert, the president, successfully resisted these calls but students of history do not need to be reminded that eventually Ebert's successor, Paul von Hindenburg, gave in to Adolph Hitler's demand for these powers.

Amazingly enough, eventually inflation was broken with the issue of a new currency and normalcy returned . . . for a time.

1923: The Crisis of German Democracy in the Year of Hitler's Putsch

The second book, "1923: The Crisis of German Democracy in the Year of Hitler's Putsch" (Basic Books 2023, 328 pages plus notes, \$32 hardcover at Amazon) by Mark William Jones follows a similar outline but with more of a focus on Hitler's putsch as the subtitle suggests. Jones, like Ullrich, ends 1923 on an optimistic note that Jones calls the "triumph of reason." Still, Weimar's days were numbered due to its basic constitutional structure that may have survived 1923 but would not be so lucky in 1933.

Jones argues that democracy had the strength to survive the challenges of 1923 but no longer had that strength by 1933 due to gradual erosion. Ullrich does not use the term erosion but sees its effect as German political parties and politicians lost the ability and willingness to compromise. This instability at the national level caused citizens to lose confidence in their democratic institutions as the parties of both extremes encouraged voter dissatisfaction with whichever cabinet was in power this week. Herein lies the lesson for 21st century America: The more viciously governmental institutions are attacked, the better non-democratic solutions look.

My great-uncle was an exchange student in Germany during this time. He told me the

comment he heard most often was, "It wasn't like this when the Kaiser was here." Is it any wonder that frustrated Germans began to believe the promises of kaiser wannabes?

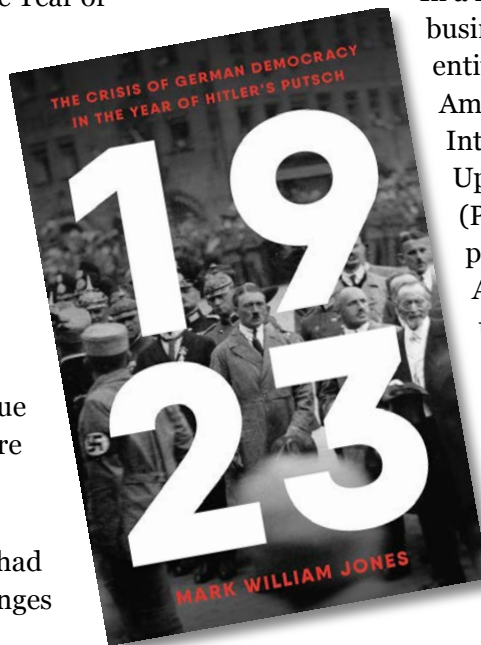
The Coddling of the American Mind

The question is whether any of this history is instructive for our current political situation. If Weimar's ultimate failure was due to the loss of support for democratic institutions, how close are we to that attitude today? First Amendment activist Greg Lukianoff addresses this question by examining the way American thought processes have been corrupted.

In a recent book he co-authored with business professor Jonathan Haidt entitled "The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure" (Penguin Press 2018, 281 pages plus notes, \$18 hardcover at Amazon), he tells us exactly what three of those bad ideas are and the negative impact they have produced in the younger generations.

What doesn't kill you makes you weaker, always trust your feelings, and life is a battle between good people and evil people are the untruths which have worked together to distort understanding of the real world and severely handicapped adaptation to it. The authors call this "safetyism," the belief that children should be shielded from any potentially challenging experiences. An example used is the peanut allergy phenomenon, whereby the number of allergic children rose significantly after schools and parents banned peanuts. So much for the nanny state's good intentions.

The book includes several psychological theories, cognitive behavioral theory and negative filtering being examples, that were above my intellectual pay grade but it helped that there are



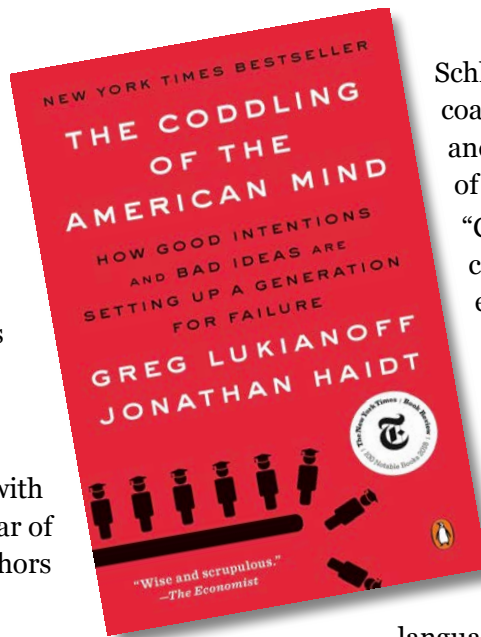
many graphs throughout the book to illustrate the effect of these misguided ideas. What we get is a raft of nonsense ideas such as “speech is violence” and binary thinking in which all is viewed in absolute good and bad terms. The result is an increasingly polarized society.

So how does this affect young people today? A rising level of anxiety and depression coupled with less independence and greater fear of catastrophe is the result. The authors place much of this blame on the helicopter parent model, leading children to believe that the world is unsafe except with adult supervision, and on college campus administrations which respond in a “customer is always right” manner to student violence.

The authors call for an increased respect for and protection of the First Amendment on campuses. Their premise is that most students are not “snowflakes” who require coddling but are open to intellectual challenge in a free market of ideas. (See my review of Jonathan Marks’ “Let’s Be Reasonable” in the Winter 2023 Journal for a similar perception of college students today.)

The Three Great Untruths are challenged by the wisdom of the ages. Parents should prepare children for the road and not the road for the child. Dividing good from evil is labor for each individual heart and not a simplistic taxonomy for the human race. The most dangerous enemy is an unguarded thought and its resultant feeling untrustworthy. Replacing the untruths with true wisdom will lead to better societies, or so the authors encourage.

Was Lukianoff’s hope for the future unfounded? He revisited his theme with “The Canceling of the American Mind: Cancel Culture Undermines Trust and Threatens Us All—But There Is a Solution” (Simon & Schuster 2023, 307 plus appendices and notes, \$15 hardcover at Amazon), this time with journalist Rikki Schlott.



Schlott was a good choice for a coauthor as she is in Generation Z and recognizes the incipient danger of embracing the Great Untruths.

“Canceling” is structured around case studies that follow nearly every chapter. The organization is easy to follow as the authors explain what cancel culture is and how its pernicious effect is permeating journalism and universities. There are technical chapters dealing with psychological theories in reasonably understandable

language for the layman. I appreciated that the book is replete with data charts and tables, each in support of a conclusion drawn by the authors. Then, after a seemingly unending parade of bad news case studies, the book ends with an optimistic call for a return to respect for and encouragement of free speech. This is not surprising given the authors’ involvement with the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE). They say the right things about the Founding Fathers and the American love of liberty.

If I learned anything after three months of reading, it is this: Democracy is a fragile thing because liberty is a fragile thing. Without democracy as the front line of defense, liberty is in danger from demagogues who offer freedom from whatever troubles us at the cost of all freedom. The circumstances do not have to be the same for the same outcome. It’s the same answer to whatever question is asked. The appeal is emotional rather than intellectual.

Benjamin Franklin warned us about the attractiveness of applying a simplistic prescription to a complex problem. “Those who would give up essential liberty, to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.” The problem is that the political snake oil salesmen never advertise the exchange honestly in those terms.

Democracy is hard work.

Coup d'Oeil

“The King’s Grave: The Discovery of Richard III’s Lost Burial Place and the Clues It Holds” (St. Martin’s Press 2013, 288 pages with modest notes, \$38 paperback at Amazon) by Philippa Langley and Michael Jones is really two books in one. The main story is about Langley’s determination to find Richard III’s burial spot in a Leicester city parking lot while alternating chapters between the grave search and a history of Richard’s life and reign. Langley is a member of the Richard III Society, a group dedicated to rehabilitating Richard’s reputation in the face of Shakespeare’s hatchet job in his play. Think MSNBC and Donald Trump to get a modern equivalent to Richard’s press in Tudor England. Since I have no archeological background, I found those chapters quite interesting in how such digs are funded and administered. There are better histories of Richard’s reign, Langley having written one, but this book gives a quick overview of the last years of the Wars of the Roses. In the interest of full disclosure, I am a Richard apologist; he could have been one of England’s greatest kings if he lived . . . and I don’t think it was he who murdered the princes in the Tower.

“The Siege at Kekionga: Tecumseh’s Uprising” (Oak Creek Media 2021, 146 pages, available from author) by Jim Pickett is his third in a series about battles between the American army and the Miami Indians near Kekionga village and old Fort Wayne. (See my review of his first book, “The Bones of Kekionga, in IPR’s Fall 2020 Journal.) Each book is written as light historical fiction at a high school level, no surprise there as Pickett is a retired high school history teacher. This book is based on Tecumseh’s war against American expansion into the Old Northwest, beginning with the battle of Tippecanoe and ending with his unsuccessful siege of Fort Wayne. The story follows a fictional settler family but uses mostly historical soldiers, traders and Indians. Many of these names are familiar, having lent themselves to streets, parks and schools in Allen County and nearby. (I grew

up across a large sand dune from Kekionga Junior High in Waynedale.) Students of Fort Wayne’s early history will find all three books quick reads and they can be recommended to older children.

“A Republic of Founders: The Schemers, Intriguers & Adventurers Who Created a New American Nation” (Pegasus Books 2023, 269 pages plus extensive notes, \$21 hardcover at Amazon) contains a series of essays edited by David Head and Timothy C. Hemmis on, well, the subtitle says it all. There are 12 of them, beginning with Benedict Arnold and concluding with Aaron Burr. Many if not most of those in between are obscure and some unknown to me. Each was a questionable character who added something to our national ethos, although not always beneficial and frequently controversial. Take General James Wilkinson, a favorite historical bete noire of mine. Ending at the right place effectively justifies his duplicitous path getting there, according to his essayist Samuel Watson. Wilkinson’s partner in duplicity, Aaron Burr, does not get off as easily. To be fair, each essay attempts to explain things from its subject’s point of view. While we want to see everything as either totally black or white, there are a lot of grays obstructing the assumed clarity of our vision. Benedict Arnold, for example, was treated quite wretchedly by the Continental Congress. This is not an excuse but does contribute to our understanding of his treason. The authors advance a theory that the reason so many scoundrels appeared on the scene in the first years of our republic is that self-interest was prevalent and the unsettled West was too good an opportunity to miss. In other words it was simply the time and place for scoundrels. Fortunately it was also the time and place for altruistic patriots, those who didn’t warrant a chapter in this book.

“Road to Surrender: Three Men and the Countdown to the End of World War II” by Evan Thomas tells the story of the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan but its perspective is unique. It views things primarily through three men: Secretary of War Henry Stimson, General Carl Spaatz and Japanese Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo. All three wrestle with moral issues, at times in opposition to their perceived

duty. Stimson was a sick man, suffering several minor heart attacks during the late years of the war. Spaatz was in command of the strategic bombing offensive against Germany where he saw the horrific civilian cost of the Allies “de-housing” bombing of workers’ homes. But the most interesting character is Togo, the Japanese foreign minister who alone convinced the government and Emperor Hirohito that Japan must surrender. He accomplished this despite the personal risk of being assassinated by army hardliners. He was also about the only governmental official who argued against the Pearl Harbor strike. For his efforts he died in prison convicted of crimes against peace. Thomas has provided an interesting book written in an easy-to-read style.

“A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599” by James Shapiro is an interesting history of that year as seen through the plays Shakespeare released in 1599. It was a productive year for him with four plays produced: Henry V, As You Like It, Julius Caesar and Hamlet. I’ve read and/or watched them all but next time I will be alert to the subtleties written in that reflect his commentary on current events. Henry V, my favorite history, is loaded with current references to England’s military excursion into Ireland, led by the former court favorite the Earl of Essex. I knew he had a falling out with Queen Elizabeth but never realized how close he came to outright treason. Another example is the mustering of Essex’s army, a criticism of how England impressed unfortunates into serving involuntarily. Julius Caesar, of course, is a play about treason and Hamlet’s lese-majeste falls right into the same category. Even the on again, off again love affair of As You Like It is uncomfortably close to the Elizabeth-Essex relationship. I always thought of Shakespeare as the tame court playwright for the Tudors but Shapiro convinced me he often sailed close to the royal wind. This is a great book for Shakespeareans but also for those who love the Tudor period of English history.

“Jefferson’s White House: Monticello on the Potomac” by James Conroy is his second book about life in the executive mansion during a

presidential administration, Lincoln’s White House being his earlier work. I’m not a Jefferson fan for several reasons, but this book softened my anti opinion of the man. Jefferson was not the first occupant but John Adams had only lived there one month before leaving office so the book is about Jefferson’s efforts to make it a livable as well as a functional home. Two points are made clear by the book. First, the White House in Jefferson’s time was incomplete and not structurally sound. Furnishing it mostly came out of Jefferson’s personal funds as Congress appropriated very little in support. These expenditures contributed significantly to Jefferson’s eventual bankruptcy. Second, Jefferson spent lavishly on entertaining by inviting diplomats, congressmen and others to dinner on a regular basis. He even developed a friendship with a Federalist senator, this during a period of elevated rancor between the two parties. How he accomplished this was by focusing the dinner and post-dinner conversation toward non-political topics, Jefferson’s reputation as a polymath working to his favor. Despite my prejudice Conroy is convincing that Jefferson the host was an engaging and likable person. It reminded me of the Kennedy quote at a state dinner for Nobel laureates. “I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered together at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone.” Except that Thomas Jefferson almost never dined alone, perhaps because he was a lonely widower with family issues. — *Mark Franke*

Backgrounders

James O'Donnell is the retired, emeritus, Luke J. Peters Professor of Business and Economics and Executive-in-Resident at Huntington University, Huntington. Before becoming a professor, he was an Executive Vice President at Fidelity Investments in Boston.



Jesus: Socialist? Capitalist? It's Complicated

(Feb. 22) — Some of our Lord's harshest statements were about wealth and the rich:

"How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" (Luke 18:24)

"Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you." (James 5:1)

"There were no needy persons among [the Christians]. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need." (Acts 4:34–35)

Marx adapted that last one: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

With such strong statements by Jesus against wealth, it might seem like a contradiction that He could be a free-market capitalist. But capitalism is only a few hundred years old. Its major contribution to economics is the idea that markets should be allowed to function based on freedom, cooperation and decentralization, not centralized governmental control. It allows people to take risks to create, innovate, satisfy others wants and needs and, thereby, build wealth.

Back in Jesus' day, however, wealth was evil. In Jesus' day, different assumptions informed economic behavior:

A zero-sum approach to wealth.

A coercive economic system wherein wealth was intertwined with "extractive imperial policies."

Under Rome, only about 2 percent or 3 percent of the population ruled. And they did so largely by hereditary control of land and labor, consuming most of the production and confiscating most of what's left for peasants.

No surprise, then, wealth was seen as theft. Add to this exploitative picture the grim fact most of the non-wealthy were slaves it's not hard to understand why the rich were hated. Every poor person was oppressed, and every rich person was an oppressor — or the willing recipient of the fruits of oppression.

Such systems of oppression produce only limited amounts of goods. They obstruct innovation and dull the motivation for personal profit. There is only so much to go around, and the powerful take most of it. Surviving — let alone thriving — without free markets really is zero-sum.

By contrast, private property rights, unbiased rules and free trade create the conditions for upward mobility. Those at the bottom have opportunities to advance. Wealth grows and is spread around, even to the poorest.

In the short life of capitalism so far, these principles have borne results beyond what any ancient could have imagined. Bailey and Tupy, in "Ten Global Trends Every Smart Person Should Know" refer to capitalism creating "The Great Enrichment," since the world's economy has grown more than a hundredfold since 1820.

Compared with the stagnation of the previous 1,800 years, this number is incredible. Despite critics' frustration, growth has transcended the wealthy. Consider Baily and Tupy's data:

Nearly 84 percent of humans suffered extreme poverty in 1820. But by 1910, only 66 percent;

By 1950, only 55 percent;

1981, 42 percent;

and by 2018, 8.6 percent.

In short, capitalism builds wealth. And human flourishing.

But too many today, even among Christians, begrudge capitalism. We need better language to convince people of capitalism's successes. Milton

Friedman tried. How's this: Be "pro free-enterprise," not just "pro-business . . ."

Business people too often favor free enterprise for everybody else but want special governmental protection for themselves. Much like the Roman elites of Jesus's day, corporations that lobby politicians try to rig the system.

Of course, there are limits to what even free enterprise can do. Illness, disability, disaster and other unforeseen challenges happen. But if we're serious about alleviating the hardships of others, free markets are essential.

John Gaski, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is a long-time registered Democrat and long-time registered Republican — sequentially and intermittently, not simultaneously — which should dispatch any suspicion of partisanship. Dr. Gaski is author of *The Language of Branding* (Nova Science, 2011). His primary research specialization is social and political power and conflict.



The Dems and Their Biden (and Harris) Problem

Satire Alert: Channeling and appropriating the reverse-projective style of William Safire: 1) in tribute to the late New York Times columnist; 2) for possible reader nostalgia; and 3) because the situation calls for it.

(Feb. 15) —Pundits and pols speculate that we Democrats might find a way to remove Joe Biden from presidential candidacy this coming year. They don't know how right they are but, as usual, we are several steps ahead of them. The way we will arrange for this crypto-coup to play out is what is so clever and opaque to outsiders.

Too late for a serious primary challenge, they say? Immaterial. Not even in the ballpark, folks. That route is not close to how we'll do this. No, the plan is, first, for Biden to remain in office through the Democrat National Convention, at which he will ostensibly accept the nomination. Then, maybe even during his (necessarily brief) "acceptance" speech, but probably days or weeks later, he will bow out, i.e., withdraw from

candidacy for personal or health reasons. Shortly thereafter but pre-arranged, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) meets in faux emergency session to select its replacement presidential candidate, with the cover of super-delegate approval, of course.

The beauty of this ruse — we specialize in political hoaxes, don't we? — is that it leaves the flat-footed Republicans with little reaction time. Through misdirection, we trick them into expending their competitive ammo on Joe Biden all along, with too-little time to attack the real nominee.

Why would Joe Biden go along with this? Abundant reasons, including his knowledge that we — the DNC/Obama clique which really runs your government — will resort to literally anything to get what we want. Explicitly, one Sword of Damocles we wield is the 25th Amendment's incapacity threat, which Biden knows we can execute at will. Also, don't forget, Biden himself will do almost anything for money, even sell out his country, demonstrably, so we have a carrot to go with the stick. Ultimately, you see, old Joe has little choice.

Now, who is our mystery nominee in place of Biden? Chosen already, to be sure, as you may have guessed. We can ease the very-willing Gavin Newsom into the candidacy role — if Michelle exercises her prerogative to change her mind. Yes, as of now, Michelle Obama may have agreed to run — largely because she knows millions of illegal Obama '24 votes have recently been ushered in on foot through America's southern border, to be registered via lax "motor voter" laws. Sure, Hillary Clinton and Liz Warren are also ready and willing, but we have our preferred nominee(s) lined up, two deep on the depth chart, ahead of them.

The lingering question (to some, not us): What about Kamala? Why isn't it her turn? How can we be sure she will "get in line" and stay in her place, that is, out of the picture? Easy; of course we have that contingency settled. Here's the plan for her:

We not only "coax" Joe Biden to withdraw from the nomination, but he also will resign the

presidency very late in his term. Again, because he knows we can and will use the 25th Amendment if he would balk, he goes along with it. This is also the reward for Kamala to forgo actually running for the presidency. She gets to be in the history books as the first woman U.S. president – albeit for a term of merely a few weeks (or days?). Yet this only happens for her if she goes along with the plan. If not, then not only does she not get to be president but she knows we will not even allow her to become the nominee (as if she ever had a chance at that prize). Specifically, in the unlikely event that Kamala Harris would resist, we simply modify the scheme to have Joe complete his term, thereby acing out a “President” Harris.

For good measure, our insurance is that Kamala also knows the implicit “we will do anything” threat and that “anything” really means anything with Democrats. (Recall how we deftly engineered Biden’s ultimate nomination in the South Carolina primary of 2020.) Expect Barack to be very persuasive with Kamala as well. Once again, a combo of sticks and carrots is how internal Democrat politics operates, mainly sticks, à la the old Soviet Politburo. Kamala’s cameo appearance at the national level is thus resolved efficiently. What if Joe expires while in office? In that case, only a slight variant of the original concept of an ultra-short-term President Harris ensues.

So, why not replace Joe sooner, like right now, on 25th Amendment grounds? Because we fear a longer-term President Harris would foul things up and damage the Democrat brand even more than a few more months of the enfeebled Biden. Yes, that is a gamble, and we are rooting for Joe to remain among the living at least briefly.

But then who is our ’24 vice presidential candidate? Kamala again? As temporary president in waiting or even president when the election occurs, she is not interested. Our biggest masterstroke of all, perhaps: Constitutionally, Barack himself is not eligible for election as president again, but that does not cover election to the VP job. He would simply be a VP who is disqualified from the line of succession, right? But

wait. The Constitution’s (amended) language does not prohibit serving a third term through a presidential succession instead of election. Look it up. Maybe President Michelle would choose to resign! (Even without that, Barack as VP will assuage public concern over rookie Michelle or a failed governor in the top job. And with at least one Obama on the ticket, ideally two, any danger of a black voter pro-Kamala backlash is quelled.) Watch for it. Expect the unexpected. Not unexpected by us, though, because we have it all wired.

So, Repubs, keep enjoying the illusion that Biden’s problems are of value to you. We hold the cards and have some surprises planned. As mentioned, we will resort to anything. Stay tuned.

This is Bill Safire, from the great beyond, signing out . . .

The GOP and the Abortion Trap

(*Jan. 29*) — Clearly, the Republicans need emergency repositioning guidance on the third-rail issue of abortion to neutralize or at least minimize its electoral damage. This is not a “re-branding” matter; nearly all media talking heads and editorial writers misuse that term when they mean repositioning. Bad strategic positioning does cause brand perception problems, but the positioning is the underlying fault. So, here is a primer on what Republicans can do through messaging to prevent getting swamped again, especially in 2024, by the single-issue pro-abortion vote — primarily that of American women.

- Some say Republicans should pivot to a posture of the “party of women,” mothers in particular. Fine, but this gambit might be worth only a few public opinion basis points because those with true, wholesome devotion to women and mothers already tend to be Republicans or conservatives. The Repubs need much stronger ammo.

- Therefore, emphasize in public communication that the Republicans, not Democrats, occupy the mainstream position philosophically on abortion by U.S. and world

standards, e.g., a window of 15 weeks or so along with rape/incest/life-of-mother exceptions. (So, how can Repubs have been losing on the issue if they align so well with the American public? The pro-abortion side is far more motivated and intense, especially now with the overturn of *Roe vs. Wade*. The leftward-biased media have also played a role.)

- This moderate extant Republican positioning can be driven home Socratically by allowing the relevant audience to reach the same conclusion on their own (ostensibly) via leading questions, such as: “How about if we adopt the permissive abortion policies of the Western European countries, or Russia? Would that be OK?” Then hit the doubters with the surprise gut-punchline that the United States already has much looser abortion laws than most of those nations!

- Help the pro-abortion female populace to see that the Democrats are insulting their intelligence with a campaign of phony fear. The Dems, in fact, have been terrorizing American women for decades over abortion. To rebut, remind abortophiles that the issue is already dead at the federal level because of the *Dobbs* decision — thus should not even be a factor in a presidential campaign. Specifically, it would be nigh impossible for a Republican U.S. president to get 60 Senate votes to pass an abortion restriction of any kind (because the Democrats accept no less than unrestricted abortion access up to, and beyond, the time of birth).

- Again for communication impact, try something like this: “Post-*Dobbs*, there actually is an increase in the number of abortions in the U.S. Any woman in this country can now obtain an abortion at any time of gestation, although some would have to travel to a no-restriction state. Is that not enough for you? It is time for you ‘pro-choice’ women to celebrate your victory on the issue and collect your chips. The Dems are trying to propagandize and manipulate you into a misunderstanding.” (No one likes to be manipulated into misunderstanding.)

- Then, to punctuate the political spin, this poignant device could yield bonus impact: “Cheer

up, ladies. You and your daughters can now kill as many of your unborn babies as you want. Isn’t that the outcome you always sought? (And when we refer to your daughters, we mean only the ones you, yourselves, did not murder by having them aborted.)”

What, you don’t like this one? A violation of “how to win friends and influence people”? Maybe, but more a matter of tough love and effective irony, and also a contrast with how Democrats talk down to women. Of course, when brainstorming for new insights, not every idea is a sure winner, but that is the primitive stage of strategic revision Republicans are in—whether they realize it or not. I urge readers to improve on my offerings, but drastic new language does appear necessary.

Actually, the sensible dual-track subtext message for this last entry is: 1) Your side has won, the national issue is largely gone, and no longer is there reason to vote against Republicans on a pro-abortion basis; 2) maybe it is your abortion position that has been too extreme all along, and the Repubs are the moderate and mainstream side. (Note: None of these tactical suggestions implies lessened opposition to the abortion holocaust. They merely constitute a parallel campaign of diversionary public relations cover.)

Overall, it is past time for radically revised Republican and conservative rhetoric on the abortion controversy. The author invites even more novel input. Indeed, the present trajectory will not only continue to fail politically but will literally doom our nation. How? One more national-level win by the Democrats to consolidate their oppressive power means a permanent leftist dictatorship imposed on the United States, especially with millions more Dem voters surging into the country illegally. (Recall the nature of every leftist dictatorship in world history.) Need evidence to support this grim forecast? Just look at the rapid progress toward repression and national destruction over the last three years. Heaven help our land. The preceding

may be some of the human-level help it also needs, and is proffered in that spirit.

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. Citations viewable at www.inpolicy.org.



The Travail of a Letter-Writer

(Jan. 24) — Each morning, I read a newspaper, The Wall Street Journal (WSJ), and a Gannett product, the daily paper that has many of the same articles in its Milwaukee paper as in its Indianapolis paper. As well, Gannett products have cut back on editorial commentary, especially letters to the editor. The result, as lamented by a Greenfield Reporter reporter, is that papers skew left or right, even if a comment or letter has been well researched.

On the other hand, the WSJ invites readers to share their thoughts regarding news items and commentaries. For example, the WSJ had an article entitled “How Should We Treat Abusive Mothers?” in its Jan. 20-21, 2024 edition. The WSJ invited readers to share their thoughts thus: “SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS — What do you think of the Gypsy Rose Blanchard case? Join the conversation below.”

The article reported on a horrific case of child abuse and the subsequent murder of the mother by the child. The article contained no data, so I responded to the lacuna:

“Our idealization of motherhood and reluctance to see women as abusers” is misplaced idealization and a fantasy. 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 — would that the data be reported in the media.”

Readers of The Indiana Policy Review may recognize the data since it was published there back in September 2023.

The Wall Street Journal refrained from publishing my comment. I followed with another comment:

“Statista in June 2023 reported that In 2021, about 210,746 children in the United States were abused by their mother. Furthermore, 132,363 children were abused by their father in that year. We would serve children better were our society to deal with the data.” The WSJ allowed that comment into the conversation.

However, information from Statista, while generally reliable, is not as authoritative as information from the dot gov (.gov) e-domain. So I sent one more comment: “For people who wish to have a better grasp of the reality of child abuse, by way of more and more precise data, I recommend they visit the Department of Health and Human Services site and read chapter 4 of Child Maltreatment 2021.”

That comment was held back, too, treated similarly to the first comment. The last comment and the first comment were eventually allowed to enter the conversation.

My experience provides insight. First, unlike Gannet newspapers, the WSJ encourages discussion by readers. The discussions sometimes appear to be a brawl between people who lean left and those who lean right, but the editors attempt to keep vile language and ad hominem out. Second, the WSJ apparently does not allow data to appear in the commentary following an article unless the folks at the WSJ verify it, a policy that enhances journalistic responsibility. My third comment enabled the WSJ to track down the data. That the data finally appeared in the commentary speaks well for the WSJ.

Third, and most important, that the WSJ has little or no knowledge about the man-woman data on child abuse and child abuse fatalities shows how little our society cares about

“contrary” thinking, even when it is easy to “follow the data.” The attendant problem of policy based in ignorance is as unhealthy for our society as cruel women can be unhealthy to children.

Domestic Abuse Revisited

(*Jan. 10*) — Periodically, the Indianapolis Star has an article about domestic abuse. Consequently, I periodically research the data on domestic abuse.

In mid December, Danyette Smith was featured in a Star news article, “Sunglasses to Survival: Indy woman wants to help stop hiding abuse.” (Dec. 13) The article was timely. Domestic abuse occurs more frequently on major holidays, including Christmas and New Year’s, according to the group Women against Crime. That group focused on women, with the attendant implication that men are the perpetrators, women are relatively blameless. The Star reported that Ms. Smith wanted to prevent “the same from happening to other women” with regard to her suffering domestic abuse.

The article in the Star, though, recognized indirectly that men suffer domestic abuse, too, at the hands of their partners. The article noted that Ms. Smith hoped “to provide services for people going through abuse,” suggesting men and women, i.e., people, suffer domestic abuse.

Further, the inclusive “people” is more accurate with regard to domestic abuse. The Department of Justice, in an October 2023 report, said “Data from the last National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey indicate that 41 percent of women and 26 percent of men stated that they had experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime and experienced an intimate partner violence-related impact.”

Indiana aligns closely with the national data. In 2019, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, noted that “42.5 percent of Indiana women and 27.9 percent of Indiana men experience intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner

sexual violence and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes.”

Following the data, men are also victims of domestic abuse. As Dutton and Nicholls reported in an academic journal as long ago as 2006, several studies found “the levels of violence by female perpetrators higher than those reported for males.” The two researchers reviewed studies “indicating high levels of unilateral intimate violence by females to both males and females. Males appear to report their own victimization less than females do and to not view female violence against them as a crime. Hence, they differentially under-report being victimized by partners on crime victim surveys.”

The last statement is consistent with a 2017 article by Myhill. He stated that “many surveys suggest women and men experience similar levels of domestic violence, but added that “domestic violence practitioners see abuse as perpetrated primarily by men against women.”

The surveys and research confirm the observation made decades ago by Murray and Strauss. They reported in their 1990 book, *Physical Violence in American Families*, that women initiate violence, both major and minor, at the same rate as men, not that the data were taken seriously by policymakers.

Of course, given men’s secondary sex characteristics, the characteristics that “enable” a man to become a woman and win all sorts of athletics contests, a man’s physique can normally overpower a woman’s physique. Given the superior strength of a man when domestic abuse occurs, I would counsel men to refrain from retaliating were a woman to start a domestic brawl.

I would also counsel policymakers to acknowledge that men do not always begin a violent domestic spat, major or minor. Policymakers could televise ads that show a man, obviously angry but also rubbing a cheek to ease the pain, looking at a camera. The voice overlay would say, “Yeah, she hit you. Yes, it hurts. But be a man. Control your urge to strike back. That shows strength, too.”

Such an appeal is likely to lower the incidence of retaliatory violence by men. That kind of appeal follows the data and acknowledges that men can feel the sting of domestic violence, both physically and emotionally. And acknowledgement often brings peace.

Is Disparity a Choice?

(Nov. 16) — About a month ago, the Indianapolis Star reported that “One of Indianapolis’s most popular charter schools is expanding to create an all-girls STEM-focused K-8 school.” Inside Indiana Business said “the school, called Girls IN STEM Academy . . . will open in partnership with the Girl Scouts of Central Indiana, Every Girl Can STEM and Purdue Polytechnic High School.”

The likely impetus for such a school was educational data regarding undergraduate majors by sex. The National Center for Education Statistics showed that in 2011, 73,833 men and 14,896 women majored in engineering and engineering technology, or 83 percent men and 17 percent women. In 2021, men were 75.8 percent of engineering and engineering technology majors to women’s 24.2 percent. Majors in computer science and information science broke down into 78 percent men and 22 percent women. For mathematics and statistics, men constituted 58 percent of undergraduate majors.

Hence, a STEM school exclusively for girls, Title IX notwithstanding.

A thinking person might then ask are there other imbalances by sex in other fields? Well, yes. Data for 2021 show that undergraduate majors in biology and biomedical sciences were 65.8 percent women, not quite the same imbalance as in engineering and engineering tech, but still a considerable imbalance. Communication and communication technology majors were 63.9 percent female to 36.1 percent male. However, women comprised 82.8 percent of education majors and 72.5 percent of English language and literature majors.

For health professions and related programs, 84.8 percent of undergraduate majors were woman. Were a person to look at nursing schools, the person would see an even larger disparity favoring women. The largest disparity between the sexes among the majors listed in the National Center for Education Statistics was for family and consumer sciences, where women were 88.2 percent of the majors. That area of major study had only 22,15 majors, a fraction of the 268,018 majors in health professions and related programs.

Female majors in psychology and in public administration and social service professions were 79.8 percent and 83.3 percent, respectively. As for visual and performing arts, 63.2 percent were female. Those majoring in the liberal art and sciences showed a similar imbalance: 64.4 percent female

The undergraduate area of legal professions and legal studies shows women at 55.5 percent of the majors whereas physical sciences and science technology majors were 55.4 percent men.

Many majors had a roughly even distribution between men and women. For example, business majors were roughly equal, with 53.4 percent men and 46.6 percent women. Data on majors in homeland security, law enforcement, firefighting, and related professional services had women at 52.2%. The least disparity in major areas was for park, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies inasmuch as the 54,294 majors had a disparity of .01 percent.

Given the data above, maybe there should be boys-only charter schools, again, Title IX notwithstanding. The boys-only charter schools could get men ready for the fields of education, or nursing, or family and consumer sciences, or biology and biological sciences, or the liberal arts and sciences, or health professions and related fields or psychology. For that matter, maybe Indiana and every other state should look at the totality of majors and recognize the disparity in undergraduate students inasmuch as 60 percent are female. Instead of creating girls-only

schools, maybe educators should worry more about educating boys and young men.

Perhaps, along the way, government leaders in Indiana and every other state could reflect on the data regarding linguistic attainment. Research shows more adept linguistic attainment in girls compared to boys, and as one researcher noted, “The results showed that girls are slightly ahead of boys in early communicative gestures, in productive vocabulary, and in combining words. The difference increased with age.”

Maybe, just maybe, the choice of a major reflects the disparity in linguistic development between boys and girls. Given their linguistic proficiency, one “that increases with age,” young women are able to choose majors and occupations that utilize that proficiency. Young men have less latitude and bunch up in majors and fields that require less linguistic proficiency.

Like the STEM fields, Title IX notwithstanding.

Dr. Richard Moss, a physician in the town of Jasper in Dubois County, is the author of “A Surgeon’s Odyssey” and “Matilda’s Triumph” available on amazon.com. Contact him on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



Diversity Comes to Jasper

(Dec. 23) — The medical staff at our community hospital in Jasper, Indiana, a small, generally conservative berg in the middle of fields of corn and soy, received an email from hospital administration indicating that they would begin implementing Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) training.

I responded with the following letter, sent this to the entire medical staff and hospital administrators including the CEO. I also sent it to members of the hospital board.

I have heard nothing back and do not know if they plan to proceed with their disastrous plans. I will continue to oppose it vigorously and must imagine that it is a small minority of leftist activists on the medical staff that pushed for it. I

will do all that I can to ensure that it does not stand.

I RECEIVED your email to the medical staff regarding the new DEI initiative at Memorial Hospital, including ‘talking points’ and ongoing ‘education and awareness training.’ I would like to share some thoughts with you, and others, about DEI.

DEI, as the world knows, refers to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This concept, like many seemingly innocuous-sounding slogans or acronyms, carries with it aspects quite sinister. It is a phrase that has swept the nation and all of our major institutions, including our universities and schools. DEI has become the new mantra, indeed, a booming industry and ethos, dominating our culture. But contained within it are concepts that are alien and antithetical to the Christian mission of Memorial Hospital, of “being for others.” It is also hostile to the founding principles of the nation.

DEI is a hyper-aggressive and politicized quota system, a radicalized version of affirmative action for certain so-called “marginalized” people. It divides society into “groups” based on race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and so on. It gives preference to certain favored groups, which include, in descending order: Muslims, transgenders, gays, blacks, Hispanics, women. It disadvantages other groups currently out of favor, chiefly whites, males, heterosexuals, and Christians. Alas, there is another group that joins the list of the despised, perhaps the chief target of DEI hatred, the Jews.

Apart from being intensely divisive, it also reflects a world view that is not compatible with our biblical tradition, which holds that each person is an individual uniquely made in the image of God. This transcendent concept is peculiar to the West and accounts for its extraordinary success, chiefly here in the US, the greatest embodiment of Western thought and accomplishment, although certain alien ideologies, of which DEI is one, now threaten it. But it is our emphasis on the individual,

protecting individual rights and liberties, that has made Western nations in general, and America, in particular, so desirable and why all the world seeks to come here. It explains our economic growth, standard of living, and extraordinary cultural and technological achievements. It is based ultimately on the freedoms and protections of the individual precisely because of our belief in the sanctity of each person.

DEI rejects that. It is an identitarian ideology, a “caste” system, so to speak, that divides society into intersectional groups based on perceived wrongs committed by alleged dominant power centers in society, which it perceives as intrinsically racist or sexist or homophobic, and so on. Within the DEI calculus, there are oppressors and oppressed, victimizers and victims, and, as noted above, so-called “marginalized people.” It emerges from standard Marxist ideology, except centered on culture or race rather than class, as originally conceived, hence the term “cultural Marxism.” DEI is an extension of cultural Marxism, part of the “intersectional” hierarchy of “oppression” that divides society into odd categories, placing the groups allegedly most “oppressed” at the pinnacle of the pyramid, say blacks, women, or transgenders, and those designated most guilty of “oppression” at the bottom (whites, males, Christians, Jews).

DEI represents a vision that discards eternal notions of good and evil with a new measure: the alleged “powerless” were good, the “powerful” were bad. We replaced colorblindness with race obsession . . . People were given authority in this new order not in recognition of their gifts, hard work, accomplishments, or contributions to society, but in inverse proportion to the disadvantages their group had suffered, as defined by radical ideologues. (Bari Weiss)

Rejecting the individual, it reduces American society into a collection of groups or tribes, hence the “tribalization” of society. This tribalization (racialization) is based on certain immutable, physical traits such as skin color and sex. This, by the way, has been the norm for all of human history and throughout the world. America was

unique in that it rejected tribalization, group characteristics, and superficial appearance, and elevated the individual, which accounted for its historic success, and the reason so many sought to live here.

DEI, furthermore, has no place in any institution that values standards and color-blind meritocracy. If diversity becomes the driving force behind hiring and promotion, or even a small part of it, rather than skill, accomplishment, and merit, then it necessarily compromises standards. If the goal is diversity, and to have proportional representation in Memorial Hospital’s work force, based on race, sex, sexual orientation, and other such trivialities, even in part, and do not contemplate the individual and his unique abilities and contributions over all else, then the system collapses and becomes simply one of groups or tribes competing with one another. Meritocracy necessarily dies in such a system. You can have DEI or meritocracy, but not both.

Shall we now have quotas for our doctors, nurses, technicians, and janitors based on DEI principles of proportional allocations for blacks, Hispanics, Gays, Lesbians, Moslems, and transgenders – over more qualified individuals of the wrong color, sex, or sexual orientation? Shall we treat patients based on such considerations? Such a concept is antithetical to the mission of the hospital. It betrays the purpose of our institution and its religious and biblical basis for current fashionable, destructive, and divisive Marxist goals that have no place here and should be unequivocally rejected. Further, why is “diversity” a goal. Diversity is actually a challenge to overcome in the pursuit of “unity,” which is a far more important aspiration.

DEI has become a quasi-religion. It is part of a cadre of similarly destructive and related leftist concepts such as “Critical Race Theory,” “Social Justice,” “Queer Theory,” and “wokeism.” DEI means the end of meritocracy, standards, quality of care, and the belief in the individual not as a member of a particular racial tribe but as a person forged in the image of God. It is antithetical to our faith, traditions and the founding principles of

this nation. DEI prioritizes identity over excellence and balkanizes along racial and other lines. Replacing hard work, initiative, and accomplishment with proportional representation of favored groups, it elevates skin color, sex, or sexual orientation, over the sacred individual. It is also anti-white, anti-male, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, anti-Western, and anti-American. Dissecting a society by superficial appearance is divisive not inclusive. It is nihilistic and foments hate and separatism. It is destructive of the mission of the hospital, of “being there for others,” which is accomplished by providing the highest quality of care based on employing the finest individuals regardless of race, sex, ethnicity, and so on – and treating everyone, patients and staff, equally, as individuals. That is the ideal you should strive for – not scrutinizing trivial, surface features. You must reject DEI, a poisonous ideology. It shifts power to a corrupt agenda and bureaucracy that threatens achievers of every race and ethnic background, and, ultimately, America itself. You must rip DEI out root and branch for the sake of our institution — and the God we hold dear.

Barry Keating, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is Professor Emeritus at the University of Notre Dame.



The King’s Hawaiian Example

(Dec. 11) — Edinburgh is a town in Bartholomew County. It is part of the Columbus, Indiana, metropolitan statistical area. An astounding event took place in Edinburgh this past month: A firm engaged in building a new plant failed to ask for a tax abatement!

Such behavior is unusual; new businesses of every variety routinely request tax abatements as day follows night. These requests are almost always granted, often with even larger abatements than requested.

The firm proposing to build in Edinburgh is one almost everyone would recognize: King’s Hawaiian is known for its sweet bread. We often see large end-of-aisle displays of King’s Hawaiian in supermarkets.

In the Bartholomew County Board of Zoning Appeals Staff Report of August 2023 (called “Project Whiteboard”) King’s Hawaiian met almost all the existing local regulations and asked for minor local government assistance. For instance, the district in which the proposed project would be located presently permits food and beverage production facilities. One of the few requests made by King’s Hawaiian concerns a building height regulation: “... variance is, however, needed in order to allow the proposed 78,000 square foot cold storage facility to exceed the 50-foot maximum primary structure height and be up to 100 feet tall, as proposed.” The County Board did allow for this variance.

The lack of tax abatement is an ideal course of action for both King’s and the Bartholomew County Board. County boards have no role to play in attempting to encourage or entice businesses of any type to either build or not build in their county; that decision is not appropriately exercised by the government. It is a decision to be pursued by the individual firms.

Had a tax abatement been requested and offered, what would Adam Smith writing in 1776 have commented? Known for his advocacy of free markets and the invisible hand, Smith would likely have advised against government intervention in the form of tax abatements for specific companies. Smith believed in the natural order of markets and the idea that self-interest, when guided by competition, leads to the best outcomes for society.

Smith might have argued that granting tax abatements to a particular company created an unfair advantage and distorted competition. He would emphasize the importance of a level playing field where businesses compete based on their merit, efficiency, and ability to meet consumer demands.

In place of tax abatements, Smith would have likely suggested that the government's role should be to establish and enforce a fair and impartial legal framework, ensure property rights, enforce contracts, and maintain a stable economic environment. By fostering an environment of open competition, Smith believed that the market would allocate resources efficiently and promote the overall well-being of society.

It is important to maintain a neutral and fair tax policy. Instead of granting specific favors to individual companies, governments should strive for a business-friendly environment through low and stable tax rates that apply uniformly to all businesses. Special exemptions and abatements can only distort the market, create unfair advantages, and ultimately harm overall competition.

If a company is facing financial challenges (as are many companies requesting tax abatements), a more effective solution would involve addressing the root causes of those challenges, such as reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens or providing a more predictable business environment.

A competitive marketplace and a level playing field are essential for fostering innovation, efficiency, and sustained economic growth. King's Hawaiian and the Bartholomew County Board followed the right course of action. Let's buy some King's Hawaiian this week. ♦



Thomas Hoepker, Sept. 11, 2001

The Outstater

No, Dr. Whitten, We're Not 'Equal'

"We are not the party of identity politics, you utter idiots." Ann Coulter critiquing the GOP response to the State of the Union.

(March 14) — Reading the words in the 74 bills that Gov. Holcomb signed into law this week, you were struck by the hypersensitivity to offending even slightly any segment of the population that might feel the tiniest bit unequal.

Peripherally, nothing in the bills or in the press announcements was allowed to imply that any class of persons — children of intact, nuclear families, for instance — performed exceptionally or contributed inordinately and thereby deserved special encouragement.

No, everything in legislative land is hunky-dory egalitarian. Nobody is better than anybody else, except of course the legislators themselves who now are singularly permitted to carry firearms in the Statehouse to defend themselves, one supposes, against their unarmed constituents.

Even the commendable attempt to reform of university tenure was cast as good for everyone equally. It wasn't of course. It was only a token "win" for white males, who have been beaten down by the system for three generations now. More like simple justice, you should say.

Tip-toeing around anything that hinted at that, the sponsor of the tenure bill meekly suggested that it would cause only "minimal

disruption" in how universities now operate, which is to tyrannically crush academic careers that don't fit the favored human-resource profile. Rather, he described his bill in the ideology-washed terms of ensuring more "diversity" and more "equity."

Pamela Whitten, president of Indiana University, was apoplectic nonetheless. She was joined by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in saying that the measure would impede recruitment of faculty (or at least those who share her political outlook) and threaten the prestige of state schools.

But the columnist Ann Coulter, canceled during a visit to IU two years ago, is surely right that modern etiquette requires that "no policy be criticized unless it can be shown that it harms someone other than whites, men or Americans." Thus reform of the immigration system is promoted illogically as being good for illegal immigrants, U.S. citizens be damned.

Being careful not to mention the hundreds of students, faculty and guest speakers who have been canceled on state campuses this last decade, the governor spoke vaguely of "intellectual vibrancy" and "differing viewpoints." In any case, each university is left to work out the details themselves. The governor has faith they will do so "equitably."

Nobody wants to say that in certain fields white and Asian males outperform others by magnitudes. Moreover, to purposefully discourage such groups (can you spell D.E.I) is perverse and will bring one's society to disaster.

Wait, somebody *did* say that — said it presciently a generation ago.

Arnold Toynbee was at the time Britain's preeminent historian. He was here the summer of 1961 teaching at the University of Pennsylvania when he wrote this for American alumni magazines:

"There is at least one current notion about democracy that is wrong-headed to the point of being disastrously perverse. This notion is that to have been born with an exceptionally large endowment of innate ability is tantamount to

having committed a large pre-natal offense against society. It is looked upon as being an offense because, according to this wrong-headed view of democracy, inequalities of any and every kind are undemocratic.”

The great man reminded us that in a constitutional republic, even one governed democratically, no individual is equal except in one sense: He is given an equal opportunity to develop his unequal capacities.

Toynbee’s heroic work, “A Study of History,” argues that societies arise from a challenge and response. If the challenge is overcome it is always by the response of a small number that Toynbee calls the creative minority. These can be anyone of creative spirit from illiterate farmers to nuclear physicists. He says that the individuals in this minority can be varied in demography, class or race but warns that they must be both protected and encouraged if the society is to prosper.

What would be the odds, Toynbee might ask, that the creative minority now needed to save American society be made up entirely of persons approved by Pamela Whitten and the AAUP or anyone not white, not heterosexual or not male?

Toynbee’s theory, need it be said, is no longer favorably reviewed on American university campuses, if taught at all

An Eternal Education Conundrum

(March 4) — I belong to a study group that takes up a public policy issue each month. Over the months, one thing has become painfully clear: Viable and sometimes obvious solutions are more plentiful than the will to apply them. Indeed, in many cases it would be just a matter of noticing what’s going on. And if that sounds too pat, here is an example — school funding.

Hundreds of legislators have gone through the Statehouse in the two decades since the Indiana Policy Review published its study on school funding. Political careers have been made, fortunes secured. Literally thousands of editorials and speeches on the importance of funding classroom learning, hundreds of bills. The result, it is argued here, has been zilch.

Let’s be more specific. Education takes up the lion’s share of the state budget, and “classroom learning” is code for the single most critical item in that budget — the teacher. Yet, teachers are inarguably underpaid and overworked. Teacher shortages are reported in almost every Indiana district.

What’s going on?

To that point the Reason Foundation last week released its study “Public Education at a Crossroads.” Here is what it says about Indiana:

“Between 2002 and 2020, Indiana’s student population grew by 5.5 percent. At the same time, the number of total public education staff grew by 15.3 percent, with teachers increasing by 3.4 percent and non-teachers increasing by 25.6 percent. The average inflation-adjusted teacher salary in the state went from \$63,818 in 2002 to \$51,745 in 2020, a -18.9 percent growth rate that ranked 50th in the U.S.”

Fiftieth? There’s more:

“Indiana’s inflation-adjusted education revenue grew from \$13,116 per student in 2002 to \$13,368 per student in 2020, a 1.9 percent growth rate that ranked 49th in the U.S. During this time, real spending on employee benefits grew by 20.6 percent — ranking 46th in the country — going from \$2,696 per student to \$3,252 per student. In 2020, Indiana had \$10,458,248,000 in total education debt, up \$8,356 per student in real terms since 2002.”

In that same period, public school enrollment nationally increased by only 6.6 percent while total staff grew by 13.2 percent, the report continued. At the state level, staffing growth exceeded student growth in 39 of 50 states. “Much of this can be attributed to growth in non-teaching staff, which increased by 20 percent across states,” it added.

Finally and most discouraging, the study could find no consistent relationship between funding growth and outcomes across states.

If you have a high tolerance for the futility of human endeavor you might compare the Reason Foundation’s results to those of that Indiana

Policy Review study a generation earlier. They found the same thing. Why? Because Indiana lawmakers were — and are — unwilling to take two simple steps: 1) Give building principals ultimate authority to hire, fire and promote teachers; and 2) pay better teachers more.

In these last 20 years the statewide alliance of teacher unions and educational administrators that controls Indiana public education has blocked these and other common-sense reforms. Indiana law still imposes what doesn't work: exclusive, mandatory representation of all teachers by unions. That same law prevents a school board from negotiating contract improvements with the union — an insane management situation.

We have the leadership we deserve, and the sorry proof is being played out in the unfulfilled lives of our students and the dead-end careers of their teachers.

Inside Journalism: What to Know

(*March 1*) — It was a commendable practice in the Old Journalism that you did not write on the internal workings of the news room — no “inside baseball,” they said. Readers didn't have time for it; all they wanted was reasonably accurate reports of the city's goings-on, prescient whenever possible.

That is all out the window.

Gannett's Indianapolis Star, for example, has taken to publishing baseball-card style bios of its reporters lauding their journalistic skills. That treatment, whether or not the plaudits are deserved, would embarrass every Pulitzer Prize winner I've known.

In any case, I tend to go easy on the reporting staff, having been an ink-stained wretch myself. I'm confident the baseball cards weren't their idea. Nor do I think they came up with the silly tag line now put on their news stories, i.e., “Blah, Blah, Blah: What to Know.”

Rather, the bright ideas come from today's editors, trying to impress someone in a distant headquarters who may or may not know where

Indianapolis is. They do so in lieu of actually funding and managing the collecting of news. It is fair, therefore, to assess their performance on what should have been an earthquake-sized story — the 911 call to the home of Jim Irsay, owner of the beloved Indianapolis Colts.

What to know?

The first thing to know is that the breaking-news standard for journalism is one publication cycle. That is, the reader should expect to know how the fire started, who shot whom, the roll call for the next tax increase, all within 24 hours of the news break. That was accomplished, incidentally, not by employing titles such as “seeker of secrets” but by developing longterm relationships in the community.

In regard to the Irsay story, there would have been someone in the EMS crew, the emergency room, or even the Colts organization itself with ties to the news staff to “drop a dime,” as the boys in the Cop Shop liked to say. Some reporter or editor would have simply taken a call from a trusted news source.

As it was, there was no call. That is because the Gannett system doesn't develop trusted news sources. You can tell that by the log of the Star's Irsay stories. The first entry according to the Star's online listing was Jan. 9, a brief and innocuous news release from the Colts front office that Irsay would miss a scheduled performance with the Jim Irsay Band.

The next entry was Jan. 18 a full nine days later. It said that Irsay had been the subject of a 911 call the month earlier that involved the administration of Narcan, whatever that might mean. Then there was this smarmy and somewhat odd tweet from sports writer Gregg Doyel, “Mr. Inside Man”:

“Jim Irsay is a good man — generous, loving, loyal — dealing with a lifelong addiction in the most public of ways. What's happening is heartbreaking, and I hope he's able to read this. He owns the Colts, but he's more than that around here. He's our guy.”

Later, Doyel had this to tweet: “From what I understand, Jim Irsay is home. That was scary a few months ago, but also instructive. The rumors flying around were so bad. People were convinced they were right. Why? Because they heard the rumors themselves. Stop it.”

Confused? Stop it. Just accept that the Star doesn’t know what’s going on with Irsay or much else — or at least to any degree it is willing to share with its readers, a consideration which used to be in the job description. Again, there was no tipster within the news cycle because the Star doesn’t know anybody out there in Indy land. Its only “sources” are hacks and boosters who use it to transcribe for one public policy position or another, that and an occasional do-good project thrown in to show it cares.

Besides, the Gannett staff doesn’t think its readers can handle too much news. Here is a recent tweet from one of its reporters: “Not until I moved from Chicago to Indianapolis did I discover that ‘Bumf**k Indiana isn’t the state’s official name. Now I’m wondering if it shouldn’t be.”

In more “inside baseball,” the Star editor recently announced a \$2 million investment by Gannett in the newsroom. In mock accountably, he has asked his readers to suggest how the money should be spent. Some of us would be happy if he incorporated that into his salary on the condition he do his job and put together a real news operation.

Equity? Here’s a Position for You

(Feb. 23) — Almost 50 years of an incoherent national dialogue on race has left me with some perverse views. If we are going to have separate black and and white national anthems, for instance, my position is that one of them ought to be Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13.

Recently, I have struggled with the prevailing logic that a founding document declaring all men (persons) equal is somehow entirely negated by a ruling elite’s reversal (slaveholding) of that principle. No matter that it was corrected

with mechanisms set in motion by the document itself.

That, it would seem to me, was resounding affirmation of the wisdom of the document’s signers. I am told I am seriously wrong about that.

And yet, a friend recounts his experience judging an adolescent speech competition where one team’s position began with the “fact” that America was founded to preserve slavery. The room was flummoxed by my friend’s simple question as to who taught those bright young people such nonsense.

Moving along, I am trying to see the logic in commanding that people be hired on the basis of a skin pigmentation gradient. The free market being what it is, the only way that could work is by brute force — force applied to employers to do what is not in their best interests, i.e., maintain a purposefully and mathematically less productive workforce.

Absent such force, a friend explained how things work — or once worked. He remembers an administrator at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology saying that a good number of engineering graduates, black or white, don’t end up actually engineering anything. Rather, because of their recognized cognitive and problem-solving abilities, they were soon promoted to management. That, however, now may be illegal.

The late Kurt Vonnegut handled the absurdity nicely. His dystopian short story, “Harrison Bergeron,” although inexplicably absent from Wikipedia’s list of Vonnegut’s work, centers on an abusive government that requires ballerinas, for instance, to wear leg weights so they are not more graceful than anyone else.

I am looking at a chart that shows over time the standing by race as a result of omissions of certain types of questioning on the Composite Standard Aptitude Test. These changes, beginning in the 1990s, were meant to bring “equity” to the scoring system.

Instead, they optimized the scoring of already advantaged groups. Here is the political scientist Charles Murray offering an explanation:

“It rewarded systematic test prep, period, and it turns out that the people who work the hardest on test prep are Asian students and the white children of the affluent who want to get into elite schools. Want to know what the hardest-to-prep-for kind of question is? Analogies. Vocabulary is a close second. Yes, you can try to memorize vocabulary lists, but the real edge goes to young people who reflexively try to figure out what an unfamiliar word means when they encounter one. It’s a strong signal of — you guessed it — cognitive ability. The College Board dropped both analogies and vocabulary.”

We pause to let that sink in: They dropped the problem-solvers. Yes, our once great nation has figured out a way to discriminate against problem-solving by whatever race. I would say that was a policy error except that a hero of mine, Thomas Sowell, has been warning about this for so long and so eloquently it qualifies as determined, purposeful self-destruction.

I will let Sowell’s observation stand as the only rational position left us — a sort of blanket absolutism to be spoken aloud before any public gathering:

“Much of the social history of the Western world over the past three decades has involved replacing what worked with what sounded good. In area after area — crime, education, housing, race relations — the situation has gotten worse after the bright new theories were put into operation. The amazing thing is that this history of failure and disaster has neither discouraged the social engineers nor discredited them.”

The Sole Proprietor Is Passé

(Feb. 9) — My grandfather businessman used to say his life was getting too “busy.” Well, we are way past that now. Extracurricular and regulatory responsibilities have made life for a business owner downright hectic, demonically so.

I say that because the Devil loves an impossible task and our days are full of them. Running any business requires a daunting mastery of technical, accounting, computer and engineering skills unimaginable even a generation ago. Hitching a

mule to a plow to dig into 40 acres is idyllic by comparison.

The government, meanwhile, is adding regulations and restrictions at breakneck speed, or at least as fast as its bureaucracy allows. Have you read the tort-driven warnings on your new step ladder? Have you attempted to guide a loved one through Obama’s healthcare system? How about a business owner complying weekly with hundreds of details in safety, procurement, architecture, zoning, personnel and tax laws?

All that is on top of almost incidentally providing a valued product in a competitive market.

So I shouldn’t have been surprised when a friend told me he was thinking about selling his family’s near century-old business. And this is not just any business, it is a national business and was Indiana founded. The company’s operation has become too complex for any single person to manage — too much paperwork and regulatory detail, most of it involving serious legal exposure.

On top of that, my friend cannot find the trustworthy people he needs to assemble a management team. Although only in his 50s, he is being exhausted by government and its deranged policies. He feels like a character in an Ayn Rand novel.

And as Rand predicted, business success has been devalued generally in our culture and its risks minimized. Several generations now have been taught that capitalism is a zero-sum game where profit is merely stolen from someone else — someone else politically designated as more needy.

That said, is it important that sole proprietorships survive? Think about it for a minute. Individual owners have a stake in the community and its citizen-employees. Their goals are set longterm with their families and the families of their workers in mind. In short, they are civically accountable. Such private, personal ownership is the building block of our state and nation.

William Rockhill Nelson, a Fort Wayne publisher who went west to help build Kansas City

was asked why his newspaper there spent so much time promoting thoroughfares, parks, sculptures and fountains. “Because I live here, damn it,” was his answer.

Currently, the U.S. Small Business Administration says the William Rockhill Nelsons make up only 79 percent of all businesses now.

Along with inflation, that is a number to watch.

A Word for You Old Fellows

(Feb. 5) — Being a man of words, I must take them seriously. Recently I discovered a new one that has wide application to my life, explaining vexations that previously were invexible.

The word is “non-cognizable.” Yes, I have stretched its meaning somewhat to fit my purposes but that is a feature of the English language. It is plastic, and alas becoming more so.

The legal dictionary says “non-cognizable” means a piece of evidence or information is outside the purview of a court. I have expanded that to mean something in which contemporary society has no interest, that could just as well disappear, that doesn’t really even exist. It can even be a person. Any white male over the age of 50, for example, is non-cognizable.

There is a study on my desk that purports to understand who in an extended family knows what about a family’s general goings on, gossipy and transactional. It turned out that the oldest male in the family knows virtually nothing, evidence that he is non-cognizable.

As the word has bounced around in my head in recent weeks, I have put together a list of thoughts that I now must admit are non-cognizable. Here it is with the obligatory trigger warning indicated by italics:

Cultures are different. That is not said judgmentally, only practically. What defines a culture, after all, is how it affects people, that is, its incentives and disincentives. Hundreds or even thousands of years of a culture picking winners and losers within a society has an effect. The individuals in one society may end up different than those of another — maybe better in some

ways, maybe worse in others, just different. That, of course, can change over time, and individuals can adapt to new cultures, either imposed or adopted. All of that, dear friends, is non-cognizable today.

Government cannot solve every problem. In fact, there is strong historical evidence that it doesn’t solve any problems — outside the interests of its ruling circle anyhow. Government’s proper job in a constitutional republic is to protect individuals in various ways so they can solve their own problems as best they see fit. The country was founded on that principle. It is now non-cognizable, violently so.

Men and women are distinct. They have different life strategies and different strengths and weaknesses. Some think that has a Devine purpose. Others think it is some sort of cosmic joke. Whichever, it is a fact with which mature persons must eventually grapple. Non-cognizable in the extreme.

You may have your own list of non-cognizable thoughts. By definition, though, I don’t want to hear any of them.

No Saving Small-Town Journos

(Jan. 31) — It’s not news to anyone that there’s no news. But I fear too few realize the importance of a media check on local government, a stalwart independent authority that holds councilmen to their word and verifies their facts, tries to match intentions with results.

That once was the job of hometown newspapers — particularly those with an individual owner, not a corporate manager. The owner, with roots deep in the community, was the trusted recipient of tips about official wrong-doing and malfeasance. That was true even if he could not afford a newsroom large enough to directly or proactively investigate city hall.

For small town or not, the truth eventually got out. Officeholders and readers alike knew that, The unscrupulous were forewarned, the honest reassured. That of course is all gone. How far gone was brought home to me watching a council meeting in Fort Wayne, one of the growing

number of media markets without local ownership. There was no reporter present.

Excuse me for repeating an earlier column, but one councilman argued that a sloppy bond deal was costing the city \$50 million a year. Neither the council nor its witnesses disputed his facts. Indeed, they didn't say anything, just voted the councilman down. There was no news report, no questions asked.

Now, that's a lot of money. If the duly elected and sworn councilman was wrong, the public deserved to know how. If he was right, heads should have rolled. Nothing.

And last week a friend sent me a discouraging clipping from neighboring Illinois. The Illinoisans, astonishing in their shallowness, have a solution to an epidemic of newspaper closings — free money. They have created a bipartisan task force of legislators and journalist recommending a package of tax credits. Qualifying newspapers, which would be exempt from local business and other taxes, would have to pay their staff members at least \$50,000 a year (there's a union man on the task force). There would be a set-aside of government advertising to be doled out to those papers that conform to yet unstated and no doubt evolving requirements.

You get dizzy trying to sort out the incentives and disincentives of such a bizarre arrangement, so let's just move on.

Face it, this generation is not blessed with journalist entrepreneurs willing to invest in small and mid-sized information systems. You can't blame them. The profit margins have always been slim and the management challenging if not exhausting. Nonetheless, a previous generation found it rewarding and to their minds essential for a town's well-being.

You may remember a passage from Mark Twain's "Journalism in Tennessee" that captured the mood if not the actual experience of being a small-town editor. It relates instructions from the editor-in-chief to his new assistant:

"Jones will be here at three — cowhide (whip) him. Gillespie will call earlier, perhaps — throw him out of the window. Ferguson will be along

about four — kill him. That is all for today, I believe. If you have any odd time, you may write a blistering article on the police — give the chief inspector rats. The cowhides are under the table; weapons in the drawer — ammunition there in the corner — lint and bandages up there in the pigeonholes. In case of accident, go to Lancet, the surgeon, downstairs. He advertises — we take it out in trade."

My memories are more halcyon.

Our publisher, who paid us a pittance, promised we would be compensated not only in learning what is essential to a noble profession but in the knowledge of what a community is about, what is at its heart whether on a perfumed summer night covering a little league game or at a raucous planning meeting in a crowded, sweaty council chamber. Although a self-serving rationale, it turned out to be right.

I don't think the small-town publisher or his brand of journalism will return, Internet or not — just my opinion. Those with means no longer appreciate the unique role journalism plays in preserving liberty and prosperity. They would be surprised to know that James Madison and other Founders rightly preferred a monarchy had they not been assured of an active and free press.

Finally, readers and viewers no longer value the timely and objective news required to be independent-minded citizens. They shuffle along in ignorance and self-righteousness, depending on Oprah Winfrey and the like for direction and perspective.

It made me sad to write that.

The Government Shell Game

"If you think the problems the government creates are bad, wait until you see its solutions."
— *Libertarian coffee mug*

(Jan. 27) — The Indiana Legislature has discovered that the Holcomb administration's economic strategy, bribing investment, is pointless at best if not self-defeating or even fraudulent. There is a stack of independent economic analyses that says it doesn't work. A new Rasmussen study finds two-thirds of likely

voters nationally continue to favor ending “corporate welfare” and believe government should not be giving handouts to politically selected businesses.

So, will the Legislature, being a representative body, do away with the dozens of eco-devo programs throughout the state establishing tax rebates, credits and special favor? Will it remove the incentives that encourage pay-to-play schemes and political machines in every corner of Indiana? Will it disband the bureaucratic engine for all this, the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC)?

No, or as a friend likes to ask, “In what movie did you see that happen?”

Rather, State Affairs reported last week that lawmakers are considering merely increasing oversight of the IEDC “amid growing bipartisan frustration with the quasi-government agency tasked with luring employers to the state.” A Senate committee perfunctorily heard testimony on a bill that would add two members of the Indiana General Assembly to the IEDC’s governing board as non-voting representatives.

Do you see which walnut half-shell hides the pea? Nothing is going to change, legislators just want in on the racket. Problems aren’t solved, they are rearranged so the right people profit. Rent-seeking vendors, developers and contractors now will have to compensate a couple of legislators in addition to the dozens of city and county councilmen.

Being from a small town, it took me some time to catch on to big-city ways. My first lesson was government-operated gambling. It was difficult to understand that if gambling was bad how government would make it good.

It had to be explained to me that the issue had nothing to do with the moral aspect of betting. Rather, the Legislature came to realize that gamblers could be taxed (forced to bet against bad odds) but they wouldn’t complain — at least not like property owners and retail shoppers. It was free money, in other words, money legislators could spend anyway they wanted, without that pesky accounting to voters.

You can expand on this as you wish. Almost none of our nation’s pressing issues is unsolvable, there’s just no desire to solve them.

Mass illegal immigration? Begin organized extraditions. Social Security? Shave benefits in favor of alternative saving plans. The national debt? Formally tie increases to re-election prospects. Election integrity? Paper ballots and single-day voting. Racial equity? Read the Declaration of Independence. Carbon caps? Sit down and think about it for a minute.

I know, I know, I simplify to the point of the ridiculous. But wouldn’t you expect that at some point after a decade or three or four lawmakers would decide to solve a problem instead of massage it?

Like I said, I’m from a small town.

The ‘Popobawa’ Election Analysis

(Jan. 19) — All of us in the field of political commentary have been searching these past few years for similitude to the current predicament. Although the presidential election is upon us and time is short, I think I’ve found it.

First, please know that my associates at the foundation have done their best. The economists have presented compelling economic models, one right after another. Our book reviewer has scoured the historical and religious texts for profound examples. Our philosophy professor has pointed us to the ancient principles and the divergents therefrom.

With all respect, though, I found none sufficient. These scholars — because they are credentialed and knowledgeable — cannot be expected to capture a zeitgeist that is flippant and ignorant. That’s my job.

I am leaning toward the 1995 Popobawa Hysteria of the Zanzibar archipelago. I can spare you a detailed analysis by quoting a brief summary, albeit a bit Hunter Thompson-esque. It is from the treatise, “Panic in Zanzibar: Nocturnal Sodomy and Demon Bats.” As you will note, I believe in careful citations, a practice falling out of fashion. But see if you can connect the dots to

current headlines on your own, filling in the names that correspond to the players in our own particular hysteria. The summary is from a Jan. 19 column under the name Stone Age Herbalist published in the Gray Goose Chronicle:

“It started on the island of Pemba and later spread from there to Unguja and Zanzibar town. Men, women and children described being assaulted by a shape-shifting spirit, Popobawa, and on the larger island reports were rife that adults of both sexes had been sodomized by this malevolent entity. In order to avert its nocturnal attacks many people resorted to spending the night huddled together in anxious groups outside of their homes (primary caucuses?). On both islands the panic produced incidents of collective violence, when strangers suspected of being manifestations of Popobawa were attacked, beaten, and in some cases killed by the angry mob. Efforts to calm things down were largely intellectual, not least because most Pembans and supporters of the opposition Civic United Front (CUF) believed that the ruling CCM (Chama cha Mapinduzi) party was itself responsible for bringing Popobawa to the islands in order to divert attention away from politics in the run-up to the country’s first multiparty elections.”

Lest you missed this in your multi-cultural history class, “popobawa” is a Swahili name which translates literally as “bat wing.” This is a description of the shadow cast by the spirit. It does not refer to the actual form, which, as in the case of our own hysteria, is shifting. (Credit to Wikipedia.com, last viewed today).

A professor of African Cultural Studies at the University of Wisconsin adds a final detail to the Popobaw story, a pertinent one. Katrina Daly Thompson (no relation to Hunter) tells us there is a Swahili proverb in Zanzibar, Lisemwalo lipo; ikiwa halipo, lipo nyuma linakuja. In case you need that translated, it means what is talked about exists, and if it doesn’t exist right now it’s not far away.

“For some Swahili-speakers, talk about Popobawa is evidence for his existence,” Thompson says, “which is thus taken for granted.”

Sort of like our CNN. — *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

Established January 1989