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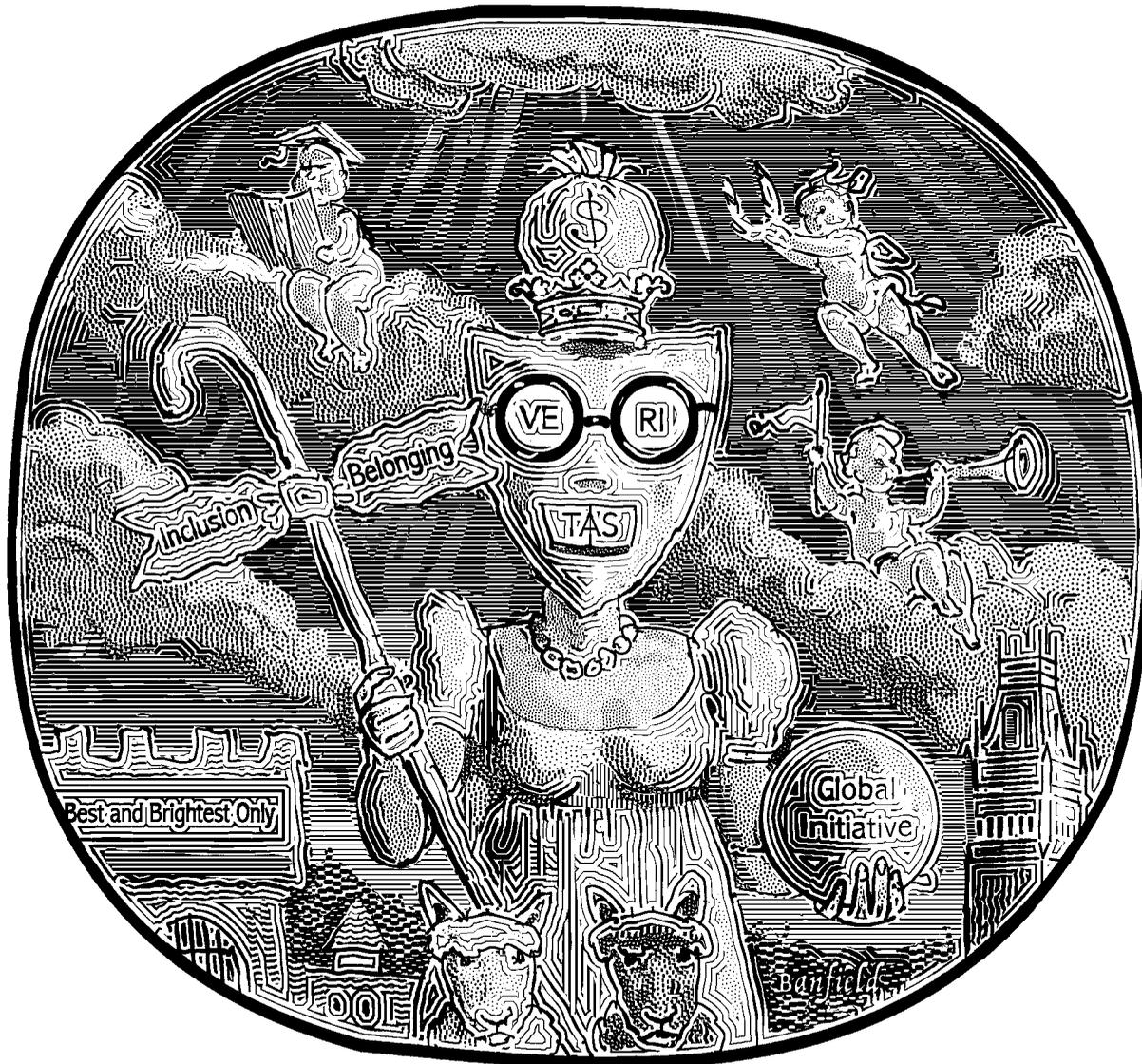
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Essay by Mark Helprin

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AT HARVARD



I WAS BORN IN 1947, AND FOR ME THE EFFECT of the Second World War was not merely a haunting eddy but more like the aftermath of a bombing in which one exists for a time in a netherworld of deafness, confusion, and shock. I grew up surrounded by, and at times living with, Holocaust survivors, former soldiers, French resistance fighters, and families who mourned their dead among the more than 50 million who perished. My surroundings couldn't have made me anything but serious at heart, and this in turn was deepened by many serious childhood illnesses—quite a few of which nearly carried me away. In many respects, I was an old man before I was five—something often noted by those unfortunate enough to have known me.

Having little use for conventional ambition, I had come to believe that the keys to heaven

and earth were truth and beauty, and I went to Harvard truly believing in its vaunted motto: *Veritas*, which was at the head of the admissions diploma that it, perhaps uniquely of all institutions, granted merely for its genius in choosing you. I had no thoughts of prestige, career, making a living, attaining power or position, or whatever the repulsive and dishonorable thing was then that now is called “networking.” Of course, I was a naïf, perhaps a bumpkin, but even as my naïveté vanished I tried to stick with the original idea. Given what I had come to understand about history from the very existence of the people around me, there was no other option.

The first hint of disillusion came in the late spring of 1965, when an itinerant dean descended upon Manhattan to welcome local members of the forthcoming class of 1969 at a

Harvard Club lunch, or, as they said in Cambridge, luncheon. The majesty of the Harvard Club complemented his pronouncement that we were “the finest young men of your generation.” Really? How did he know? I was 17. Some of us still had acne and wore white socks. In stating what he did, was he not administering a perhaps daily or hourly dose of self-adoration, as in methadone maintenance? So that was why they gave me the diploma. It was a certification of what they fancied their own good judgment.

Fair Harvard

JUST AS THERE WAS VICHY FRANCE AND *France Libre*, the France of the *collabos* and the France of the *Résistance*, the France of Céline and the France of Zola, so with Har-



vard. It would be wrong to call out unfair Harvard without noting the wonder of fair Harvard, of which much has been lost but much, though current balances weigh against it, survives.

Unlike the malcontents who for one reason or another hated the place, I loved it even as I became aware of its faults. One of their complaints, lifted without the slightest justification from the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, was that it was too big and impersonal, its professors inaccessible, the undergraduates jilted in favor of research. This criticism of Harvard found eager repetition among smarting students at smaller, less prestigious colleges, such as Yale, for whom Harvard had been the unrequited first choice. But it was untrue. Its great and famous scholars were by and large open, accessible, and amazingly generous with their time. In my freshman year, even I—a benighted adolescent so overburdened with energy that it easily sank my primitive intellect—gained entrance to a six-person seminar with the leading Dante scholar of the age, Dante Della Terza, and a class with Harry Levin, the most renowned Shakespeare scholar. That kind of access continued unambiguously throughout my undergraduate and graduate years.

How could one not love a place where, by the time I left, the course catalog for the

Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the College alone (*pace* the schools of law, medicine, divinity, dentistry, design, public health, engineering, business, education, forestry, public administration, and God knows what else) was 650 pages long? In the 60-plus departments and degree programs you could study anything from Chuvash to malacology, even if you hadn't the slightest idea what they were before you went in and possibly even after you came out. A solar system of a hundred specialized libraries, some of which were themselves stars, orbited Widener (one never said Widener Library, or the Widener), which in most respects is the finest library in the world.

The place was filled with madmen, scoundrels, geniuses, and not a few dolts, for leavening. It was either so rich or so odd that it appeared to have the luxury of name collecting: F. Skiddy von Stade, who brought his polo ponies; Outerbridge Horsey, of the many generations of Outerbridge Horseys; and of course Stanislaus von Moos. Taken for granted were the continual visits of what Bill Murray might have called, with a long flat *a* after the *l*, “dudes like the lâma,” as in Dalai.

You were not assigned places in Widener's main reading room, but claimed them by adverse possession. Mine was next to that of

Lee Kuan Yew, the sitting prime minister of Singapore, who had granted himself a leave of research and reflection. He made clear to me then that the anarchy and dissolution that by the time he visited had taken over Harvard Square horrified and disgusted him, and I was not surprised by his subsequent broken-windows approach in Singapore, down to banning chewing gum.

When in my sophomore year Secretary of Defense and architect of the Vietnam War Robert McNamara (rule of thumb: whatever he might recommend, do the opposite) was trapped by a demonstration outside Winthrop House, he escaped into Harvard's immense network of tunnels, where I, my roommate, and Tony Hiss (son of Alger) intercepted him and an aide. While a DOD car drove around attempting to find him at the loading dock of the central kitchen, we were able to spend half an hour sophomorically debating him. I will always treasure his unexcelled, incredulous annoyance.

I have so many similar stories that, as many have about their years at Harvard, I could write a book about them that no one would read. It was a giant, magic barrel, rich in material things, experiences, and, best of all, the acquisition of floods of knowledge within a still-intact culture and belief system. For a

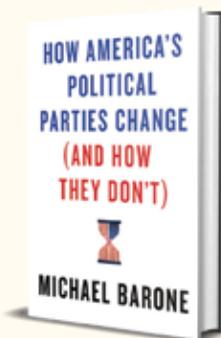
New and Noteworthy Books from AEI Scholars

How America's Political Parties Change (and How They Don't)

Michael Barone

October 15, 2019
Publisher: Encounter Books
ISBN: 9781641770781

Whenever one of our two major political parties has a setback, we hear that it is doomed to permanent minority status or to disappear altogether. In *How America's Political Parties Change (and How They Don't)*, Michael Barone argues that's not likely to happen. Drawing on more than 50 years of observing and writing about American politics, Barone notes that America's political parties are old—the oldest and third oldest in the world—and astutely explains why these two oft-scorned institutions have been so resilient.



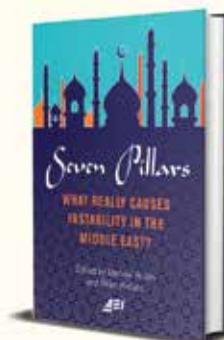
Seven Pillars

What Really Causes Instability in the Middle East?

Edited by Michael Rubin and Brian Katulis

December 2019
Publisher: AEI Press
ISBN: 9780844750248

In *Seven Pillars: What Really Causes Instability in the Middle East?* a bipartisan group of leading experts unravel the core causes of instability in the Middle East and North Africa. Understanding the pillars of instability in the region can allow the United States and its allies to rethink their own priorities, adjust policy, recalibrate their programs, and finally begin to chip away at core challenges facing the Middle East.



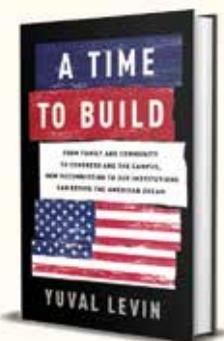
A Time to Build

From Family and Community to Congress and the Campus, How Recommitting to Our Institutions Can Revive the American Dream

Yuval Levin

January 21, 2020
Publisher: Basic Books
ISBN: 9781541699274

In *A Time to Build*, Yuval Levin explores the frustration, division, populist anger, and alienation that have overwhelmed our public life. By understanding what our institutions do for us, how they are now failing us, and how we might be failing them too, we can chart a path toward an American renewal and can see what we each might do to bring it about.



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short period, like a break in the clouds, Harvard was deliberately blind to race, class, and the many particulars that now figure so heavily in selection, hiring, and the disposition of controversies. The 1964 application for admission was designed with that in mind. Of course, if you were a donor, a legatee, a Rockefeller, a Mellon—or a squash—or if you had gone to Groton or Andover, it couldn't be hidden: they didn't go so far as to ignore such details. From several universes away, I marveled at the precocious alcoholics who drifted in on the afternoon tides from Exeter and St. Paul's, so well schooled that they were able to coast through their undergraduate years drowning in cocktails and ennui.

But the impulse was toward merit above all, without either the ideological discipline or compulsive categorizations absent which the modern university would be unrecognizable and the hearts of its busybody enforcers would stop. It was generally assumed that after exposure to a wide range of views, facts, and ideas, you would continue your education forever, and freely choose your own course, opinions, and convictions. This confidence and equanimity was possible only with faith in the power of truth and belief that there was such a thing. As the recent kerfuffle between Sohrab Ahmari and David French illustrated and could not settle, such liberalism may lead to its own demise. At Harvard, it did.

Soft, Privileged Center

MY FIRST BRUSH WITH THE DELUGE was anecdotal but potently symbolic. In 1965, I witnessed what I think of as the *Ur*-protest at Harvard, in the form of a single demonstrator carrying a sign in front of Lowell House. He was against parietals, the rules that not only dictated the limited hours in which girls could visit your room, but assigned proctors to inspect periodically for sexual activity. I didn't like parietals, but in that era when we dressed in jacket and tie all day, as I had since 4th grade, I appreciated their value in elevating desire by means of the heavy cultivation of forbidden fruit, and in steadying, so to speak, the morals of state. Even if the heart of the game was to circumvent them, that they were there was civilizing. So, undecided, I heard him out.

He was not, however, merely protesting parietals, he was protesting America—past, present, and, were it not to transform according to his lights, future. I loved America and was profoundly grateful for its principles and its reality, so I asked him why he was so angry. His father, he said, one of the Hol-

lywood Ten, was unjustly accused of being a Communist, and had had to move to France. I replied that being a Communist in America was not illegal, and it was a pity that he had had to move to France—though I myself would have loved to have moved to France if only for the food—but that his father was indeed a Communist, and either his father had lied to him or he was lying to me. He reacted in amazed disbelief. I couldn't possibly back up what I said. But, no, I told him, his father had been in the same Hollywood Communist cell as my mother, who had known him quite well. Ahem.

It is remarkable how such true believers can leverage a community that lacks awareness, conviction, and fighting courage. A well-known Communist tactic is to place a small group of agents both at the four corners and scattered near the center of a large meeting. Reacting simultaneously either to propose or oppose, they can carry the more passive participants with them by creating

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the illusion of consensus. As the Vietnam War and urban unrest destabilized the '60s, posing urgent questions one after another and, like the sea beyond a dyke, exerting constant pressure against the figurative walls of the university, leftist true believers took control of Harvard's soft, privileged center. Pacific by nature, academics are ill-suited to Leninist political combat, and though they cannot be blamed for shying from it, they should be held to account for becoming its converts and agents.

Where were those in authority with the spine to stand up to the fascistic tactics now the everyday province of so many academic institutions? Many on the faculty were veterans of the Second World War. Others were refugees from totalitarianism. They were as brave and eloquent as necessary, but vastly outnumbered by the generation they had sired. William Alfred, my tutor in junior year, said to me, sadly, "It's different now:

they run in packs." They did, and the elders had begun to fade away.

In the mid-'60s, going to see *Casablanca* at the Brattle Theatre was a ritual. When Victor Laszlo defies the Germans and orders the orchestra to "Play the Marseillaise!" the audience would often stand and sing. Professors (some in tears), tutors, and even undergraduates like me, deeply moved, would rise in respect. Six years later, the same scene, perceived as camp, elicited the conformist, gutless, Harvard hiss, a group exercise in disapproval of expressions of emotion, patriotism, Christianity, and anything unfashionable. In those years, a lot had happened and a lot of pressure had been brought to bear.

Guerrilla Warfare

HARVARD HAS ALWAYS TAKEN UP masses of real estate in Cambridge, Boston, and elsewhere, from forests, agricultural land in California, astronomical observatories around the world, to Bernard Berenson's former villa in Florence, hospitals, clinics, a cyclotron, giant swimming pools, and secret gardens. But mainly it straddles Cambridge like (if I can be permitted an insane simile) a fat, happy, beautiful, snobbish octopus. You can do a lot with \$40 billion, no taxes since 1633, and a river of government and private grants, tuition, and giant bequests. Harvard is as big and varied as Xanadu. For example, only after almost a decade of living in the middle of it did I discover what appeared to be the terrace, of the *faculty dining room*, of the *cafeteria*, of the *school of forestry*. Harvard contains Whitmanesque multitudes, and one can describe it only as accurately as the blind men describing an elephant. Though within its vastness I could be in only one place at a time—and spent most of that time with my head down, reading and writing—by chance alone I was present at so many disruptions in the late '60s and early '70s that by reasonable extrapolation their real number and frequency were a steady guerrilla warfare: the staple student protests about regulations and living conditions, which by then had been beautifully feathered into broader political themes; jackbooted, leather-clad Panthers marching in cadence through the Yard to the old Gund Hall, where they invaded a lecture on medieval city planning they claimed was in furtherance of black genocide, and forced the professor to abandon it; the attack by helmeted, chain-and-pipe-wielding leftist *fascisti* on what they thought was the Center for International Affairs but was really the Semitic Museum and its aging female



Zara Tzanev/HGSD

docents (it might have been funny except for the injuries and destruction); Cambridge cited in the Institute for Strategic Studies's (which later prefixed *International* to itself) *Strategic Survey, 1970*, for a violent demonstration (among many) in which, *inter alia*, on April 16 of that year 300 were injured; trying to sleep despite clouds of tear gas wafting from Harvard Square a third of a mile away; my graduate adviser's car bombed in the garage adjacent to the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, where he was the director; literally fighting my way past thugs blocking classroom buildings; and so on. Even in its stronger days, the administration either surrendered, compromised, or did not notice.

Thanks in part to Harvard's better angels, I could not help but notice. As a freshman of no consequence, my very first course had been a seminar on Italian fascism, taught by one of the great and principled men, Dante Della Terza, who had opposed it. So I knew the drill and what was likely to follow. The tendency of refined academicians to bow to force and fashion was eerily confirmed yet again and much later when as a fellow of the American Academy in Rome I watched a

jerky, black-and-white film of the Academy's elite American academics welcoming Mussolini, whose program and beliefs were well known at the time, by passionately, if not literally, kissing his ass.

Events such as those described above—outrages against civility, law, freedom, and common sense—were either ineffectively opposed or simply tolerated, and have never been corrected. Instead, they have become a sort of English Constitution or common law for Harvard. One can almost cite them like case law to describe what goes on today.

As Lady Macbeth would have put it, Harvard's "most admir'd disorder" came in April 1969, when the Students for a Democratic Society seized University Hall (Harvard's administrative HQ), beat up the deans, rifled the files, and, in their idiom, occupied and trashed the place. Rather than immediately dispatch the university police to evict these vandals, the ever-so-understanding authorities attempted to reason with them. An inexplicable frame of mind—exemplified by Neville Chamberlain, John Kerry, and Caspar Milquetoast (a famous cartoon shows him, soaked to the bone, standing in a cold rain,

saying, "He's five hours late. Well, I'll wait one more hour for him and if he doesn't come then he can go and borrow that \$100 from someone else.")—is doing your damndest to please whoever it is who is beating the hell out of you. Rather than strike the precariously held beachhead, the administration allowed it to consolidate. So the occupiers chained the doors, brought in supplies and reinforcements, and engaged in public relations. By the time action seemed likely, they had assembled hundreds of Radcliffe girls and others to serve as a barrier between them and the inevitable police assault.

Passing by the Cambridge firehouse embedded in the campus (most Harvard buildings lay within two seconds to a minute of a speeding fire truck), I saw masses of government police in riot gear and preparing to move out. After scaling the locked gates of the Yard, I went to University Hall, where, after placing newspaper on a beautifully finished table so as not to damage it, I climbed up and announced that the battalions were on their way with their battering rams. My object being to spare the students outside who would bear the brunt of the attack, I urged the occupiers to disperse like the guerrillas they so admired. But they shouted me down, explaining that they wanted to "radicalize the bouzhies." That is, the bourgeoisie. You didn't know that Radcliffe girls were the bourgeoisie.

The pumped-up-adrenalin charge that followed was extraordinarily violent and bloody, as the police used their nightsticks like gladiators against the unprotected "bouzhies." At the top of the steps, before they broke-in the doors, they threw students over the rails so violently that the momentarily splaying bodies looked like chaff in the wind. I saw an officer continue to hit a boy on the head as he lay on the ground, until the nightstick broke either on the boy's skull or the pavement. He then chased me, although I was just a bystander. I escaped by climbing onto one of the giant window ledges of Widener. He ordered me to come down, but I would not. I have a picture of him. Unfortunately for all serving police officers (including, subsequently, me), he was really fat and he looked very much like a pig.

As the police entered the building, the ring leaders escaped out the other side. One of them, whose name you would recognize, later told me that Mao said the leadership must be preserved. Well, it was, and it continued with what it had come to call the long march through the institutions, where, if not deceased but now emeritus, it watches the ravishing strides of the generations it indoctrinated as they prove that absurdity has no end.

Insanity as Orthodoxy

EVEN IN THE DINOSAUR TIME WHEN I was graduated, Harvard conferred so many degrees that, after the general commencement, diplomas were handed out in ceremonies divided by undergraduate house and the various graduate schools. Now, however, perhaps smitten with Ben & Jerry's many flavors, it countenances black, "latinx," and "lavender" graduations. But what if you are a womyn, half-Irish, half-black, lavender, latinx, disabled, socialist, atheist, Basque, nudist, survivor of Chinese aggression in Tibet? Where the hell is your inclusion? You have been marginalized by the patriarchy, and just about everything else.

At my first Harvard commencement (I skipped the second), there were no such divisions, just as in the years leading up to it there had been no segregated dorms or race-restricted dining tables such as to my astonishment I would encounter at Princeton in 1973. Each of us was a unique individual, and, in a vast, egalitarian unity, freer than we were carrying the brands of identity. Now your betters will tell you that you simply do not have the latitude of mind to understand why racially separated quarters and ceremonies are proof of the defeat of segregation.

In the jackbooted invasion of the old Gund Hall briefly mentioned above, the students were stunned, fearful, and silent. The photograph accompanying this article is of their successors in the new Gund Hall, at the 2017 "Designing Resistance, Building Coalitions" conference. Except that they are smiling, they seem hardly distinguishable from the Red Guard or the various fascist youth groups of yore. Their department, like most at Harvard, is subject to diversity bureaucrats who are really nothing more than political officers. Certain departments or divisions—Women, Gender, and Sexuality; African and African American Studies; Immigration and Latino Studies; et. al.—function as organelles within the university as a whole, making sure that it doesn't stray from their orthodoxies, and that, if it does, it will hear about it.

Ronald Sullivan, a Harvard Law School professor, was relieved recently of his position as the "residential dean" (more about this later) of Winthrop House because he had the temerity to represent an unpopular client, that fetching sylph, Harvey Weinstein. Had he represented Khalid Sheikh Mohammed he would have been a hero. As in a lobster trap or the Roach Motel, Harvard has a ratchet mechanism: principle flows in one direction only. Professor Sullivan, who is black, then tried the race card. But the militant young

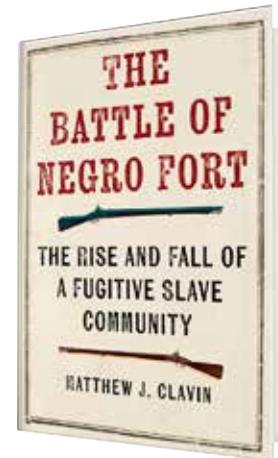
prigs of Winthrop House, in a ferocious display of their timidity, insisted that, like their counterparts of the same age at forward bases in Syria or Afghanistan, they had reason to feel "unsafe," and he had to go. So he did. Such are the workings of a semi-insane asylum as, at a steady though not glacial pace, it sheds its ancient and inherited prestige.

CRB readers will be aware of these and other deprivations continually upwelling in the universities. Even half a century ago, though mere seedlings, they were apparent. Visiting the *New Republic* in Washington, I was speaking to Roger Rosenblatt, who had been on the short list for Harvard's presidency, when I walked Marty Peretz, who had been a tutor in Kirkland House when I lived there. Roger said, "You remember Helprin, don't you? From the asylum?" And that was then.

There is no question that a place of free inquiry and free thought must, as much for its own sake as for the public good, tolerate to some extent the unorthodox, the weird, the disruptive, the revolutionary, and even the insane. Although to avoid its own demise it must know and uphold its own principles, it should not be mainly in the business of imposing its own orthodoxy. Tolerance and commitment must be fluid rather than fixed, and balanced as a matter of art, or they easily and disastrously get out of whack. The worst possible getting out of whack is when the insane becomes the strictly imposed orthodoxy, which is what we see now. How did this happen? No one can know exactly, but even though it isn't in California, Harvard has often been in the lead among American universities, and I have an idea or two about why it has become what it has become.

A persistent mistake of human nature is to attribute power, wealth, and fame to the workings of high intellect, when as often as not in an aristocracy they are merely inherited, and in a democracy they accrue to those who can please the lowest common denominator. Especially in a conformist environment, the appearance of intelligence can be simulated by adherence to orthodoxies in political belief and how one lives, and the adoption of mandated styles of speaking and argumentation. Thanks to the approximately 4 zillion public-radio call signs, it is almost impossible to escape the astoundingly mannered and self-conscious way of speaking that I call NPR- or Ivy-speak, which, like a self-basting chicken, continuously bathes itself in its wonderful reasonableness. A good example of this is Barack Obama, who, even if he doesn't know the difference between a subjective and objective pronoun and thinks it is possible to lead

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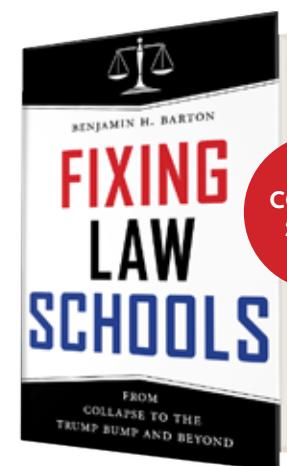
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from behind, walks the walk and talks the talk in a spectacular victory (for some) of style over substance. Intellectuals would rather be caught dead than failing to pirouette their intelligence or admitting that they don't know or haven't read something. At a cocktail party, refer to Durkstein's Adductive Paradox and see how no one will ask what it is, even though it isn't. The greatest proof of this lies in the vast tundras of modern academic prose, in which with unintentional hilarity, if one may borrow sentence structure from Winston Churchill, never have so many over-credentialed idiots attempted to conceal such utter nonsense behind so much anaesthetizing jargon.

Unquestionably, Harvard is a nexus of wealth, power, fame, and prestige. Although none of these is necessarily correlated with intelligence, certainly among its many thousands of students and faculty it possesses brilliance, some might say, and they might be right, unrivaled anywhere on the planet. This is not about them. It is about those who hold the power, make the policy, enforce the rules, and set the tone, although it is also about the compliant sheep—designing resistance, building coalitions—who fiercely lap it up. What is one to conclude about the breathtakingly stupid administration of a place renowned for its intelligence?

Take for example the aforementioned Sullivan affair. Unremarked in the press is the significance of the title he had to relinquish: residential dean, which used to be house master, or, after Harvard became co-ed, it was, I believe, sometimes house mistress—until someone complained that this was redolent of slavery. Many words are redolent of slavery, such as “slavery.” Or “chains,” “subjugation,” “ownership,” “manumission,” “auction,” “block,” “middle,” and “passage.” “Master” predates slavery in America and has many other meanings and connotations. The failure of Harvard's governors lies not only in analysis and etymology but in taking a word that has numerous applications and rejecting its employment in one because it is objectionable in another. Shall we now have the tortured equivalents of a residential-dean key, a residential-dean switch, a residential-dean piece, a residential dean of arts degree? Should Patrick O'Brian have retitled his book *Residential Dean and Commander*, or Casals have taught a residential-dean class, or Julia Child have written *Residential-Deaning the Art of French Cooking*?

Is it not astounding that in the universities, where one would expect historians, linguists, philologists, lawyers, and philosophers, among others, to define terms closely, the words “hate,” “diversity,” “equity,” “inclusion,” “aggression,” “rape,” “survivor,” “racist,” “privilege,” etc., are bandied about like badminton shuttlecocks

and pushed into Orwellian servitude? The trick in using language as a political weapon is to make it as flexible as Kirsten Gillibrand, vaguer than Beto O'Rourke, and more emotional than Cory Booker. One need only consult Humpty Dumpty, for apparently when Harvard encounters a word, it means just what Harvard chooses it to mean. And Harvard's answer as to how it can do this is that the real question is who is to be master—that's all.

If Harvard makes a practice of approaching the English language with no more precision than that of a habitual drunkard; if via its Hiphop Archive & Research Institute it thinks it is “Facilitating and encouraging the pursuit of knowledge, art, culture and responsible leadership through Hiphop” (I did not make this up); if it—fervently—believes that it is possible for a man to become a woman and a woman to become a man, to what extent does this suggest intelligence? And if it does not, is it perhaps an indication of the thing that is the opposite of intelligence, a thing that begins with “s”? Could it

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be? Is it possible? At *Harvard*? Really?

Puritan Aristocracy

WITH RELATIVELY BRIEF PERIODS OF exception, Harvard has always been a racially and otherwise prejudicial institution, as it is now. The only variance in this seemingly unbreakable pattern is which groups are targets and which beneficiaries. In almost 400 years, it has had the opportunity for much revision: Christians good, heathens bad; heathens good, Christians bad; heterosexuals good, homosexuals bad; homosexuals good, heterosexuals tolerable (because there are so many) but guilty; men good, women tolerable (because they are so pretty); women good, men actually not; Protestants good, Catholics bad; Protestants and Catholics bad; atheists good; Jews bad, Christians good; Christians bad, Jews okay, maybe, assuming they're neither religious nor Zionists; blacks bad, whites good; blacks good, whites bad; Americans good, the rest of the world deplorable; the rest of the world good, Americans deplorable, and so on,

forever producing new blooms.

Now it is Asians who are bad and against whom Harvard must defend itself lest it be overrun “disproportionately.” Just like the Jews in the 1920s and '30s, because they're so wily, Asians would be “over-represented.” It was okay for white Anglo-Saxon Protestants to be “over-represented,” but, in Harvard's view, not Jews, because, strangely enough, as in Harvard's view of Asians today, they worked too hard, were one-dimensional, alien, kept to themselves, and lacked desirable personal characteristics such as summering in Southampton.

Caught red-handed in anti-Asian racism, Harvard is now wiggling and obfuscating in a contemptible effort to establish that its racism is not racism. It will certainly succeed in proving this, if only to itself; but a federal district court has recently gone along, too. As it has through the centuries, Harvard fails to perceive, understand, or accept that each of us is unique, and that generalized categories of exceedingly low information content and specificity—such as skin color, eyelid structure, or whatever, even if closely correlated with certain cultures or subcultures—do not and cannot serve as accurate tools of assessment given the high complexity and staggering variation of any individual, his experience, and his soul. The deans of Harvard understand this perfectly well in regard to the police and racial profiling, but not so much as it is applied to admissions and hiring. In this, as much as they might try to tut-tut it away, they are the bosom buddies of those white guys of my generation—Brylcreemed hair, black pants, and white tee-shirts with a pack of Camels rolled up in one sleeve—who hurled insults and more at tiny little black girls trying to go to school.

The only difference is in which groups they favor, which they disfavor, and the *savoir faire* they employ in doing so. Their American and German predecessors in the academy advanced racism and eugenics with plenty of *savoir-faire*. Is Margaret Sanger not to this day one of the heroines of the smart set? If people who believe that they cannot be anything but good employ rancid principles in furtherance of what they assume will be just outcomes, the destructive power of the former will almost always make impossible the latter.

Although it would generate mutinies and riots, the faults in Harvard's governance could be corrected were it genuinely and without evasion to uphold beleaguered principles such as freedom of speech, association, and religion; presumption of innocence; due process; right to counsel; catholicity of viewpoints; and the rights and equality of individuals as expressed in the common law, the Declaration of Independence, and the U.S. Constitution.



It is most unlikely that they would do so, and the question is why?

The snobbery, elitism, and self-deception of a culture in which people believe they are entitled to manipulate the classes and races “below” them as if these were Mahjong tiles cannot be addressed other than by a heavily documented, multivariate analysis rather than an informal essay, and in either case neither precisely nor conclusively. But I suspect that a large part of the explanation lies in Harvard’s particular situation and may have spread elsewhere due to its outsized influence. As far as one can ascribe an ongoing culture to an institution, Harvard never fully bought in to the principles of the American Founding (or their refinement and realization in the Civil War), the last great and just political passions, after which all others have proved retrograde.

In its atavistic Toryism it remains demonstrably hostile to the essence of the Declaration of Independence. Natural rights? No. Consent of the governed rather than the action of experts? No. Self-evident truths? No. A Creator? Not these days. And it mainly follows Woodrow Wilson—of Princeton, no less—in regard to that exasperating and pointlessly obstructive doctrine, the Constitution. Though Harvard’s sons fought bravely and no doubt

disproportionately to preserve the Union and free the slaves, it may have been less in affirmation of the principles of the founding than (as is the wont of their descendants) to engage in the joy of righteousness.

Harvard does not look back to these principles as its own foundation. Why should it? Its culture began 139 years prior to the American Revolution. It regards itself as senior to that disturbance, and above it. As American history has unfurled beneath it, it has watched with the imperturbable superiority of a sow nursing her piglets. Being senior, it need not subscribe to the declarations of relative newcomers long after it had come through almost a century and a half of New England’s punishing winters and beautiful fresh summers. Still remnant as its foundation are attitudes traceable to belief in the divine right of kings, or at least, by extension, the aristocracy of which Harvard and the nobles it imagines it creates are the inheritors and beneficiaries. Dreadful enough, this gets worse when conjoined with the other half of Harvard’s double helix—a fervent, intolerant Puritanism that feasts on the kind of self-righteousness based these days, more often than not, on truly delusional ravings such as the need to accommodate pregnant men.

When I arrived 54 years ago, the outward signs of aristocracy were unconcealable—in

speech, dress, lineage, demeanor, and, most of all, presumption. Some characteristics were laudable and worthy of adoption, others hardly so. Now that undergraduates—who, granted, as a pathology of adolescence, have always garishly encostumed themselves—dress like anarchists, villagers straight out of Bruegel, or 19th-century lumberjacks, the superficialities have changed radically, but not the presumptions. Harvard has always believed itself superior to, and separate from, the rest of America. Over almost four centuries, Puritan self-righteousness and aristocracy’s self-justifications have managed in one form or another to carry on within it.

Years after I had left, I found myself in conversation with an undergraduate. The subject was zoning and how to accommodate the rights of both the owners of property and the community as a whole. I said to this young person, “The difficulty of the question is determining who will decide.” The response—immediate, impassioned, and emphatic—was, “We will decide!” What could better show Harvard’s pride and its prejudices?

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