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a Constitutional  
Crisis**

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Mansfield:  
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Randy E.  
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**Cass  
Sunstein**

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Flannery:  
**Shakespeare's  
First Folio**



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Anderson:  
**Election 2024**

Christopher  
Caldwell:  
**Desperate  
Germany**

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Guelzo:  
**Woodrow  
Wilson's  
Red Scare**

David P.  
Goldman:  
**Why Sparta  
Won**

Michael  
Anton  
Harvey C.  
Mansfield

William  
Voegeli:  
**The Roots  
of Woke**

Mark Helprin:  
**ISRAEL**  
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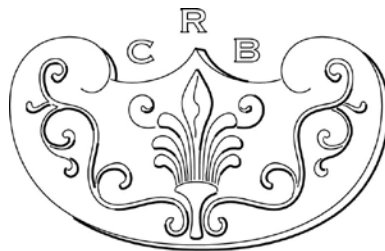
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## THE HENRY SALVATORI PRIZE



*Editor's Note: On September 10, Harvey C. Mansfield was presented with the 2023 Henry Salvatori Prize in the American Founding, honoring his scholarship and accomplishments, at a dinner hosted by the Claremont Institute and held at the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas, Texas. Senator Tom Cotton's introduction and an edited and expanded version of Professor Mansfield's remarks are printed here.*

# HARVEY C. MANSFIELD

by Tom Cotton

**H**ARVEY MANSFIELD IS A LEGEND—not to say a myth. These days, of course, a conservative on the political science faculty of an Ivy League college may sound as mythical as a minotaur. Perhaps Harvey's critics viewed him with the same mixture of astonishment and fear as they would the mythical beast. Unfortunately for them, Harvey was all too real.

When I arrived at Harvard in the mid-'90s, Harvey had been there for nearly 50 years. Every student knew the legend of Harvey C. Mansfield—or Harvey C-minus Mansfield, as he was universally known, for the high standard to which he held his students. The first time I went to his office, I grimaced that someone had scratched a minus sign into the nameplate after his middle initial. Since he hadn't replaced it years later, I can only assume he secretly welcomed this minor act of vandalism.

Harvey Mansfield, "the lone dissenter." A man who was to the Harvard faculty meeting what Socrates was to Athens. His dissents were the stuff of legend, passed down from one generation of students to the next.

He inveighed against grade inflation for decades, till he finally relented and started giving students two grades: the real grade actually earned and the "ironic" grade sent to the registrar. I suspect all my grades were ironic. Of the apparent increase in academic abilities and decline in virtue among Harvard's students, he quipped, "We've replaced the gentleman's C with the non-gentleman's A-."

He cautioned that affirmative action would elevate group identity over individual merit and proud achievements. He predicted that its rationale would shift from remedying past discrimination to "diversity"—from a temporary exception to the principle of equal opportunity to a permanent replacement for it.

He warned that Women's Studies wasn't even a real discipline and better called feminist studies anyway for how it catered to a small number of peevish women who held a narrow-minded view of their sex. No Plato or Jane Austen for this crowd. And he famously scorned the faculty for their vote to create the major: "Ladies of America, if you want a husband you can push around, marry a Harvard professor!"

He also warned about Environmental Studies, also not a real discipline, but rather socialism under the latest trendy guise. Or, as he later told me, what is modern environmentalism but the pantheism about which Alexis de Tocqueville warned democratic peoples?

**A**LTHOUGH THE STUFF OF LEGEND, Harvey's dissents continued in my time. He rebuked the administration for its reprehensible invitation to Jiang Zemin, the Communist Chinese dictator. A former soldier himself, he stood up for our troops during the Iraq war. He defended quaint notions of due process against Harvard's Stalinist sex police. He even defended President Larry Summers, a Democrat whose remarks

about women and science had given some women professors the vapors.

At every turn, his colleagues and the school paper portrayed Harvey as a hidebound relic. Harvey has said, "they let me talk, but they never listened." If only they had! Because in retrospect, every legendary dissent has marked him out not as a relic, but as a prophet of the damage his beloved university was about to do to itself. Just months ago, the Supreme Court found Harvard liable for its racist admissions policies. What shame the university should feel—if Harvard professors and administrators were capable of shame.

And yet, the lone dissenter was also part myth. Harvey was no reactionary conservative. For those of us who studied with him, he was the opposite of dogmatic or orthodox—which is to say, the opposite of most Harvard professors. This caricature of Harvey truly was a myth.

I once asked him about the story that he nearly left Harvard for Chicago to fill the seat of his good friend, the late Allan Bloom. I imagined that he might feel more at ease among a faculty that, if not exactly conservative, was more sympathetic to his views. He replied, "I could never leave Harvard. Besides, I'd probably be a liberal at Chicago just to be contrarian. Not really, but it would be fun."

Harvey knew that it was more important, more interesting, and, yes, more fun, to examine, as he put it, "the fundamental principles of philosophy and political philosophy than



simply to be conservative politically.” To my knowledge, he never taught a course on mere conservatism.

**H**E DIDN’T ATTRACT MANY ASPIRING politicians, very much including young Brooks Brothers Republicans. Not for them the risk of a blemish on their transcript. Besides, what use did they have for James Madison, much less Aristotle.

No, Harvey tended to attract earnest, inquisitive students of all political stripes. He rewarded those students for taking the plunge by exposing us to political philosophy as a way of life, confronting and grappling with those “fundamental” questions: What is justice? What is virtue? How should I live?

And reminding us in creative ways that these are not academic questions, but as urgent today as when Socrates first called them down from the heavens. Over the years, Harvey struck up a friendship with Miss Manners (advice columnist Judith Martin). He invited her to a session of his seminar on manliness. He grinned as she swatted away complaints about manners and etiquette. One student

objected dramatically that manners are inauthentic. Of course, they are, she said: would you like to go through life with everyone saying and doing exactly what they think? A young feminist complained that manners are sexist, what with men opening doors and holding chairs. On the contrary, she answered: those customs reflect a kind of deference, and deference is paid at least to equals and usually to superiors.

Finally, Harvey levied his own objection: aren’t manners unmanly, because they throw up obstacles and red tape between a man and the object he desires? Having just taught *Macbeth* and what Harvey called the forms and formalities of constitutional government, I suspect that he meant how political customs or constitutions thwart the ruling designs of men with vaulting ambition. But Miss Manners quizzically asked, “What do you mean, Harvey? Skip the dinner and movie, go straight to the sex?” After a pregnant pause and with an impish grin, he answered, “Not what I had in mind, but good example.”

That was Harvey. Presenting timeless questions in novel ways, challenging his stu-

dents to see the permanent truths of the human condition not only in old books, but in the world around them.

Far from the mythical conservative, one might even call Harvey a liberal, along the lines of a question he sometimes posed: who today is called a liberal for his manly defense of liberty? Remarkably, to even speak of “liberty” or “freedom” these days is effectively to mark oneself as a conservative.

Whatever it’s called and whether in the faculty room or the lecture hall, Harvey mounted just such a defense of liberty, grounded in the human soul and the highest aspirations of mankind. He called his university back to its noblest traditions and he inspired generations of students to live an examined life.

I’m thankful for the great good fortune of having known and studied with him and I join you tonight in honoring the life and the work of the great Harvey C. Mansfield—the man, the myth, the legend.

*Tom Cotton is a United States senator for Arkansas who serves on the Senate Intelligence, Armed Services, and Judiciary Committees.*

## THOUGHTS ON WOKE

by Harvey C. Mansfield

**A**S PREFACE TO THOUGHTS ON “WOKE,” the new name for “political correctness,” I wish to thank the Claremont Institute for honoring me with the Henry Salvatori Prize—the occasion for the essay that follows. The Claremont Institute began from the legacy of the noted philanthropist Henry Salvatori. A legacy is like a forward pass in football, composed of a pass and a catch. Both pass and catch require virtue, each of its sort. As the catch cannot occur without the pass, so the pass acquires most of its virtue from a successful catch. This is what the Claremont Institute has accomplished, thereby honoring the name of the philanthropist as much as he honored the Institute.

This prize is my second gift from Henry Salvatori. The first was a year’s fellowship to complete the writing of my commentary on Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy*, entitled *Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders* and published in 1979. Although the money for the fellowship came from Henry Salvatori, the choice to give it belonged to Harry V. Jaffa, whose students started the Claremont Institute, and whose own role might be compared

to the coach of the passer and receiver. When my book was published, Professor Jaffa presented a copy to Mr. Salvatori, who discovered that in its acknowledgments his name was thanked after the opening phrase, “money being the sinew of war...” He was not pleased that his philanthropy had been described so coarsely, and Professor Jaffa was at some pains to sweeten his temper. He did not know, and I rather doubt that Jaffa assured him, that Machiavelli had devoted a chapter of his *Discourses* to an argument that money is *not* the sinew of war (2.10). Nor would he have added that, according to Plato and Aristotle, money is not even money unless it is well spent. True wealth is knowledge correctly applied, which should be the motto of philanthropy but for some reason is not, perhaps because it gives little credit to moneymakers in the loose, ordinary sense of the term, which might appear important to successful entrepreneurs like Henry Salvatori.

Let us say that Henry Salvatori’s munificence was mediated through Harry Jaffa’s directing prudence, so that I can acknowledge Jaffa’s generosity to me in particular. He

befriended me in 1948, when I was in high school. He was an assistant professor in the political science department at Ohio State University, where my father was chairman, but Jaffa did not hesitate to wean me away from the sort of political science, neither quantitatively scientific nor philosophic, that was common in that day. He did not know that my father would be warily admiring of his efforts while aware of their connection to the name of Leo Strauss that was beginning to acquire the radioactive glow it still retains. Soon after Jaffa and I both left Columbus, he to Claremont and I to Harvard. Both of us stayed where we went for the rest of our lives. At Harvard, away from Jaffa, I had a brief love affair with Max Weber, which was rudely cured by the publication of Strauss’s *Natural Right and History* in 1953. Later in life Jaffa and I had our differences, as Straussians tend to acquire despite, or because of, their common hero. But my admiration for his masterpiece, *Crisis of the House Divided*, published in 1959, was unbounded. In that book *he made sense of Lincoln*, a phrase short and weighty enough to serve as his epitaph.

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**I**TURN TO THE INVASIVE PANDEMIC OF woke that has spread into our universities, and through them into institutions of government and private corporations. I shall use a send-off letter I wrote recently as professor to the Harvard class of 2023. Its topic was self-censorship, to which are now added some remarks on self-expression, identity, and feminism, two sources of woke I did not have time for in the letter. The examples I use could have come from most any other university, but I am more familiar with Harvard.

Not long ago, an Iranian woman taking my class told me that in her country you had to be careful about what you said in public but could say what you wanted in private. “At Harvard, however, it’s the reverse,” she observed. Some Harvard students complain of such self-censorship. Only some complain because the complaint is directed against the rest who dominate conversation and do not want to hear opposition. These dominant students may not begin as a majority, but the activist few create the majority who accept their view and then impose it on those who disagree, forcing them to censor themselves.

The punishment for not censoring yourself is to lose the friendly company of fellow students and to be disregarded and shunned. You are not put in jail, as happens in Iran and other countries where oppression is forcible and overt, but you are shamed and deprived of the fellowship you expect from college life. I don’t know how widespread the necessity to censor oneself is felt, but I think the judgment behind it is pretty accurate. Harvard is a one-party institution, much more so than even the one-party state and one-party city in which it resides. In Cambridge and Massachusetts one party dominates the electorate but does not attempt to exclude opposition as Harvard does, in its faculty and administration and among students.

Let’s not be hasty. First consider: is this such an unhappy fact? Self-censorship might seem to be a part of self-control based on the need to respect others. Everyone knows what tact is, and as one matures one gains experience of the great truth that it often pays to keep your mouth shut. You may be proud of the many wise and witty things you can say, but with your mouth shut you will not be embarrassed by the few foolish remarks you let slip. From the standpoint of tact, self-censorship might seem to be an education in prudence and responsibility.

Perhaps conservative complainers about self-censorship should be boasting of their ability to exercise prudence. They are get-

ting a better education than the many who live unprotesting and almost unconscious in the Harvard bubble. Conservatives, I like to say, get more from Harvard by having to be critical of its politicized conformity. Though boring and banal, it cannot be ignored. Conservatives are, therefore, forced into self-censorship. Upon graduation they can go elsewhere and enjoy a freedom that their education has in a backhanded way obliged them to have prepared for themselves. When you are prudent you are less free, because you are not free to make a fool of yourself, but also in a better sense more free, because you make fewer mistakes.

Yet if self-censorship is a benefit, should it not be made more general than it is, and offered for the instruction of those who at present do not practice it because they think they do not need it? All students should experience the feeling of taking a college course where one sits in silence as an unaddressed minority. Why should genuine education be reserved for conservatives? But this reasoning might suggest that everyone should spend a term in jail to learn what it’s like.

### Identitarians think of themselves as godlike because they hold the power to take and give offense.

Let’s move from the benefit to the harm of self-censorship.



**T**ODAY, SELF-EXPRESSION HAS MUCH greater sway than self-control. Freedom is defined not so much as being in control of yourself as in expressing yourself without interference or objection. The difference appears in the transformation of the right of free speech to free expression in language and thinking. “Free speech” is the term in the First Amendment. “Free expression” crept into a joint role as “freedom of speech and expression” in the first of Franklin Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms in 1941. The phrase became the basis for advancing a claim about free speech in the famous Supreme Court case *West Virginia v. Barnette* (1943) regarding the daily school requirement of a recited pledge to the flag. In a much-quoted paragraph near the end of the decision, Justice Robert Jackson declares that the fixed star of our Constitution is that it has no orthodoxy that can be compelled—except the one being compelled by this decision. The assertion is applied to

any attempt at forcing citizens “to confess by word or act...” Thus act—the act of pledging—is accounted speech. Moreover, in Jackson’s opinion the flag pledge is described pejoratively as a “slogan” or a “symbol” that is hostile to “the individual’s right to speak his own mind.”

While speech is expanded to include acts, this foundational case for the interpretation of free speech narrows it to expressing one’s own mind rather than contributing to political deliberation. This narrowing is understood and presented as widening. The typical law school course on the First Amendment is on “expression” rather than “speech,” making speech an instance of expression rather than expression an instance of speech, as in the *Barnette* case. The subordination of speech to expression is disguised as breadth, and gesture is elevated to rationality. Incidentally, the idea that the Bill of Rights could be withdrawn from “the vicissitudes of political controversy,” as Jackson further opined, is, to put it mildly, a delusion. It would be better to say that the Bill of Rights sets the terms of much political controversy, as in the present case of the recent history of “free speech.”

**I**MUST PASS OVER THE CONTRIBUTION THAT modern political philosophy made to the notion and power of “one’s own mind,” notably in John Locke’s *A Letter Concerning Toleration* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s “Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar.” Nearer in time and more damaging in immediate effect was the destructive nihilism of the New Left in the late ‘60s, based on Friedrich Nietzsche’s doctrine of the will to power. The effect of these intellectual influences can be summarized in the difference between expression, as now understood, and free speech with its origin in Socratic political philosophy.

Free expression is speech imputed to an act or gesture, like a salute, but more likely a protest of “demonstration” whose least feature is any kind of argument. What is the difference between this sort of expression and free speech in its older, fuller sense? Free speech comes from the Greek word *logos*, meaning reason as well as speech. Speech is for communication among human beings, and to communicate speech must make sense or “logic.” Of course, most speech is not rational in the full sense of correct, but it wants to be correct or at least rhetorically convincing. Speech can be defined by its best example: “That was one helluva speech.” Every other speech would be speech in an inferior sense, defined by what it lacks of the best speech. Expression, however, has come to be defined as a sub-rational urge of gesture or action that one cannot deny or

## In the Next Issue

**CRB Winter 2023/24**

**Bradley C.S. Watson**  
Up from Conservatism

**Joshua Mitchell**  
How Liberalism  
Became Despotism

**Michael Brendan Dougherty**  
Mitt Romney's Reckoning

**Helen Andrews**  
Elon Musk

**David P. Goldman:**  
China & the World Economy

**Daniel J. Mahoney**  
Russian Conservatism  
& Russian Liberalism

**Michael Anton**  
Harvey Mansfield's Machiavelli

**Dennis Hale & Marc Landy**  
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hold back. This is very inferior *logos*, though sometimes it may succeed as a provocation.

Self-expression is about you and your will; free speech is about you and others, those you are trying to convince or inform. Politically, expression is the imposition of yourself and your group. Free speech, however, is about self-government, with its view toward the reasonable deliberation of a free people aware of its choices and necessities and open to argument.

When expression dominates the definition of speech, politics descends from choice to identity. Why are you an American? The question is answered as if American were your "identity" with no reason attached and no principle to be defended. It is as if your politics were a given, like your race or sex. But the notion of expression is hostile to anything so given. With the same immediacy that justifies an urge, that notion insists that the urge must be yours. It must not be given to you by your nature or by some god (such as a Muse). Urge takes over your nature and your reason, leaving nothing but caprice or its apparent opposite—zeal. You are free to reject your sex and become nothing definable, as when the new Justice Jackson (Ketanji Brown) admitted in a Senate hearing that she did not know what a woman was. Or you can become transgender, poised by your identity between two givens and above both, if not rationally at least by the value of identity. Transgender owes its notoriety to its stubborn insistence on "one's ownness" of identity.

**A** FURTHER STEP TAKES US TO WOKE. TO be free, it is said, you must be not only permitted to express yourself but also to be safe while doing so. To express yourself fully means to fashion your own identity. And to do that, the danger of being offended in your identity becomes a vital point: you must be free both to take offense when you are disrespected and to give offense when your own identity demands it. Identity is not reason, it is taking offense, a stubborn assertion of one's will. But is this not a democratic version, or caricature, of Nietzsche's "will to power"? Differences of status are taken as distinctions of power; to have safe space one must have equal or equalized power. Will such power be equal? One may ask this with or without reference to Nietzsche, who would certainly deny—as would any reasonable person—that all expressive identities are equal.

The principle of expression seems to require that you have the ability to express. Express what? Express yourself. Yourself in this view is the urge you have been given; its givenness is guaranteed by its strength. Ability to

express is the given that supports your delusion that you have no givens, but only your identity. Giving identity presupposes the ability to give. Most people are pretty ordinary in their decent ways, unaware of their power to make an identity for themselves.

Identitarians, however, are not satisfied with being ordinary. They think of themselves as godlike because they hold the power to take and give offense. But in practice they confine themselves to small things that symbolize larger issues and that do not require much thought or effort. To them everyday slight offenses loom as large as major ones that are rare. Self-expression permits, even requires, that the names people use be inspected for the harm they cause. Once-respected names like Woodrow Wilson and John Winthrop may need to be abandoned and tossed into the trash can of non-history. People at well-known universities feel themselves ashamed to be indebted to these figures, whom they accuse with little or no argument. A single misstep or faulty remark, taken out of context and condemned as if the perpetrators were living now and belonged to the wrong party, is enough to make them deserve the punishment of execration or oblivion.

With accusation against the unjustly famous come more familiar subjects of scorn: pronouns. Those who believe that sex is given must be forcibly dislodged from their conformity to convention based on nature and required to use new, identity-friendly pronouns. If they insist on the old pronouns, they must accept that these are their self-assigned identity, no longer simple good sense. Persons formerly known as women must be appeased—no more impersonal "he" or "him," no more "chairman" or "freshman."

**H**ERE ONE MAY INSERT THE IMPORTANCE of feminism to woke. Behind self-expression are the thought and political power of feminism. For what is feminism? It is the assertion made by Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) that a woman has no permanent definition, only a historical one. Woman has been defined up to now by the imposition of power. With more power women can rise from second sex to first. Whether women will be equal or superior to men is left unsaid, but it would seem that the effort to equalize women will require treating them as superior during the transition. To destroy any definition of woman imposed by the power of men the women's movement destroys what it calls "essentialism," which is any effort to define. Indeed, the first target of the movement was femininity, opposed by Betty



Friedan as *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). For women, femininity is letting yourself be put on a pedestal and defined by men. Beware of the courtesies of men! They try to impress you with your worth and dignity while denying you power. They offer you fake power. It's no wonder that our Justice Jackson refuses to define herself as a woman. This refusal is what makes her a woman.

This refusal also causes feminism to lose its claim to be the first sex to the transgender persons. Suspended between the two traditionally given sexes, these brand-new identities stand for determined irresolution and constant identifying without ever coming to an identity. They are neither above sex nor a new sex. The transgenders are in control in the sense that everything is done to appease them and to ensure that they are included in the democratic whole. Lacking identity, they are pure identity before it commits suicide by defining an identity, thus surrendering to essentialism.

**I**N FACT, THE TRANSGENDERS ARE FAKES. Most of them are men pretending to be women—fake women. They are the consequence, and represent the consequence, of feminism: the empowerment and elevation not of women but of fake women. Feminism has no guide for itself; it is a failed rebellion against nature. Feminism, one should add, is indebted to Karl Marx as well as to Nietzsche. In Marx it found the advancement of equality, to combine with Nietzsche's will to power. The final stage of history in Communism, according to Marx and Engels, is the abolition of the division of labor that is responsible for human oppression. For women, this means the abolition of social roles, the disappearance of the housewife, of the routine and confinement as well as the artifices of femininity. Out of the kitchen they go and into the heady, exciting, outdoors realm of sexual harassment by liberated males.

Woke has much of the given, definitional femininity about it, the nature of woman from which Beauvoir led the prison escape. Only the most dedicated feminists will reject

the small courtesies of sexist gentlemanliness, and responsibility for less-noticed advantages such as needing a mentor and appreciating "support." These reveal the dependence of women, now transferred from the men in their lives, who love them, to government or employer with their impersonal bureaucracies, so as to disguise their sexist origin. Measures to control "bullying" are directed at the male rather than the female type of that human trait and nothing is said about indignities from not being brave enough to confront the bully oneself. The word "sissy" is no longer heard. As regards woke in general, the most obvious feminine aspect is its reliance on women's weapon of shaming, given focus by the use of pronouns to raise consciousness of guilt instead of argument to convince.

Woke is the result of the feminist formula of the personal made political. It appears, in fact, not to arise from the personal but rather to have a political origin as well as political consequences. Do people object to changes of honored names, new pronouns, made without their consent? Isn't this forced speech just like the flag salute and the school prayer? Mostly they do not object, but if they did, they would be informed that justice overrides their sense of offense, and they must consent to the advanced kind of censorship that actually puts words in their mouths. They must learn the new expressions and learn to like them. Self-censorship raises your consciousness and wakes you up so that you can join the woke. But the intolerance of woke affects our liberalism. I mean our generic liberalism, the 17th-century liberalism based on natural rights that informs American life. This liberalism includes both conservatives and liberals today since both like to argue in terms of rights. With rights government must be based on consent, and consent must be decided on the basis of majority rule in elections. This means that our parties must tolerate one another and accept defeat by leaving office lawfully. In this stylized framework of our government the main practice of woke, which is taking offense, is

toxic. Free speech with argument and without or with a minimum of character assassination needs to be our ruling mode but is now being forgotten.

**I**S ANYTHING LOST BY BEING WOKE? YES. Instead of disputing the point you disagree with, you begin to search for character defects in your adversary and pounce when they are found. You blind yourself by taking offense because in doing so you are led to simplify the justice you think is unquestionable. Instead of thinking about what justice might require, you try to shame opposition out of existence. Believing that justice is easy to think, you begin to believe it is easy to apply. You conclude, for example, that slavery was as easy to abolish as to denounce today after it was abolished. You regard those who gave their lives in a Civil War to gain that end as less just than we are now, bravely changing names and pronouns.

Recently my university issued a report titled "Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery." It listed minor incidents inflated to claim that slavery was a misdeed of Harvard, requiring that Harvard in all its facets should adopt the measures of woke as contrite repentance for its legacy of white supremacy. This report is effectually contradicted by the most prominent building on the campus, Memorial Hall, completed in 1878 to enshrine the memory of Harvard graduates who died in the Civil War on the Union side.

My argument against taking offense ends up by taking offense. I got there in defense of the honor of Harvard, which I have always loved a little more—right now a lot more—than it deserves. America is the country that Harvard honored by being its first university. For some reason there was no indigenous persons' university waiting to greet the Puritans when they arrived. So they founded Harvard.

*Harvey C. Mansfield is Research Professor of Government at Harvard University. An earlier version of this essay first ran in The Harvard Crimson.*

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