

THE CONSERVATIVE

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL BY THE EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVES AND REFORMISTS (ECR) PARTY



Jonathan Haidt | Ben Shapiro | Federico N. Fernández | Jeremy Black | Alvino-Mario Fantini

IDENTITY

POLITICS



THE CONSERVATIVE

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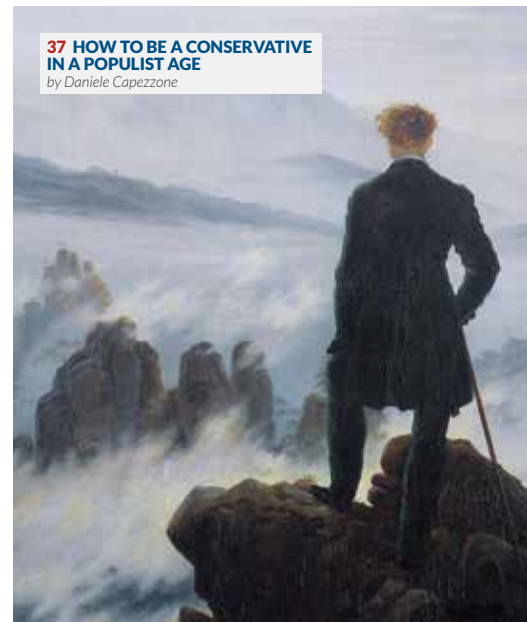
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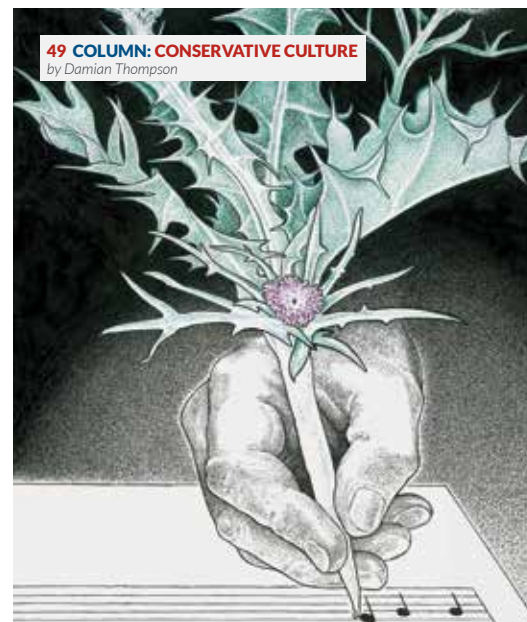
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Modernity is unnatural. Its values – reason, scepticism, the scientific method – are, in the exact sense, counter-intuitive. Our DNA is attuned to an altogether more dangerous and tribal world. We want simple rules of thumb rather than analysis. We like to divide the world into “us” and “them” – our own tribe or kin-group, and that of the stranger.

We therefore struggle, at a genetic level, to accept that someone we don’t like might none the less have useful things to tell us. This notion – the basis, if you think about it, of the Enlightenment – has to be continuously drummed in, because it runs up against our innate hunches.

Hannah Arendt once wrote that “every generation, civilisation is invaded by barbarians – we call them ‘children’”. We arrive in the world no different from a new-born *homo sapiens* 50,000 years ago. What makes our society different from theirs is that we are inculcated with a number of counter-intuitive ideas.

For three centuries and more, that inculcation was carried out by schools and, above all, universities. Professors taught their students to be quizzical, to think for themselves, to test new ideas. To some extent, of course, they still do. But there is also a growing tendency to subordinate reason, merit and free enquiry to identity politics.



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Students are now frequently taught that the intrinsic strength of an idea does not, after all, matter as much as the identity of the person proposing it. We are held to be defined by race and sex. The feelings of a designated victim trump the facts of a designated oppressor.

Consider this sentence: “Islam has a problem with gay people”. How it is assessed will be almost wholly determined by whether the speaker is Muslim or non-Muslim, gay or straight, rather than by its intrinsic accuracy or inaccuracy. In other words, instead of elevating logic above subjectivity, we are encouraging people to do the reverse. We are actively teaching them to think in a tribal way.

Once we do that, of course, consistency goes out of the window. Gender is a meaningless social construct, but the right to pick your own gender is fundamental. There are no differences between the sexes, but we need more women in politics to bring their unique feminine

perspective. The rights of indigenous peoples in Brazil are paramount, but try substituting “Denmark” for “Brazil” and see how that sentiment is received. We should be anti-racist, but we should also have a university admissions system that is actively based on race. And so on.

This phenomenon, referred to by some political scientists as “the great awakening”, has come upon us very suddenly. The phrases that we associate with it – “safe spaces”, “trigger-warnings”, “cultural appropriation”, “micro-aggression” – were not in use before 2015. Yet wokeness builds on older ideas, especially what is known as postmodernism – the notion that there is no objective truth or, more precisely, that truth is a product of power structures. A better name, though, would be “premodernism”, for the idea strikes at the essence of the Enlightenment. Its growth in campus is the single most depressing phenomenon of our age.

In the pages that follow, some of the finest conservative writers in the world turn their attention to the phenomenon of identity politics, and consider how to respond to it. What is at stake – for once this statement is apt – is Western civilization itself. If we stop treating people as individuals, and instead categorise them in groups, we return to an altogether poorer and darker past. Let’s not go there. ■



HOW TO REVERSE THE CENTRIPETAL FORCES PULLING US APART

by Jonathan Haidt

What is happening to our country, and our universities? It sometimes seems that everything is coming apart. To understand why, I have found it helpful to think about an idea from cosmology called “the fine-tuned universe.” There are around 20 fundamental constants in physics—things like the speed of light, Newton’s gravitational constant, and the charge of an electron. In the weird world of cosmology, these are constants throughout *our* universe, but it is thought that some of them could be set to different values in *other* universes. As physicists have begun to understand our universe, they have noticed that many of these physical constants seem to be set just right to allow matter to condense and life to get started.

For a few of these constants, if they were just one or two percent higher or lower, matter would have never condensed after the big bang. There would have been no stars, no planets, no life. As Stephen Hawking put it,

“the remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make possible the development of life.”

Some have suggested that this fine-tuning might be evidence for the existence of God. This would be a deist conception of God, of the sort that Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and most of the Founding Fathers believed in: a God who set up the universe like a giant clock, with *exactly* the right springs and gears, and then set it in motion. I myself am not taking fine-tuning as evidence of God. I’m simply using it as a way to open this lecture. I want to lift your attention up into the cosmos and put you into a mindset that is awestruck at our improbability. And if I have succeeded in doing that, then I’d like you to take that same mindset and apply it to the existence of our improbable country.

I’d like you to consider an idea that I’ll call “the fine-tuned liberal democracy.” It begins by looking backward

When we look back at the ways our ancestors lived, there’s no getting around it: we are tribal primates.

a few million generations and tracing our ancestry, from tree-dwelling apes to land-dwelling apes, to upright-walking apes, whose hands were freed up for tool use, to larger-brained hominids who made weapons as well as tools, and then finally to *homo sapiens*, who painted cave walls and painted their faces and danced around campfires and worshipped gods and murdered each other in large numbers.

When we look back at the ways our ancestors lived, there’s no getting around it: we are tribal primates. We are exquisitely designed and adapted by evolution for life in small societies with intense, animistic religion and violent intergroup conflict over territory. We love tribal living so much that we invented sports, fraternities, street gangs, fan clubs, and tattoos. Tribalism is in our hearts and minds. We’ll never stamp it out entirely, but we can minimize its effects because we are a behaviorally flexible



species. We can live in many different ways, from egalitarian hunter-gatherer groups of 50 individuals to feudal hierarchies binding together millions. And in the last two centuries, a lot of us have lived in large, multi-ethnic secular liberal democracies. So clearly that is possible. *But how much margin of error do we have in such societies?*

Here is the fine-tuned liberal democracy hypothesis: as tribal primates, human beings are unsuited for life in large, diverse secular democracies, *unless* you get certain settings finely adjusted to make possible the development of stable political life. This seems

to be what the Founding Fathers believed. Jefferson, Madison, and the rest of those eighteenth-century deists clearly *did* think that designing a constitution was like designing a giant clock, a clock that might run forever if they chose the right springs and gears.

Thankfully, our Founders were good psychologists. They knew that we are not angels; they knew that we are tribal creatures. As Madison wrote in *Federalist* 10: “the latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man.” Our Founders were also good historians; they were well aware of Plato’s belief that democracy is the second

worst form of government because it inevitably decays into tyranny. Madison wrote in *Federalist* 10 about pure or direct democracies, which he said are quickly consumed by the passions of the majority: “such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention... and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths.”

So what did the Founders do? They built in safeguards against runaway factionalism, such as the division of powers among the three branches, and an elaborate series of checks and balances. But they also knew that they had to train future generations of

clock mechanics. They were creating a new kind of republic, which would demand far more maturity from its citizens than was needed in nations ruled by a king or other Leviathan.

Here is the education expert E.D. Hirsch, on the founding of our nation:

The history of tribal and racial hatred is the history and prehistory of humankind... The American experiment, which now seems so natural to us, is a thoroughly artificial device designed to counterbalance the natural impulses of group suspicions and hatreds... This vast, artificial, trans-tribal construct is what our Founders aimed to achieve. And they understood that it can be achieved effectively only by intelligent schooling. (From *The Making of Americans*)

Thomas Jefferson wrote, in 1789, that “wherever the people are well informed they can be trusted with their own government;” he backed up that claim by founding the University of Virginia, about which he wrote, in 1820: “This institution will be based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind. For here we are not afraid to follow the truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error as long as reason is left free to combat it.”

So, how are we doing, as the inheritors of the clock? Are we maintaining it well? If Madison visited Washington, D.C. today, he’d find that our government is divided into two all-consuming factions, which cut right down the middle of each of the three branches, uniting the three red half-branches against the three blue half-branches, with no branch serving the

Thankfully, our Founders were good psychologists. They knew that we are not angels; they knew that we are tribal creatures.

original function as he had envisioned.

And how are we doing at training clock mechanics? What would Jefferson say if he were to take a tour of America’s most prestigious universities in 2017? What would he think about safe spaces, microaggressions, trigger warnings, bias response teams, and the climate of fearfulness, intimidation, and conflict that is now so prevalent on campus? But first, let’s ask: How did we mess things up so badly?

I’ve been studying political polarization since 2007. Data from Gallup and Pew show steadily rising polarization since the 1990s, whether you ask people how much

they dislike the other side, how much they think the other side is a threat to the country, or how upset they’d be if their child married someone from the other side.

Why do we hate and fear each other so much more than we used to as recently as the early 1990s? The political scientist Sam Abrams and I wrote an essay in 2015, listing ten causes. I won’t describe them all, but I’ll give you a unifying idea, another metaphor from physics: keep your eye on the balance between centrifugal and centripetal forces. Imagine three kids making a human chain with their arms, and one kid has his free hand wrapped around a pole. The kids start running around in a circle, around the pole, faster and faster. The centrifugal force increases. That’s the force pulling outward as the human centrifuge speeds up. But at the same time, the kids strengthen their grip. That’s the centripetal force, pulling them inward along the chain of their arms. Eventually the centrifugal force exceeds the centripetal force and their hands slip. The chain breaks. This, I believe, is what is happening to our country. I’ll briefly mention five of the trends that Abrams and I identified, all of which can be seen as increasing centrifugal

forces or weakening centripetal forces.

External enemies: Fighting and winning two world wars, followed by the Cold War, had an enormous unifying effect. The Vietnam War was different, but in general, war is the strongest known centripetal force. Since 1989, we have had no unifying common enemy.

The media: Newspapers in the early days of the republic were partisan and often quite nasty. But with the advent of television in the mid-twentieth century, America experienced something unusual: the media was a gigantic centripetal force. Americans got much of their news from three television networks, which were regulated and required to show political balance. That couldn't last, and it began to change in the 1980s with the advent of cable TV and narrowcasting, followed by the Internet in the 1990s, and social media in the 2000s. Now we are drowning in outrage stories, very high-quality outrage stories, often supported by horrifying video clips. Social media is turning out to be a gigantic centrifugal force.

Immigration and diversity: This one is complicated and politically fraught. Let me be clear that I think immigration and diversity are good things,

overall. The economists seem to agree that immigration brings large economic benefits. The complete dominance of America in Nobel prizes, music, and the arts, and now the technology sector, would not have happened if we had not been open to immigrants. But as a social psychologist, I must point out that immigration and diversity have *many* sociological

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effects, some of which are negative. The main one is that they reduce social capital—the bonds of trust that exist between individuals. The political scientist Robert Putnam found this in a paper titled “E Pluribus Unum,” in which he followed his data to a conclusion he clearly did not relish: “In the short run, immigration and ethnic diversity tend to reduce social solidarity and social capital. New evidence from the US suggests that in ethnically diverse neighborhoods residents of all races tend to ‘hunker down.’ Trust (even of one’s own race) is lower, altruism and community cooperation rarer, friends fewer.”

In short, despite its other benefits, diversity is a centrifugal force, something the Founders were well aware of. In *Federalist* 2, John Jay wrote that we should count it as a blessing that America possessed “one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, the same language, professing the same religion.” I repeat that diversity has many good effects too, and I am grateful that America took in my grandparents from Russia and Poland, and my wife’s parents from Korea. But Putnam’s findings make it clear that those who want more diversity should be even *more* attentive to strengthening centripetal forces.

The final two causes I will mention are likely to arouse the most disagreement, because these are the two where I blame specific parties, specific sides. They are: the Republicans in Washington, and the Left on campus. Both have strengthened the centrifugal forces that are now tearing us apart.

The more radical Republican Party: When the Democrats ran the House of Representatives for almost all of six decades, before 1995, they did not treat the Republican minority particularly well. So I can understand Newt



Gingrich’s desire for revenge when he took over as Speaker of the House in 1995. But many of the changes he made polarized the Congress, made bipartisan cooperation more difficult, and took us into a new era of outrage and conflict in Washington. One change stands out to me, speaking as a social psychologist: he changed the legislative calendar so that all business was done Tuesday through Thursday, and he encouraged his incoming freshmen *not* to move to the District. He did not *want* them to develop personal friendships with Democrats. He did not *want* their spouses to serve on the same charitable boards. But

personal relationships among legislators and their families in Washington had long been a massive centripetal force. Gingrich deliberately weakened it.

And this all happened along with the rise of Fox News. Many political scientists have noted that Fox News and the right-wing media ecosystem had an effect on the Republican Party that is unlike anything that happened on the Left. It rewards more extreme statements, more grandstanding, more outrage. Many people will point out that the media leans Left overall, and that the Democrats did some

polarizing things, too. Fair enough. But it is clear that Gingrich set out to create a more partisan, zero-sum Congress, and he succeeded. This more combative culture then filtered up to the Senate, and out to the rest of the Republican Party.

The new identity politics of the Left: Jonathan Rauch offers a simple definition of identity politics: a “political mobilization organized around group characteristics such as race, gender, and sexuality, as opposed to party, ideology, or pecuniary interest.” Rauch then adds: “In America, this sort of mobilization is not new, unusual, unAmerican,



illegitimate, nefarious, or particularly Leftwing.” This definition makes it easy for us to identify two kinds of identity politics: the good kind is that which, in the long run, is a centripetal force. The bad kind is that which, in the long run, is a centrifugal force.

Injustice is centrifugal. It destroys trust and causes righteous anger. Institutionalized racism bakes injustice into the system and plants the seeds of an eventual explosion. When slavery was written into the Constitution, it set us up for the greatest explosion of our history. It was a necessary explosion, but we didn’t manage

the healing process well in the Reconstruction era. When Jim Crow was written into Southern laws, it led to another period of necessary explosions, in the 1960s.

The civil rights struggle was indeed identity politics, but it was an effort to fix a mistake, to make us better and stronger as a nation. Martin Luther King’s rhetoric made it clear that this was a campaign to create conditions that would allow national reconciliation. He drew on the moral resources of the American civil religion to activate our shared identity and values: “When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent

words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note.” And: “I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’”

Of course, some people saw the civil rights movement as divisive, or centrifugal. But King’s speech is among the most famous in American history precisely because *it framed our greatest moral failing as an opportunity for centripetal redemption*. This

is what I’m calling the good kind of identity politics.

Let us contrast King’s identity politics with the version taught in universities today. There is a new variant that has swept through the academy in the last five years. It is called intersectionality. The term and concept were presented in a 1989 essay by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a law professor at UCLA, who made the very reasonable point that a black woman’s experience in America is not captured by the summation of the black experience and the female experience. She analyzed a legal case in which black women were victims of discrimination at General Motors, even when the company could show that it hired plenty of blacks (in factory jobs dominated by men), and it hired plenty of women (in clerical jobs dominated by whites). So even though GM was found not guilty of discriminating against blacks or women, it ended up hiring hardly any black women. This is an excellent argument. What academic could oppose the claim that when analyzing a complex system, we must look at interaction effects, not just main effects?

But what happens when young people study intersectionality? In some majors, it’s woven into many courses.

Students memorize diagrams showing matrices of privilege and oppression. It’s not just white privilege causing black oppression, and male privilege causing female oppression; its heterosexual vs. LGBTQ, able-bodied vs. disabled; young vs. old, attractive vs. unattractive, even fertile vs. infertile. Anything that a group has that is good or valued is seen as a kind

The civil rights struggle was indeed identity politics, but it was an effort to fix a mistake, to make us better and stronger as a nation.

of privilege, which causes a kind of oppression in those who don’t have it. A funny thing happens when you take young human beings, whose minds evolved for tribal warfare and us/them thinking, and you fill those minds full of binary dimensions. You tell them that one side of each binary is good and the other is bad. You turn on their ancient tribal circuits, preparing them for battle. Many students find it thrilling; it floods them with a sense of meaning and purpose.

And here’s the strategically brilliant move made by intersectionality: all of the binary dimensions of oppression are said to be interlocking and overlapping. America

is said to be one giant matrix of oppression, and its victims cannot fight their battles separately. They must all come together to fight their common enemy, the group that sits at the top of the pyramid of oppression: the straight, white, cis-gendered, able-bodied Christian or Jewish or possibly atheist male. This is why a perceived slight against one victim group calls forth protest from all victim groups. This is why so many campus groups now align against Israel. Intersectionality is like NATO for social-justice activists.

This means that on any campus where intersectionality thrives, conflict will be eternal, because no campus can eliminate all offense, all microaggressions, and all misunderstandings. This is why the use of shout-downs, intimidation, and even violence in response to words and ideas is most common at our most progressive universities, in the most progressive regions of the country. It’s schools such as Yale, Brown, and Middlebury in New England, and U.C. Berkeley, Evergreen, and Reed on the West Coast. Are those the places where oppression is worst, or are they the places where this new way of thinking is most widespread?

Let me remind you of the educational vision of the Founders, by way of E.D. Hirsch: “The American experiment... is a thoroughly artificial device designed to counterbalance the natural impulses of group suspicions and hatreds... This vast, artificial, trans-tribal construct is what our Founders aimed to achieve.” Intersectionality aims for the exact opposite: an inflaming of tribal suspicions and hatreds, in order to stimulate anger and activism in students, in order to recruit them as fighters for the political mission of the professor. The identity politics taught on campus today is entirely different from that of Martin Luther King. It rejects America and American values. It does not speak of forgiveness or reconciliation. It is a massive centrifugal force, which is now seeping down into high schools, especially progressive private schools.

Today’s identity politics has another interesting feature: it teaches students to think in a way antithetical to what a liberal arts education should do. When I was at Yale in the 1980s, I was given so many tools for understanding the world. By the time I graduated, I could think about things as a Utilitarian or a Kantian, as a Freudian or a behaviorist,

as a computer scientist or a humanist. I was given many lenses to apply to any one situation. But nowadays, students who major in departments that prioritize social justice over the disinterested pursuit of truth are given just one lens—power—and told to apply it to all situations. Everything is about power. Every situation is to be analyzed in terms of the bad peo-

Today’s identity politics has another interesting feature: it teaches students to think in a way antithetical to what a liberal arts education should do.

ple acting to preserve their power and privilege over the good people. This is not an education. This is induction into a cult, a fundamentalist religion, a paranoid worldview that separates people from each other and sends them down the road to alienation, anxiety, and intellectual impotence.

Here is how one young queer activist described the cult. The essay is titled “Everything is Problematic: My journey into the center of a dark political world, and how I escaped.” The author identifies four features of the culture: dogmatism, group-think, a crusader mentality, and anti-intellectualism.

Of greatest relevance to our exploration of tribalism, he writes: “Thinking this way quickly divides the world into an ingroup and an outgroup—believers and heathens, the righteous and the wrong-teous... Every minor heresy inches you further away from the group. When I was part of groups like this, everyone was on exactly the same page about a suspiciously large range of issues. Internal disagreement was rare.”

Can you imagine a culture that is more antithetical to the mission of a university? Can you believe that many universities offer dozens of courses that promote this way of thinking? Some are even requiring that all students take such a course.

Let us return to Jefferson’s vision: “For here we are not afraid to follow the truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate any error as long as reason is left free to combat it.” If Jefferson were to return today and tour our nation’s top universities, he would be shocked at the culture of fear, the prevalence of unchallenged error, and the shackles placed on reason.

Now that I have thoroughly depressed you, let me end with a few rays of hope and some thoughts about what can be done.



I began this lecture with a discussion of the fine-tuned liberal democracy, which is the hypothesis that human beings are unsuited for life in large diverse secular democracies, *unless* we can get certain settings finely adjusted. I think this hypothesis is true, and I have tried to show that we have stumbled into some very bad settings. I am pessimistic about our future, but let me state clearly that *I have low confidence in my pessimism*. It has *always* been wrong to bet against America, and it is probably wrong to do so now. My libertarian friends constantly remind me that people are resourceful; when

problems get more severe, people get more inventive, and that might be happening to us right now. If you want hope, you need only put this quotation up on your bathroom mirror: “We cannot absolutely prove that those are in error who tell us that society has reached a turning point, that we have seen our best days. But so said all before us, and with just as much apparent reason... On what principle is it that, when we see nothing but improvement behind us, we are to expect nothing but deterioration before us?”

That was written by the British historian Thomas Babington Macauley in

1830. It is probably still true today. And if you want more hope, let me tell you why I think things are going to start to improve on university campuses, beginning in the fall of 2018: because as things get worse on campus, more people are beginning to stand up, and more people are searching for solutions. Some college presidents are starting to stand up. They all know they are sitting on a powder keg, and they want to defuse it. Also, they are generally liberal scholars, deeply opposed to illiberalism. Carol Christ, the new chancellor of U.C. Berkeley, is clearly mortified by what happened to her school’s reputation last



spring, and she has taken a very strong and public stand, saying that U.C. Berkeley supports freedom of speech and will pay to protect speakers. Robert Zimmer, the president of the University of Chicago, has been consistently excellent. I have spoken with several other college presidents who would like to stand up publicly but still feel that the illiberal factions on their campuses are too strong. But if a few more presidents stand up, and if applications to schools like the University of Chicago surge this year, then I think we'll see the floodgates open, possibly next fall.

Professors are starting to stand up, too. At Heterodox Academy, we started with 25 members two years ago; now we have over 1,400, evenly balanced between Left and Right. We got a big surge of members after the violence at Middlebury because that was a tipping point. Professors

To play with another person, you must pay attention to the other person's needs, not just your own, or the other person will quit.

are overwhelmingly on the left, but they are mostly liberal Left, not illiberal. My field—social psychology—for example, is quite sane. I have been raising the alarm about political imbalance and orthodoxy since 2011, and so far nothing bad has happened to me. I have not been ostracized. The problem on campus—the intense illiberalism—is concentrated in a few departments that are committed to political activism. When you look at who signs the petitions denouncing professors for what they've written, or demanding that journal articles be retracted, it is mostly professors from about seven departments in the humanities and identity studies. Few professors dared risk the ire of this illiberal Left back in 2015,

but with each new witch hunt, each aggressive shout-down, more members of the liberal Left are willing to stand up and say: enough is enough. This is contrary to my values.

And most importantly, some students are beginning to stand up. At Reed College, one of the most politically orthodox schools in the country, social-justice activists had been protesting and disrupting the first-year humanities course for more than a year. They called the course an act of white supremacy because it focused on dead white authors. They said the course was traumatizing to non-white students. They brought their signs and chants into the classroom every day, making it hard for professors to teach or for students to learn. Many Reed students and professors objected, but none dared to do so publicly, lest they be called racist themselves. Finally, this fall, several Asian students stood up, criticized the protesters, and asked

them to stop interfering with their education. Once these students stood up, support for the protesters collapsed. Many people had been going along out of fear, rather than conviction.

At Heterodox Academy, we're tracking these trends very closely, and we are putting out ideas and tools that help people stand up for viewpoint diversity and open inquiry. We've created a guide to colleges to steer applicants toward the schools that offer more viewpoint diversity. We've created an online survey that schools can use to assess the level of orthodoxy and fear on campus, or in any classroom. And most importantly, we've created the OpenMind app. It's a self-guided app that teaches students about the value of viewpoint diversity and then trains them to engage with people who don't share their values. We have many more initiatives planned for 2018.

I also want to call your attention to someone else who is searching for a solution: Lenore Skenazy has been sounding the alarm about what happens to kids when we raise them like veal, protecting them from everything including emotional harm. Answer: they ask to be protected in college, too. They expect that college will

be a giant safe space, and that there will always be a designated adult to resolve their conflicts. Lenore has so many ideas for how to restore childhood to children—to give them the unsupervised time they need to become autonomous, self-supervising adults. With seed money from Daniel Shuchman, she has started a nonprofit called LetGrow.org. I serve on the board, along with Peter Gray, from Boston College. One of the reasons LetGrow is so important, and the reason I mention it now, is that unsupervised free play turns out to be crucial for the development of democratic citizenship. I just want to read you a few sentences from one of Gray's articles on the importance of unsupervised free play:

To play with another person, you must pay attention to the other person's needs, not just your own, or the other person will quit. You must overcome narcissism. You must learn to negotiate in ways that respect the other person's ideas, not just yours. [Gray goes on to describe the way that kids learn about rules, when adults are not present.] They learn in this way that rules are not fixed by heaven, but are human contrivances to make life

more fun and fair. This is an important lesson; it is a cornerstone of democracy.

So please do not despair. Be alarmed—the situation is truly alarming. But most Americans are decent, thoughtful people who don't want to give up on their country or its universities. There are many things we can do to reduce tribalism, strengthen our kids, and repair our universities. We—the baby boomers and gen-Xers who fill this room—we have made a mess of the clock. Left and Right, Republicans and Democrats. But we can make up for it if we can come together, admit that we messed up, and change what we are doing to kids, and to college students. We just might be able to raise a generation of kids who can care for the clock after all. ■



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This essay is an edited version of his Wriston Lecture for the Manhattan Institute, delivered on November 15, 2018.



THE RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY

by Ben Shapiro

In July 2017, Pew Research did a poll. Sixty-eight per cent of Democrats said it was “stressful and frustrating” to talk to political opponents; 52 per cent of Republicans agreed.

This isn’t just a matter of partisanship. We don’t trust each other: as of 2015, only 52 per cent of America said they trusted most or all of their neighbours. And we don’t trust our democracy: as of October 2016, 40 per cent of Americans said they

had “lost faith in American democracy,” and another six per cent said they never had faith to begin with. We fight with each other over everything: football, chicken sandwiches, shoes.

So, what’s going on? Simply put, we don’t have anything in common anymore. We don’t share a common belief system, a common sense of purpose. We used to. We used to believe in something called “Western civilization.”

So, what’s going on? Simply put, we don’t have anything in common anymore. We don’t share a common belief system, a common sense of purpose. We used to. We used to believe in something called “Western civilization.”

Western civilization was built on two fundamental pillars: Jerusalem and Athens. Jerusalem represents the Judeo-Christian religious values by which we form families and communities;

Athens represents the Greek reason we use to investigate and explore the world. Western civilization is the only civilization that has balanced a belief in religious meaning and a belief in human reason. Those two ideas exist in tension. But that tension built our world.

Judeo-Christian religion is foundational to our civilization. Judeo-Christian religion posits that there are certain fundamental truths handed down to us by God – truths that aren’t logically provable, but are vital for

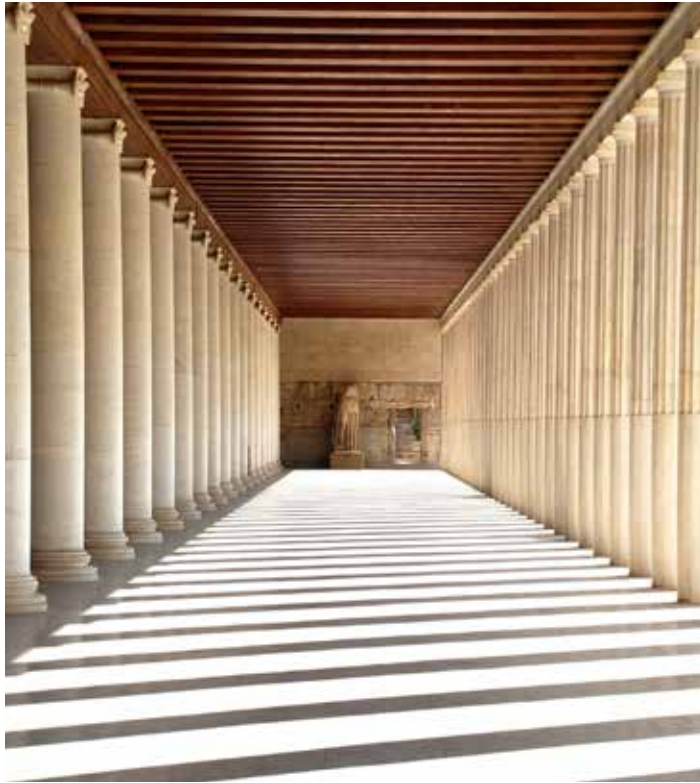
building a functioning civilization and a happy life. Those truths seem simple and obvious, but they’re not. For brevity, we can boil those truths down to four simple principles:

First, Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that a master plan stands behind everything – that the universe is a logical place. Most pagan religions teach otherwise; they assume that the universe is a chaotic place, without logic.

Second, Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that human beings must be moral not

out of subjective feeling but out of a duty to a higher law. This principle is controversial these days; too often, we seem to believe we can create our own morality. We can’t. Human beings, it turns out, are quite willing to change their morals based on convenience. We’re all too willing to crack eggs to make omelettes. A God standing above us doesn’t allow such logic.

Third, Judeo-Christian tradition states that human beings have the capacity and obligation to better their



world – that progress is possible. By positing that history has a direction, Judeo-Christian religion obligates us to try drive progress.

Fourth, Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that every human being is created in the image of God. This seems self-evident. It isn't. For most of human history, virtually every civilization held slaves. Only by recognising God in each other have we moved beyond tribalism toward the individualism that characterises the West – and toward free markets, human rights, and democracy.

But Judeo-Christian religion alone didn't build the West. We also required Greek

Judeo-Christian religion alone didn't build the West. We also required Greek reason to teach us to shoot for the stars – to teach us that man has the capacity to search beyond religious texts for answers.

reason to teach us to shoot for the stars – to teach us that man has the capacity to search beyond religious texts for answers.

Greek reason brought us the notion of the natural law: the idea that we could discover the natural purpose – the telos – of everything in creation by looking to its character. Human beings were created with the unique

capacity to reason; therefore, our telos was to reason. To reason was to become virtuous. By investing reason with so much power, Greek thought became integral to the Western mission: balancing reason and revelation.

By balancing Jerusalem and Athens, the West was built.

Jerusalem and Athens built science. The twin ideals of Judeo-Christian values and Greek natural law reasoning built human rights. They built prosperity, peace, and artistic beauty. Jerusalem and Athens built America – the Founding Fathers rooted their philosophy in Judeo-Christian values and Greek reason. As John Adams wrote, America was founded on “the principles of Aristotle and Plato, of Livy and Cicero, and Sidney, Harrington, and Locke; the principles of nature and eternal reason; the principles on which the whole government over us now stands.”

Those principles ended slavery, defeated the Nazis and the Communists, lifted billions from poverty and gave billions spiritual purpose. Jerusalem and Athens were the foundations of the Magna Carta and the Treaty of Westphalia; they were the foundations of Declaration of Independence, Abraham

THE RIGHT SIDE OF HISTORY



How Reason and Moral Purpose Made the West Great

BEN SHAPIRO

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, and Martin Luther King Jr's Letter from Birmingham Jail.

Civilizations that rejected Jerusalem and Athens, and the tension between them, have collapsed into dust. The USSR rejected Judeo-Christian values and Greek natural law, substituting the values of the collective and a new utopian vision of “social justice” – and they starved and slaughtered tens of millions

of human beings. The Nazis rejected Judeo-Christian values and Greek natural law, and they shoved children into gas chambers. Venezuela rejects Judeo-Christian values and Greek natural law, and citizens of their oil-rich nation have been reduced to eating dogs.

We need both Athens and Jerusalem. Without Judeo-Christian religion, we fall into scientific materialism – the belief that life has no

USSR rejected Judeo-Christian values and Greek natural law, substituting the values of the collective and a new utopian vision of “social justice” – and they starved and slaughtered tens of millions of human beings.

meaning, that we're wandering clusters of cells occupying a rock slowly spinning off into a cold universe. Without Greek reason, we fall into fanaticism – the belief that fundamentalist adherence to unprovable principles represents the only path toward meaning.

We need Jerusalem, and we need Athens.

We can come together again if we rediscover our history – the most glorious ideas ever thought, building the most glorious civilization ever constructed. We can come together again if we recognize that Western civilization is worth understanding, restoring, and fighting for. ■



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OUR PRESENT DISCONTENTS

by Jeremy Black

The constitution changes. That is a lesson of British history that opponents of the EU referendum appear to find difficult to accept. The cause and process of this change is democratisation, the process by which governments and institutions respond to the fact that we live in a community in which the members have views and expect them to be heeded.

This is not the history of a society in which freedom has been measured out by rulers

deigning to offer politically-appropriate maxims while retaining power, control and authority for themselves. That is true of constitutional change in many other states where government comes first and the people second, but that has not been how the British have seen their history. Instead, in both England and Scotland, a long series of monarchs were overthrown in medieval and early-modern times precisely because they would not

The British emphasis on organic change and on legal process means that Parliament has played a central role in this continuum, but that is as part of a cooperative relationship with democratisation, rather than as a restriction of it.

accept this. That they were overthrown by movements in which nobles played the major role did not make the political consequences and constitutional aftermath

of episodes such as Magna Carta less important.

The determination to keep government and people together and in accord, and to maintain domestic stability and build international strength accordingly focused on the extension of the franchise in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The vote was an expression of the conviction that Parliament must respond to the will of the people, and the vote was the means to ensure that it did so. So also with the successive moves of power and

authority from the House of Lords to the House of Commons. The root point was that the electorate came first.

Far from there being an unchanging constitution somehow breached from 1975 by referendums, there were a number of Representations of the People measures earlier in the 20th century, including a significant Act in 1949. Referendums can therefore be seen as part of a developing continuum of constitutional change designed to enhance representation and strengthen

democratic principles and practice.

The British emphasis on organic change and on legal process means that Parliament has played a central role in this continuum, but that is as part of a cooperative relationship with democratisation, rather than as a restriction of it. In the 2010s, there has come an accentuation of the tension possible in any system of managed, peaceful change. It is easy to present the referendum as the cause of this tension, but there were already multiple

uncertainties on other points. The meaning and consequences of the 2010 election result, and its consequences in terms of coalition government were uncertain. Moreover, Parliament was given an effective veto in the case of the Syria bombing issue, a decision that was completely out of line with the constitutional practice.

Thus, there was already a process of flux prior to the EU referendum, and this was one in which some parliamentarians were keen to increase their consequence, a process also seen with the Commons' Standing Committees. Possibly this was

linked to parliamentarians all being full-time politicians, as opposed to the situation during the Victorian Age.

Eager to assert themselves at the expense of government, it is scarcely surprising that many parliamentarians, notably in the

Those who are damaging the entire political culture, let alone the workings of government and Parliament, are throwing away the legacy of the past and the hope of the future. That cannot be the recourse of patriots.

Lords but also in the Commons, have been hostile to direct democracy. The latter is obviously antithetical to the Lords, which with its unprecedented size, frequent non-attendance, large number of Liberal Democrat members and anti-democratic suppositions, is not only ridiculous but also disturbing. The Commons, however, is not much of an advertisement for representative democracy. Seats that vary greatly in the size of their electorate, a lack of determination to reform this situation, and a willingness of MPs to slight the views of their electors, let alone the



electorate as a whole, create a situation that would lead British observers to question the democratic credentials of a foreign country with such characteristics.

Establishing criteria for direct democracy is not easy, but we have been doing it since 1975, and, hitherto, opponents have lived with decisions they actively campaigned against.

That, indeed, is the nature of democracy: accepting the legitimacy of a victory by the other side. It appears to have been lost since 2016, and this loss has been made worse by the context of condescension – variously political, social, cultural, economic,

and ageist – that has helped poison the atmosphere. We surely cannot be happy with a system of politics in which only results that please us are valid and accepted. Not only does that sap democracy, it also challenges patriotism. In *Britain since the Seventies* (2004), I had a chapter entitled “An Ungovernable People?” Little did I imagine that that epithet should rather be directed to some of our politicians.

In this context, and with the country threatened as it is by a Corbyn victory, the prospect of which troubles many Labour supporters, let alone others, it would be best if we could understand

the challenge posed to our country by the demonising of opponents and the overthrowing of the complex interactions of people, Parliament and government that makes for not only our constitution but our character.

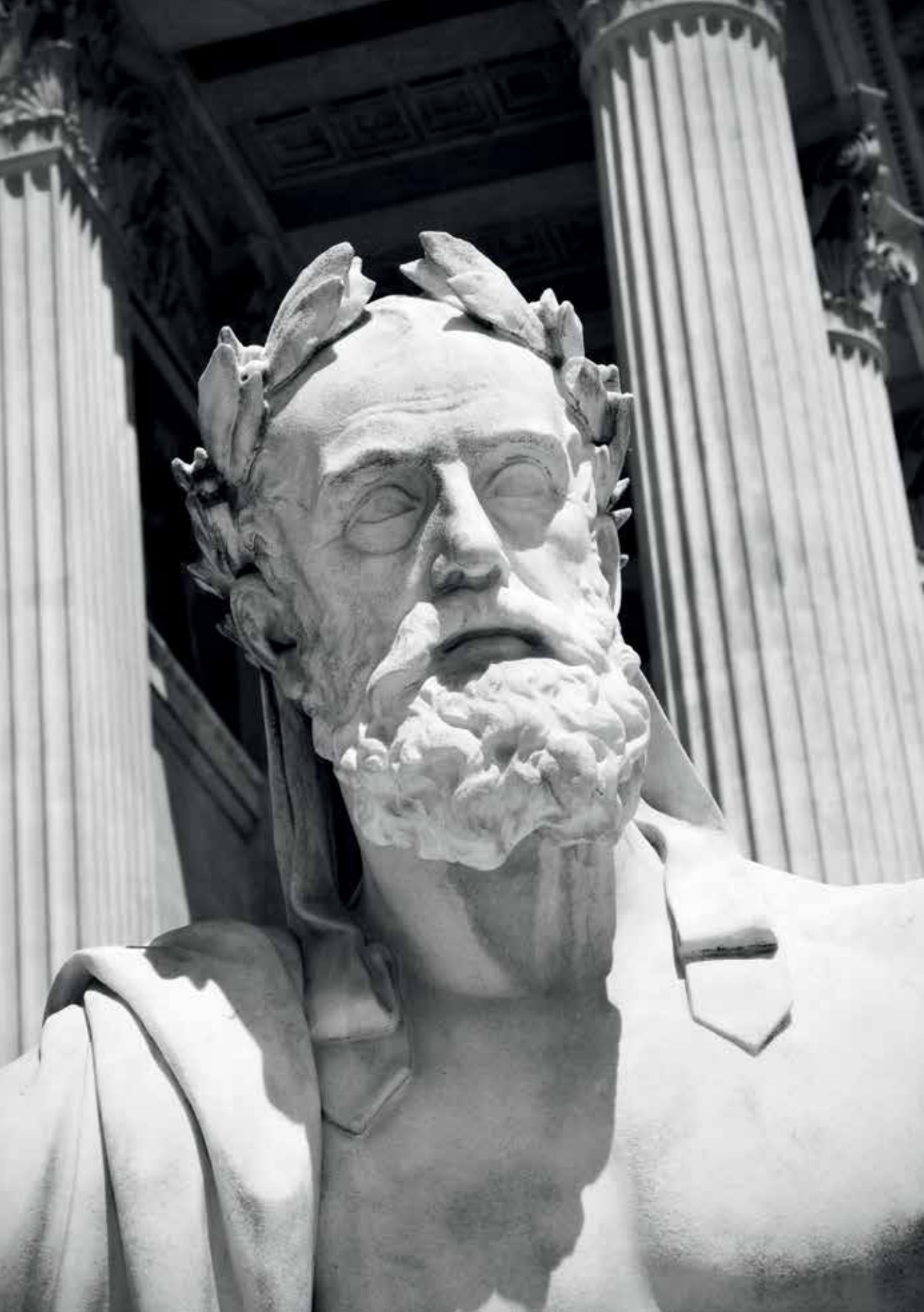
How to achieve democratic reform remains difficult, and possibly more so in the more complex society of the present. British conservatives have long been committed to a political culture of patriotism, opportunity and fairness, one defined by national independence, the rule of law, rights to property, and a government that seeks to foster and further social cohesion, themes eloquently offered by Theresa May when she became Prime Minister. Those who are damaging the entire political culture, let alone the workings of government and Parliament, are throwing away the legacy of the past and the hope of the future. That cannot be the recourse of patriots. ■



Jeremy Black

Jeremy Black's most recent book is *Britain and Europe: A Short History* (Hurst, 2019).





WE CAN CELEBRATE ANY CULTURE – UNLESS IT’S WESTERN

by Alvino-Mario Fantini

In today’s disenchanted and degraded world, to speak publicly of “identity” and the West’s “civilisational inheritance” is openly to court controversy. It’s not only that such terms are considered euphemisms for the “racist” and “oppressive” structures left behind by the “Dead White Males” who dominate the annals of history. It’s also that such concepts are seen as unworthy of serious discussion.

Barring something rather politically innocuous like *Krampusnacht* in Austria or the St Patrick’s Day parade in New York, expressing inordinate pride in the social traditions and cultural inheritance of the West can today be seen as chauvinistic and rather anachronistic.

In fact, as some academics in North America and Europe can attest, the slightest expression of admiration for “Western Civilisation” – understood as the combined legacy of Judeo-Christian revelation, Greek philosophy and Roman law – can trigger a swift response on the part of the “guardians of [progressive] orthodoxy”.

No violation is too small for them to notice.

Yet, at the same time, liberal elites talk openly of the “civilisational inheritance” of the “autochthonous peoples” of the Global South. It seems preserving and safeguarding cultural identity is perfectly acceptable – as long as it’s of non-oppressive non-Western cultures and civilisations. Its visual shorthand is the African masks, Asian ceramics, and Persian carpets in the homes of its prosperous proponents.

So why should the West’s own civilisational inheritance be the object of opprobrium? Why should one be expected to fawn over the ruins of Angkor Wat or Chichen Itza, but ignore the primacy – perhaps the preeminence – of a tradition that encompasses cathedrals in England and castles in Spain, Florentine manuscripts and German liturgical hymns, epic poems of Portuguese maritime bravery and master paintings of Polish military triumphs?

That inheritance – which transcends ethnicity, gender, language, and race – represents an intricate

The slightest expression of admiration for “Western Civilisation” – understood as the combined legacy of Judeo-Christian revelation, Greek philosophy and Roman law – can trigger a swift response on the part of the “guardians of [progressive] orthodoxy”.

embroidery formed over several millennia. It determines *our identity*, as well as our duties and obligations.

This identity – as *stewards* of European civilization – should be a source of pride. But, instead, our elites have cajoled us into believing that it should be a source of shame.

We are today obliged to be *tolerant* of adversarial beliefs to the point of self-abnegation and *open to others* to the point of personal dissolution. We are asked to move beyond old-fashioned parochial interests and outdated provincial concerns, and to be instead “citizens of the world”.

Inspired by such global pretensions, today’s “social justice warriors” have actively sought ways to demolish “Western Civ”. Seeking greater influence in academe,



the boardroom, and the mass media, and benefiting from the coercive powers of the state, they have pursued an abstract multicultural ideal.

In the process, they have sought more explicit recognition of historical grievances – and have lobbied for reparations for the sins committed by the ancestors of today's spineless oligarchies and elites.

It's worth noting an apparent paradox: at the same time that activists have sought to destroy the Judeo-Christian West because of its contentious legacy, they have sought – in their own advocacy on behalf of the *victims* of that legacy – to promote new rigid ethnic, racial, and sexual categories.

This is the hypocritical core of today's politics of identity. And the great act of injustice on the part of its proponents is that they react only to the outrages they *choose* to recognise.

This selective, reactionary identity politics occurs on the extreme Right as well.

But whether on the Left or the Right, those enthralled by identity politics are really in thrall of a *politics of misanthropy*. In their descent into tribalism and ideology, they have lost sight of a bigger civilisational picture around which we really should rally.

The way forward will depend very much on the categories and criteria used to determine Western identity. If that identity is based solely on materialistic aspects – such as the biological, economic, or sociological – then the result will too easily lead to the elimination of natural distinctions and the imposition of an artificial unity or “oneness”. Such reductionism is, according to the now forgotten Austrian thinker, Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, precisely what characterises Leftism. It leads to nihilism – and, left unchecked, in the past has given rise to the political death cults of Lenin, Hitler, and Pol Pot.

If, however, we were to

It is time we proudly reclaimed our inheritance, without fear of retribution or shame.

instead conceive identity as something based on more abstract factors – such as shared values and common beliefs – then not only could the unique civilisational inheritance of the West be restored, but the racist nonsense of the extremes might be attenuated.

It is time we proudly reclaimed our inheritance, without fear of retribution or shame. Its story, to paraphrase the American thinker Russell Kirk, is the story of Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome. If we were to again hew faithfully to this tradition, not only will we remember who we are but we will recognise the exceptional richness, power, and majesty of that tradition. The West is the basis of our identity and the source of our strength. Anything else is a distraction. ■



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TEMPTING RECIPES FOR VENEZUELA, BRAZIL, CALIFORNIA AND HIGH-STREET TAKEAWAYS

by Kristian Niemietz

Socialists have an amazing ability to cling to power against all the odds. That's why I'm not going to make a fool of myself by trying to predict what the situation in Venezuela will be like by the time this article is published. But let's just say that unlike previous anti-Chávez or anti-Maduro protests, this time, Venezuela has a much more united opposition. Their recently published joint declaration *Plan Pais: La Venezuela Que Viene* (“Plan Country: The Venezuela That's Coming”) is a first draft of what a post-socialist Venezuela could look like.

Pulling no punches, they describe Venezuela as a “failed state”, and put the blame squarely on Chávez's and Maduro's “Socialism of the 21st century”. They plan to “lift the system of controls that suffocates national production, [and] rebuild an independent judicial system which guarantees private property and the rule of law”. They reaffirm their



“Any new Venezuelan government would start from a terrible position. The economy has shrunk by half over the past five years. The currency is worthless. Shortages of food, medicines and other essentials are endemic.”

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commitment to a market-based economy.

Any new Venezuelan government would start from a terrible position. The economy has shrunk by half over the past five years. The currency is worthless. Shortages of food, medicines and other essentials are endemic. And yet: if the opposition gets a chance to put that programme into action, the worst aspects of Venezuela's crisis could be overcome quite quickly. Hyperinflations have been solved before. The most famous historical example is the Weimar Republic, where, once the political will was there, the problem was ultimately sorted out within a few weeks. If price controls and exchange rate controls were ended, supermarket shelves could fill again overnight.

Not since the election of Donald Trump has there been a social media hysteria comparable to what happened when Jair Bolsonaro became president of Brazil.



And indeed: you do not have to be a “social justice warrior” to take issue with a lot of the things Bolsonaro says. But Bolsonaro’s victory was not the whole story of the election. Two liberal, pro-market parties, Novo and the Democrats, have also done unexpectedly well, leaving them potentially strong enough to tip the scales. And they may have a natural ally in Bolsonaro’s main economic advisor, Paulo Guedes, who has been dubbed “Brazil’s Chicago Boy”. Guedes wants to make Brazil more open to international trade, simplify its tax code, privatise state assets and cut public spending.

Capital controls and exchange rate controls have been relaxed, the economy has been opened up a bit to international trade, and legal protections for private investors have been improved.

His main priority for now, however, is pension reform, and that will probably be his acid test. Brazil has one of the most expensive pension systems in the world, due to a low retirement age, generous special favours, and rapid demographic change. The last government had already tried to get a grip on the situation. They started promisingly, but ultimately ran out of steam.

Success in this area would not improve the Bolsonaro government’s image in the West, but it would do wonders for Brazil’s public finances.

The state of California suffers from housing affordability problems about as bad as Britain’s. Like in Britain, this is explained by a combination of restrictive planning laws, and a well-organised “Nimby” lobby.

And yet, at least one city now wants to buck the trend. The Mayor of San Diego, Kevin Faulconer, recently announced that he wants to remove maximum building heights and density limits in most places. This would

represent a substantial liberalisation of the city’s zoning code.

Regions with major housing shortages usually have high levels of pent-up demand, which is why one city can only make so much of a difference. The additional homes may simply get snatched up by people from the surrounding towns, which maintain their building restrictions. San Diego, however, is a large enough place. Hopefully, it will become the spearhead of a wider “Yimby” (Yes In My Back Yard) movement.

Even in Nimbyish Britain, planning rules are going to be relaxed a little

bit. More precisely, high-street premises used as takeaway restaurants will soon automatically get planning permission for conversion to residential use. Betting shops and payday lenders will get automatic planning permission for conversion into office space.

This does not exactly sound like a free market revolution; it sounds more like a minor technical change in urban planning. But it could have wider implications. These days, politicians often feel the need to signal their commitment to “saving” the high street. This is giving birth to Luddite policy

prescriptions, such as new taxes specifically designed to penalise online retailers.

However, online retail, entertainment and delivery services are now a part of life for most of us. It makes no sense to try to preserve the retail infrastructure we have inherited from the pre-internet age. Making conversions easier is a market-driven regeneration strategy. It allows high street premises to be put to other uses without politicians meddling with it.

Finally, some good news is coming from an unexpected place: Uzbekistan. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan was one of the countries that strayed least far from the inherited socialist economic model. As a result, they stayed poor, while other parts of the region took off economically.

This is now, belatedly, starting to change a little. Capital controls and exchange rate controls have been relaxed, the economy has been opened up a bit to international trade, and legal protections for private investors have been improved. On the Heritage Foundation’s Index of Economic Freedom, the country’s score has increased from 46 points (out of 100) to 53.

One of the last strongholds of Leninism is finally abandoning that legacy. ■



THE DANGEROUS GROUP-THINK OF THE RIGHT

by Bill Wirtz

A Twitter user accused me of being a “privileged straight white cis-gendered man”, in response to an argument about economics. I’m disillusioned. I’m used to *ad hominem* attacks, but they used to be about my looks, the fact that I don’t go to the gym or my way of speaking. Over the last five years, we’ve seen a massive shift towards an ideology that happily puts people in groups.

The line of argument is fairly easy to grasp: do you

oppose tuition-free higher education? It must be because you’re from the privileged upper class. Do you think it is legitimate that a comedian makes jokes about gay people? It must be because you’re heterosexual. While *ad hominem* was previously a last resort argument, this ideology makes it the key point of the rebuttal. In essence it means that the more you belong to an imagined victimised class, the more say you get.

Do you think it is legitimate that a comedian makes jokes about gay people? It must be because you’re heterosexual.

This philosophy doesn’t only state that you can identify with a group, but that identifying with a group is not a choice. You and all of your actions are inherently related to the collective judgment of your group. If white people are racist, then so are you if you are white. Therefore, your existence should be

spent on rectifying this social injustice, by wholeheartedly agreeing with the policies suggested by social justice activists. Such a movement is naturally set out to lead to discrimination based on arbitrary principles.

When Martin Luther King Jr said “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character”, he surely didn’t mean to add: “And in order to achieve that, we need to demonise another group of people by the colour of their skin instead of by the content of their character.”

The race question hasn’t been as pronounced in Europe as it has been in United States. Despite some radical feminists being just as unpleasant as their American counterparts, they remain an insignificant portion of society.

Loud protests in the UK, school blockades in France: these aren’t new phenomena. Every decade has had its set of irritating people. Although we’ve left the German Red Army Faction, the IRA bombings, and the Red Brigades in Italy behind us, our century has started off as much more irritating than the previous one.

Intersectionality as an ideology is certainly unsettling, but to most people it remains what it really is: loud, intolerant, and a youth trend.

But as a reaction to this ideology, a number of people on the Right have resorted back to their own identity politics. It turns out that if the Left screams “your whiteness defines you” long enough, there will eventually be those on the identitarian side of the aisle who’ll take them at their word. Slogans

Conservatives should be cautioned not to feel bitter, or even victimised themselves when opposing Left-wing identity politics. Instead, conservatives should turn to classical liberalism and individualism for the answer.

and names such as “White Pride” follow. The identitarian movement in Europe is most emblematic of this: everything is hip and fresh, ranging from the websites to the banners, the music in their videos and the style of their activists. No skinheads or tattoos. On the contrary: The modern identitarian wears fancy sunglasses and dresses to the point where it’s tough to say who just shopped at Calvin Klein and who thinks Europe is being

overrun by Muslims. The identitarians’ online merchandise features everything from polo shirts to stickers asking to people to “Defend Europe” against the “invasion”. The movement shows off a lot of female faces, by featuring gender-balanced videos and putting women in the first row in their protests. The goal is to break with the burden of old European neo-Nazi parties, which are heavily male and unattractive to (at least) half the population.

Right-wing identity politics may be evolving, but just like its Left-wing counterpart, it offers destruction instead of solutions.

The argument of division of the rich versus the poor, or the victims versus the victimised, has been the theme of destruction during the 20th century. One hundred million people were killed by socialism in the last century. It was nationalism that caused the First World War, which killed almost 20 million people, and a mix of fascism and racism led to the Second World War, which killed around 80 million people. Swinging the pendulum Left and Right on identity politics is a dangerous game that will be paid by the lives of the innocent.



Conservatives should be cautioned not to feel bitter, or even victimised themselves when opposing Left-wing identity politics. Instead, conservatives should turn to classical liberalism and individualism for the answer. Telling a bystander that they are themselves responsible for their own actions, and in charge of their own destiny is not only appealing to them, it's also true.

People are individuals no matter what. This doesn't mean that you cannot feel close to your family, your traditions, your nationality, or your ethnic background, and neither would an individualist deny the good actions performed by a certain group. What it does imply that you cannot judge

If we turn our back on justice as a notion of the protection of the rights of the individual, it risks falling into the hands of identity politics advocates.

people on the basis of a group membership, particularly if it is as arbitrary as sex or race. This goes as well for the majority group as for the minority group. There should never be such a thing as "social justice", as it is defined by the political Left these days. If we turn our back on justice as a notion of the protection of the rights of the individual, it risks falling into the hands of identity politics advocates. And just as the courts of fascist states were a judicial joke and a danger to

humanity, so they will be if they turn Left.

So a Twitter user accuses me of being a "privileged straight white cis-gendered man", in response to an argument about economics.

I don't care. I get back to the core of the argument. ■



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HOW TO BE A CONSERVATIVE IN A POPULIST AGE

by Daniele Capezzone

It's time to confess our intellectual sins: whenever reality and electors smash the mandarins of political correctness, the priestly caste of the "experts", the old mummies of the mainstream media (the same ones who failed to understand the main events of the last two years, but who still presume they can "explain" everything), many of us feel satisfied and even amused.

OK, it's a sort of *schadenfreude*: they have been lecturing and patronising us for years. And now, every single day, all over Europe, and from South America to North America, they are forced to experience public humiliation from different (but equally powerful) populist and sovereignist forces.

And they deserve this fate: the more they showed off their culture, their assumed "empathy", the less they were able to use these tools to understand what was happening around them. The needs (not only the "rage") of a new lower middle class whose fears and reasons and emotions had been too long kept out of the

official agenda. And so, every election, all over the world, has become a popular opportunity to take revenge against the political and intellectual establishment.

But now for us – as conservatives, as Atlanticists, as free marketeers – the time has come to turn over a new leaf. This kind of satisfaction for someone else's misfortune can't be enough.

And while we can certainly share the disruptive part (*pars destruens*) of the populist agenda, on the other hand we should do our best to propose something positive (*pars construens*), something we can build on, a cultural compass. And – in a way – this could be useful also for the populist forces: if you have to scream, being an amateur is an asset, but once you have to make decisions, it turns out to be a liability.

On the one hand, we should keep at a distance from those who are only interested in bitterly attacking and putting the blame on the populist leaders. This is really depressing. Every

Now for us – as conservatives, as Atlanticists, as free marketeers – the time has come to turn over a new leaf. This kind of satisfaction for someone else's misfortune can't be enough.

single day, you can see many European Right-wing and Left-wing political figures go hand in hand, only interested in making fun of the electors, without asking themselves what is really happening. And without realizing that they are part of the problem: that is to say that their love for the *status quo*, their inability to put things in the right context, has been the natural ally of the rise of their foes.

On the other hand, we must find (or invent) room for a positive and optimistic vision. Apart from anger and fear (which are already "occupied"), is there a space of hope and reasoning that a new generation of conservative leaders might fit into? We know that the conservative culture has concrete proposals, good data, excellent platforms, but we know even better that politics is about emotions as much as it is about ideas.



We need a new narrative; we need a new (and surprising, if possible) media strategy; we need an injection of courage and boldness (Erasmus of Rotterdam, please, provide us with some “reasonable folly”!); and, above all, we need to find a third way (it is a charade, I know: but it is our charade) between appearing as a part of the old establishment and being only spectators of someone else’s political leadership.

The whole Western world is in turmoil. We are leaving a known dimension, and

We need a new narrative; we need a new media strategy; we need an injection of courage and boldness; and, above all, we need to find a third way between appearing as a part of the old establishment and being only spectators of someone else’s political leadership.

entering an unknown one. But we cannot prevent ourselves from the intellectual challenge of a “factual” political offer, of electoral campaigns designed not only to “go to war” but also to reach out to swing electors who

may be convinced through reasoning and a nuanced political offer. There might be life beyond “identity politics”.

If we fail to do so, we will lose an opportunity, and we won’t be of any help to the possible evolution of several protest movements. They have been making the most of a “perfect” (that is to say: disgraceful) environment in the EU. Consider the following factors: an immigration crisis which the Brussels bureaucrats have not been able to handle properly; a deep economic

crisis, with a collapsing and expensive welfare system and the living standards of the middle class that have been stagnating for years already; a weak institutional architecture; the EU itself, seen (unfortunately, it’s true!) as a sort of economic “cage”; and, at the door, Mr Putin’s authoritarian model offered as an “appealing alternative” (don’t forget that Russian propaganda and the European leaders’ weakness go hand in hand). Populist leaders can very easily build on these factors. They might even go

on holiday, and once a day send a tweet, a note, and a 15-second tv interview.

It’s up to us to offer once again some proper conservative tools: first of all, to reach out to and keep in touch with the electors who have made a populist choice. The present situation is testing the limits of modern democracy. And this happens in a Continent, as Europe is, where institutions are weak, where the political system is fragmented, and where – as history tells us – democracy is not the default setting for governance. ■

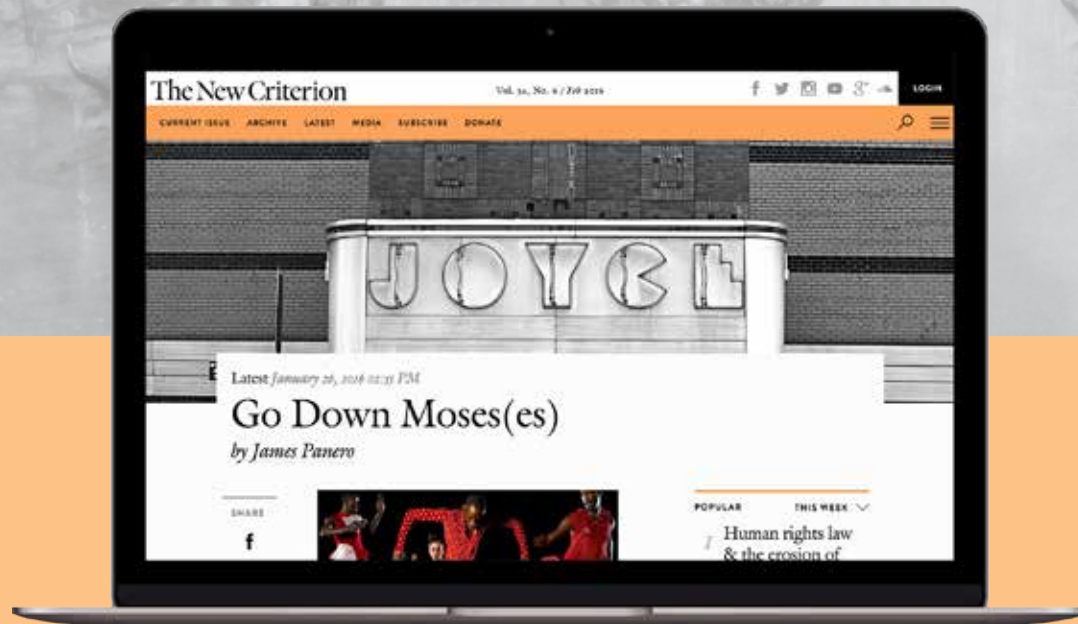


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ALL GREAT COMPOSERES ARE GUILTY OF CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

by Jay Nordlinger



“The best musicians are cosmopolitan, or at least unconfined to the national and particular.”

Jay Nordlinger

is a senior editor of *National Review* and the music critic of *The New Criterion*. He is the author of *Peace, They Say: A History of the Nobel Peace Prize* (Encounter Books). His latest book is a study of the sons and daughters of dictators: *Children of Monsters* (also Encounter). He lives in New York. [@JayNordlinger](https://twitter.com/JayNordlinger)

Identity plays a role in music, as it plays a role in life. Some music is universal. Some music is more national and particular. Even some of *that* music is universal. Who doesn't like a good Slavonic Dance, for example?

The Czech Philharmonic played two of them as encores in New York's Carnegie Hall. They are by Dvořák, the Czech Republic's most prized composer. The Philharmonic was marking the hundredth anniversary of Czech independence. The concert was all-Dvořák, featuring his Cello Concerto and his Symphony No 7.

Are those works Czech? They have ethnic or national elements, to be sure, but they are also music, plain and simple (and glorious).

The next day, once more in Carnegie Hall, the Philharmonic played a single work: Mahler's Symphony No 2, the "Resurrection." Nothing Czech about that, right? Well, let me tell you a story.

A friend of mine, a conductor, was being interviewed on the radio in Prague. He mentioned the Big Three Czech composers: Dvořák, Smetana, and Janáček. The interviewer said, "But there

are four." It turned out that he was including Mahler.

How human it is to want to claim glorious others! To include them in your tribe! Gustav Mahler was born in Bohemia, to be sure, and he spent his first 15 years there. But he belonged to the Jewish, German-speaking minority, and he got to Vienna as fast as he could.

The best musicians are cosmopolitan, or at least unconfined to the national and particular. It was said of Artur Rubinstein, the Polish-Jewish-American pianist, that he was a Frenchman in French music, a Spaniard in Spanish music, a Russian in Russian music, and so on. And it was true. Composers, too, can slip on the skin of other nations.

In *Madama Butterfly*, Puccini is Japanese. He really is. And in *Turandot*, he is Chinese. And in *The Girl of the Golden West*, he is American-ish. His musical sympathy is astounding. Is he guilty of "cultural appropriation"? No, he is guilty of



talent, and an appreciation of the great broad world.

There is ample Spanish music by Albéniz, Granados, Turina – real Spaniards. But you can't leave out the Frenchmen: Chabrier, for example, who wrote *España*, and Bizet, who wrote *Carmen*! Don't forget the Russians either: Rimsky-Korsakov produced *Capriccio espagnol*; Shostakovich produced *Spanish Songs* (a set of six).

Every classical guitarist is a Spaniard, no matter where he was born. That's because the repertoire is dominated by the Spanish. A guitarist acquires a Spanish soul, if he doesn't have one already. A Chinese woman, Xuefei

I have a question of my own: Is the music of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and the rest German music (or Austro-German music)?

Yang, made an album called *40 Degrees North*. The title refers to the line of latitude connecting Madrid and Beijing. Jiji is a (one-named) guitarist from South Korea. When she plays, she's as Spanish as anyone.

Ned Rorem is from Chicago. But when he was a child, Debussy and Ravel rattled his brain, and he has always been a composer with a French mindset. For him, there is no greater work than Ravel's opera, *L'enfant et les*

sortilèges. Ravel, for his part, loved American jazz. The middle movement of his Violin Sonata No 2 is marked "Blues."

Spirituals belong to black America, of course. But Marian Anderson, Leontyne Price, and others made them famous all over the world. They "travel," touching hearts and souls everywhere. George London, the bass-baritone, made an album of them. He was born George Burnstein in Montreal. His parents had immigrated from Russia. He knew that spirituals belonged to him, regardless.

My fellow Americans have always been touchy about their classical music. They feel defensive, in the

face of their older European cousins. This goes way back. A 19th-century American composer, George Frederick Bristow, had a famous fight with the New York Philharmonic Society. The society was too German-minded, he said. He had a question, a rhetorical zinger: "Is there a Philharmonic in *Germany* for the encouragement of *American* music?"

I have a question of my own: Is the music of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and the rest German music (or Austro-German music)? You will find native dances and

the like in it. Still, for most of us, it is simply music, I think.

It has long amused me that many Americans who otherwise would have no use for nationalism whatsoever, in any form, get all blood-and-soil when it comes to music. They demand the programming and championing of American music. It is a patriotic duty, they practically say.

One of my heroes in life is Edward MacDowell, the American composer who lived from 1860 to 1908. An organization wanted to

When asked, with a gun to my head, to name my top ten operas, I always include *Porgy and Bess* (Gershwin). It's an American thing. I had it in my mother's milk. It means the world to me.

include a piece of his in a concert devoted to American music, exclusively. He refused, saying he wanted his music to be judged on the merits, no matter the nationality of the composer.

For my part, Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven – and Ravel, Dvořák, and Shostakovich – mean a lot more to me than, say, Ives, Carter, and my friend MacDowell. And yet, and yet...

When asked, with a gun to my head, to name my top ten operas, I always include *Porgy and Bess* (Gershwin). It's an American thing. I had it in my mother's milk. It means the world to me. And a few summers ago, the Salzburg Festival did something rare: it staged a musical, *West Side Story* (Bernstein). I found myself rather overcome by emotion, embarrassingly. These things are buried deep, and will out.

How fortunate to have the universal, the national or tribal, and the blend of them. ■





THE LEFT OFFERS A RELIGIOUS FERVOUR IN A POST-CHRISTIAN ERA

by Dominic Green

Carlyle called the French Revolution the “third and final act of Protestantism”. After the revolts of Luther and Cromwell, the revolt of Danton and Robespierre was, he thought, the final revelation of “Reality and Fact” in a Europe “perishing of Semblance and Sham”. The old pessimist permitted himself an optimism. The French Revolution should be the last word on this distressing matter, “for lower than that savage *Sansculottism* men cannot go”.

Men proved Carlyle wrong, first by mistaking the sham of Victorian race science for the truth of human nature, and then by falling for the semblance between dictators, both fascist and communist, and the modern Caesar for whose coming Carlyle had longed. Still, Carlyle accurately identified the twin dynamics of post-Christian democracy. The passions of politics were those of religion secularised. In their

“Identity politics” has always been with us. You could argue, and Carlyle did argue, that modern politics was only ever about the collectivising of identity.

heat, they aspire to sacrificial violence. When they cool, they harden into the forms of tyranny.

Burke had drawn similar conclusions about the French Revolution. The 18th century, cognisant of Europe’s wars of religion and the Cromwellian republic,

distrusted “enthusiasm” in religion. The religious enthusiast, fired by the glow of personal conviction, sees the Promised Land from “the Pisgah of his pulpit”. Like Rousseau’s General Will, he yearns to conscript everyone else into the long march. But Burke had also wondered if the “prudent” mind, obliged to choose which “errors and excesses of enthusiasm he would condemn or bear”, might prefer “the superstition which builds to be more tolerable than that which demolishes”.

Merriam-Webster dates the first usage of “identity politics” to 1979. Identity politics is a noun, “plural in form but singular in construction”. Carlyle might have appreciated this emergence of linguistic ideal from organic life, for the factions of identity politics are constructed from singular individuals, electing to take plural form in the combat of politics. But “identity politics” has always been with us. You could argue, and Carlyle did argue, that modern politics was only ever about

the collectivising of identity. And we should admit that we approve of some forms of identity politics.

The modern nation state, a by-blow of the first act of Carlyle’s “Protestant” revolution in spirit, cannot function without a strong collective identity. Neither can an innovation which stirred in the second act of Carlyle’s drama, and was finessed into functional existence by Burke in the third: the political party. The rational actor of classical liberal theory cannot translate his singular



constructions into social facts without collectivising institutions. Conversely, the restrained irrationalist of conservative theory builds his individuality on the foundation of collective origins, language and territory. Nor do you have to be an “intersectionalist” to believe that economic disadvantage and racial inequality can interact and compound each other.

So identity politics has its moderate and radical aspects. Our current problems are those of identity politics in the radical mood that typifies the end of one of Carlyle’s acts – the radical mood that Carlyle called apocalyptic, in the sense of the revelation of a plot point in human history. The racial collectivisation of the late 19th, and the tyrannies

Our current identity politicians claim to be “resisting” the remains or resurgence of fascism and “imperialism”. They do not claim to be resisting the remains of the rival schools of command-economy government, communism and socialism, both of which fostered imperialisms of their own.

of the early 20th century, were the fourth act of modern identity politics. The fifth act, whose climacteric we appear to be witnessing, inverts the categories of the fourth act, especially in substituting racism with “anti-racism”. The real targets of this theatre of virtue, however, are the vestiges of the third act.

The French Revolution led to massacres, dictatorship, and 20 years of war. This proof of the dangers of enthusiasm commended the alternatives: liberal democracy, free markets, free actors. These were the common enemies of the fascist *falange* and communist cadre. They remain the common enemies of the legions of identity politics.

Our current identity politicians claim to be “resisting” the remains or resurgence of fascism and “imperialism”. They do not claim to be resisting the remains of the rival schools of command-economy government, communism and socialism, both of which fostered imperialisms of their own. This selective model betrays modern identity politicians as the

inheritors of the old revolutionary Left. Disgraced by the reality of Soviet and Chinese communism, and rejected at the ballot box by the workers of the West, the revolutionary Left retreated in the 1950s to the natural home of failed ideas, the university. There, the old ideology of class war was refurbished in the rhetorics of race and sex, then repackaged as “social justice”.

The community of virtue, a familiar phenomenon of “Protestant” politics since Calvin’s Geneva, is what Burke would have called a “faction”, a collective device for dissension and the disbursement of government patronage. The faction of identity politics is a twisted reflection of liberal democratic politics. The family resemblance is close enough to make identity politics the natural partner of government.

This is not the only way in which government and its purported enemies are working partners. Only government, whether by legal coercion or explicit force, can dispense justice to society, either in its collective sense or as an aggregation of individuals. And while the disbursement of justice to preserve the equality of individuals is slow and difficult, the adjustment of “equity” between collectives

is a powerful vote-winner. Whether politicians believe in the rules of identity politics or not, they play the identity game in the hope of permanently securing the votes of ethnic or racial minorities, and of assembling them into a “rainbow coalition” of the disgruntled.

All this explains why the radicalism of current identity politics is what we now call an “elite” affair, and why the victims and consequences of #MeToo have been restricted to the elite spheres of education, government and media. The universities train the agitators of today, so that they will become the bureaucratic administrators and “community” representatives of tomorrow; two small groups, and neither democratically representative of their publics. The media draw their staff from the same universities, and volunteer as a supplementary bureaucracy, educating the non-specialist public in the ideological requirements of the patronage system. The government, as a patronage system, needs the universities as a source of patrons and the media as an ideological intermediary. While the intersectionality of the institutions of education, media and government creates mutually advantageous patronage systems, the rest of

The community of virtue, a familiar phenomenon of “Protestant” politics since Calvin’s Geneva, is what Burke would have called a “faction”, a collective device for dissension and the disbursement of government patronage.

us are merely patronised.

Identity politics, therefore, is a rhetoric of government, perpetually striving to make itself a principle of human relations. It is to modern technocracy as Latin was to the mediaeval Papacy, and the insistence that everyone has to have a political life is to us. The Burkeian defense, a studied inauthenticity that choose the “superstition that builds” over the one that destroys, cannot inoculate against the desire to choose the superstition that gratifies by destroying. And so each age must refight the wars of enthusiasm and faction. ■



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THE CREEPY ORCHESTRAL NOTE STRUCK BY THE SNP

by Damian Thompson

The Scotsman reports that Glasgow's Celtic Connections festival has been awarded £100,000 by the Scottish government "to create a new body of orchestral work inspired by the Declaration of Arbroath. Eight of the nation's leading folk, jazz and classical musicians will be charged with composing new pieces which will be premiered together months before the 700th anniversary of the signing of the document next year. It is hope [sic] the project will inspire a new generation of composers to emerge and create 'extraordinary symphonic pieces with a Scottish voice that is not patronising or backward'."

The Declaration of Arbroath was a letter written in 1320 by Scottish magnates to Pope John XXII, who had recognised England's feudal overlordship of Scotland. That might seem none of the Pope's business, but he'd been wickedly provoked. In 1306, Robert the Bruce stabbed to death his rival John Comyn in front of the altar of Greyfriars Church in Dumfries. For this



“The Scottish government isn't demanding that the Celtic Connections composers set its propaganda to music. Nor does it have a taste for genocide, though I suspect that an independent SNP-ruled Scotland would be a creepy place.”

Damian Thompson
is an Associate Editor at The Spectator and Editorial director at the Catholic Herald.
[@holysmoke](#)

he was excommunicated. The nobles wanted the penalty lifted and Robert recognised as king, on the grounds that Scotland was a free and independent kingdom.

The BBC History website tells us that the Declaration of Arbroath was "a prototype of contractual kingship" and that the American Declaration of Independence was "partially based on it". Both claims are strongly disputed by scholars. But that doesn't trouble the SNP, which likes its nationalist history neat, with not even a wee drap of ambiguity.

The composers will be given "complete freedom", says the festival. For some reason this prompted me to listen to Prokofiev's *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution*. It was about as much fun as the title suggests, written in a spirit of sycophantic terror by an almost-great composer who chose to end his exile in America and live in Stalin's Russia. His cantata didn't protect him from persecution, but it's hard to feel sorry for him.

I'm toying with an extreme analogy here, so I'd better be careful. The Scottish government isn't demanding that the Celtic Connections composers set its propaganda to music. Nor does it have a taste for



genocide, though I suspect that an independent SNP-ruled Scotland would be a creepy place.

But let's take a look at what Donald Shaw, creative producer of Celtic Connections, has to say: "It's very strange that a country like Scotland, which absolutely has its own musical identity, hasn't had big symphonic pieces rooted in the folk tradition like those from Bartók, Shostakovich and Stravinsky. This project is a declaration of intent to grasp the thistle and give a sense of confidence to orchestral works from Scottish composers. It's about freedom, exploration and intent."

None of this rings true. Which big pieces "rooted in the folk tradition" does Shaw have in mind? Shostakovich was inspired by Jewish, not Russian, folk music. Stravinsky despaired of composers trapped by their national idiom. Which leaves Bartók, whose music, even at its most inaccessible, speaks with a Hungarian accent. But it's rooted in the Western musical canon, not "the folk tradition". And although Bartók was a pioneer ethnomusicologist, he collected more Romanian and Slovakian tunes than Hungarian ones.

I suspect what Shaw means – and wants – is nationalist music. That describes Bartók's early symphonic poem *Kossuth*,

written when Hungary was a Habsburg kingdom – but it sounds more like gypsified Richard Strauss than mature Bartók. Stravinsky wrote none. And Shostakovich's nationalist music, like Prokofiev's, is state-commissioned propaganda.

Maybe there is something in my analogy. Scottish nationalists still worship the poet Hugh MacDiarmid, whose own household god was Stalin.

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The Celtic Connections festival, though lively, is creeping ever closer to Scotland's nationalist government. Check out Donald Shaw's Twitter profile, full of SNP ranting and boasting: he may not know much about classical music, but he could give Prokofiev lessons in toadying to political masters.

I said that none of Shaw's statement rings true, but notice that it twice uses the word "intent", which is hard to square with its talk of "complete freedom". Will the composers be free to challenge the mythology of the Declaration of Arbroath? That's a silly

question, I suppose, because someone has to choose the composers, who will be "charged with" producing music that is not "patronising or backward". Meaning: if you want a commission, get with the programme.

The author of the *Scotsman* article, Brian Ferguson, certainly is with the programme: his "report" is a press release. Scroll down, however, and you'll find a comment from someone called Eddie McGuire. It simply reads: "Creativity being harnessed to the separatist project!"

That must have stung. McGuire is one of Scotland's finest composers. If you doubt that, go on to Spotify and listen to his chamber music, in which formal mastery of composition and years spent playing flute in a proper folk group, the Whistlebinkies, combine to enchanting effect. He could, if he chose, write a mighty piece inspired by the Declaration. But my guess is that he'd choose not to, because he can spot a political stunt when he sees one.

And there are plenty to spot. The SNP has always dreamed of a day when all creativity is harnessed to the separatist project. Now that it controls not only the government purse but also much of the Scottish media, that day is not far off. ■

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BRITISH WINE DRINKERS ARE LOOKING BEYOND THE EU

by Iain Martin

The final straw was another speech by President Macron. Jupiter was explaining how the nations of Europe should order their affairs to align with his brilliance, and in passing he had another swipe at the naughty Brits for daring to Brexit.

“Right, that’s it,” my friend announced, pointing at Macron on the television screen. “Enough is enough,” he said. “As long as that *homme* is President of France, I will not purchase French wine.”

My friend is someone who loves France so much that he has holidayed there almost every year for four decades. He has criss-crossed the country in his car countless times, spending a decent portion of his annual income on staying in French hotels and consuming French cuisine on the way to visiting French vineyards, each of which he leaves having purchased several cases of wine.

Yet he is so angry with the conduct of Macron and the tone of the President’s remarks during the Brexit process that he has against all



“Relax, please. I do not propose here to get into the question of tariffs levelled on wine from outside the European Union and the impact they might have on price.”

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expectation switched to buying New Zealand, Chilean and American wine instead of the French wine that he adores, and I adore.

Relax, please. I do not propose here to get into the question of tariffs levelled on wine from outside the European

Union and the impact they might have on price. In Britain a vast industry of lawyers and trade experts dealing with such questions has proliferated since voters decided – almost three years ago – to leave the EU. Mention tariffs and wine in the UK or anywhere near it and someone will appear waving a spreadsheet showing that dropping the tariff of 6.5p to 8p on a bottle of Australian Chardonnay will result in the imposition of costly extra checks at the border and the end of the British economy and possibly the termination of the entire universe.

The question of tariffs or prices in general is immaterial to my friend, just as the risk of some economic disruption post-Brexit was thought immaterial, or deemed acceptable, by many Leave voters in the UK who concluded that a higher principle, self-government, was at stake in the 2016 referendum. My friend is running a one-man boycott regardless of whether or not it costs him a little more, or he stands in the end to save a pound or two.

CONSERVATIVE WINE

This is not primarily about money. Instead it is a question of culture, manners, loyalty, and the souring of friendship across borders. Presidential rudeness can have an impact.

In one sense the French can afford to be insouciant. Figures published earlier this year show that French wine and spirits exports exceeded sales of 13bn euros last year for the first time. Sales are booming in President Trump's America thanks to strong economic growth. A quarter of French wine and spirits exports go to the US.

But not all is well. Sales to China fell because the Chinese economy is slowing. Reuters reported that French wine and spirits exports to China fell 14.4 per cent last year, to 1 billion euros, after increasing almost 25 per cent in 2017. That's an unreliable and frothy market.

In contrast, the British have been a steadier market of unflashy consumers and concerned citizens worth being consistently nice to. The UK is the second largest importer of French wine. Some 1.3 billion euros of alcoholic produce made its way from France to Britain in 2018, according to the Federation of Wine and Spirit Exporters of France.



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Amid Brexit fears about potential disruption to supply chains, trade bodies told Reuters that as many as 200 lorries a day are crossing from France to

the UK, carrying booze for stockpiling in warehouses in case there is a no-deal Brexit. The stockpiling assumes the British will buy as much French stuff, even if the Brexit talks result in a bitter stand-off with the French government.

I should add that my friend boycotting France is not an extreme Brexiteer. His brand of Brexiteering is of a moderate shade. Here is someone who likes Europe, and its wine, a lot but who voted to leave the European Union on the basis that a

relatively new political construct, the European Union, is not the same thing as the cultural and geographical entity that is Europe. Like many Britons he hoped and expected that after a brief interlude the EU and its largest powers – France and Germany – would strike a friendly and non-punitive deal with the UK. Macron's sneering, and the conduct of the talks by Brussels, came as a disappointment. Hence my friend's boycott.

Politics has poisoned the palate, critics will say.

Not at all, is my response, having tasted several of my friend's excellent New World purchases. When we had dinner recently we drank New Zealand Sauvignon rather than Sancerre, the classic French product of the Loire.

When it comes to Chardonnay, I have written before on the joys of the wines of Kumeau River as a rival to Burgundy. The winemaker Michael Brajkovich, New Zealand's first Master of Wine, took over the family property in 1982 and set about steady improvement, until he was producing wines that are starting to be ranked among the best in the world. Prices are rising as words spreads and demand increases, but you can still find one of the cheaper Kumeau River bottlings for under 20 euros.

Why bother buying a wine from New Zealand, will be the response from those in the Europe where the instinct is to always buy local on the basis that Europe is the best.

The British are highly unusual in Europe in that sense, in buying wine from France, Italy and Spain, although surprisingly little from under-rated Germany, alongside wines from all over the world. In part it is surely a buying habit rooted

The British will never stop consuming French produce – it is too good, and the friendship between peoples transcends transient politics.

in sentiment and history, and the British seafaring tradition that made foreign names familiar, and then the Commonwealth connection. It cannot simply be that, though. Mass consumption of wine in Britain only took off in the 1970s after we joined the EEC.

The reality is that there is not much indigenous English wine to buy, so we must look about and be international. On the shelves of their supermarkets and in wine merchants the British seem to like seeing a range of wines from a wide geographical spread.

The British will never stop consuming French produce – it is too good, and the friendship between peoples transcends transient politics. But my friend's valiant boycott is a reminder that sentiment can shift in a market economy; consumers do have power. That means presidents of countries that want the British to continue buying their wine, and much else, after Brexit should try being pleasant for a change. ■

LEFTIST TRIBALISM HAS RUN ITS COURSE

by Federico N. Fernández

Identity politics has metastasised to the whole societal body. For its very nature it has both promoted and produced a multiplicity of groups and “identities” under different banners such as race, gender, sexual preferences, etc. Facebook allows its users to choose from 58 possible genders.

Besides social media, a place where identity politics has found one of its strongholds is the university. Naturally, the humanities departments have become a cozy home for it. But they are far from the only one in higher learning institutions. Rochelle Gutierrez, a professor at the University of Illinois, claimed that teaching maths perpetuates unearned white privilege. “On many levels, mathematics itself operates as Whiteness,” she explained. “Who gets credit for doing and developing mathematics, who is capable in mathematics, and who is seen as part of the mathematical community is generally viewed as White.”

Hard sciences research departments are also under

siege. The accusation is that the STEM field (science, technology, engineering, maths) is not diverse enough and “minorities” such as women, blacks, and Hispanics, are underrepresented. “All across the country the big question now in STEM is: how can we promote more women and minorities by ‘changing’ (ie lowering) the requirements we had previously set for graduate level study?” a scientist at UCLA laments.

In the United States, universities are full of infantilising safe spaces and unconstitutional speech codes. Some even have “White-free days.” All these regressive inventions claim to defend and protect marginalised and oppressed groups.

At the base of college campuses identity politics is the Ludwig von Mises’s notion of polylogism... on steroids. While the classic Leftist polylogic would separate the thought processes of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the postmodern Left multiplies the different kinds of groups of the oppressed *ad infinitum*.

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Another important mutation is related to the epistemological consequences of victimhood.

Once linked to the tenets of relativism, the Left’s identity politics is now full of certainties in a way that would make the staunchest Positivist blush. And this turn has to do with the status of the “victim.” According to identity politics, being a victim provides blamelessness, moral authority, and epistemological preeminence. The secular dogma of “believing the victim” has two implications. On a micro level, the burden of proof has been reversed. It is the accused of a crime who has to prove his or her innocence. On a macro level, the statements or claims which stem from oppressed groups (ie, radicalised individuals who claim their representation) cannot be questioned or criticised. Any such criticism would immediately be deemed racist, sexist, homophobic, or an act of pure hate.



“The next time some academics tell you how important ‘diversity’ is, ask how many Republicans there are in their sociology department,” says Thomas Sowell. Indeed, the Left’s domination over academia and the predominance

of identity politics as its most dangerous cultural weapons will not be coming to an end any time soon.

However, innovation and the free market are going to provide us with a solution to counteract the grotesque

tribalism coming from college campuses.

If current trends continue, it is very likely that universities as we know them have their days counted. In a way, it could be that contemporary universities are



somewhat zombie institutions, walking dead that move purely by the inertia of the past.

Which trends? For starters, that the job market of the future is likely to demand a constant update of one's knowledge and skills and individuals will probably change career paths several times throughout their work life. What is more, Silicon Valley companies have already stopped requesting college degrees of potential employees. The reason may be twofold. There is a huge pool of talented people who have acquired knowledge through non-traditional channels (eg, the Internet). But it is also plausible that colleges are more and more perceived as the Left's über think-tank and that the

We will witness not only the demise of college campus identity politics but will also see the end of the Left's monopoly over culture. We are at the gates of one of the most transformative events since the invention of the printing press.

education part side is losing ground against the ideological brainwashing.

There are already in place many online alternatives not to go to university at all or to acquire skills with short easy courses. The technology tycoon and venture capitalist Peter Thiel himself established a special fund to incentivise young entrepreneurs to skip or postpone college in order to start their projects right away.

Moreover, Jordan Peterson, the black beast of college campus identity politics, is currently working on an online university which he promises will "teach people to write, speak, and think."

As we can see, there is a lot going on right now in order to find better alternatives to higher learning. The moment the market finds reliable ways to accredit the knowledge people receive online education as we know it will be changed for ever. We will witness not only the demise of college campus identity politics but will also see the end of the Left's monopoly over culture. We are at the gates of one of the most transformative events since the invention of the printing press. ■



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THE CONSERVATIVE



CONSERVATIVE BOOKS

VANITY FAIR - William Makepeace Thackeray

by James Delingpole

In each issue, James Delingpole reviews a book which may not be recent in its publication, but which conservatives should read.



“Very good indeed, beats Dickens out of the world,” wrote Jane Carlyle to her philosopher husband Thomas, as William Makepeace Thackeray’s serial novel *Vanity Fair* was beginning to catch fire in the Victorian public’s imagination.

Until then – it was serialised in *Punch* magazine in 1847/8 – Thackeray was just a modestly successful jobbing journalist, critic and author, “writing for life” to feed his wife and three daughters. By the book’s close he was an overnight sensation, hailed by Charlotte Brontë as “an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognised”, hugely sought after by society, and was subsequently an influence on Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*.

Vanity Fair is indeed a magnificent novel and a great, rollicking read, surprisingly modern in its tone and style, and refreshingly free of the earnest moralising we

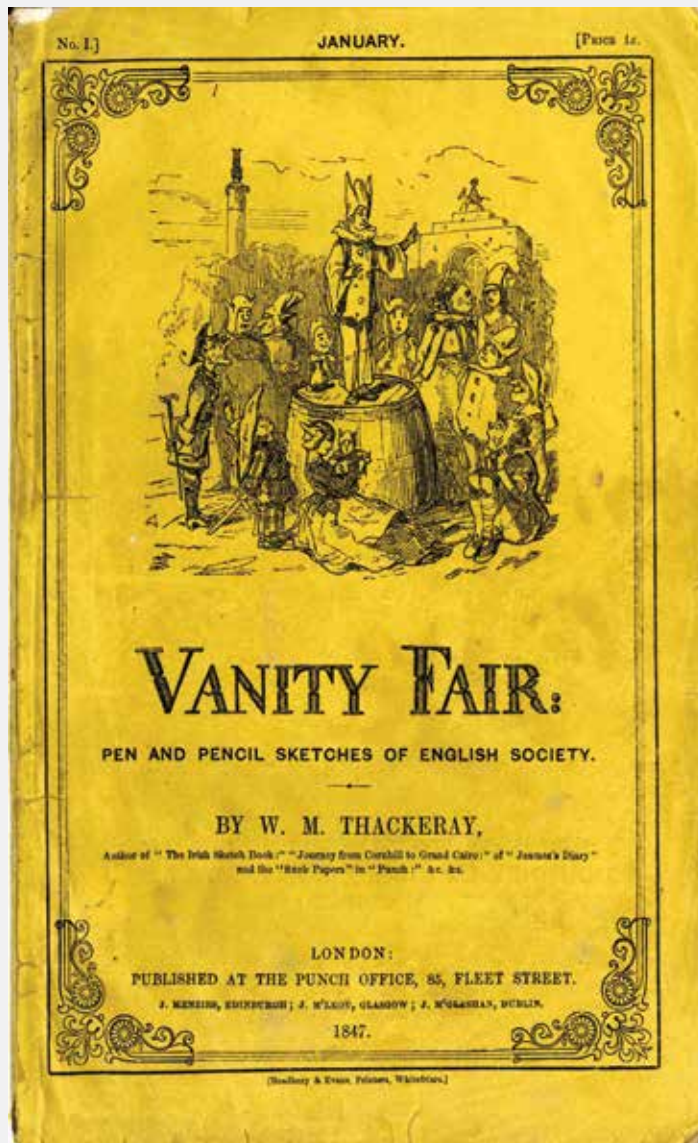
have to endure in contemporaries like Dickens. Perhaps its most daring experiment is its almost complete absence of likeable characters. Hence its subtitle: *A Novel Without A Hero*.

It does have a heroine of sorts, though, in the form of the amoral adventuress Becky Sharp. Becky is cynical, manipulative, shallow, acquisitive, deceitful and treacherous. By the end – spoiler alert – she has even added murder to her list of crimes against the social order. Sometimes you root for her, sometimes you don’t, but you’re never in any doubt where she is coming from. Born the daughter of an impoverished artist and French dancer, Becky has the chameleon social skills, accomplishments and aspirations of a proper English lady. But not, unfortunately, the financial security to keep herself in the style she would prefer. Her only real option, therefore, is

“*Vanity Fair* is indeed a magnificent novel and a great, rollicking read, surprisingly modern in its tone and style, and refreshingly free of the earnest moralising we have to endure in contemporaries like Dickens.”

James Delingpole

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[@jamesdelingpole](https://twitter.com/jamesdelingpole)



The book is not without its flaws. When you buy it, make sure you get an edition with a key to all the *dramatis personae*, otherwise you're likely to find yourself lost for at least the first half.

Victorian audience, the pecuniary preoccupations of its cast of characters will never date. Then, as now, everyone wants to get a foot on the ladder, to improve their finances, status and lifestyle. And if they can't achieve it by fair means, well foul ones it might just have to be...

Thackeray – *via* a chirpy, confiding authorial voice which frequently calls the reader aside to comment amusedly on proceedings – passes little moral judgment. Virtue is rarely rewarded; wicked deeds often go unpunished. When John Sedley loses all his money, he is not suddenly redeemed by penury: it simply turns him into an irritating loser engaged in endless fruitless money-making schemes which drive his poor wife and daughter deeper into misery. Thackeray's cynicism – especially in an era more religious than our own – is breathtaking, and may explain why contemporary audiences found the book so

exciting. Here, in the raw, is an almost Godless universe where the smiling author refuses to countenance anything so trite as a happy ending.

All this makes *Vanity Fair* a particularly refreshing antidote to our own age of cant and virtue-signalling. Were he writing today, Thackeray would no doubt be hailed by feminists for having such an empowered, feisty, psychologically plausible woman as his main protagonist. Except he then goes and blows his politically correct credentials completely with his portrait of the book's other

main female character – the dreary, sexless, worthy, feeble-minded, maddeningly drippy Amelia Sedley – surely one of the most uninspiring women in literature. Thackeray doesn't want you to like or admire him; he just wants to tell you what he knows.

The book is not without its flaws. When you buy it, make sure you get an edition with a key to all the *dramatis personae*, otherwise you're likely to find yourself lost for at least the first half. Yes, it could have been more tightly edited and the sprawling plot – as is the way in serial

novels – does read at times like it was written on the hoof with a view to titillating with sudden shocks and cliffhangers. But that's also what gives it its exuberance and vitality: that sense you get of a writer at the height of his powers, bursting with so much profligate talent he can't help squandering it now and then. There are long-gueurs, yes. But also passages of such vivid colour – the scene at Vauxhall gardens; the ball before Waterloo; Becky's brief apotheosis as a society queen – that they will stick in your memory forever. ■

to ensnare a succession of richer men.

Money is the driving force not just for Becky but for most characters in *Vanity Fair*. (Just as you might expect of a book which takes its title from the licentious centre of commerce in John Bunyan's allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*.) Thackeray,

who himself gambled away his inheritance, writes with feeling and insight on the subject: how to make it; how to spend it; how to lose it. One of the chapters is famously titled: "How to live well on nothing a year".

Though the book is set in Regency England (and Europe) and written for a

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