George Will

[*The Conservative Sensibility*](https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0316480932/ossnet-20)(Hachette Books, 2019)

**6 Stars – Handbook for an American Renaissance**

This book is a masterwork, a capstone work for the author, for his time, for the Republic, and for We the People who have lost our Republic. Of the over [2,500 books I have read](https://phibetaiota.net/reviews/), 10% of which have received a 6 star rating, this book is easily in the top 25 and perhaps the top 10. The last book I remember that impressed me this much was Philip Allot’s [*The Health of Nations: Society and Law beyond the State*](https://phibetaiota.net/2003/10/the-health-of-nations-society-and-law-beyond-the-state/) (Cambridge, 2002) but this book is closer to home, focused on the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the collapse of the US federal government with a Presidency run amok, a Congress in abdication, and a judiciary all too passive as the Constitution is shredded.

This glorious piece of work, clearly a handcrafted deeply researched endeavor (not a collection of past columns) that draws on all forms of erudition from poetry and theater and fiction to history, philosophy, and science, is noteworthy for integrating deep and diverse citations from the varied leading individuals in the US executive, US legislature, and US judiciary.

The top four points made by this book, in my view, are these:

01 Most conservatives today are not real conservatives, and have completely lost touch with the roots of our Republic, to wit, the need to protect and conserve the FACT that the USA is unique for establishing the natural rights of its individual citizens prior to the formation of the government by their consent. Individual (and state) sovereignty precede and should always “trump” state power.

02 Progressives as well as fake conservatives are the enemy of liberty for their constant efforts to enlarge the federal government with entitlements as well as interventions such that the primary economic player has become the federal government and its rent-seekers – banks and corporations and non-profits that have learned it is easier to leverage government to increase revenues than it is to be innovative and hard-working. Interestingly for me, despite the author’s emphasis on rent-seekers as a parasite, none of the Mainstream Media (MSM) reviews – I link four at the end of this review – address this core aspect of the book. The federal government has been captured – it is in enemy hands. The author is persistently wonderful in demonstrating that progressives are full of hatred for the average American whom they consider “vulgar… sick, racist, sexist, imperialist, etc.”

03 All three branches are broken and the judiciary is the solution. Presidential powers need to be sharply, decisively curtailed; legislators need to stop abdicating and delegating to the executive; and the judiciary needs to become more interventionist, ruling against all laws and regulations that are not in keeping with both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

04 Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt accelerated the destruction of the Republic with the twin presumptions that government should shape the public, not the other way around; and that the American Republic had a right and an obligation to intervene in everyone else’s business. The author makes a clear and persistent case for progressives (and faux conservatives) and the enemy within, who strive to impose political correctness (what Marcuse calls “repressive tolerance” where anything goes to the point of no values being allowed), using identity politics to de-moralize, de-construct, de-minish the individual, the family, the community, and the fifty states whose Electoral College votes represent the fact that the Presidency is beholden to the fifty sovereign states, not to the publics at large. Democracy is subordinate to liberty and no inequality confers any entitlement to elevated or even protected political status. While the author is weak on alternative history, what we know now supports his righteous disdain for Wilson and FDR. See for instance

[Review: The Folly of Empire–What George W. Bush Could Learn from Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson](https://phibetaiota.net/2004/11/the-folly-of-empire-what-george-w-bush-could-learn-from-theodore-roosevelt-and-woodrow-wilson/)

[Review: The Fruits of Graft](https://phibetaiota.net/2017/05/review-the-fruits-of-graft/)

[Review: The Devil’s Chessboard – Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America’s Secret Government](https://phibetaiota.net/2017/05/review-the-devils-chessboard-allen-dulles-the-cia-and-the-rise-of-americas-secret-government/)

This book is a moral and spiritual manifesto for an American Renaissance, a Second American Revolution. As much as the author may despise the presidency (including the incumbent who is not mentioned) I will go so far as to say that President Donald Trump cannot become the greatest president ever without embracing this book and its author, and rising to the challenge this author presents us all. He is strong and pointed when he observers that the federal government, an administrative state picking winners and losers, has ended up focusing on externalities – the economy – on a foundation of ignorance that gestates rent-seekers (carpet-baggers) while also failing completely to focus on virtues and enabling citizens to freely – freely – pursue happiness writ large: fulfilment through hard work and innovation. The public has been “infantilized” as a ward of the federal government.

This book is a certificate course in citizenship starting with the fact that citizens of the USA have absolute rights that cannot and should not be trifled with by the federal government or even the individual states, but are today. The author’s bottom line is that both the citizenry and the judiciary should end their deference to the federal government and to the mis-steps of the executive and legislative branches, and get back in the saddle.

QUOTE (23): *Government’s primary purpose is to secure pre-existing rights. Government does not create rights; it does not dispense them.*

This book destroys the progressives and their arrogant and ignorant ambitions to “shape” humanity, inclusive of the legitimization of eugenics and perversions such as pedophilia and transgenderism, The law of unintended consequences, a law that is very applicable when decisions are made in arrogance and ignorance, has destroyed the very fiber of the Republic, its individual citizens. Social engineering is in fact social genocide.

The author draws the connection among taxes (I maintain the 16th Amendment should be over-turned or even more aggressively, shown to have never been properly ratified in the first place), debts, and wars. These are known instruments for subordinating the many to the few and for profit taking by the few over the many.

The author avoids reference to the 17th Amendment perhaps not properly ratified, that effectively castrated the fifty states that comprise the union, and changes the Senators from being the representatives of their sovereign state with both budget and war powers, making Senators nothing more than super-representatives as subject to bribery and blackmail as are all those in the House of Representatives today. He does emphasize on page 140 that the Founders were wise to have the Senators represent the states themselves rather than the publics of those states at large. Worth a look:

[William Benson: Assertion That 16th & 17th Amendments to the Constitution Were Not Ratified by Enough States UPDATE 1 Adds 16th Amendment Information](https://phibetaiota.net/2018/10/william-benson-assertion-that-16th-17th-amendments-to-the-constitution-were-not-ratified-by-enough-states/)

QUOTE (131, citing Daniel Patrick Moynihan): *Not long ago it could be agreed that politics was the business of who gets what, when, where, and how. It is now more than that. It has become a process that also deliberately seeks to effect such outcomes as who THINKS what, who ACTS when, who LIVES where, who FEELS how.*

To which I would add the point not made in any of the MSM reviews, to wit that the federal government is now in the business of lying to the public, drugging the public, and dumbing down the public. See for instance:

[Review: TAVISTOCK INSTITUTE – Social Engineering the Masses by Daniel Estulin — Deep State Playbook](https://phibetaiota.net/2019/04/review-tavistock-institute-social-engineering-the-masses-by-daniel-estulin/)

[Worth a Look: Licensed to Lie – Exposing Corruption in the Department of Justice](https://phibetaiota.net/2018/09/worth-a-look-licensed-to-lie-exposing-corruption-in-the-department-of-justice/)

Various points that caught my attention:

Senate should be consulted in firing those whom they have confirmed.

Administrative law has dwarfed statutory law.

Clarence Thomas is a rock star and deserves much more attention and respect.

The author proposes an Amendment to compel Congress to deliberate by making choices. I would go much further – we need to move toward a convention of states to examine all of our Amendments, see this post on this topic:

[Robert Steele: 15 Constitutional Amendments — Protect, Modify, Cancel — UPDATE 1](https://phibetaiota.net/2018/10/robert-steele-convention-of-states-restoring-the-constitution/)

The author also proposes a balanced budget amendment, I would modify that by suggesting that in addition to terminating the federal income tax in favor of a transaction tax on all transactions including stock and currency and supply chain transactions, we need to revert to where the states both approve the federal budget, and allocate funds from state-collected revenues rather than continuing to allow the federal government to print and borrow money with abandon. The author cites James Madison (on page 151) with respect to the Founders intending for America to be a bottom-up Republic of citizens, not a top-down imperial power with subjects.

He goes on to call for judicial muscularity in enforcing a Due Process clause that sharply restricts the government’s ability to regulate and fine via administrative law, often arbitrary, that restricts individual rights.

QUOTE (186): *The challenge for a free society is to preserve liberty while nurturing virtue.*

QUOTE (212): *Since the New Deal, courts have abandoned the protection of economic rights, including the fundamental right to earn a living without arbitrary and irrational government hindrances* [such as onerous licensing requirements become one can charge a fee for cutting hair or arranging flowers].

The entire book is a dissection and illumination of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution at the line item level, integrated with reflections on individualism, capitalism the role of religion and faith, and the depth of the ignorance that underlies government decision-making, along with corruption. I am reminded of three books, all of which point out that the best information relevant to any political or economic decision is to be found at the local level:

[Review: Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action (Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions)](https://phibetaiota.net/2014/05/review-governing-the-commons-the-evolution-of-institutions-for-collective-action-political-economy-of-institutions-and-decisions/)

[Review: ANTIFRAGILE – Things That Gain From Disorder](https://phibetaiota.net/2018/11/review-antifragile-things-that-gain-from-disorder/)

[Review: Skin in the Game – Hidden Asymmetries in Daily Life](https://phibetaiota.net/2018/11/review-skin-in-the-game-hidden-asymmetries-in-daily-life/)

QUOTE (247): *The more complex society becomes, the more government should defer to the spontaneous order generated by the voluntary cooperation of freely contracting individuals.*

White the author has an exaggerated faith in the information produced by markets (as many books will gladly document, the information reaching executives is invariably biased, incomplete, and often an outright lie), his core point is on target: top-down decision making, even if completely honest, is destined to fail. See for example:

[Review: Business Blindspots–Replacing Your Company’s Entrenched and Outdated Myths, Beliefs and Assumptions With the Realities of Today’s Markets](https://phibetaiota.net/2008/05/business-blindspots-replacing-your-companys-entrenched-and-outdated-myths-beliefs-and-assumptions-with-the-realities-of-todays-markets/)

[Review: Too Big to Know – Rethinking Knowledge Now That the Facts Aren’t the Facts, Experts Are Everywhere, and the Smartest Person in the Room Is the Room](https://phibetaiota.net/2012/02/review-too-big-to-know-rethinking-knowledge-now-that-the-facts-arent-the-facts-experts-are-everywhere-and-the-smartest-person-in-the-room-is-the-room/)

[Review: Organizational Intelligence (Knowledge and Policy in Government and Industry)](https://phibetaiota.net/2009/07/organizational-intelligence-knowledge-and-policy-in-government-and-industry/)

[Robert Steele: Intelligence at a Cross Roads: To Be Or Not To Be… Review of Principled Spying by David Omand and Mark Phythian](https://phibetaiota.net/2018/06/robert-steele-intelligence-at-a-cross-roads-to-be-or-not-to-be-review-of-principled-spying-by-david-omand-and-mark-phythian/)

Intellectuals are both ignorant and unnecessary in their current progressive configuration.

The Republican Party is not conservative, not intelligence, and not responsible as a steward.

The two-parent family with a stay-at-home parent is the single best predictor of a child’s future success.

Gerrymandering creates artificial voting blocks and de-incentivize cross-block dialog and negotiation at the District level.

A redefinition of poverty would cut the poverty rate by two thirds – the author is brilliant in outlining the extent to which the government has incentivized a huge proportion of the work-eligible public into NOT WORKING. Dependency proliferates fraud as well as indolence.

The ratio of “disabled” non-working individuals is now 1 for every 16 working, it used to be 1 for 134.

The true cost of an entitlement state is a loss of individual self-reliance, responsibility, and zeal for work. Universalizing dependence on the state has killed our culture.

In combination with outlandish unlimited health benefits, disability payments have created in the federal government a very capable machine for bankrupting the Republic financially as well as spiritually.

QUOTE (349): *Today’s America has ample evidence that when you shed customs, you get accelerating social regression. Customs are normative; they affirm some behaviors and stigmatize others. When norms come to be considered optional, or worse, repressive, liberty degenerates into license, which is not a blessing.*

Case in point: California schools now forcing all children to receive sex education in which they are REQUIRED to consider the possibility that they be one of up to 30 different types of “approved” sexual deviant.

The chapter on education is thorough and inspiring. Modern education is deconstructionst, reductionist, and regressive. Universities have abandoned all pretense of standards or their role as teachers of history and the ability to think critically. Competing views cannot be tolerated because they might “trigger” some fragile moron who has never learned to be an adult.

Americans are a creedal people. The author mentions this several times.

Presentism has destroyed history. Judging the past by the politically correct standards of the day is intellectual and moral suicide.

QUOTE (370): *The danger is not cultural hegemony but cultural amnesia, and the concomitant balkanization of the life of the mind.*

QUOTE (372): *Multiculturalism attacks individualism by defining people as mere manifestations of groups (racial, ethnic, sexual) rather than as self-defining participants in a free society.*

From Martin Luther to Martin Luther King to Barry Goldwater, conservatism is about respecting the right of the individual to assert their private conscience.

Abandoning standards is the end of education. Identity politics, political correcting, and presentism have killed the American educational system and several generations of citizens. Citing Lynn Truss: we are entering an age of “social autism” in which universities have become the theater of victimization and epistemological nihilism.

Greatness is hard, decay easy.

QUOTE (516): *It is time for second thoughts – or, in many instances, first thoughts – about the price we are paying for what has been lost.*

Our Republic has been ruined by the ability of the political class to conceal from the public – with the active assistance of academia and the media, the true cost of consumption without limits. In this context, government is inimical to the public interest because it fosters both dependency and waste as well as uncivic aggressiveness and outright fraud (lies, bribery, blackmail) that bend public institutions and public funds to private factional advantage – the rent-seekers have hijacked our government and our country.

This is a book that merits more than one reading.It has a few flaws in that it does not address the degree to which the Deep State and secret societies have deliberately subverted the government;it ignores the role of Zionists in balkanizing first Europe and then the Middle East; it has no sense of the degree to which the dumbing down and drugging up of the public – and the acquiescence of politicians in high crimes and misdemeanors including the theft of $43 trillion from the public treasury and the persistent engagement of elements of the government in crime – running drugs, guns, cash, gold, and humans for sale – are a major part of our fall from grace.

What do we stand for? Here are my own reflections.

[Robert Steele: Reflections on The People’s Army, The Constitution, & Grand Strategy](https://phibetaiota.net/2016/09/robert-steele-reflections-on-the-peoples-army-the-constitution-grand-strategy/)

[Robert Steele: The Second American Revolution – Reflections on the Near Future UPDATE 2](https://phibetaiota.net/2018/11/robert-steele-the-second-american-revolution-reflections-on-the-near-future/)

The time for the Second American Revolution is now. This author is the second Arsonist.

[Review: The Arsonist – The Most Dangerous Man in America (James Otis 1760′s Catalyst for Liberty)](https://phibetaiota.net/2011/07/review-arsonist-the-most-dangerous-man-in-america/)

This is not a book our President will read. This is an author whose insights and values should be represented in the forthcoming 4th of July speech by President Donald Trump. That they may never meet is our American tragedy in a microcosm. That I embrace this author and his call to reconnect to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution is a given. It is my prayer that George Will be heard across the land, particularly by Generation Z that is realizing that both the “progressive” vision and the fake conservative vision are empty, toxic, and inherently opposed to the root concept, live free or die.

**Other notable reviews online:**

Matthew Continetti, “[The Conservative Sensibility Is George Will’s Definitive Declaration](https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2019/07/08/the-conservative-sensibility-is-george-wills-definitive-declaration/),” *National Review*, 20 June 2019

John R. Coyne, Jr., “[Revealing the Foundations of the Republic: The Conservative Sensibility](https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/jun/12/book-review-the-conservative-sensibility-by-george/),” *Washington Times*, 12 June 2019

Lloyd Green, “[The Conservative Sensibility review: George Will and a right wronged](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jun/09/the-conservative-sensibility-review-george-will-trump),” *The Guardian*, 9 June 2019

Andrew Sullivan, “[George Will’s Political Philosophy](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/03/books/review/george-will-the-conservative-sensibility.html),” *The New York Times*, 3 June 2019

**Videos where George Will discusses the book:**

[George Will: The Conservative Sensibility](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jwe3bzr22lM)

[George Will, "The Conservative Sensibility"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Tc_5R2urjc)

[George Will and Robert Doar on the conservative sensibility](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f75mUQZbxfI)

[George Will wrangles with God, the conservative sensibility and the dangers of progressivism](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eR4RCBBW27k)

[George Will's Uphill Battle Against Trump’s GOP and the Democratic Socialist Left](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZ9JV-hmAzA)