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## TROUBLE IN THE IVORY TOWER **BYLINE:**

Reviewed by Bob Fishburn **SECTION:** BOOKS; Pg. 6 **LENGTH:** 446 words

The mass of books since the 1970s on American higher education spans the alphabet: from Able to Badgering, through Effusive, to Shocking, past Tedious, all the way to ZZZZ. Some are readable; many are exercises in indecipherability; most ride on rigid rails, driven by powerful preconceptions. I confess: I'm hooked on books about higher education, but I have grown tired of their occasional rancor, hyperbole and dependence on anecdotal evidence. A case of too much heat, too little water. **Along comes an oasis in the form of Dr. Lewis, miraculously fresh from more than 30 years on the Harvard faculty and unjaded from eight tumultuous years as dean of the college. His book, subtitled "How a Great University Forgot Education," is blessedly free of ideology, packed with common sense and is wonderfully sane and sensible in describing an academic world that too often has the average reader agreeing with William Buckley, who said he would rather be ruled by the first 500 people in the Cambridge phone book than the Harvard faculty.** Lewis is a throwback: His instincts were obviously honed in the 1940s and '50s and somehow survived the onslaught on higher education in the '60s. His central theme is that Harvard and many other "top-tier" research universities have lost touch with what used to be and still should be the central goal of undergraduate education: "to turn eighteen-and nineteen-year-olds into twenty-one- and twenty-two-year-olds [in his words], to help them grow up, to learn who they are, to search for a larger purpose for their lives, and to leave college as better human beings." Ponder that: The statement heavily implies that there ought to be a "moral" or "ethical" (or whatever you wish to call it) component to undergraduate education. Words like "larger purpose" and "better" are not words that easily slide from the lips of your average "top-tier" college professor. They are closer to huge chunks of meat that require a Heimlich maneuver before issuing forth. Lewis manages to dissect the many problems at places like Harvard, Princeton and Stanford with great candor. His book is both an inside history of Harvard (with a clear explanation of its current predicament) and a prescription for its renewal. Any parent with a student entering any top research university should read this book. It is the clearest argument for the truth of George Orwell's searing statement: "We have sunk to a depth at which the restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men."

**EXCELLENCE WITHOUT A SOUL:** How a Great University Forgot Education  
By Harry R. Lewis. Public Affairs / Perseus Books. \$26.

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