

I've spent my career at Harvard writing and editing articles for *The Crimson* and during that entire time I have never faced any serious form of writer's block. But when I sat down to draft this speech, I started countless iterations—and none of them worked. I struggled to determine why. Nothing seemed to make this different than any article I had written before.

And then I realized something: worldviews are for other people, applying just one lens through which to consider the subjective world isn't for me.

During my time at *The Crimson* I always wrote about someone other than myself. It's not that I don't have opinions or convictions. In fact, I do. I have political views and thoughts on God. I get in dining hall debates and can now and again deliver impassioned diatribes. If you asked me, I would happily opine on any number of subjects from tax policy to abortion. Like any normal human being, I'm a walking, talking host infected with beliefs and ideas about the world around me.

It isn't that I'm so modest as to say that I wouldn't prescribe my particular set of convictions to other people. I'm not modest. At times I can be abrasive and arrogant. I hold my beliefs because I think that they're correct. I hold them because I'm pretty sure they're true.

I've just come to conclude that trying to convince other people that my stances are the right ones is boring. Not only is it boring, it's futile. I have adopted a post-interventionist worldview, which in any practical sense isn't much of a worldview at all. I have very little interest in dedicating time to convincing or cajoling anyone in the realm of the subjective.

It's much more interesting to adopt perspectives. That's why I am a

journalist. Of course, the idea that anyone could truly take on someone else's worldview is probably delusional. But the intellectual exercise of trying is absolutely thrilling. They might not be right but immersing oneself in another person's perspective is a wonderful trip. It's important to understand that my predilection for stealing and trying on for size another person's perspective isn't some left-leaning, hyper-tolerant ideology. This isn't relativism. I neither accept nor reject their view. I entertain it.

Most recently, my adventure into the land of abandoning conviction in exchange for a sliver of understanding came through the mind of Harvey C. Mansfield—whom I labeled in a recent magazine cover story, “Harvard's head heretic.” He is a man who on pretty much every political issue of the day, holds the opposite position that I do. And I don't really mind. In fact, I think it's fascinating. He is a man who thinks that progress for progress sake is a flawed intuition—I don't. He's a man who thinks that women and men should have distinct roles in society and that we should expect less professional success from women at large—I don't. Nonetheless, when leaders of *The Crimson* had an off-the-record dinner with President Faust last week and the opportunity to pepper her with questions, I didn't draw from my own convictions. Instead, there was a voice in my head and it was Mansfield's. It was Mansfield's ideology that crept into my mind. I asked Faust why there weren't more conservative academics at Harvard. I used the phrase “political correctness”—which the me, me, who is a liberal, thinks is some sort of conservative code phrase. Even outside the context my reporting, I was transfixed. While it helped that I developed an affection for the soft-spoken 79-year-old, it was the complexity of his worldview that enraptured me. It was so foreign that I had to try it on for size, provoking friends into debates from his perspective, knowing that I probably didn't agree with the words leaving my lips.

I love journalism because I get to simultaneously practice extraordinary deference and outrageous arrogance. I entertain the idea that someone else could have things right and then I convince myself and the reader that I am best suited to put that worldview to words.

Of course, this extraordinary deference can quickly begin to sound a lot like acquiescence. Is this post-interventionist worldview an outlook that enables broken views and propagates falsehoods? And here I would draw on the fact-value distinction, which unlike Mansfield, I firmly believe in. While I leave the battle of values to others, I'll happily brawl over facts. Some of the best stories point out unnoticed truths about the world around us. I remember writing about the high percentage of Floridians who had their license suspended, often not because they were bad drivers but because they were too poor to pay their tickets. There, facts alone, not a worldview, helped to further the discourse and make legislators think.

That is how I bring together the two aspects of journalism that lead me to choose journalism as my calling. Journalism allows me to attempt true understanding in the realm of values. At the same time, it demands that I be truly self-righteous when it comes to facts. I will happily fight to obliterate worldviews with a faulty premise by attacking the facts. That's the role of a good journalist. I'll leave the war over values to someone else.