

Multiculturalism and Mass Immigration

Explaining ultimate origins

Book Review by Mark Wegierski

Professor Paul Edward Gottfried, who teaches at Elizabethtown College, Pennsylvania, here continues his critical and forthright analysis of “the managerial-therapeutic regime” which he began decades ago, but which was recently most trenchantly expressed in *After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State* (Princeton University Press, 1999) (reviewed in *The Social Contract*, Vol. IX, No. 4 (Summer 1999), pp. 274-276). The title of Gottfried’s new book is an ironic reference to *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Recognition* (an essay by Charles Taylor, with commentary by Amy Gutmann, Editor; Steven C. Rockefeller; Michael Walzer; Susan Wolf) (Princeton University Press, 1992). This work by Charles Taylor, *et al.*, which represents the “official” view of multiculturalism at the very heights of current-day political theory, was brought out in a revised edition by Princeton University Press in 1994, with new commentary by K. Anthony Appiah, and Jurgen Habermas (edited and introduced by Amy Gutmann). (It is possible that there have been newer and expanded editions of the collection in the interval.) Professor Gottfried may be signaling by the choice of his title that his work offers a sharp critique of multiculturalism — and careful explication of what it “really” represents, beyond all the hazy rhetoric and abstract theorizing of “official” political theory and “official” political discourse.

Other books by Gottfried include: *Conservative*

Mark Wegierski is a Toronto-based writer and historian. He is a frequent contributor to The Social

Millenarians: The Romantic Experience in Bavaria (1979); *The Search for Historical Meaning: Hegel and the Postwar American Right* (1986); the two editions of *The Conservative Movement* (1988 and 1993, the former co-written with Thomas Fleming, editor of *Chronicles* magazine), on postwar American conservatism; as well as *Carl Schmitt: Politics and Theory*, a highly nuanced work about the controversial yet often acute German right-wing theorist.

Today Paul Gottfried is probably the leading political theorist of the American “paleo-conservative” grouping (in fact, he is credited with coining that term). He has been a senior editor of *The World & I*, and is currently a senior editor at *Telos*, a journal of eclectic political criticism, and a contributing editor to *Humanitas* and *Chronicles*.

Prof. Gottfried has also paid a real price for his forthright political views, most notably being rejected from a major appointment to the Catholic University of America (Washington, D.C.). Ironically, this appointment was opposed more strenuously by neoconservatives (who often complain about this kind of academic exclusion), than by left-liberals. Considering that Gottfried may have supervised dozens of Ph.D. and M.A. students at Catholic University (as opposed to Elizabethtown, which lacks a significant graduate program), his deselection from CUA could be seen not only as an attack on him, but as an attempt to crush an entire intellectual tendency.

Reading *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt*, one has the feeling that the author is writing what he wants to write, leaving aside excessively tactical considerations. In an age in which many so-called conservatives are deathly afraid of stating their views openly, or of going beyond any but the mildest critiques

Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt: Toward a Secular Theocracy

by Paul Edward Gottfried
Columbia and London:
University of Missouri Press
158 pages, \$29.95



of current-day society, Gottfried's book is highly refreshing.

The work is high-level political theory, grounded in an intimate knowledge of both the classics and new currents of political philosophy, as well as an acute understanding of the long history and evolution of political practice. Gottfried has a command of numerous languages, including Ancient Greek, Latin, German, French, Italian and Polish. This is something which is especially rare among most North American scholars and policy "experts" — the former who often deliberately misportray the classics and most of history, and the latter who often give ignorant lectures to countries abroad as to the internal politics and arrangements they should follow.

The book includes Acknowledgments (pp. ix-x), sometimes extensive footnotes, and an index (pp. 151-158). It begins with an excellent Introduction, "From the Managerial to the Therapeutic State" (pp. 1-16). Contrasting Europe and America, Gottfried says that while America may seem economically freer (with significantly lower taxes), its therapeutic regime is in many ways as advanced as that in Europe.

We are expected to take for granted, and view as beyond critical discussion, "universal nations," "open communities," "homosexual family units," and "pluralistic cultures."... These things thrive because of government agencies, the judiciary, and "public" education. They represent what democracy as public administration holds up as the happy alternative to how things used to be. And if the state moves boldly to ban insensitivity, that may be necessary to avoid mass backsliding into life "before the Sixties" (pp. 4-5).

His first chapter, "The Death of Socialism?" (pp. 17-38), is a brilliant dissection of the politics and economics of the current-day period. Gottfried argues that old-fashioned social democracy, and even the Communist parties (for example, in Italy) and regimes, were, to a large extent, socially-conservative. The embrace by left-wing parties of current-day capitalism (along with multiculturalism, of course) has made them objectively "less" rather than "more" conservative. Gottfried also skewers capitalism as espoused by, for example, Virginia Postrel:

Postrel's eagerness to eradicate tradition and established community is so extreme that even a center-left reviewer writing in the New Republic finds her neophilia to be one of the "best arguments for conservatism with which I am familiar."... Postrel's enthusiasms are a perfect example of democratic capitalist boosterism, characterized by support for open borders, the mixing of peoples and races, and a continuing redefinition of nations and cultures... Postrel's vision does not conflict with the consuming quest to change society in a progressive way pursued by social democrats, save for her difference with them over the degree of government intervention useful for the economy... Their quarrel with the other side is not about abolishing the past but about the best means to bring that about (pp. 27-28).

Professor Gottfried is clearly impressed with certain aspects of the Left tradition of the West. Some of the most prominent of these social conservatives of the Left include William Morris, George Orwell, Jack London, and Christopher Lasch (who considered himself a social democrat). Gottfried has also closely studied the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, a curiously bivalent tradition which gave rise to both the theory of "the authoritarian personality" (which is one of the main props of the managerial-therapeutic regime), as well as some of the most cutting-edge critiques of the system.

Chapter 2, "Religious Foundations of the Managerial Therapeutic State" (pp. 39-70) looks at some possible origins of the seemingly all-pervasive current-day viewpoints. It would be too simple to say that it is all the result of current-day conditioning and propaganda. Gottfried locates one of the major sources of these outlooks in James Kurth's view of the so-called "Protestant deformation" (p. 10). Gottfried cites Kurth:

All religions are unique, but Protestantism is more unique than all others. No other is so critical of hierarchy and community, or of traditions and customs that go with them. At its doctrinal base Protestantism is anti-hierarchy and anti-community (p. 10).

Gottfried would argue that, although there may be many traditionalist and conservative Protestants, the so-called “mainline” Protestant denominations in the United States tend very heavily in directions supportive of the regime. Gottfried writes: “Basic for American religious life is the fusion of a victim-centered feminism with the Protestant framework of sin and redemption” (p. 56). According to Gottfried, it is the broad mass of self-hating, guilt-driven WASPs in America who tend to valorize all the accredited minority claims, and promote mass, dissimilar immigration, as well as neutralize and suppress the resistance to the managerial-therapeutic regime from more conservative WASPs and many Catholic and Orthodox Christian white ethnics.

“[Gottfried] does not hold out much hope for these tendencies of resistance to the managerial-therapeutic regime.”

These American liberal Protestant outlooks have spread into Europe, where the more Protestant countries, such as Germany, tend to be further along the road of coercive political-correctness. Gottfried reveals the startling fact that “[m]ore Germans are now languishing in prison for expressing (unprogressive or insensitive) opinions than there were in East Germany before the fall of the Communist regime” (p. 44).

Chapter 3, “The Managerial as Therapeutic State” (pp. 71-100), is a very sharp analysis of the various control-mechanisms of the current-day regime. In Gottfried’s analysis, it looks like an ultra-totalitarian system (in the normative rather than openly-violent sense), intimately concerned with the innermost thoughts of its “subject-citizens,” and consigning particularly troublesome dissenters to coercive “therapy.” Gottfried argues that many high-ranking political, legal, and feminist theorists, such as Richard Rorty, Stanley Fish, and Jurgen Habermas, have summarily dispensed with freedom of speech, the right to free association, religious freedom (for Christians), and freedom of conscience, as even purely theoretical requirements for their vision of “liberal” polity.

“A Sensitized World” (chapter four, pp. 101-117) points to the fact that the Western managerial-therapeutic regimes are now embarking upon global, “missionizing” projects. Professor Gottfried leaves it an open question whether non-Western societies, which are often filled with a highly ferocious traditionalism, are now going to be increasingly subject to such projects, or if Third World traditionalism will by some strange process continue to be valorized by self-hating Westerners. The heavily pervasive pop-culture of America is already functioning as an icebreaker for various aspects of current-day Western ideas, far ahead of possible political realignments in non-Western traditional societies.

Chapter 5, “Whither the Populist Right” (pp. 118-130) does not hold out much hope for these tendencies of resistance to the managerial-therapeutic regime. Gottfried decisively refutes the notion that these tendencies can be considered “far right” or “neo-fascist”:

It must...be asked if what European populist leaders famously demand — referenda, an end to welfare burdens, and more government accountability over immigration — are intrinsically “illiberal.” However offensive they may be to the journalistic Left, these stands do invoke a recognizably liberal principle, the consent of citizens... The confrontation that has erupted is not between liberals and antiliberals but between two postliberal concepts of democracy, one, managerial-multicultural, and the other, plebiscitary national or regional (p.122).

In the Conclusion, “A Secular Theocracy” (pp. 131-149), Gottfried reiterates the point about the all-pervasiveness of this current-day “soft totalitarianism” (p. 138). He foresees as main challenges to the regime either economic difficulties, or the frictions arising out of excessive, mass, dissimilar immigration. The managerial-therapeutic regime has enjoyed great support because economic prosperity (and the cornucopia of government benefits for large sectors of society), as well as what seems like a highly attractive cult of sexual and personal pleasure, are seen as the regime’s successes, in most people’s minds. However, it is possible that an over-extended welfare state will, at some point, have to significantly reduce benefits, and those to whom it reduces benefits first are highly likely to be those who

lack the status of current-day victim groups (or those groupings who are considered decidedly less victimized than others). At the same time, the current-day New Class elites grossly underestimate the transformative and revolutionary potential of a dissimilar immigration so huge that it threatens to displace the native-born majority. What will happen if former majorities become ever-smaller minorities, while the new majorities will ever more insistently press their claims? Presumably, the regime will try to maintain prosperity by the upholding, as far as possible, of current-day capitalism (probably tactically accepting much of what is called “fiscal conservatism” today), combined with even more thoroughgoing efforts at conditioning and suppression of dissent.

Gottfried’s book is rather terse, and could have devoted more attention to an analysis of current-day capitalism, consumptionism, and a closer look at how the mass media works upon the average person (in its main self-designated functions of advertising, entertainment, and information). It is also possible that some of the ultimate roots of the evolution of the managerial-therapeutic regime lie in the very fact of the ever-accelerating advance of capitalism and technology. For many people today, that life of comfort, pleasure, and lifestyle freedoms apparently assured by the regime is more germane in their assent to it, than the strictures of political-correctness. Indeed, the broad masses are clearly far less interested in political-correctness than the New Class cadres, although the latter, of course, usually live lives of comparatively even greater material comfort. (One is reminded of that socio-economic category identified by David Brooks: “bobos” or “bourgeois bohemians.”)

Given the intertwining of the regime with capitalist growth — which is clearly ecologically unsustainable over the long term — more attention should have been paid in the book to possible resistance to the regime from such tendencies as ecology/environmentalism, neo-mysticism (such as that represented by Joseph Campbell and C.G. Jung), and the anti-globalization movements. There could have been more space given to such diverse figures as Ralph Nader, Noam Chomsky, the Mexico-based ecological critic Ivan Illich, G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, J.R.R. Tolkien, Peter Augustine Lawler (author of *Postmodernism Rightly Understood: The Return to Realism in American Thought*, among other

works), agrarian philosopher Wendell Berry, Camille Paglia, and Canadian traditionalist philosopher George Parkin Grant. There could have been some attempt to engage with the more positive aspects of communitarian political theory, and to look at such thinkers as, for example, British political theorist (formerly at Oxford, now at the London School of Economics) John Gray, and Jean Bethke Elshtain. Giving the work a more broadly cultural, ecological, technoskeptical, and communitarian focus might have helpfully increased its possible appeal without diluting its central message.

As it stands, the book is brilliantly and acutely political, but perhaps lacks a certain cultural depth. In a way it mirrors the writing of Hobbes (who is clearly one of the main inspirations of Carl Schmitt, Paul Gottfried, and James Burnham¹ — a thinker who has also clearly inspired Gottfried). Hobbes brought a very sharp precision to political philosophy, but the mechanistic qualities of his view of human nature had deconstructive effects. Professor Gottfried has given us the razor-sharp theory; the “poetry” of resistance to the managerial-therapeutic regime (unless one semi-anachronistically chooses to consider as such some of the prescient forebodings of Nietzsche) has yet to be written. •

NOTE

1. James Burnham’s seminal work is *The Managerial Revolution* (1941). Burnham’s *Suicide of the West* (1964) describes various aspects of self-hatred and guilt massively undermining Western elites and societies. Burnham began his writing career on the Left, and was considered “Trotsky’s most brilliant disciple.” Much of Burnham’s writing is focused on an analysis of power and its exercise in inter- and intra-societal relations. George Orwell paid Burnham a curiously ironic compliment by apparently basing on Burnham his character “O’Brien,” the Grand Inquisitor-like figure, in *1984*.