

# POWER TRIP

---

## **Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt: Toward a Secular Theocracy**

Paul Edward Gottfried

Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002

\$29.95.

xii + 158 pp.

---

*Reviewed by Samuel Francis*

**M***ulticulturalism and the Politics of Guilt* is the sequel to Professor Paul Gottfried's earlier volume, *After Liberalism*, published by Princeton University Press in 1999. In both books Professor Gottfried, a prominent paleo-conservative polemicist, intellectual historian, and Professor of Humanities at Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania, tries to account for the emergence of "post-liberal" trends in political thought and behavior, especially the rise of such phenomena as "multiculturalism" and what is popularly called "political correctness." The problem underlying his efforts is that such political and cultural views are so self-evidently absurd, based on such transparently false beliefs about history and culture, and so evidently harmful to intellectual freedom and social cohesion, that it is a mystery why anyone believes them at all, let alone why they have become such powerful and all but irresistible trends in academic, intellectual, and political life. Is the acceptance of such views by various key elites in Western society genuine, and to what extent does their acceptance point either to some hidden agenda reflecting the material interests of these elites or to some equally obscure irrational motivation, a collective "death wish" on the part of the leadership sectors of the modern West? This is perhaps the central problem Mr. Gottfried's series seeks to answer. Aside from what I take to be certain flaws in his presentation and argument, both books are well worth reading, and not only

for the large amount of anti-Western foolishness that he documents. They are major contributions to our understanding of what is happening to the Western world and why.

Both books take off from the common assumption that the United States and most of the Western world are now governed by what Gottfried calls the “managerial state,” a term and concept that derive from conservative theorist James Burnham in his *The Managerial Revolution* of 1941 and which I to some extent reformulated in various essays, columns, and books in the 1980s. Gottfried’s usage of them, however, is quite different from their meaning as defined by either Burnham or me.

In the first place, Burnham was writing under the influence of a Marxism from which he had only recently defected and of the largely Italian school of what are known as “classical elite” theorists, in particular Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca, which he had recently discovered. Hence, his theory, as well as the reformulated version that I developed, is framed in terms of elites—relatively small groups within a population that share a common relationship to the instruments of power within a society and a common interest in how those instruments are used and which exclude the majority of the population from access to power. The key concept for Burnham, then, was a “managerial elite,” a “managerial class,” or a “new class,” which was displacing the older elite or ruling class in modern society. He saw this process going on simultaneously in Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany, and the United States of the New Deal era. The new elite, like the old, dominates the state, the formal apparatus of government, but also extends well beyond the state in its control of the economy (as a corporate elite) and of the culture (the structures of ideological formulation, education, and mass communications). In both the original and the reformulated versions of the theory, the behavior of the managerial elite is largely determined by its consciousness of its power interests and its pursuit of those interests, and its ideology is constructed by a managerial intelligentsia (academics, journalists, think tank verbalists, etc.) to justify its interests.

Gottfried’s work, by contrast, owes little to elite theory, and he seldom speaks of a “managerial elite” or “managerial class” at all. Instead, his discussion focuses almost exclusively on the state itself. Large corporations, unions, foundations, mass media, and schools and universities play far less of a role in his model of managerial dominance than in Burnham’s or mine, and his concept of what motivates the thinking and behavior of those who control the managerial state is also radically different.

Secondly, and consistent with his abandonment of elite theory, Gottfried’s usage of the term “managerial state” itself is quite different from that of the Burnhamite school. In the latter, much as in classical Marxism, the state is largely the “executive committee” of the ruling class—in Marx’s case, the capitalist bourgeoisie; in the Burnhamite case, the managerial bureaucracy,

which is closely wedded to the corporate and cultural managers. In the absence of the elite theory concept, however, Gottfried's "managerial state" appears almost spontaneously, merely as the product of liberal ideology combined with political ambition. For Gottfried, the "managerial state" seems to be mainly a synonym for what a Goldwater conservative of the 1960s would have called "big government"—the centralized federal government that regulates the economy, dishes out welfare and special benefits to selected constituencies, and overrides state, local, and private authorities as vaguely defined "mandates" or "social needs" dictate—but neither the interests of the elite that runs the state nor those of sister elites with which it is allied seem to constitute significant driving forces for its behavior and policies. There is therefore little connection between Gottfried's usage of the term "managerial" and the special sense in which Burnham developed the concept of "manager"—specifically, one who holds power through proficiency in modern technical and managerial skills.

Those who hold such skills are able to dominate the state, the economy, and the culture because the structures of these sectors of modern society require technical functions that only specially skilled personnel can provide. The older elites simply lack those skills and eventually lose actual control over the key institutions of modern mass society. As the new, managerial elites take over, society is re-configured to reflect and support their interests as a ruling class—interests radically different from those of the older elites. Generally, the interests of the new managerial elites consist in maintaining and extending the institutions they control and in ensuring that the needs for and rewards of the technical skills they possess are steadily increased, that society become as dependent on them and their functions as possible.

Little of this analysis is apparent in Gottfried's discussion, however, and it is never entirely clear why he is using the term "managerial state" at all or what the relationship between his usage and that of Burnham is. Indeed, the bulk of his second volume is concerned with how and why the "managerial state" evolves into what he now calls the "therapeutic state," which undertakes "therapeutic" functions intended to "cure" the pathologies of bourgeois society—its "racism," "sexism," "homophobia," etc.—and which adopts what is now called generally "multiculturalism" as its dominant ideology. Whereas the old "managerial state" was concerned principally with the public administration of material welfare, the new therapeutic state is concerned mainly with the instillation of "correct" mental and psychological attitudes and behavior.

Social guilt, antifascist education, and the search for subterranean prejudice are integral to the moral mission of European politicians and intellectuals as much as it is for their American preceptors. The mental cleansing that European sensitizers desire must go so deep that it can never be brought to completion. The road is indeed everything, but on the never-ending road toward the unattainable goal, the prescribed reeducation warrants a draconian control over citizens, who remain susceptible to old ways. (p. 10)

As Gottfried demonstrates, adopting therapeutic functions does not mean that older managerial functions vanish or significantly diminish, despite the claims of neo-conservative champions of “democratic capitalism” that “socialism has died” or the “era of big government is over.”

But while it is clear that the therapeutic functions have been added onto the older ones, it is not so clear that the “therapeutic” state is as fundamentally different as Gottfried seems to claim. “Therapy,” after all, is merely one kind of technical skill that more recent managers have adopted and applied as an instrument of power and social control. The metaphor of a “sick society” that requires therapy is indeed more recent than the older managerial one centered on the idea of “social engineering,” but the concept of “therapy” does not deviate from that of a technically skilled class (even if the skills are largely pseudo-scientific) asserting hegemony over the rest of society. “Therapy,” in other words, is merely the current codeword by which the managerial class rationalizes its dominance over other social and political forces and especially its claim to reconstruct the human mind itself through the manipulation of emotions, attitudes, and social relationships. Even though the new therapeutic regime reaches much further into the psychic and social roots of behavior to inculcate submission, it is not essentially different from the Burnhamite concept of managerial totalitarianism. It should be recalled that Orwell based *1984* on Burnham’s work, and the consummate achievement of therapeutic managerialism in that novel is the engineering of love for Big Brother, at the expense of all other human affective relationships. Brainwashing masked as “therapy” was thus by no means unknown to the older apostles of managerial domination.

Yet Gottfried’s “managerial” or “therapeutic” state by itself seems to be harmless enough; its drive toward tyranny does not, in his view, derive from its own structure or the interests of its controlling elite. If we could somehow take out the ideology, change the minds of those who control the state, and convert them into paleo-conservatives, the state apparatus itself would be neutral. What really animates its drive toward a totalitarian conquest and reconfiguration of society and the human mind itself comes from the ideology that the masters of the managerial state have adopted, a force that is entirely extraneous and largely accidental to the structure by which they exercise power. In Gottfried’s view, this ideology derives from and is largely identical to what he calls “Liberal Protestantism.”

As Gottfried writes, “A religious worldview gives direction to the managerial state’s progress toward a therapeutic regime concerned with the self-esteem of victims. This worldview is liberal Protestantism, understanding that term in the current sense and not in the way it might have been taken in the past” (i.e., not as a movement to adapt Protestant theology to modern scientific and political trends so much as a theologically based ethic demanding recognition of and collective repentance for such “sins” as “racism,” “sexism,” “homophobia,” “anti-Semitism,” etc.).

Gottfried is no doubt correct to point to recent expressions of guilt and guilt-mongering among various Protestant theologians in Europe and the United States, but there are two major problems with his use of such maunderings as an adequate explanation for the practices of the managerial state. In the first place, he fails to establish any significant connection between this body of theological thought, on the one hand, and actual members of the managerial elite (or administrators of the managerial state, if you will), on the other. The closest he comes is a brief account of a speech by ex-President Bill Clinton not long after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in which Mr. Clinton spoke of the collective responsibility of the West for atrocities committed against the Moslem world going back to the Crusades. That sort of rhetoric is common enough, of course, and it may in fact derive from what Gottfried means by "liberal Protestantism." But there is little reason to take anything Bill Clinton says very seriously except as an expression of his own personal and political interests, and no reason to think that serious feelings of guilt derived from liberal Protestantism really animate the managerial class as a whole.

In the second place, such expressions are by no means limited to Protestants or to liberal Protestants. As Gottfried acknowledges, the so-called "Christian Right" is not exactly immune from emoting about the "sins" of "racism," and groups like Promise Keepers (before its collapse) specialized in "overcoming guilt" and actually promoted interracial marriage. Gottfried also cites a rhetorical belly crawl over Christian guilt for anti-Semitism by Christian Coalition director Ralph Reed before the Anti-Defamation League in 1995 as illustrating that "the politics of atonement has spilled over to the American Christian Right, the side of the religious spectrum where one might think it would be hardest to find." But such performances do not derive from the kind of liberal Protestant theology of sin and guilt that Gottfried is talking about. They are more likely either a kind of public theater intended to avoid charges of "racism" and "insensitivity," or else reflections of the real guilt experienced by various religious neurotics and oddwads who compose the leadership of the "Christian Right."

For that matter, Pope John Paul II in the last few years has taken up the habit of crawling about on his hands and knees in a protracted apologetic to Protestants (for the Inquisition), Jews (for "The Holocaust"), Moslems (for the Crusades), and even Eastern Orthodox Greeks (for "intolerance"). Whatever the meaning of "liberal Protestantism," guilt is hardly confined to it, but again there seems to be no special linkage between feeling such guilt or acknowledging its legitimacy and the policies of the managerial state. While Gottfried argues, perhaps accurately enough, that Protestantism harbors inherent tendencies toward guilt and repentance for sin and the rejection of social hierarchies and authority in favor of individualism, he also tends to ignore the profoundly conservative and anti-liberal Protestant heritages of the American South, the pre-twentieth century Church of England, Prussian

Lutheranism, and South African Calvinism, among other expressions of Protestantism that fail to suit modern managerial ideological needs. What he seems to have identified is not so much “liberal Protestantism” as “liberalism” itself, which rejects authority and hierarchy explicitly, has succeeded in permeating virtually all Christian sects in the course of the last century, and has evolved into what the late Reviso Oliver dubbed the “sucedaneous religion” of the modern West that leads it to racial and cultural suicide. There is no special reason to blame Protestantism for this development and less reason to blame it than other forces.

Searching for such forces that help animate the managerial-therapeutic state’s war on Western culture, we should extend our inquiries to other religious and ethnic formations besides those of Protestants. If we are looking for the sources of the collective consciousness of “sins” such as “racism,” “sexism,” etc. and the systematic, politically enforced reconfiguration of American society, then the Jewish role in promoting racial egalitarianism, promoting feminism and subverting male social roles, instilling collective guilt, promoting mass immigration, and pushing multiculturalism (through Franz Boas and his disciples in anthropology, the civil rights movement, Freudian psychoanalysis, the Frankfurt School, any number of Marxist and New Left movements, Jewish feminist ideologues like Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Susan Sontag, pro-immigration lobbying by Jewish “public interest” groups and individual political figures, and the major architect of multiculturalism, Horace Kallen, not to mention the largely Jewish “neo-conservatism” of recent years) can hardly be ignored. Gottfried, however, does ignore it almost entirely, though he gives a casual and not very complimentary nod to Kevin MacDonald’s work, which he characterizes in a footnote as “methodologically uneven but occasionally illuminating.” (p. 42, n. 5; and see also p. 15, n. 21) In short, even if we grant, as Gottfried seems to think, that the managerial elite has no inherent tendency to wage war on traditional Western institutions and values and even if we resort to extraneous forces such as religious and theological movements, there are any number of such forces present in modern society that are at least as plausible as the “liberal Protestantism” Gottfried accuses.

Finally, Gottfried argues that “a transformation of the self-image of the majority population would have had to take place in order for the therapeutic state to have reached its present strength,” and it is the “altered religious consciousness that has affected Protestant majorities in the United States and in other Anglophone countries” that has brought about this transformation. Yet he also points out the “catastrophic” (his word) decline in mainline Protestant church membership and attendance and remarks that “More and more of the 58 percent of the American population consisting of churched Protestants are joining Fundamentalist and Evangelical denominations” in

protest of the liberalization of the mainstream churches. In other words, American Protestants, so far from having their religious consciousness altered by liberal Protestantism, are in fact fleeing it.

Moreover, it is not to my perception true that any "transformation of the self-image of the majority population" has taken place at all or that such a transformation is necessary for the dominance of the managerial state, even if the managerial state today is granted the power Gottfried attributes to it. Challenging the possibility of a nationalist, populist political reaction against the managerial regime, Gottfried remarks that "nothing connected to American nationalist politics resonates as strongly as the concern registered in polls about 'fighting discrimination in the workplace.' Not even quotas and affirmative action in education, issues that engage the entire American Right, have aroused a national opposition as noticeable as what is counterpoised on the other side." (pp. 116-17)

The main foundations for these claims that the bulk of the American population now embraces the anti-discrimination policies of the liberal managerial state (as well as mass immigration) are various opinion polls that Gottfried adduces, including one from 2000 showing that 53 percent of the public approves of the federal government "guarding against discrimination in hiring." But opinion polls often show different attitudes at different times, depending on how the questions are asked, and a mere 53 percent approval of what is an essential function of the managerial-therapeutic state is actually somewhat encouraging. Virtually all polls up to 2000 showed solid majorities favoring reduced immigration, but Gottfried uses one from that year that reported only 45 percent of the public favoring reduction as the basis of his claim that "a majority of Americans have become benignly indifferent to or positive about the government's immigration policy." (p. 144) Yet only four pages later he cites a Roper poll of 1996 that showed that 83 percent of the public favored reduced immigration. More recent polls since the 9/11 attacks have shown that a majority again favors reduction. It is likely that most respondents answer such polling questions not after long and deep reflection on and study of public issues but on the basis of vague associations, implanted images, and exposure to mounds of carefully selected information and misinformation about issues like race, affirmative action, and immigration. How reliable any polls on such issues can be for divining what "most" Americans "really" believe is questionable.

Yet in any case, it is not at all clear that Gottfried's assumption that such a transformation of the majority population is necessary for a therapeutic state to function is true. Elites and states function continuously in most societies, imposing policies to which most citizens have not actually consented and do not even understand. The manufacture and manipulation of "consent" by elites skilled in propaganda and public relations is the foundation of what the state does, not what its citizens really support. Indeed, if Gottfried were correct

in his analysis – that a majority of the population, influenced by their religious persuasions, has accepted the legitimacy and necessity of “curing” themselves and their institutions of various repressive pathologies – he would have largely removed most grounds for objecting to what is going on. If most Americans support multiculturalism, why object to it?

Gottfried’s reliance on liberal Protestantism as the animating force behind the managerial-therapeutic state’s war on traditional culture is one of the two main flaws in his thesis. The other main flaw in his argument is his conviction that the managerial state and those who run it are not driven so much by what he calls “calculation” of self-interest on the part of the elite as by “a Protestant culture of social guilt and of individuals ashamed of their collective past.” Such irrational motivations no doubt are always operative in any social or political group, but reaching for irrationalist explanations is never as persuasive as looking for perfectly rational reasons why an entire class thinks and behaves the way it does.

In the case of the managerial class in the Burnhamite analysis, such reasons are not hard to locate. The managerial elite as a whole shares a vested interest in making sure that political, economic, and cultural organizations are dependent on the skills that only the elite possesses. Unlike earlier elites in history, the managerial class does not depend on the transmission of property, power, or status through the family but on skills that cannot be inherited or passed on. Hence, institutions such as large accumulations of private property and the family are relatively unimportant to it. So are the specific identities that multiculturalism combats. As Burnham argued, the reach of managerial power is transnational and supranational; national boundaries, sovereignties, and identities present mainly obstacles to managerial power, and Burnham explicitly predicted the managerial movement away from traditional nation-states and toward supranational organization. For much the same reason, the managerial class is at best indifferent and actually hostile to most other specific identities such as those derived from class, ethnicity and race, religion, region, and gender. Managerial power is heightened by the eradication of such identities and by the triumph of a universalist ideology and ethic that celebrates such abstractions as “humankind.”

Movements like “multiculturalism,” which ostensibly defends the legitimacy of many different cultural and ethnic identities, would seem to be the opposite of the abstract universalism that the managerial system prefers, but in fact the main social and political function of multiculturalism as it is deployed in schools and government policies today is to undermine white, Christian, male-oriented, bourgeois values and institutions – those, in other words, that remain the principal institutional constraints on managerial reach and power. Despite a good deal of play with such ethnic heritages as those of American Indians, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, etc., the real “cultural” bonds that discipline these different groups are those created and deployed by the managerial regime – through government

bureaucracy, educational manipulation, mass routinization by the economy of managerial capitalism, and disciplining by the mass media. Managerial elites can clearly afford to patronize tribal, often paleolithic, practices such as musical styles, clothing, cuisine, and religious rituals; there is little danger that such folkways will seriously interfere with real managerial control and interests, and the elite neither expects nor desires them to do so. The main use of such diversions is to embarrass and discredit their Western counterparts as repressive, genocidal, boring, and uncreative, not really to elevate primitive and Third World cultural strains into the dominant culture created and controlled by the managerial class. The multiculturalist ideology promoted by the managerial regime is supposed to remain subordinate to and controlled by the “color-blind” universalism and egalitarianism that the regime also sponsors.

Yet Gottfried’s analysis, despite the flaws on which I have perhaps dwelled too much, remains a compelling one, and we can agree that even if “liberal Protestantism” is not the major animating force in the managerial regime, it is certainly capable of providing an influential ideological rationale and justification for managerial guilt-mongering, especially in cultural regions where a Protestant heritage remains prevalent. We can agree also that while the “managerial state” is by no means the only structure constructed and deployed for the pursuit of managerial power, it is the major one, and increasingly in both Europe and the United States, cultural and economic control and manipulation of mass society are dependent on the state itself. There are therefore points of congruence between Gottfried’s analysis of “managerial” power and that of Burnham.

Gottfried concludes his book with a warning that the multiculturalist and immigration policies of the managerial state may well be undermining its own power and the stability of the system it dominates (this is a major element in his argument that managerial policies reflect irrational motives rather than rational interests). Thus, the managerial state

will not benefit and may destroy that [managerial] order if the culture shifts in ways that diminish its control. If a certain kind of multiculturalism may have that effect, reasoning leaders will try to prevent it from destabilizing society. This has not happened with immigration: Short-term gain and ideological commitment have both driven the managerial class and its media and academic priesthood toward “empowering” those who live parasitically on multicultural institutions. Hispanic racialists, Third World patriarchs, and Mexican irredentists will likely eat up the present regime, if given the demographic chance. What will then ensue will not be a return to what the managerial state supplanted. At most a precarious truce may be struck, before the advocates of group rights resume their competition for power. (p. 147)

Of course, the managerial class would have a ready answer—that the Balkanizing forces against which Gottfried warns will themselves eventually be assimilated into the managerial stewpot, that managerial techniques of

social control will neutralize any such forces, that Gottfried exaggerates them anyway, and that anyone who mentions such problems is probably a “xenophobe,” if not an outright “racist.” Nevertheless, Gottfried has an entirely valid and indeed powerful point, that the dynamic of managerial power undermines its own regime. In particular, what he is alluding to in this passage is the emergence of a non-white and indeed anti-white racial consciousness among the immigrant populations and subcultures (though by no means confined to them) that does not yet fit into the managerial superculture and which has emerged in the course of the last century as an entirely independent force, the “rising tide of color,” the rebirth of non-white and anti-white racial consciousness on a mass scale.

As noted, it is of course the conceit of the managerial class that eventually the threat of Balkanization that such consciousness and the population streams that carry it will be “assimilated” into the superculture through application of its universalist policy of “color-blindness” and the disciplines of economic reward and that they present no long-term threat. What Gottfried is suggesting is that the emergence of Third World racial consciousness cannot be assimilated, that it is impervious to managerial bribery and manipulation, and that it presents a far more serious threat to the stability and functioning of the managerial regime than the masters of the regime realize or—given their ideology—are able to understand.

“Thinking these leaders govern through calculation disregards the fantasy aspect of their vision,” he writes on his last page. Perhaps so, though interest and the greed and lust for power that it engenders can blind ruling classes just as easily as fantasies. While Paul Gottfried has analyzed the irrational and fantasy aspects of managerial power admirably, he fails to dwell sufficiently on the obvious truth that no elite can come to power or remain in power unless its ideology and behavior allow for a considerable amount of accurate calculation of its power interests. The managerial class that has now become the dominant force in American and European societies is at least as calculating as any other in human history, and its power cannot be fully or accurately understood without grasping this truth.

---

*Samuel Francis is a nationally syndicated columnist, a contributing editor for **Chronicles** magazine, and Associate Editor of **The Occidental Quarterly**.*

---