



1. *On Liberal Elitism*
2. *Dr. Paul Gottfried's Talk on Nazi Germany*
3. *The Immortality of Wilfred Owen*

On Liberal Elitism

By FRED POLLEVICK
STAFF WRITER

Turn on Fox News between 8 and 11 p.m. and watch for an hour. There is a good chance that you will hear the words “liberal elitism.” Occasionally, liberal elitism is referred to as “northern” or “coastal” elitism, due to the locations (the Northeast and the West Coast) of these liberal elitists. While the Oxford English Dictionary has yet to define the term, resources such as the *Washington Post*, *National Review*, the Huffington Post, and the Independent have attempted to provide a definition. The most concrete definition I’ve found is from Wikipedia, which defines liberal elitism as “a pejorative term used to describe politically leftists, whose education had traditionally opened the doors to affluence and power and form a managerial elite.”

I found it interesting that this is, or has become, a pejorative term. What aspect of the term, as defined by Wikipedia, is inherently negative? Much of President Trump’s popularity came from his and others’ bashing of elites, calling for America to “drain the swamp.” The Daily Signal posted an article on July 31 this year, titled “The Liberal Elite Wants to Manage Our Lives. They Must Be Stopped.” These are only two examples of a widespread attack on liberal elitism. They sum up the feeling of many people in this country against liberal elites. That said, there should not be a war against liberal elites. Here’s why.

A republic structured like the United States needs a clear source of authority in its government. Whether that is manifested in a man like President Trump, who has no experience in the public sector, or a member of the “liberal elite” who has years of experience in public office or government, someone needs to provide government for our citizens. Abraham Lincoln, in his famous Gettysburg Address, stated: “government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” The sentiment resonates, but it was made at a time when half of the “people” were attempting secession by means of war. While we are not currently on the brink of civil disunion, there is a great divide in this country over a plethora of issues.

Unfortunately, not all voices will be represented in the government. That

is why liberal elitism needs to prosper in our nation. Since it is logistically impossible to represent every opinion, the ones that should count most are those that can create progress for the country. The ones that will bring the future in energy, the future in technology. Those are the views that most need to be heard, not the ones that try to restore, for example, the lesser energy potential and the outdated technology of coal country.

Enemies of the liberal elite often misconstrue higher education as a negative thing, but it is essential for governance.

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How else can a government rule if not with people who clearly understand its structure, as well as the mistakes and accomplishments of the past? As Ray Bradbury once said about education and books: “Without libraries what have we? We have no past and no future.” Humankind learns from its mistakes, especially by means of education, and corrects them for the future. In addition, what is wrong with people using their education to open doors to affluence and power? Have we, as Americans, not always taught that working hard and studying would reap awards? Have we not always taught that those who studied would come out ahead?

Washington needs liberal elitism because it was, actually, founded on what many would call liberal elitism. The Founding Fathers tended to be educated lawyers, and to one degree or another intellectuals, who were members of an elite class in the colonies. Sure, switch back and forth between liberal and conservative elites, but do not blame intellectuals because you are losing work to an illegal immigrant who has a better work ethic, or your outdated coal job has disappeared. Education, and the class of people known as “liberal elites,” are not the problem. Take it from Nelson Mandela, who said: “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Education, and these so-called “liberal elites,” will do a great deal to help the United States break the barriers to more progress and move forward into a hopeful future.

Dr. Paul Gottfried's Talk on Nazi Germany

By ALLISON ZUCKERMAN
STAFF WRITER

Amid peaceful protests, Dr. Paul Gottfried discussed his book *Fascism: The Career of a Concept* last week with Professor Alfred Kelly’s “Nazi Germany” class and interested guests. Gottfried introduced his lecture with brief commentary about both liberals’ and conservatives’ use of the label “fascist” to condemn either side of the political spectrum. According to Gottfried, the use of “fascism” as a label for any movement that is not derivative of Benito Mussolini’s Italian fascist movement is simply inaccurate.

He briefly discussed Adolf Hitler’s version of fascism, which was actually, according to Gottfried, an eclectic borrowing from both Stalinism and Italian fascism. His talk then continued with the concept of “generic fascism,” which he said can thrive only in a Roman Catholic society with a quasi-medieval corporatist economy. Leaders like Spain’s Francisco Franco and Portugal’s Antonio

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de Oliveira Salazar attempted to copy Mussolini’s system, but “generic fascism,” Gottfried said, only succeeds as a regime when there is complete state control.

He also criticized Jonah Goldberg’s assessment that fascism as a whole was a product of “the left.” He then discussed the use of Italian fascism as a model by other regimes, as both in Lebanon and in Tito’s Yugoslavia. These regimes copied Mussolini to an extent, he said, but ultimately weren’t really fascist because they lacked the Catholic-influenced corporatist theory that allowed fascism to thrive in Italy.

Historiographically speaking, Gottfried explained, most scholarly

continued on back

discussions of fascism reflect the political and cultural world of the scholars themselves rather than, with real accuracy, the ideological concept. When authors like Jonah Goldberg write about fascism, he said, they reveal more about themselves and the context in which they live than about fascism's history. He specifically mentioned the German historian Ernst Nolte, who argued that counter-revolutionary forces disguised themselves as part of the socialist left. Nolte also argued that anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany was almost an afterthought for that country's regime in comparison with its hostility to Bolshevism, an interpretation Gottfried very strongly disagreed with.

When Gottfried opened the discussion to questions, the topic quickly evolved from his presentation on fascism to a political and cultural discussion about the "Alt-Right." One student asked about labeling certain modern movements or political groups as

"fascists." The student asked for Gottfried's reaction to Richard Spencer's expressed admiration and idolization of Gottfried, also inquiring: If certain white nationalist or white supremacist groups were behaving in, or advocating for, a manner that resembles fascism, is it not fair to call them fascists?

Gottfried responded by strongly disparaging white supremacists like Spencer. He then added that the Alt-Right is no real political threat. Referring to them as fascists is not only historically inaccurate, Gottfried said, but also gives them much more credit for political strength and influence than they deserve.

Unfortunately, much of the question period strayed far from Gottfried's topic of fascism. In a comment to Gottfried, one student referenced an article from the *Guardian* about an Italian police officer who terrorized a town during Mussolini's rule,

although Gottfried was unfamiliar with the story. Gottfried made a comment at one point about how he disagrees with the Nuremberg Trials of German war criminals after World War II and with what he views as show trials in general, but this topic was sidetracked by another discussion of current events, when one student distractingly brought up the Las Vegas shooting, engaging him in a conversation about the historical or moral impact of violent crimes and large-scale traumatic events.

Paul Gottfried's presence on campus certainly generated substantial dialogue about current political and cultural movements in the United States. While he made interesting historical arguments about Italian fascism and various attempted imitations of that ideology and regime, they seemed to take second place to more contemporary questions about current politics and ideologies.

The Immortality of Wilfred Owen

By CLAIRE ANASTASIA KITZ
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Few literary commentators would dispute that Wilfred Owen was one of the greatest war poets of the last hundred years. He wrote from personal experience as a British soldier in World War I. Surprisingly, these poems were written in just over a year, and of those he fought with, few knew he had such a gift.

He volunteered in October 1915, trained for a year, and was sent to the front in late December of 1916. He fought stoically but succumbed to shell shock in 1917 and was sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital in Scotland to recover. He returned to his regiment in June of 1918 and was awarded the Military Cross for bravery while under fire in Amiens, France. He was killed on November 4 of that year, while attempting to cross a canal near the village of Ors, France, with his men. He was 25 years old. His parents were notified of his death on the day the war ended, November 11, 1918.

Owen had credibility as a war poet because he had lived the life of a soldier. He understood what it was like to be in battle amidst the appalling conditions, fear, and blood-soaked horror. Though in many ways he was an unexpected warrior, he was ill-suited to combat (who isn't?) He was slight of build and introverted, put his head in books, was profoundly religious, and was repulsed by the coarseness of men in the trenches. Nevertheless, he felt it was his duty to fight.

In his poetry, Owen raised profound ethical questions about the conduct of the

war – the cruel indifference that seemed prevalent—and the war itself. Having seen the carnage firsthand, he believed World War I was the first conflict in which technological advance and new industrial capability made the noise deafening, chaos and atrocities usual things, and the killing efficient. Mechanization effectively rendered heroic action almost void of meaning, and produced a protracted and shamelessly conducted war.

His book of poetry on the war was published posthumously in December 1920. His friend, soldier and fellow poet Siegfried Sassoon, wrote the introduction. He believed Wilfred Owen was the conduit or channel by which the war's dead could truthfully speak to the living. He understood that Owen

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successfully transmitted, through his poetic verse, the grotesque and unparalleled calamity that was World War I. Owen explored, through stark and garish representations, the psychological toll of so much violence and destruction on the human psyche and soul after the gallant marches, parades, dramatic bluster, and propaganda had wilted.

In several of his most compelling war poems, he focused on infantrymen who froze in the trenches, were blinded by mustard gas, wished for death as a release, had nightmares or hallucinations because of sleep deprivation, injury, or mental exhaustion. In

his poetry, he revealed that rest often held no relief. With sleep arose haunting visions and fantastical images that interpreted the current hysteria and dreadfulness. Owen's story and poetry confirmed the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus's lament: "And even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God."

His poem "Strange Meeting" – T. S. Eliot considered it his masterpiece – fit that mold. Thematically, it was frightening and personal. Owen focused on the hollowness, the lives cut short, and the pity of it all. "Strange Meeting" was meant to be lyrically jarring and never far from denoting dissonance, fear, or misery. The poem was not maudlin or consoling, but a requiem for the dead. It was a lament for the lost and disheartened soldier, and for those left behind to pick up the pieces. It was about countless deaths, recognition, futility, and waning light: "I am the enemy you killed, my friend. / I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned / Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed. / I parried, but my hands were loath and cold. / Let us sleep now ..." As we might expect, "Strange Meeting" was sophisticated in its construction and technically complex. Owen used literary devices such as personification, metaphor, and the pairing of similar consonants with dissimilar vowels to express the melancholy, the extreme otherness, and the heartbreak of war. The poem was written in iambic pentameter. For its author, simple rhymes were one-dimensional and would have failed to convey, in their tone, the atmosphere and the great toll of war.

Read Wilfred Owen's poems such as "Strange Meeting" and prepare to be stunned by their power, judgment, and beauty of language.

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CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

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