



## Episode 1,381: I've Been Wrong About Right and Left

Guest: Paul Gottfried

**WOODS:** As I just got done telling you, although I didn't tell you the real punch line here, I did an episode on left and right a couple of weeks ago, and it has left me thinking ever since then. I've been rolling the ideas around in my mind, and I think I've come to a conclusion, and the conclusion is that I honestly think I've been wrong about something, consistently wrong in the way I look at the world for a long time. And the area where I've been wrong is I have spoken up there being a left-to-right spectrum. And I now believe that the word spectrum is not correct. That's just a category mistake.

Now, if all we were talking about is, on one side, we have people who don't favor much government involvement, and on the other side, we have people who favor a lot, then obviously, mathematically, I could construct some kind of spectrum there, right? But since I don't believe that's fundamentally what differentiates left and right, I therefore don't think it's a spectrum. I think either you are, for example, on the left, or you're not. Either you accept the presuppositions of the left to one degree or another, or you're not. I don't see how it's a spectrum of, okay, you're entirely left, then you're only 90% left and you agree with me 10%. You either have my worldview or you don't, is more or less what I believe now. Do you think I'm right about that?

**GOTTFRIED:** I think you're entirely correct. I think there is – let's see. There is a leftist worldview. It's based on equality and a homogenized humanity. I think it's one point that Leo Strauss got right when he tried to define what was the right and what was the left. The right rejects those beliefs. It does not believe in a universal state. It does not believe that all human beings are the same, except perhaps in a Judeo-Christian spiritual sense in that they have souls and should be treated with a certain dignity.

But the right does not feel any imperative, whatever, to equalize the human condition. And it also revels in social, ethnic, and other forms of diversity, and that is what distinguishes it from the from the left. I have had a problem over the years, because I see right as being instantiated in different forms in different places. If someone were to ask me, is a 19th century – someone like Joseph de Maistre, is he a man of the right? He definitely is. But then if you were to ask me, was the poet Wallace Stevens a man of the right, or Faulkner? When Faulkner, I'd have to say yes. Although the question is, what exactly do they agree about politically? And I think at the end of the day, I would say that they both accepted human difference as a necessary and good thing. They had no desire to homogenize people. They accepted racial, cultural, gender differences as being real. And in many cases, they defended these things. So this would make them figures of the right, even if they defended different political systems in different places. This is a point that David Gordon and I have been

discussing for 30 years. Can you be a libertarian and be on the right? And can you be an authoritarian and be on the right? And the answer was yes, depending on the particular circumstances that you're addressing and the historical situation in which you find yourself.

**WOODS:** All right, this is a very interesting answer. In fact, I heard the answer you gave, because I'd been listening some of your stuff. I heard the talk you gave on "How the Left Conquered the Right," which is a very provocative title. It was recently linked to on Bob Wenzel's website, Target Liberty, and so when it was recently linked to, I thought it must have been your most recent talk. And it turns out it was from 2011.

**GOTTFRIED:** [laughing] It never changes.

**WOODS:** It never changes. Right, you could have given it yesterday.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right.

**WOODS:** But I found it very interesting that your first response about what the right is all about was, you said, hierarchy of some kind –

**GOTTFRIED:** Right.

**WOODS:** Of *some* kind. And then, in general, some form of opposition to Equality with a capital E.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right, exactly.

**WOODS:** So in other words, you might accept it in the sense that you mentioned, but otherwise, with a capital E, as an engine of revolution, absolutely not. Now, at the same time, one point that I raised in a recent episode was that, in the American context, there are no official hierarchies. Jefferson spoke of a natural kind of aristocracy that he might have favored, but that didn't have any state privileges, but that nevertheless, might be recognized by the general public. So doesn't that indicate that in the American case, there's kind of been a left – I don't know what the word would be – a leftening of this general right-wing principle.

**GOTTFRIED:** Yeah, I think that is certainly true. I think there is a case of American exceptionalism. This is not, however, mean the United States has always been committed to the left, but it's had less of a conservative character than European countries once did. I would, however, point to the fact that certainly in antebellum America and even well into the 20th century, you do have organic hierarchies within American communities. Even when I grew up, we knew who were the important people and which were the important families, and they had a certain amount of social privilege. And people certainly accepted that. There were certainly were strong gender roles that were maintained legally and socially, so that the leveling effect that we're now seeing does not necessarily come out of the conditions of an earlier America.

**WOODS:** I think a lot more, though, does go into the – if we want to say there is an outlook on the world, maybe not a – you know, with a tip of the hat to Russell Kirk, maybe not an ideology or a program, certainly, but nevertheless, a feature of their outlook on the world is

somewhat but not entirely captured in the word subsidiarity. But the general idea that although a monk may feel like he has an obligation – or let's say a missionary, rather, or a mendicant friar may have a generalized obligation to the entire world, those people are carrying out what the Catholic Church call super erogatory works that generally don't – it would be irresponsible of you as the father of a household to be over in Burkina Faso helping people, because you have a set of obligations that are a series of concentric circles. And those obligations are greater the closer that people are to you. And you can find scriptural support for that if you're looking for it. But the point is that the right wing does not say I have not only a generalized obligation to the world, but certainly no obligation to socially engineer other parts of the world. This would be completely foreign to the way he looks at things.

And now, I'm not saying this is always the case. I'm absolutely not saying this is always the case, because when my friend Bob Murphy did go and do some volunteer work in Haiti, he reported back to me that he genuinely met some people who don't just spend their time screaming in the street, but actually picked up a pickaxe or whatever it is they work with and went to work, and they genuinely were being selfless in that regard. But there are so many cases of people who sing about the happiness of the world, and how much they want to bring that about, but are terrible in their own individual cases. Like John Lennon could sing all these beautiful songs, but man, was he an SOB to his first son. That's his main obligation, and Julian was given the back of his hand for years and years. Or Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Oh, man, there's an earthquake in Lisbon, he's all tears and pity. How's he treating his own children? So I think that's another right-wing thing.

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, but I think that the left has gone well beyond professing this spurious cosmopolitan humanitarianism. I think what you see now is that the left openly expresses hatred for its own ethnic, gender group, whatever. A majority of people graduating from college now express absolute hatred for the white race, particularly the whites. Men come out and express hatred for their gender. I think what we're seeing is sort of a pathological extreme of this earlier, shall we say, bogus cosmopolitanism that you find in Jean-Jacques Rousseau and other people who profess love of the human race but treat their own families badly. I think now you see absolute hatred for one's own group. And this, to me, is really remarkable, because the left has never been this crazy in history, and it is hard for me to imagine how people really think this way.

**WOODS:** Let me get a little bit more specific from you about what do you think it means to want to homogenize people or societies?

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, I mean, what you want to do is have everybody live within the same culture. You want to end any distinctions, human distinctions as they've existed until now. For instance, there'll be no racial distinctions. There'll be no gender distinctions, because you'll be free to change your gender at any time you want. You could say I'm a man today; I'll be a woman tomorrow. And this leveling, homogenizing process that we see taking place, I think, is another form of *reductio ad absurdum*, in terms of what the left believes, that there will be no fixed identities that distinguish people from each other, or any identity that you have is one that you can change at any time you want. There is no human nature, insofar as we decide to play a particular role at a particular time, which everybody else will then have to accept.

**WOODS:** How does the welfare state fit into this? You made a very interesting statement in your talk, because you were saying something that sounds like the opposite of what I hear

from a lot of libertarians, where they say politics is downstream of culture, that we have culture as this freestanding, spontaneously occurring phenomenon. And once those assumptions are shaped a certain way, politics tends to follow. But your argument seems to say more the opposite.

**GOTTFRIED:** The opposite, yes.

**WOODS:** First you have politics, and politics influences culture.

**GOTTFRIED:** Yes, no, I'm a political determinist that way. I think you cannot understand any of these bizarre developments that we're living through without assuming a democratic managerial state, which is allied to certain globalist, multinational interests, but which by itself has tremendous power in reshaping human beings. And I think that most libertarians and many leftists of my acquaintance, they're always yapping about, *Well, it's culture*, as if culture is a totally independent thing that just happens without any coercion being involved. And of course, there is a lot of coercion going on, when the government comes after you because you've behaved inappropriately or expressed the wrong views and so forth. So that I think that it is very important to start with politics. We may go on to other things and say that the media have influence, but the media is always egging on the state to take even more power, right? I mean, it's not that the media is taking a libertarian position, it wants to leave people alone. It wants the state to engage in increasing social engineering. So in this respect, the media simply is the crowd that incites the state to take even more control over our lives.

**WOODS:** Let me give maybe what might be – well, I don't know if it's a counterexample or not. Let's see how you would deal with it.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right.

**WOODS:** The case of marijuana decriminalization does seem to be a case where people did not need to be led by the media or the state. It did seem like the population was out ahead of both, and really, there was just suddenly a sea change in people's outlook on the question, and it would seem as if politics followed that.

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, I think in the case of the use of marijuana, is there's almost a kind of symbiotic relationship, that the state is itself committed to overturning traditional morals, and in this case, sort of to enacting aspects of the counterculture that existed in the 1960s. But at the same time, young people who go through the educational process that are exposed to the culture industry, have also taken over this view. So it's a kind of harmony of interests that we see taking place, in which the state is quite happy to legalize something, but it's legalized something which is going to make us less the way we used to be when America was in a bourgeois Christian country. We're going to look less the way America historically was, so therefore the state, which is engaged in constant social engineering, is delighted to give in on the demand for legalizing marijuana, just as it's very happy to go after people for smoking cigarettes or going after people who don't card you in the local store, because this is also a way of controlling our behavior. And cigarettes are bad, because ordinary, I suppose ethnic Catholics or blue-collar Protestants in the South, they're the ones who smoke cigarettes, so you're sort of going to punish them, while at the same time you glorify the marijuana culture.

**WOODS:** I want to ask you, if I may, a little something about the panel that you I guess chaired at the Mises Institute at their Austrian Economics Research Conference that I wanted to attend, but I had been out of town quite a bit and my kids were on spring break, and, just, my place was at home. A part of my heart was indeed in Auburn, but I got to see your panel. I agree with you. I thought Brion McClanahan was just great. I think he is very, very underrated, and he's very serious, and he's totally uncompromising. I mean, he just could not care less what they say about him. He is just going to speak his mind, and good for him.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right.

**WOODS:** But the topic of your panel was the interwar right, presumably in the US. And that interests me, because this is when you had an American right before there were – I mean, yeah, eventually there was the – I guess somewhat after the war, I don't remember the exact year, but there was the Foundation for Economic Education, but even that was hardly a think-tank. They weren't trying to influence public policy in any discernible way. This was a more, I don't know, innocent, disorganized, and idiosyncratic right, to the extent that it existed at all. But was there a right, and what would these people all about?

**GOTTFRIED:** I think it's a good question. If you're asking, was there a right, I think we're sort of searching for a right or searching for those attitudes that were characteristic of a certain group of mostly writers, you know, novelists, journalists, of the period that we could identify with the right. And I think there are figures who definitely represent rightist attitudes that are no longer acceptable. H.L. Mencken, of course, is an obvious case, but even a poet like Wallace Stevens, I think, would fit into that category. Certainly, Robert Frost.

The argument that I was making is that you have this sort of spontaneous emergence of a right that belongs to an older America, that's still part of an older America, even if people like Isabel Paterson claimed to be or presented themselves as rebels. And it's an older WASP America out of which these people come, one that longer even exists. I made one remark that WASPdom has sunk to the level of Bushes or Jeb Bush's or something like that. But you know, Stevens went to Harvard. He was a student of George Santayana, with whom he maintained an almost sort of lifelong correspondence. Ivy League universities still counted for something. When Nock went to Bard, it was still an identifiably Anglican or Episcopal college. Nock's also another very good example. I mean, he is clearly a man of the right, even if he sort of defends Jefferson not the democrat, but Jefferson the aristocrat. So I think what there was of an American conservative – by the way, even Isabel Paterson, who sees herself was a radical libertarian, writes a very incisive critique of liberal democracy. This is something I would never expect the conservative movement to do today. She would not be allowed on Fox News, because she would be too right-wing.

So I think sort of looking back at these people, it seems that there are figures we really can admire. There are figures, in many cases, who are overshadowed, politically overshadowed certainly, by the emergence of the Buckley movement and post-World War II *National Review* conservatism. Most of them just sort of sink into oblivion, except for some of their literary work, and we still read Wallace Stevens. We used to read – when I was in college, we had to read H.L. Mencken. Now he's considered to be a racist and an anti-Semite or whatever he's being called at the moment. I don't think anybody reads Isabel Paterson anymore. And the lady who produced *Little House on the Prairie* has now fallen into disfavor because she didn't hold what are now politically correct views about Native Americans. But sort of going back and looking – and I'm not even including the Southern Agrarians, about whom Brion spoke.

They certainly qualify as conservatives or as men of the right by our shared definition of the right.

So I think there is a good deal to be found in – by the way, one of the reasons I became interested in this is precisely because these people sink into obscurity, and I only became interested in them, by the way, after I'd met Murray Rothbard. I hardly ever read them before, except for Wallace Stevens, whom we were assigned as a poet when I was in college. And Robert Frost, I also – I had no idea what the politics of Frost were until my now deceased friend Peter Stanlis wrote a biography of Frost and discussed his politics with me.

**WOODS:** All right, let's talk practicality for a minute. Now, the conservative movement has latched on to the Republican Party. That's obvious. And so therefore, what's acceptable to say in the conservative movement – that's not the only reason, but one reason that some things aren't acceptable to say, even things as modest as, "We really need to cut the budget pretty severely," really, no one's really saying that anywhere in the conservative movement. Even something like that, even they even their own principle, they don't really even utter, because it would make it hard for their candidates to get elected. So all right, the conservative movement would be somewhat different, maybe not a lot different, but somewhat different, if it didn't feel like it had to be respectable for the sake of the palatability of the Republican Party to the American public.

So let's say now something about the Republican Party, which for better or worse is the closest thing in the political sphere anybody has to a right. And man, the left thinks this is a right wing, a radical right wing. And I think to myself, man, if you want to see a radical right wing, you could get it, but I guarantee you'd be begging to get these people back. I mean, of all people to say that about. But given that the American people – you said in your talk that Charles Krauthammer had said, *look, the American people are conservative, they've been conservative for the past 50 years, and they haven't changed.* How you could have lived through the last 50 years believing that is just beyond me. You'd have to be absolutely delusional. Of course, they're not conservative, and of course, their minds have changed. So in light of that, in light of the fact that that statement is false, they're not primarily conservative and their minds have not changed, what on earth would you propose that a politician seriously advance if he wants to be successful?

**GOTTFRIED:** I think our options are extremely limited. Taking a look at the politics of college graduates, particularly women, white women, I am appalled by how far to the radical crazy left they have moved. I'm not sure what one could do at this time, except argue for decentralization, if that's still possible. And I'm not even sure what that means at this point, because you have college-educated women who are leftists in Alabama and Mississippi, as well as in New York City. But I would call for cutting budgets. I would call for decentralization. Anything that disempowers the central government is something that I would call for. One thing that I would definitely call for is a reduction in military expenses. I think the military is something which seems, in addition to the Republican Party, to drive the conservative movement. It seems to be a diversion – an enemy of the weak seems to be a diversion from all these internal problems that we're suffering from.

The political leader, the congressional leader I admired most was this Jones, the man who was from North Carolina who died a few months ago. He seemed to take the right positions on everything. Unfortunately, he became a fossil by the end of his life. But I think most of the positions that he took on foreign policy, particularly, were correct. I would be very happy if

our president were Rand Paul rather than Trump, because I agree more with his constitutionalism and sense of fiscal responsibility.

But getting back to the question, at this point, I don't know. What chances remain to turn things around, they've all gone too far in too radical of a direction for too long.

**WOODS:** All right, well, here's a question that I think you'll find a lot easier to answer. And these can be from as recently as yesterday or as long ago as you like. But if you were to recommend, let's say, three to five books to somebody who listens to what you're saying and is very sympathetic and wants to know more — I'll get to Gottfried books in a minute, but let's say non-Gottfried books that you think would be the most helpful in getting this person's head on straight: what would you recommend?

**GOTTFRIED:** That is a good question. It's a good question, because I'm not sure how the reader would relate to something that I offered — if I said read Spengler's *Decline of the West* or Gibbon's *Decline of the Roman* — what effect will this have on the person reading it? There is a book that I reviewed for *The American Conservative*, and except for all the Jaffaite garbage in it, it is very good in discussing how an all-powerful government developed under the supposed aegis of Congress, which has not done its bit, by John Marini. And if you can read past all the Jaffaite junk, which he probably had to put in there in order to get the Claremont Institute to support his book, it is very good on the growth — Another book that I like, by the way, is your book, the one on economics and the depression. I think you're right about the direction in which we are moving. I think there will be ruination because of government spending in the end. I don't know whether this is going to get people to change their minds about government expenses.

Just about any book that has come out on the cultural revolution in the United States — gay rights, transgender, the gay agenda, feminism — any critical work that has come out on this, I would recommend. One of the things that I find absolutely frightening is that the Republican Party refuses to address the cultural, social radicalism of the Democratic Party. Instead, it yaps about Marxism all the time, or, *We are on the road to socialism* as if we weren't on the road to socialism for the last hundred years or something. We're on the road to socialism. What about transgendered bathrooms? What about the feminist movement? All the things that are destroying the family, and which the state is imposing. They don't want to take those things on, because they're afraid of losing yuppie votes or offending the Republican Party? And any book that you can recommend to me on that, I would recommend as compulsory reading from my friend, my hypothetical friend.

**WOODS:** I know what you mean by hypothetical friends. You don't mean that in real life, you have no friends; you mean in this particular case —

**GOTTFRIED:** [laughing] In this particular case, right.

**WOODS:** I was calling out of the air that there would be a hypothetical person, right, right. Okay, now you've written quite prolifically, and as an author, I don't like to privilege one of my books over another. That's a case where sometimes I do believe in equality. I want people to read them all.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right.

**WOODS:** But there may be some that are more easily grasped, let's say, by the lay reader than others. I could certainly say that about my own books. So of the Gottfried collection, what would you recommend to the beginner?

**GOTTFRIED:** *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt*, without any doubt.

**WOODS:** I remember that.

**GOTTFRIED:** That book is the most accessible of all the books that I've written. It can be grasped by a popular readership in a way that some of my other books cannot.

**WOODS:** I remember your book on — oh, geez, I'm sorry, I can't remember the title. It's my middle-aged brain at work again. But it was the one about the movement of the left, the strange death of —

**GOTTFRIED:** Oh, yeah, that's a very relevant book. It was just reissued by the publisher, and it's *The Strange Death of Marxism* —

**WOODS:** That's what it is.

**GOTTFRIED:** Yeah, in which I make the argument that the left is no longer primarily Marxist. It's culturally radical and very successful in a way that Marxists could not be in Western countries.

**WOODS:** But the reason I bring it up is that if that book — you can tell that's written by an intellectual historian. That was written, I think, at a very high level.

**GOTTFRIED:** It was.

**WOODS:** It was not really written as an entry-level text for the general public. But *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Guilt* certainly is. And I've reviewed several of your books, I think I reviewed that one, but if I did, it would have been in my sprightly youth when I could actually remember things I had written.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right, I'm now writing a book, two books. One is on anti-fascism, in which I discuss the struggle between populism and anti-fascist. That's sort of at the core of the book. Then there's another one; it's a critical anthology on the conservative movement, which Cornell University Press will be bringing out, which deals with why the conservative movement is a fake conservative movement, something that neither one of us would have to be convinced of.

**WOODS:** No doubt. So do you have any idea of a release date on these?

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, it will be some sometime in the course of this year. I don't know exactly when. I'm actually much more interested in the book on antifascism, because antifascism seems to be the current ideology of the Western world, even though there is no fascism around. It's like fighting something that doesn't exist or is just a vestigial presence right now. But it does serve to keep the left united, and the enemy that they're attacking now is mostly

the populist movement, which I suggest in the book does not have the strength to prevail in most Western countries.

**WOODS:** I'm trying to think of one final thing, because we're up against the time that I've basically committed.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right.

**WOODS:** Yeah, you know what? I am going to – yeah, and it's not fair for me to end on this note, but I'm going to do it anyway. We've talked about fascism before because you've written a book on that, and I do want to at least try to approximate what these people who complain about fascism, what – I mean, if we're being as charitable as possible, charitable to a degree they couldn't possibly deserve, here's what I can come up with. They would say they look around the world and they see a resurgence of nationalism, authoritarianism, and a belief in an authoritarian leader, and, let's say, beefed-up immigration controls. And actually, I don't even know what it is other than those things. I think it's mainly those things.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right, right.

**WOODS:** Well, if that's not fascism, then is it a phenomenon that we could nevertheless give some name to just for analytical purposes?

**GOTTFRIED:** Yes, I think the word populism definitely fits. And there's a book by Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin that came out on populism, which is very good at. It basically does make the argument that there is not much connection, really there's no connection, in fact, fascism and the current populism that the authors can find, but they also reach, I think, the excessively happy conclusion that, at the end of the day, the populist and liberal democratic establishment will make peace. I see no evidence of that happening. But I think the left always needs some kind of devil that it can fight against, because like the fascists in Italy in the 1920s and like the communists, they are always a movement that hasn't arrived in power. So they haven't arrived in power because they're battling some overwhelming evil force, and the overwhelming evil force is populism or Donald Trump or something like that. This is true of all revolutionary movements, that even when they take power, they become the state. They never want to admit they're the state. They're still fighting some fearsome enemy who may have the upper hand. And this is what I think the war against fascism – the people who have the power, they're the elites, and the academic drones are the ones who are talking about how the fascists control the state, when in fact, they are the ones who control the state and the economy and the culture –

**WOODS:** Yeah, and the culture. Yeah, but they're the ones who live in fear of repression. That is absolutely crazy [laughing].

**GOTTFRIED:** It is.

**WOODS:** That's just crazy to me.

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, some do live in fear of repression, I think, but others are just using it as a tactic to consolidate and maintain power.

**WOODS:** Well, how many of them have conferences where they don't dare wear name tags or they won't allow photographs in the conference room? I'm not mentioning – I raised this example, purely hypothetically, Paul Gottfried, but I mean, really.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right, right.

**WOODS:** Nobody on the left thinks, *Oh, my gosh, if people find out I'm a socialist*. If they find out you're a socialist, it'll be like, hey, you're one of the chic people who really gets it and is woke.

**GOTTFRIED:** And if you're a black racist, you do very, very well, don't you? I mean, they invite you to conferences. You have white people getting up and attacking the white race the way they did at Al Sharpton's conference last week.

**WOODS:** Oh, geez, yeah.

**GOTTFRIED:** So racism is not bad as long as you're an anti-white racist.

**WOODS:** I was just seeing a headline on Drudge calling him some kind of a kingmaker among the Democratic candidates. Isn't that astonishing that anyone would have so little dignity as to go hat in hand to, of all people, Al Sharpton? My favorite headline – I've said this before, but *The New York Post* sometimes, for all its faults, will sometimes come up with a good front-page headline.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right.

**WOODS:** And the headline was – or actually, this might not have been a front-page headline, but it was one of theirs. It was "Sharpton: It's Racist to Investigate My Taxes." [laughing] And I just thought, that just sums him up.

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, he actually said it.

**WOODS:** Oh, if he actually said those very words, then I take it back. It's just a middling headline in that case.

**GOTTFRIED:** It's a middling headline, exactly.

**WOODS:** He's doing the work for them.

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, what's scary is the people who went there and kissed his ring and groveled and said that, in effect, white lives don't matter are ahead in the polls for the presidential race.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**GOTTFRIED:** I mean, this is scary. I mean, these people are either totally unprincipled opportunists or just leftist maniacs. But they could win. Any of them could win the presidential race unless things turn around dramatically.

**WOODS:** Yeah, honestly, I don't know. On the other hand, a lot of people had trouble predicting what was going to happen in 2016. I can't remember. Did you predict Trump's victory or not?

**GOTTFRIED:** I did. I did predict Trump's victory, yes. I'm not so sure about next year.

**WOODS:** Yeah, it's hard to say. It's hard to say. I mean, obviously, if the economy stays strong, he's got a much better chance. I mean, what could be more pedestrian observation than that?

**GOTTFRIED:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** But sometimes he's his own worst enemy. Sometimes he – like, did you read the story – I'm sorry. I'll let you go in a second; I'm sorry. But I just saw – it's just like we're having a conversation here. I forget that the recording is on. Did you see that story about how he decided to acknowledge Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights?

**GOTTFRIED:** No.

**WOODS:** It was that he said to a few people in his staff, all of whom had a vested interest in the situation: hey, listen, guys, I've got a lot to do here, China, North Korea, whatever. Give me a quick history lesson on this. Make it quick. And they spoke to him for a few isolated minutes. He said: all right, bam, we're doing it. See, that's a bad – that is not a good quality. That right there is not a good quality. To go against the position of the US for a long time – and by the way, the position of the US for a long time on a lot of things may well be bad, and maybe we do want somebody who will change them, but will change them after actually knowing what's happening over there.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right. No, I think you're right, yeah.

**WOODS:** Ah, geez, all right. Well –

**GOTTFRIED:** He is a very poor standard bearer for the right that he's supposed to be, and he never opens his mouth without my feeling the urge to cringe or beginning to cringe. I don't think I've ever heard him utter a complete sentence unless he's reading from a teleprompter. He is an embarrassment. But the people on the other side are absolutely repulsive. Elizabeth Warren seems to be polling better right now than Donald Trump.

**WOODS:** That's not good, but on the other hand, it will be interesting to see what happens on that debate stage, because he could regenerate the enthusiasm by just – because I mean, I don't see how, no matter how – the problem is Warren is wonkish, and she, I think in spite of the best efforts of her advisors, will continue to be wonkish on a debate stage, and he will steamroll wonkish. If he's up against Bernie, then he just makes Bernie out to be a doddering old man. Makes some jokes about – Bernie has no sense of humor, so Bernie will just bark something back at him that'll be ineffectual.

**GOTTFRIED:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** So maybe that works. I don't know. Against Joe Biden, well, I mean, if he's up against Joe Biden, he's got to just make the nickname Creepy Joe Biden and just call him that all the time. Creepy Joe Biden.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right, right, but it is obscene that the only way that a president can holding his office against these people who are maniacs on cultural and social questions is by playing some kind of game in a debate.

**WOODS:** I know. Look, I know. [laughing]I'm just going with the cards that are on the table here. I don't know what else to do.

**GOTTFRIED:** [laughing] Bad ones. They're all low-number of cards, and they don't match.

**WOODS:** No, that's right. That's right. It looks like we have a 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 in our hand, but I'm trying to bluff the best I can and use every other strategy I've learned. All right, Paul, thanks for this, because as I say, I just wanted to talk through a few things, because I was left reeling when it suddenly occurred to me I'm looking at this all wrong.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right, it was a very stimulating hour. Thanks for having me on.