



**Episode 977: Left, Right, and Charlottesville, with Paul Gottfried**

**Guest: Paul Gottfried**

**WOODS:** You bear a tremendous responsibility, Paul. You are the person I go to for sanity in crazy times.

**GOTTFRIED:** [laughing] Thank you.

**WOODS:** All right, so I don't — the whole situation right now is very volatile, and I'm not super optimistic about really anything. I'm not optimistic about any aspect of the right right now, which is a complete mess. The left is much better organized, and the right — white nationalism is not about to take over the right. If you're going to so-called "unite the right," it's not going to be on that principle. That is just a fact. Even though the hysterics on the left think that's on the verge of happening. Or they think every Republican basically is a white nationalist. I don't understand what world they inhabit. That is the last thing these people are.

But we were talking before we went on about what you were saying with regard to the conservative movement and its strategy of triangulation. I'd like you to elaborate on that.

**GOTTFRIED:** Yeah, something dawned on me after writing about the American conservative movement since the 1980s that, at least since the time that the neoconservatives took over the American right and perhaps possibly even going back to the time when Bill Buckley created his own version of the American right back in the 1950s, there has been a tendency among members or leaders of the establishment right to exclude everybody to the right of themselves, attack them as fascist or anti-Semites, even if they threw them out of the conservative movement for other reasons, and at the same time, try to build sort of respectable or amicable relations with the center-left.

At the same time, of course, they appropriate the ideas of the people they have thrown out or the groups they've thrown out, so that a few days ago, Rich Lowry, who may be one of the greatest plagiarists in history, had something on the "Stupid Party," which had clearly been taken from Sam Francis. But he never would acknowledge Francis. He seems to have — he's also plagiarized an entire column from me, which almost identical column had appeared on *The American Conservative* website 24 hours earlier.

So this is a common strategy of plundering the people on the right whom they're excluding but at the same time maintaining good relations with the center-left. And it's basically what I say is a strategy of triangulation. You kick out one side of the debate, but then you try to take over some of their ideas while trying to ingratiate yourself with the center-left. You know, hence the eagerness of Fox News to have leftists on their program, including leftists who identify themselves with Black Lives Matter and the anti-fascists. They would not invite us onto their program. At the same time, they will represent some of our ideas. So they've been pursuing this strategy I think for probably the last 30 to 40 years, maybe longer.

What's happening now is it doesn't work anymore, and this is one of the happy signs of our times. Even as the left is consolidating its power and the left becomes crazier and crazier and more and more totalitarian every day, the triangulating conservative movement I think, God willing, will fall apart. Because there's no way they can contain their left wing, which I think is the dominant wing, which is now going crazy attacking Trump as a neo-Nazi, attacking *Breitbart*, attacking anyone who notices that the anti-fascist left had something to do with the riot in Charlottesville. And then there are other people, I suppose more centrist conservatives like Tucker Carlson and others, who do seem to be aware. And even Ben Shapiro and Guy Benson, who I hardly consider to be right-wing stalwarts, seem to be aware that there are problems with the left and the anti-fascist left may in fact be much more dangerous than the white nationalists, which I think is indeed the case.

So I'm not sure that this triangulation can go on much longer. It's very clear reading *The New York Post* every day that they sound exactly like the hysterical left on what happened in Charlottesville. The major enemy is white nationalism and the alt-right, and we are to treat these things as greater threats to our democracy than ISIS. I heard somebody say this, someone from *The Weekly Standard* on Julie Bandersas' interview show on Fox. So it can be very hard I think to maintain stability — Also, the piece that came out yesterday by Rich Lowry, which basically seconded the NAACP and called for the removal and junking of all Confederate statues in the United States, Confederate memorial statues. This kind of thing may be a bit too much, even for the average geriatric viewer of Fox News who's a subscriber to *National Review*. I think they may have gone too far, these people, in trying to accommodate the left.

**WOODS:** Well, we can hope. I mean, there are so many responses I want to make, but first I want to talk about trying to judge the relative severity of the problem of the Antifa left and the white nationalist right, because we're supposed to — If I'm going by the newspapers, I'm supposed to be really, really worried about a march with 400-500 people. I mean, I'm supposed to be worried about that. But those people — here's why I'm not worried about it. Those people are vastly outnumbered by the left, vastly, to the point where they're not even a speck of dust floating in the air.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right.

**WOODS:** Secondly, they have zero sympathy in the entertainment world, in the academic world, in the media, in popular culture. No one in his right mind who wants to keep his job would even say they had the right to have the march, so they have nothing to build on. Whereas the left has every privilege. The Antifa group is being portrayed now as heroic folks who just simply — they're just innocently opposing

racism and bigotry. That is the — Mitt Romney expressly described them in a tweet the other day, John McCain the same way. These are just people who are against bigotry and racism. You'd have to have an IQ of 53 to think that's the depth of the issue there. So either that, or you're a member of the Republican Party. Either one. But that's insane that you would have that. So that's why — People might want to know, why don't you denounce these people more? I don't see that this is a big deal.

**GOTTFRIED:** I agree.

**WOODS:** I really don't think they're a big deal. What traction are they going to get? I understand that they're on social media and they're influential there, and I do understand also when they say, Look, the conservative movement sure hasn't accomplished anything so they have no right to lecture us about not having specific accomplishments. I get that. The conservative movement hasn't accomplished anything except raising a lot of money for the purpose of sitting around and doing nothing. I grant them that. But what are they going to accomplish when all is said and done? I don't see what the path forward is.

**GOTTFRIED:** I totally agree. In fact, I wrote a piece for *The American Conservative* website this morning making exactly this point, that however obnoxious the neo-Nazis are, they're not at the point of taking over the United States. They have nothing like the power and traction of the anti-fascist left, and we have to be realistic about which totalitarian group is likely to take over. And right now, the anti-fascist left, the cultural Marxist left, as I call them, are taking over every Western democracy. They run the media. They run the educational establishment. They run the deep states. The other side has been totally marginalized. So if we're sort of looking at the balance of power, the white nationalists and the neo-Nazis have none. They have no power.

**WOODS:** I'm going to direct people — Maybe I'll have Keith Preston on, but I'm definitely going to link on the show notes page to — this is Episode 977, [TomWoods.com/977](http://TomWoods.com/977) — to Keith Preston's analysis, which I'm going to send you after we finish.

**GOTTFRIED:** Okay, that's fine.

**WOODS:** Because if people just want to get a good sense of the whole Charlottesville thing, he's got some really good reflections on it. What I find also disturbing now is that — we've started to see this in the past year, but it is accelerating faster than you can believe. In the old days, if you strayed a bit from conventional opinion, even if you wanted enterprise zones in the inner-cities, you were called a racist. That was the best thing they had, was "racist." Now it's you're a white supremacist and they are throwing the word Nazi around all over the place. And in fact, the other day — and I told you this before we went on, but I had Patrick Schumacher on, who's a big architect in England, runs a huge firm there. And he's being compared to the Nazis for opposed to urban planning when the Nazis favored urban planning. So the facts of the matter don't even count. They're just simply trying to destroy people with this language.

**GOTTFRIED:** Yeah, which, by the way, they took over from the communists. This is one, one might say, successful transmission of a Marxist-Leninist tradition. This is exactly what the East German government would do. No matter what you said, you were a Nazi. And we do the same thing. In some respects, of course, the cultural Marxist left, which I think is the great danger in Western countries, is different from traditional Marxism, a point I've made in a number of books. But it also builds on the totalitarian tradition created by other revolutionary lefts. And here I think you can see the continuity of tradition that's most clearly evident in the practice of calling anyone who disagrees with you a Nazi or – and they're also anti-Semites, right? This is another term we picked up from the communist and pro-communist left in Europe. Obviously, if you're against gay marriage, you're also an anti-Semite, even though gay relations are explicitly condemned in Hebrew Scripture. But that doesn't seem to make any difference.

**WOODS:** Meanwhile, we've got a group of libertarians beating their breasts who've composed a petition, and people who haven't found out about this should be on my email list because I already wrote about this. But they've compiled a petition trying to show that, look, libertarians aren't fascists, everybody, and we just want to distance ourselves from the people in Charlottesville. And I thought, how pathetic to degrade yourself in that way. If you are – See, part of the problem is that these people base their libertarianism on flighty nothingness, but if you're based in the nonaggression principle, it's obvious you have nothing to do with fascism. It's an insult to be asked to signed a petition like that. But beyond that, you can sign all the petitions you want. That's not going to save you. As soon as you say, "I'm against Obamacare," you're already practically a Nazi. So there's no point in trying to appease people of bad will and certainly not to degrade yourself in the process, so forget that. And so meanwhile, we've got the head of the Libertarian Party, the chairman of the Libertarian Party – whom I shouldn't mention is also a used car salesman, but just in case that happens to be relevant to the story –

**GOTTFRIED:** [laughing] Sounds like a Republican.

**WOODS:** Yeah, no kidding – is spending his time attacking me and even attacking Bob Murphy, who's about as inoffensive as you could ask for, because we won't sign their stupid petition, "We're not Nazis." Of course we're not Nazis. What kind of an IQ would you have to have to think libertarians were Nazis? And if you're dealing with people who can't get that, stop dealing with them. They're hopeless.

**GOTTFRIED:** Yeah. But they're very much concerned with approval from the left.

**WOODS:** Absolutely. They're obsessed with it.

**GOTTFRIED:** Same as the conservative movement.

**WOODS:** Yeah, they're obsessed with it.

**GOTTFRIED:** They only worry about a left flank. They worry about a right flank. They want to exclude the right. But they're hypersensitive about offending the left.

**WOODS:** Now, Paul, let's talk about terminology, because you and I did an episode on the alt-right. And here's the big problem with the terminology: when Richard Spencer uses the term *alt-right*, he means his group is the alt-right, and so anybody who's just outside the official boundaries of the conservative movement doesn't count as alt-right. The white nationalist folks, those are the alt-right. Whereas when other people use the term – when you say *Breitbart* is alt-right, *Breitbart*, unless you're a hysteric, is obviously, whatever their faults, is not white nationalist. But if the media is going to adopt Spencer's terminology, then alt-right, there's a lot of confusion created, because you think, Oh, then I guess *Breitbart* must be white nationalist and want to have torch-lit processions, and therefore I guess anybody – you know, Paul Gottfried must be this way and anybody who's just a dissenter is therefore – because we have a small-tent definition of alt-right, a larger-tent definition, which just simply means people who hate the conservative movement, which is 99% of the human race. And because there's no clarification on that, then you can't even have a rational discussion, because then if, alt-right is viewed on the one hand as being this big umbrella group but then some people interpret it as just being the torchbearers, then it smears everybody.

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, but I think there's a deliberate deception that's going on. When Ms. Torrance, who's an editor of *Weekly Standard*, appears on Fox News and says that Trump should compare the alt-right or treat the alt-right the way he treats ISIS, she knows that the alt-right includes people like us, by which we understand the independent right, which is often lumped together with the alt-right. What this is an attempt to do is to go after everybody to the right of *The Weekly Standard* by saying they're all part of the alt-right, and alt-right means Nazi. I think many of the people who are saying that we have to condemn the alt-right and John Podhoretz when he says this, they understand that the real target is the independent right. It's anyone who despises their conservative movement and is a Taft Republican, whatever. All those people are alt-right now. And this is simply a strategy of isolating further everybody on their right by associating them through the alt-right terms with Nazism.

**WOODS:** Precisely. That is exactly what it took me five and a half minutes to try to say [laughing]. That's exactly what I was driving at. And this is what they've been dreaming of forever. Now, let's think about the practical results of this. It becomes difficult in this toxic environment to be somebody who's outspoken who's outside the conservative movement, because, simply by definition, if you're inside the conservative movement, you probably are secretly a Nazi, but if you're outside the conservative movement, well, you're definitely a Nazi.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right, right.

**WOODS:** People have jobs to worry about, and given that you can be called a Nazi for favoring an urban policy that is the 100% diametric opposite of Hitler's, don't think you're safe. The truth is no defense here. Now, I'm lucky because people can criticize me for not signing a juvenile petition. It doesn't affect me at all, because I have no boss I have to answer to. I just have to answer to people who listen to this show, and most of them thankfully have IQs above 50, so I don't worry about it. It's no problem.

**GOTTFRIED:** Yes.

**WOODS:** But the average guy could get in trouble.

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, there is what I say is a kind of fallback position, which is cultural conservatism, which is becoming increasingly vacuous over the decades. So now you read a cultural conservative website, there's some vapid gibberish about "Permanent Things" or values, which they never define very well [laughing].

**WOODS:** [laughing] Exactly.

**GOTTFRIED:** "We believe in "the Permanent Things." What the hell are "the Permanent Things"? Well, Russell Kirk liked permanent things. So as long as you do that, you're safe.

**WOODS:** Oh yeah, yeah, because nobody's going to care – or if you want to dredge up Richard Weaver's argument over universals and the nominalists in the 14th century or something, they have no care about that.

**GOTTFRIED:** Because they fall asleep while they're reading your analysis. I mean, what they do is they provide you with soporific texts, which nobody's interested in. They say, Well, we're real conservatives. I see these websites popping up every day, you know, that call themselves cultural conservative, are exactly like that.

**WOODS:** Well, I don't want to disparage the idea of doing scholarly work that may be a bit removed from current controversies, because that is what a scholar does. But on the other hand –

**GOTTFRIED:** No, no, I agree, but –

**WOODS:** But I want to give an example. The other day, I was reading an article by somebody who was tut-tutting the right about certain things, and he's one of these sort of "Permanent Things" conservatives. And I looked at his bio. He's currently at work on a book on Neoplatonic magic and the poetry of Edmund Spenser. And I thought, Well, no one's going to bother you. Nobody's coming after you for that, so you are safe.

**GOTTFRIED:** [laughing] Right. Right, there are people who take these sort of innocuous positions too, and I don't want to mention them by name, but there's one who – well, I will mention him by name: Rod Dreher. I've never been able to find anything particularly right-wing about his writing or anything of very much substance. But he usually takes positions that are not likely to bring down the wrath of the left on the person who expresses these ideas. And after a while, I think – and I agree that people should be allowed to discuss things that are not immediately relevant to our political situation, but my problem with some of the people who do this is they're neither addressing politics nor scholarship. They're sort of in some zone in between in which they feel safe, and they don't really contribute much in terms of research and information, nor are they taking any kind of courageous political stand. And there are a lot of people out there who do this, and I think Ross Douthat did that for a while. He posed as some kind of Catholic conservative, although it was hard to say what he was conservative about. And then he went to work for *The New York Times* and has sort of

moved to the left. But I think this pretense that you're above it all, you're above politics, but at the same time you're going to be a critic of the conservative movement, which is vulgar and insensitive or something like that, I think is a totally dishonest posture.

**WOODS:** So now it seems to me the only people on the right I'm interested in talking to are inside a very narrow band of people. It's basically you and about a dozen other people, and we're all going to be at the Mencken Club thing or the Mises Institute or whatever. But otherwise – and then meanwhile, the narrow definition of the alt-right – if I were having an event – Now, look, I don't know anything about having an event. I've never organized them. I'm just looking at this from an outside observer. I would say you just can't have any kind of symbolism or regalia that would call to mind Nazi Germany. That would be, I would say, qualification number one. And if I see people doing that, I would say, Sorry, this is an American movement. We're not importing foreign symbols. Remember? We're for America. I would try and play it that way.

But the idea that because you got the attention of a lot of Americans that this is a victory, what people will remember are that there were people who don't shy away from that kind of stuff, or that when you ask the leaders of the group, they can't bring themselves to repudiate it. They say this is a distraction or World War II was a long time ago or whatever. They can't even say, Look, that's just dumb. I mean, apart from the wickedness of it, it's also strategically dumb and so we repudiate it. They can't even say a simple thing like that. Or do you repudiate Hitler? Now, normally I think it's stupid to be asked questions like this, but on that one, I would say who doesn't? But they can't answer that question. That's weird to me. That's a problem.

**GOTTFRIED:** I agree.

**WOODS:** And what does that have to do with the right as it has existed in America? What does it have to do with an American right? This is some foreign import, right, and I thought they were against those.

**GOTTFRIED:** No, I totally agree, and I think this is one of the problems with the white supremacists, white nationalists. They're not just white nationalists. Many of them have sympathy for the Third Reich, and I think this is what makes them particularly toxic. Of course we're going to be linked to them by virtue of disagreeing with the conservative movement, but sort of speaking among ourselves, I think what they're doing is stupid and toxic.

**WOODS:** Yeah, and I think that for a long time, there might have been people in the media who would have at least been curious. They wouldn't want to put us on their TV shows, but they would have been curious about people who disagree with the conservative movement. But now they feel like we've neutered the conservative movement completely. We have nothing to worry about about them, so now let's just go and cut off at the knees anybody's who's outside it and then we'll just have people who talk about Neoplatonic magic and the poetry of Edmund Spenser and we've got what we want.

**GOTTFRIED:** Or why conservative marriage is a family tradition or strengthens family values. I've heard conservatives make that kind of argument. You know, it's really daring, a really daring argument. They're really taking on the left.

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**GOTTFRIED:** But the combination of pretense and cowardice is absolutely insufferable. You know, here's some of these conservatives on Fox News taking positions that are supposed to be edgy but really fit in with the left's agenda.

**WOODS:** Yeah, Trump got in trouble for one of the sensible things that he said. He said that if – I mean, whether you want all the statues down or now, there's no debating that, logically, if you want to take a Robert E. Lee statue down –

**GOTTFRIED:** George Washington is next.

**WOODS:** George Washington is next. I mean, how is that even debatable? And on Twitter, you've got all these people saying, "He compared – " And I'm sorry, I have to do my effeminate voice because who else would talk this way? He says, "He compared Robert E. Lee to George Washington." Okay, first of all, number one, he actually didn't. All he was saying was if you do this to one, you're going to do the same thing to the other. But secondly, so did JFK. And in fact, you can find beyond that quite a bit of praise for Robert E. Lee from pretty much every president going back to FDR. I mean, we have pictures of Jimmy Carter happily standing in front of the Confederate battle flag. Jimmy Carter. You cannot keep up with these people.

**GOTTFRIED:** No, but unlike George Washington, Robert E. Lee in 1862 freed his slaves and was never – he was always critical of the institution of slavery. He inherited slaves from his wife and treated them very well and then freed them. Washington didn't do anything like that. So Lee should be less reprehensible than Washington if we're going to tear down statues of people who are not politically correct. No, I think it's just a matter of time before Jefferson and Washington also go, and then we'll probably have something by Lowry saying that they would have wanted us to do this because they were ashamed of slavery or should have been ashamed of it.

**WOODS:** Right, right. Now, I wonder when do the Martin Luther King statues come down because he opposed gay marriage. How long is that going to take?

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, I have a colleague at Elizabethtown College who wrote a book, a fellow named Michael Long, who's a left-wing Methodist minister, showing that if Martin Luther King were alive today, he'd be marching in gay pride parades. He just died too soon. He was killed by a white racist. But if he were alive, he'd be in favor of transgender bathrooms, whatever. So what you could do is say if these people lived long enough, if Lincoln lived long enough, he would be a president of gay marriage. This is another tactic that the left uses. It argues that if people had lived long enough, they would have awakened to the beauties and truth of the most advanced leftist social program that's now being introduced. So they've done this with King. There's a book on this showing how King would have evolved toward gay marriage if he had lived long enough.

**WOODS:** Well, of course if he hadn't, they would have destroyed him, so sure. Maybe he might have [laughing].

**GOTTFRIED:** [laughing] Yes, he would. He would.

**WOODS:** Who knows? Who knows? All right, so let's talk about — And I'm sorry, I don't mean to make this self-referential here, but right now, I've got a bunch of people coming after me on social media, either because I've interviewed an unsavory character or two over the course of the show or — you know, years ago when these people were rather different from how they are now — but secondly, that I won't sign the petition and they can find a picture of me from 25 years ago when I had a lot more hair — sporting an '80s haircut into the 1990s is the most embarrassing thing. But it's a picture of me in front of some Confederate battle flags. And so to me, the embarrassing part is my hair. It's just horrible. Why did I think this was a good idea? And so that's all they've got. And I think, geez, if over 25 years, the only bad things I've done is interviewed one unpopular guy and then had a picture taken in front of those flags and not signed a petition, I've been really lame and I'm disappointed in myself that that's all they could come up with. I'm going to have to turn up the dial a bit here, turn it all the way up to 11 or something.

**GOTTFRIED:** [laughing] Right. No, you're absolutely right.

**WOODS:** Well, anyway, let's finish by saying something about the H.L. Mencken Club meeting. I'm going to have that linked at [TomWoods.com/events](http://TomWoods.com/events) coming up very shortly. My events page, by the way, for anybody checking it out, my coding guy is doing a little work on it because it's a little screwy, but you can still get the details. Just be aware that if you go to the Mencken Club meeting, there's going to be some unapproved opinions there, and if that's too much for you, you shouldn't go. You just shouldn't go. So tell us about it.

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, one of the people who will be voicing unapproved opinions is Tom Woods, who's our featured speaker.

**WOODS:** Yes, indeed. That is my way of saying to the world — Well, I was going to say something vulgar, but that's my way of saying to the world, "I don't care what you say about me." I just don't.

**GOTTFRIED:** Yeah, in fact, we'll also have a panel on the alt-right in which we discuss it critically, but we'll treat it as a serious political force rather than as a collection of neo-Nazis who are on the verge of taking over America. One of our speakers, curiously enough, is somebody who was the manager of the *The Daily Caller* for many years, and I assume sort of comes out of "conservatism, inc." or "conservatism, incorporated," but who's willing to speak for us and is very happy to do this on a Saturday night. But we do have some excellent speakers. This is not like a gathering of Heritage Foundation employees.

**WOODS:** Oh my gosh, no [laughing].

**GOTTFRIED:** It will be a much more open kind of dialectic or discourse that we'll be encouraging.

**WOODS:** That is a very good way to put it. So I will link to that at [TomWoods.com/977](http://TomWoods.com/977). Do you have — although once the event passes, if people go to that page I won't have the link up anymore. Anyway, do you know offhand the website?

**GOTTFRIED:** We do have a website. In fact —

**WOODS:** I've got it. I just found it.

**GOTTFRIED:** Okay, fine. And you can register there. And whoever's interested in coming, I would urge him or her to do this in the very near future since we already have over 60 people and we're three months away from the event.

**WOODS:** All right, so it's —

**GOTTFRIED:** So it will be a large turnout.

**WOODS:** Right, right, right, okay. So yeah, that is going to be big. And a lot of very smart people, not the — I don't know, the fluff — I don't know what to call the people who are coming after me.

**GOTTFRIED:** Well, I like Buchanan's term. The kennel-fed conservatives will not be there.

**WOODS:** [laughing] They will not. The website is [HLMenckenClub.org](http://HLMenckenClub.org), and this is going to be November 3rd to 4th in Baltimore —

**GOTTFRIED:** November 3rd to 4th.

**WOODS:** Yeah, in Baltimore. So we hope to everybody there. And by the way, it only occurred to me later that of course Baltimore is where — I'm sorry, I know this should have been obvious — it's where Mencken is from. Duh.

**GOTTFRIED:** Absolutely, that's why we're the H.L. Mencken Club.

**WOODS:** Why — ?

**GOTTFRIED:** We don't meet in the city, but we meet near Baltimore.

**WOODS:** Near Baltimore. Of course. You have to have some standards.

**GOTTFRIED:** Right.

**WOODS:** All right, anyway, I'm looking forward to that, and thanks for the conversation today.

**GOTTFRIED:** Okay, thank you for having me on.