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# *Power Is Manipulating the Masses*

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Allow me to note what I did not say in *After Liberalism*<sup>1</sup> or in my rejoinder to Professor Ryn<sup>2</sup> but which some of my critics persist in giving as my view. Never, to my knowledge, have I stated that the managerial regime is the sole or only significant cause for the assaults being made on bourgeois liberalism or for the end of effective self-government. But such a regime has pushed certain developments—state-engineered pluralism, political correctness, and the rooting out of self-identified communities—that are very much with us. Of course state functionaries have not produced these achievements by themselves. The media, liberalized Christianity, an amoral consumerist economy and fatefully positioned minorities who are hostile to the once dominant culture have all assisted in the radicalizing process.

*Consent  
of the  
masses  
passive.*

Moreover, what set up the managerial ascendancy in “democratic” government were conditions pointed out in my book, rapid urbanization, demographic shifts, the building of a modern industrial economy, a largely bogus “science of government” and the introduction of a universal franchise overseen by the central state. All of these situations combined to bring forth managerial government and its corresponding framework—mass democracy. Managerial classes have operated in straightforwardly authoritarian societies, but they flourish best when dealing with a formless mass of individuals, held together by the expectation of material

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Gottfried, *After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Gottfried, “Power Is Coercion: A Response to Claes Ryn,” *Humanitas* XIV, no. 1 (2001), 96-99.

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security and by appeals to egalitarian ideals. The most desirable thing about mass democratic subjects from the standpoint of managerial rule is that their consent is passive; it is not likely to result in obstacles being placed before those who rule. Managerial democracy is the very antithesis of what the lawgiver Solon hoped that popular government would be for Athenians, when he famously enacted a law “disenfranchising one who remains uncommitted when the city is politically divided [*atimon einai en stasei medeteras meridos genomenon*].” Solon held the opinion that, where citizens are truly members of a political community, “they should not remain indifferent and impervious toward the common good [*apathos kai anaisthetos pros to koinon*]—but engage themselves on the side of those who they think are acting better and more justly, suffering dangers with others and assisting fellow-citizens, rather than awaiting the victors without any danger to themselves.” In the managerial state, by contrast, citizens are expected to do what they are told and to understand that being “democratic” is to express sensitive sentiments from which properly socialized citizens will never deviate. Mass democracy in the managerial state is living in a civic culture bestowed on us by “democracy” experts. When there is a perceptible demand for real self-government, as when the populist Right in Europe insists that voters should decide who would live within their national borders, the political class can isolate the troublemakers as “fascists.”

Some of my readers have criticized me for treating these situations in a seemingly mechanistic fashion. On more than one occasion Professor Ryn has accused me of practicing a “lower form of historicism” that amounts to what Irving Babbitt called “naturalism.” Apparently I fail to valorize sufficiently the spiritual and aesthetic sides of the problem and to notice the cultural defects lurking behind the political deceit. I have also been scolded for not acknowledging the error of my ways and for continuing to say, as I have said in the past, that one should not expect better of most of humankind, which has never shown a capacity for either self-government or liberal constitutional practices. But in my political life as opposed to scholarly career, to make a necessary Weberian distinction, I have fought the moral wars that to some degree I have tried to keep out of my scholarship. Like Drs. Ryn, DeRosa,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Marshall DeRosa, “Debate on Power Should Continue,” *Humanitas* XV, no. 1 (2002), 86-89.

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and Woltermann,<sup>4</sup> I have lashed out at managerial tyranny and at the vulgarization of political discourse. I am deeply grieved by the acceptance of control as freedom and by the confusion of newspeak with sensitive language, both of which tendencies are widespread in our society. But I find it hard to blame those who are not really in charge, despite the illusion that they are, who have never governed themselves and who do not benefit from truly civilized social leadership. Needless to say, such leaders will not be taken seriously in a post-bourgeois society, where the managerial state and consumer choices shape civic existence.

*Decentralization not possible in today's America.*

At present I see no possibility for the decentralized political entities proposed by Professor DeRosa. Absent a strong communal sense enforced by traditional, long-standing associations and accepted hierarchies, there can be no reconfiguration of government along the lines he suggests. Most importantly, there is neither a widespread desire for such a political alternative nor the likelihood that the managerial state will consent to a dissolution of the power that it has accumulated for more than a century. In the case of the South there is also an intractable racial division, which many Southern conservatives continue to deny or play down. Southern blacks, like Northern blacks, distrust and abhor the heritage of Southern whites, despite the fact that they themselves have absorbed much of the culture and religion of poor white Southerners. Blacks would not consent to any devolution of power that took governing away from federal bureaucrats and put it into the hands of whites like Professor DeRosa. This is not because Professor DeRosa is a hardened segregationist but because he admires political traditions and political symbols that blacks want to eradicate. That's simply the way things are in the United States, particularly in the South, as opposed to Northern Italy or Flanders, where neither sharp racial nor ethnic divisions exist, outside of the interaction of the majority populations with relatively small Muslim minorities.

There are two points raised by Chris Woltermann that merit critical attention. One, he misunderstands my observation about power, when he brings up the women and cattle that the ancients, especially as depicted in their epics, were alleged to have

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<sup>4</sup> Chris Woltermann, "Gottfried-Ryn Dialogue Deficient," *Humanitas* XV, no. 1 (2002), 90-95.

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struggled to acquire. Hobbes too made a mental note of this culture of plunder while studying ancient history. In *Leviathan*, Book One, for example, he dwells on how power consists of being able to go from one acquisition to another. Indeed power is here associated with the capacity to take as much as one wants, mostly at the expense of others. But this kind of acquisition did not come from the aesthetic power exercised by the object over the one doing the taking. It was an exhibition of control, attested by the possession of what a particular society valued. Those who collected women in the ancient world were foreshadowing NBA basketball players or a still widely admired recent president by helping themselves to what is associated with making it politically or economically. One should not confuse this passion for the trappings of power with the captivatingly erotic or sensual, though, particularly in the capital district, the holding of power is supposedly aphrodisiac.

*Coercion, not aesthetic power, gives control.*

Finally I am puzzled by Dr. Woltermann's advice that I provide more "empirical" evidence for the arguments constructed about the progress of the managerial state. What specific evidence would he like to see; or what, in his estimate, have I failed to demonstrate sufficiently? My footnotes should point him toward the primary sources that I consulted, which contain the relevant documentation he might be looking for. My new book on multiculturalism abounds in statistical information about state bureaucrats taking charge of society. I would also recommend the physically and stylistically heavy volume in German by Wolfgang Reinhard, *Geschichte der Staatsgewalt* (Munich: Beck Verlag, 1999), that painstakingly confirms the state's growing presence in Europe, as shown by financial support and the bureaucratic direction of civic and family life during the last forty years. Like most European socialists Reinhard complains about the state being torn apart by "rival claimants for its assistance [*zerstrittene Mitbewerber um seine Beihilfe*]." He never seriously considers that the dishing out of money and the accompanying guidelines translate into political control. At least the Nazis advertised honestly about their march through society, for which they found the appropriate name, *Gleichschaltung*.

*No lack of documentation.*