

Cultural conservation



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Word Count: 715 One problem with :

To put it simply, and it's not a problem that only conservatives very often confuse

(or conflate ethics and aesthetics. When Gertrude Himmelfarb lambastes out (as she

perceives it) 'amoral, 'sexually deviant' and 'polymorphously perverse' culture she is

primarily responding to something that she finds culturally foreign and aesthetically

threatening.

I agree with her that values are oftentimes a good thing, but only when they are

born of an ethical and pragmatic perspective, not an aesthetic one.

The conservatives want a seemingly neat and compartment society wherein stable

appearances are maintained and archaic cultural archetypes are adhered to religiously. I

grew up in a world of cultural archetypes. I grew up with white businessmen going to

office buildings while their wives stayed at home and their kids went to school. or , more

accurately, I grew up with alcoholic, adulterous business men who lives culturally insular

lives while their wives took sedatives and smoked cigarettes and vented their frustrations

on there kids, and these same kids took reams of drugs, got abortions, drove drunk, and

victimized the weaklings. I grew up in what most conservatives would consider a utopia;

lots of money, prestige, cultural cohesion, and good conservative values.

But their values were in fact aesthetics, and maintaining these aesthetics ruled and

ruined their lives. Almost everyone in this suburban bourgeoisie system hated their lives,

but because they had been brought up to worship aesthetic myths they felt that to

question them was an admission of personal failure.

What are these myths? they're old and platitudinal but I'll trot on them again:

that's money makes you happy, that society is right and that poverty is bad, that

maintaining convention in every aspect of your life is the ultimate good, that aberrance

from these ideas is sin. ect.

I'm not going to say that the polar opposites of the cliches is true, that would be

one of the failings of the radical left. I believe that for the most part these criteria are

irrelevant. Money can make life easier, but it also can make life miserable.

Poverty can

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be bad but it can also be fine. Convention has some good points and some bad points.

What it all comes down to is flexibility that should allow for the well being of the individual without compromising the rights of other individuals.

When conservatives trot out their litany of evils-homosexuality, single parent families, multiculturalism, ect. I'm always asking 'why?'. If people are happy being gay then whets wrong with that? it may be a lifestyle that's aesthetically different from what we've been brought up with, but so what? and single parent families? better a loving single parent family than a 'conventional family' wherein the parents hate each other and the father is a demagogue.

One reason that we have such a wide variety of alternative lifestyles is that the conventional lifestyles that the conservatives champion are often quite flawed and restrictive.

Restrictive mores can be terrific when applied to peoples violent impulses, but restrictiveness is terribly unhealthy when its used to get people to conform

to arbitrate

social archetypes. This restrictiveness can make people feel inadequate and inferior and

it needs to be done away with.

If someone's gay, let them be gay. If your son wants to marry a black woman (or

white or yellow or Muslim) then let the,. We need to love each other and support each

other even if we choose to live in alternatives but harmless ways. Obviously if your son

is a rapist or a wifebeater or a child molester then you need to question your support of

his actions and values.

I'm not championing a retreat for responsibility. I believe that personal and social well being is built upon and foundation of hard work, loyalty, honesty, diligence,

respect, tolerance, and other good 'values.' But it doesn't matter what the cultural

manifestation of the values looks like. It can be straight or gay or male or female or

black or white or anything as long as its respectful and makes the practitioner feel well.

So my advise to cultural conservatives (and others) would be to cultivate an approach to values based on principles rather than aesthetics. I would also

like to say

that any pronouncements on the values of others, especially

pronouncements veering into

the pre-scriptive realm, need to be cautious, pragmatic, logical and not just

the typically

hateful and reactionary vacuities that we've grown so accustomed to.