



Written by [James Heiser](#) on April 17, 2015

Mistaken Identity: The Ideological Confusion of “Generation Identity”

Markus Willinger, [Generation Identity — A Declaration](#) 

[of War against the ‘68ers](#), by Markus Willinger, London:

Arktos, 2013, paperback, 103 pages.

An ambiguity in definition is often one of the most subtle forms of a deception, and as deception is a fundamental aspect of most modern ideologies, definitional ambiguity is an important front in the so-called “war of ideas.”

Thus, for example, one finds that the distinction of “Right” versus “Left” in politics often confuses those who do not know the way in which the terms have been recast to serve a particular ideological agenda. Neoconservatism has thus sorely abused the concept of “conservatism” for decades to press for an ideological agenda which is often antipodal to a conservatism rooted in the tradition of Edmund Burke.

So, too, the post-War continental European concept of the “New Right” has no resemblance to the American “New Right” — or to conservatism, in general, as the term has been used in the anglophone world, although that distinction is not always made clear at the outset of English works by such “New Right” authors. Already in the 1980s, Roman Catholic philosopher Thomas Molnar was drawing attention to the neo-pagan orientation of so-called “New Right” authors such as Alain de Benoist (the founder of the French Nouvelle Droite). As Molnar observed, the aim of the “New Right” — in keeping with such intellectual forebears as Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Spengler — is such that, in Molnar’s words, “One believes in rehabilitated paganism in order to restore to the peoples their genuine identity that existed before monotheist corruption.”

In 2012, a new “youth” organization — Génération Identitaire (Generation Identity) — emerged in France and drew a great deal of interest within conservative American circles. Its agenda was to oppose the Islamization of French society and, [as the current author wrote for The New American at that time](#), “For a populace increasingly concerned about the future of its society and national identity, such a movement has the capacity to galvanize many members of the rising generation to publicly oppose the growing Islamization of France.”

However, the publication of Markus Willinger’s [Generation Identity: A Declaration of War Against the ‘68ers](#) makes clear that while Generation Identity is committed to opposing the Islamization of France, it is uncertain what the members of that movement have to offer to their nation.

For a work which purports to give expression to French “identity” in opposition to Islamization and the agenda of the post-war Leftists who shaped modern France, Willinger makes it clear that the Christian verity has nothing to offer Generation Identity’s “vision” for France: “When we think of the Church, nothing but intolerance and backwardness come to mind. ... Every clear vow, every clear statement of faith appears crazed and closed-minded to us. Whenever someone appears ready to defend his beliefs, we suspect fanaticism and intolerance.” Thus, for all of the talk by Generation Identity about Charles Martel and his defeat of the Moors in A.D. 732, Willinger clearly does not share Martel’s faith, and would likely deem him as “crazed” as any other believer. Instead, for Willinger “identity” is disassociated from one’s beliefs and becomes simply an artifact of geography: “We don’t want Mehmed and Mustafa to become Europeans.... They should hold on to their own identities, and let us have ours. We don’t ask more than that which should be obvious: Europe belongs to the Europeans alone. We are



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the rightful heirs to this continent and we will not give up our inheritance.”

But such a conception reduced identity to an absurdity. Perhaps Génération Identitaire should listen to Hillaire Belloc, who understood the centrality of the Christian verity to European identity and summarized that relationship quite simply: “the faith is Europe and Europe is the faith.”

The darkly post-modern character of Willinger’s book is evident from its preface, where the author appears to be less a voice for conservation of a tradition, than a Nietzschean asserting a will to power: the author declares that “The ideology of the ’68ers has infected Europe. It is a sickness that will kill us if we don’t find a cure. *Even if we’ve lost our will to power*, our neighbors haven’t and they’re already penetrating our borders and occupying the places that we freely surrender to them.”

The “will to power” is obviously very important to Willinger, for it is a significant recurrent theme throughout his tract. Thus, for example, when he writes of “the sexes,” he asserts concerning the ’68ers: “You’ve taken the manliness out of men. You’ve raised them to be feeble teddy bears lacking the power to act, lacking courage, lacking strength — in short, the will to power.” Even when he discusses art, it comes down to an assertion of *will*, and Willinger declares concerning the passing generation: “You lacked all will to form, all will to creation.” And, quite significantly, for Willinger, identity is not a given, but an assertion of will, for although he writes that “every human possesses not just one, but countless and diverse identities,” the sense of identity which apparently interests him is an assertion of will: “The will to identity is the greater power, one that not even you can fetter.”

One wonders, then, which point is predominant in Willinger’s thought? How can identity collapse to geography *and* an assertion of will simultaneously? If this “will to power” is Willinger’s understanding of identity, then the entirety of his argument risks simply collapsing into one more foray into post-modernist logomachia. Many of the most significant aspects of one’s identity have nothing to do with “will” at all — for the choice of one’s parents, the nation of one’s birth, the age into which one is born, and the faith in which one is raised are not things which are chosen, but are given. Thus, geography is an *aspect* of identity, and not its sole determining factor. But the role of will in identity is far more dubious, for even if one renounces one or more of these aspects of one’s identity which come to the individual as “givens,” the change simply reifies the baseline identity from which the individual elects to dissent.

Much of Willinger’s tract is suffused with a blustering braggadocio which is probably intended to sound bold, but (at least to this reader) simply seems petulant. Thus one reads, *ad nauseam*, phrases such as these: “We have thrown down the gauntlet,” “We are not afraid to fight, and if need be, to make the ultimate sacrifice,” “We don’t want to die, but are ready to do so,” “Resolute and earnest, we will save the planet,” and “Know that the world is in good hands. We will destroy the monsters you have created.”

In one of the last “chapters” — “On the Zeitgeist” — Willinger declares: “There will come a day on which it is entirely natural for a student to be an identitarian, just as it was to be a Leftist in ’68 and a Rightist in ’33.” Aside from the credibility of such a claim — for Generation Identity has a long way to go before it can lay claim to such cultural significance — one wonders what the author intends by such an assertion. Given his apparent contempt for the “’68ers,” one must presume that Willinger is not intending to assert moral equivalence between these three movements. But how is one to understand such an assertion, save by the assumption that a future generation will look back on Generation Identity with sorrow and defend its teachings and actions with no more meaningful defense than, “Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time”?



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In short, Willinger’s tract does more to expose the weaknesses present in the current movement than offer a meaningful call to action or a vision for the future. In the assessment of this writer, the two books recently issued by Arktos Media — Willinger’s *Generation Identity* and the even shorter *We are... Generation Identity* (which weighs in at a mere 45 pages) — present a movement which is far from ready to engage in the battle which it would claim for its own.



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