

Conversations with Bill Kristol

Guest: James W. Ceaser, Professor, University of Virginia

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I: The Old Progressivism and the New (00:15 – 44:23)

KRISTOL: Hi, I'm Bill Kristol. Welcome back to CONVERSATIONS. I'm very pleased to have with me, again, my friend Jim Ceaser, distinguished Professor of Political Science and American Politics at the University of Virginia.

Author of many important books and articles, and most recently, and the cause for this conversation, really, was your cover story in *The Weekly Standard* – one of the longest pieces we've published but, needless to say, one of the best – on the return of progressivism, "[What's Next for the Left?](#)" I thought it was one of the best analyses, diagnoses of the Left today and also over the last century, and what may be coming next for the Left. I thought we'd discuss that and get a better understanding of this moment, at least, the progressive side of this moment.

So Progressivism – that's progressives, that's what the Left calls itself today, which is not the case, I think, when we were in school. They were liberals. Progressivism was something you studied from the early 20th century. What do you make of the return of the term before we go into its constituent parts?

CEASER: As you mentioned, we did use the word *liberalism*. If you could use the various words for the Left, you have *communism*, *socialism*, *progressivism*, and *liberalism* – that's where we came in roughly in that order in American politics. And now we're going backwards. We're going back to progressivism, and –who knows? – from the recent polls, socialism is now fully acceptable as a term among the millennials. I hope we don't reach communism.

Liberalism was the dominant term, but in the 60s and 70s, it began to become unpopular. It think it had a lot to do with the anti-American stand that was taken by liberals post-Vietnam War, positions on crime. It became a word of mockery or derision. And then when you look at the Gallup polls, you see that conservatism in the 70s and 80s outpaced liberalism as the preferred ideology. So we have what is now called today, a brand problem. I think that it had very little to do with theory initially, but liberals didn't want to use what George Bush Sr. called "the L-word," making fun of it. They shied away from it because it was a bad brand. In fact, in the campaign with Dukakis, Bush kept baiting Dukakis with "Are you going to say the L-word? Are you going to say the L-word?" And Dukakis said, "No, it's only about competence, I don't want to talk about ideology." But finally, he was bludgeoned and accepted finally to use the L-word at one of the late debates.

It was a brand change. As you know today, people spend millions and millions of dollars on considering brand. Like, I think AIG is considered SagePoint. They had consultants come in. Blackwell has changed its name, too, the old military – Maybe the University of Virginia or other universities will have to go through a brand change. So it was brand change.

After the word *progressive* was used, it stuck for a while, but Bill Clinton didn't use that. He went to something else which was, in a way, significant, indicating he wasn't going to go further to the Left, that was the New Democrats, or what was called the Third Way.

When you get into this century, I think progressivism emerged along with liberalism, partly for the brand reason, but partly to indicate that it was a little bit further to the Left, and certainly, that was the case. Certainly with Obama. The progressives were the ones who didn't vote for the war in Iraq and other things like that.

Today, it's both mainstream for the Left, they prefer it. Liberalism is actually fading away. It's both mainstream, but it's also an effort to say you're pretty far on the Left, and even Bernie Sanders who sometimes calls himself socialist, I think prefers progressivism. He says he's the true progressive and Hillary isn't because she allowed herself to vote for the war in Iraq.

KRISTOL: We're having this conversation in late February 2016 when the Democratic race is surprisingly somewhat uncertain between the two of them. If you had predicted at the height of the New Democrats and the Third Way, with Bill Clinton in Washington and Tony Blair in London, so that would be what late 90s in particular, that progressives would be coming back. That in itself is a huge – before we even discuss what constitutes progressivism today, what do you make of that?

It wasn't as if they were such obvious failures, or where they? The attempt to be a centrist Democrat? The Clintonian/Tony Blair vision of a modernized, sort of market-friendly, fairly tough on foreign policy, that kind of liberal? But socially liberal and concerned, more concerned than those terrible Republicans about helping the poor and so forth. That kind of centrist liberalism seems to not be –

CEASER: It's hard to say where they would fit in the campaigns today. Bill Clinton would be far too much to the right to even contend –

KRISTOL: To the right of Hillary Clinton, which is sort of interesting.

CEASER: He would be completely unsellable today. British politics, well, in some way for the Left the same thing. Where would Tony Blair be in the Labor Party today? Nowhere.

I don't think that they were fully successful in one way. People thought that Hillary might try and campaign by looking back to the 90s since it was so successful. So you have an air of success in some way, but ideologically, the Left has moved beyond, and it's moved further to the Left, and it's moved closer to the socialism. The fact that that word *socialism* is useable today is really in my view more surprising than the resurgence of the word *progressivism*. Socialism was considered pretty far to the Left and not anything that anyone in the capitalist society would ever employ.

KRISTOL: And pretty discredited, really.

CEASER: Discredited completely. I think it probably had to do with two things: the foreign policy, the war in the Middle East, the rejection that – and progressivism became the name for that. And this clever thing that's happened, say, since the financial crisis of 2008. The idea that the Left has perpetuated, that the cause of this was capitalism. Not progressivism or not the Left, but it was capitalism. So progressivism became the word to use and move the Left further left.

KRISTOL: I guess it also tells us something – well, that's interesting about Iraq and the financial crisis, perhaps, those moments from 2004 to 2008 really changing the course of, at least, of the Left and maybe American politics, and British politics, and other politics in general, but I guess this also says something – this gets more into the topic of progressivism – about the Left. There are some ways in which the Left has trouble saying, "We've achieved a reasonable balance and what we have to do is work on perfecting that balance, but ideologically, we don't have that many more places to go." Isn't there something about the Left and something about progressivism, they always want to have – no mission is ever achieved intrinsically, so they need to be going further somehow?

CEASER: And of course, if you had problems and a large part of the problems in society would be due to progressivism, since progressivism is contended as important as liberal capitalism throughout the last century, then you would have to say that the flaws are flaws of progressivism. I rarely hear progressives say that. Sometimes they'll say, "Well, we made a mistake." Or, "This program should have been tweaked a little bit better." But no, the flaws are always said to be with liberal capitalism, and therefore, we have to go further in this direction to solve the problems, which a conservative might say that progressivism created, but progressivism always says that the problems are capitalism. Hence it has to go further in the direction of taking things from civil society and markets and putting them in the hands of government or some forms of social control.

KRISTOL: Let's go back. You've diagnosed contemporary progressivism and your first kind of source for it is Original Progressivism. What is the heart of that? Is it what you just said?

CEASER: The heart of it – let's take it theoretically before we get to its practical consequences – the heart of it actually comes from a metaphysical change, this idea of progress, which we all accept today, progress. But think of why we accept it. In the 1912 campaign, Woodrow Wilson, in speeches, brought in what he called this "new idea of progress." And spoke about this new idea saying that it hadn't applied before, meaning that there is an inherent movement to history forward, let's say forward, meaning towards greater reason or towards great equality. And that previously people had conceived history in a different way, which is true. They had conceived of history as a series of events, not necessarily leading in any direction. As one person said, "One damn thing after another." But in any case, history didn't have a direction.

The new metaphysical idea is that there is this thing called *history*, it has a direction, and for some, there is science of history, so that we can know this direction even as biologists know something about plants in a scientific way. Historians, scientific historians can know something about the direction of history, and suddenly, in this view, history becomes less the study of the past than the future.

Strange thing, but Marx considered himself a scientific historian, but you think about what he was predicting in the future. I think this was the new impulse, and it dominated not just America, but Western thought in different forms – Progressivism, Marxism – different forms, but this notion that history was moving a direction, had in some cases, had an end, or at least moving in a certain direction. And that was the new idea on which progressivism rested, hence the name.

The progressivism, coming from progress. Our other parties or movements in America all have names that are stable. Republican, Democrat, something which points to an end in nature. But now you have a name or label, which points to an end in history, and historical movement is the key.

As you develop this, you see that what's right and wrong by moral standard is now replaced by what's progressive and regressive. You don't want to go back to A, you're going forward. It just so happens in progressive account and almost every account of history – a few exceptions – that going forward, that is progress is also getting better.

There are a few naysayers. There are other people that follow this idea that history is going in a direction, and it's going down. Those were declinists like Spengler and others. Most of them were idea that history is going in a direction and it's good, and that's what we mean by progress.

KRISTOL: I guess, the Founders, the *Federalist Papers* talk about progress and political science, but that's different in your view fundamentally than progress with a capital P.

CEASER: Definitely. I mean, you can look over the course of history and see trends. You can see that there has been progress, has been made in different fields. That's a wholly different thing than saying history is inevitably moving in this direction, that there's no falling back, that we won't be entering ever again an age of barbarism, that it has an end or direction. It's the furthest thing in some way from the

Federalist which begins, let's say, *Federalist* 1 – one of your favorites, Bill – but it begins with this idea, there's a choice before us.

And the outcome of history is going to depend on our choice, which means that history is driven, as Raymond Aron would say, by an event. An event is something where human beings have to make a decision and since they're human beings, they can decide in different ways, and therefore, you can't say in advance what the outcome is going to be. So the key terms in this would be *agency*, that people act and history depends on how people act – save but for Hitler, but for Churchill, but for Lincoln, history would be different – and *contingency*, that we really don't know what's going to happen even when we have an intention, history is just made up of a series of accidents or people with different intentions clashing, you never quite know how things are going to turn out. That would be a more classical view of what history is.

And it was replaced by this idea of history with a positive P, or capital H, and it was philosophically validated. Of course, today, our progressives, I think, cling to the idea of faith in history, but they've jettisoned the metaphysics. They're not talking about Kant or Hegel or Marx even, but the idea of progress. As Obama says, the arc of history. The faith in it resides without any theoretical foundation. That's how I would say the relationship of modern progressives to this idea of history.

KRISTOL: I guess in the Founders, there's progress in political science, which helps up figure out how to increase the odds, if you want to put it in this way, that this experiment in self-government won't fail like previous ones, but it still could fail, of course, and a huge amount depends on whether the right kind of reflection governs our choice and so forth. I suppose it's a progress in sort of means to achieve a problematic or questionable or uncertain end. As opposed to progress with a capital P.

CEASER: We have tools that the accumulation of knowledge has given us, that didn't exist before, if there is progress. Certainly, in medicine, I think I'd rather be treated by a modern doctor even one in Obamacare than, say, be bled by an 18th-century physician. We have means in some areas that we didn't have. But who's to say that those means will endure.

If you want to take a radical view, anything could happen. Why not a return to barbarism? I visited civilizations, say, the Mayans and everything, where you had glorious monuments and they've fallen. Who's to say this won't happen to us? Who's to say that it almost didn't happen in the 20th century?

Almost immediately after progressivism was proclaimed, it looked like we were going to enter an age of barbarism. Walter Lippmann was an early progressive, he remains one in a certain sense. But boy, after the advent of fascism and Nazism, he had some real second thoughts and said, "How could we have believed in 1912 that the development of enlightened democracy was inevitable in some form, when here we are in the 1930s and we see that the wave of the future looked to be at that point a new form of barbarism?"

KRISTOL: You get a kind of chastened progressivism, which is, maybe, more appropriately called liberalism, I think as a result of the Nazis and the Communists and Stalin's Russia – in the 50s, 40s, 50s, 60s, with Lippmann and Niebuhr, it seems to me, people like that. There's a way in which they can't believe – I think they would be very surprised today to see people going back to embrace progressivism because that was something that if you were sophisticated just seemed naive looking backwards, didn't it, in the 50s or so?

CEASER: I would say. I wasn't quite around in the 50s, but I think that is right. Those people who lived through this period had real doubts, and of course, in Europe, which didn't recover as quickly, had more doubts. The end of World War I destroyed progressivism in Europe. That war where people seemed to die, slaughtered – this was the outcome of progress? And World War II, I think, left people devastated, many, on this account. So with, I think, a large number of our liberals, who especially in foreign policy were not at all like liberals today. Or progressives today in their hopes. They were more internationalist, more Cold War, many of them, beginning with Truman, more anti-communist. They saw what could happen.

KRISTOL: The fact that progressivism has jettisoned its metaphysics, so to speak, is that an advantage for today's progressivism or a disadvantage?

CEASER: You get the message. I think it's an advantage, but you do get the message. When Obama said, "hope and change," everyone knew what change meant, it meant change in a certain direction. If change meant a move to the right, that wasn't real change. So it's all there. The arc of history is there. But you don't have to argue the metaphysics, which are, even in philosophy, are regarded as tenuous. In a way, you get the best of both worlds.

Modern liberalism in this respect, or modern progressivism rests on a prejudice, that is, an argument it doesn't want to make, or doesn't believe is proved philosophically. Which is quite different from these progressives at the beginning of the 20th century, they believed that their case rested on some metaphysical principle that was true. So it's lost that, but since people don't want to argue about that anymore, it's fine to just kind of assume it. What's interesting, though, is when moments come where there's a challenge, they don't have a good as answer as they once might have.

KRISTOL: It does seem to make them a little more frantic, maybe, in the way they have to hang onto certain things because they don't have the real confidence in a way that if you were an old-fashioned progressive – you don't have to win every argument, you don't have to bludgeon critics into silence because history is going to prove you right. There is, at least, a way that those progressives could afford to be perhaps more tolerant. I don't know if they were in practice, but in theory, I suppose.

CEASER: I hadn't thought about that. It would seem to be more a position of will rather than reason today. And will is less restrained than reason. I'll have to think about that one.

KRISTOL: It gets at what comes out of the second point you make in the article, which is Original Progressivism. And then layered onto that is what's called, what the New Left, the 60s and 70s, which has different elements. Which is what I was thinking of when I made this point. In a way, you would think that would undercut progressivism, but it somehow melds with it in some way.

CEASER: Exactly. I think we've taken the word *progressivism* – many the analysts – and said progressivism has gone back to the turn of the 20th century and said progressivism is that – that answer is wrong. That's only part of it.

And you see this again, since we're speaking in terms of the campaign, here's a progressive, Governor O'Malley, once a candidate, utter the heresy, "All lives matter." And had to go back and apologize. You can't imagine an original progressive acting that way. You can't imagine many of the things modern progressives stand for, being sympathetic to what the original progressives stand for, which indicates really is that modern progressivism is an amalgam of at least two things, and the brilliance, I think, of modern progressivism, maybe, was just an accident of organic development, but that the two fit together. You have candidates that, on the one hand, speak of progress and need to continue the old progressive project of universal healthcare, universal college, all programs which are completely in line with the old progressives, and then going on to utter politically correct things or apologizing, as I said, for saying that, "All lives matter."

What's put these – these two have been put together. They don't cohere philosophically, I don't think, but after some amount of dissonance, now, they fit together perfectly. Going back to the Third Way and Bill Clinton, Bill Clinton, in a way, ran against a part of that and was still running against a little bit of that, in the "Sister Souljah" moment and things like that. He still wanted to draw some distinction. Now that they fit together perfectly, you have to be for both or you're not a progressive. Sometimes someone will say, "Well, maybe we should let people from different views speak on college campuses." But they don't go to the mat over this. No progressive could afford to go to the mat over this. That, I think, is one point of the article.

Then, what I tried to do is look at the various parts of this – I call it Second-Generation Progressivism – which began with the New Left. Sure enough, the New Left was a challenge to progressivism. It was a challenge to progressivism in the sense, within the families of everyone. Since the children who were rebelling were often rebelling against their progressive parents. It was the challenge inside the universities, the universities at the time, the 60s, considered themselves modern and scientific and yet the New Left shut down those universities. It was a challenge to much of what progressivism had stood for, including bureaucracy.

It was movement of the Left, which rejected modern science, it went that far. It was in many ways anti-technological. This was the era that I grew up in the 60s, came of age in, and of course, developed all those prejudices for a little while. It had an immense impact – maybe not its metaphysical positions on technology – but certainly we said, “We had to change the culture,” and the counter-culture was a creation of the New Left of the 60s. The counter-culture is now definitely part of progressivism, at least the shibboleths of the counter-culture remained that way. And the culture was changed as a result of that. So that’s the first stage of the Second-Generation Progressivism.

KRISTOL: It goes on to develop over the last 40 or 50 years.

CEASER: Developed, and maybe *develop* is too progressive a word. When you move to multiculturalism and postmodernism, it’s not exactly a continuation of this, but it draws a lot on the New Left. The New Left remains, anyways, the least convincing intellectually of the Second-Generation Progressivism. I mean, in America, let’s face it, the New Left came out of the universities, claimed to be an intellectual movement, but it’s utterly impoverished. I can’t think of one book or one article from the New Left in the United States that’s stood the test of time or that anyone reads today.

We used to read – your viewers, some of the older ones will remember Charles Reich’s book, *The Greening of America*. Where he says “I’m glad I’m me.” That’s the central point. I guess he was not guilty of envy, but – And then there was Leary, Timothy Leary, drugs. But there’s no intellectual book. If you say Marcuse, he was really a German from the Frankfurt School. There’s nothing. It’s a little bit different in Europe. It had raw energy, it brought a change of culture. It’s an American kind of exceptionalism that you can change things without any serious ideas. Great for the United States.

The other things that came afterwards, I identify two – multiculturalism and postmodernism – were much more intellectual. And drew much more on, say, contemporary or late 20th-century continental thought.

KRISTOL: Let me come to those in a second. I think you do make the point in the article, the personal liberation – liberationist, if that is the right way to say it – of the New Left. That has become, of course, so deeply embedded in Supreme Court decisions, everyone has a right to be himself, create his own future, and so forth, which was not part of the Original Progressivism, which was more – because it wanted to be scientific, I suppose, was less liberationist, right? That’s a real tension. Somehow that has become totally dominant and taken for granted.

CEASER: If you look at some of the writings of the progressives like John Dewey, when he speaks of the “new individualism,” it has seeds of this, but as someone like Richard Rorty, my former colleague, said, “Could you imagine John Dewey at Woodstock?” No.

So even though he speaks of this, he was just very far from that. What the New Left did is not only reject science, but made us think the most important thing our human self-expression. And that somehow, however the rediscovery of what was true in human beings, which had been crushed by science – and this is something the Left and Right would share, the Right had had it worries about technology – but the view of the Left was the way to overcome this problem of technicism was through greater self-expression.

Turn away from tradition. The only thing that’s orthodox is unorthodoxy, looking into myself, it’s good because it’s me. A very disappointing conclusion to this criticism or caution about science because I think, as I said, T. S. Eliot, many people on the Right had the same problems with modern technology or

issues of modernism, but they took it to look for something old, that we should maybe think about, if not returning to it, integrating into it.

The view of the Left was liberate yourself, and you'll find it. And that was the Hippie, which for a while – I had a mustache, I don't want to say my hair was ever very long, but I had the mustache and the idea was go live on a commune, exercise, drugs, use drugs – never did that either. All of these things were a way to find this truth, which science could not achieve for us, through some sort of personal cultivation. So rock music, drugs, and personal expressivism.

So personal expressivism continues. It's kind of like the First Commandment of the Left today. Yet I think another little part – I took a little turn in that article – I pointed out, I tried to point out that people still use this, but people are much more cautious about it socially. Because the New Left said that you'd liberate the self and all selves liberated would produce this harmony inside of a community that was perfectly democratic, perfectly self-fulfilling, perfectly guiding. It was pretty thin stuff. Whereas millennials today, to get to our college students, they really don't believe that liberating all individuals is going to produce anything good socially. They've seen the consequences of this. They prefer liberation for themselves, maybe drug use as they would do it, experimentation for themselves. But they see what's happened in society. The Hippie today is a bum for the most part. They understand the criminality and dysfunction is the product of just letting people do that they want.

So they preach self-expressivism, but they're very favorable to elements of social control and security. And you see this on the college campus. They want certain things closed down, they want their protective zones. They want the security there. They are in a way afraid of the radical implication of this self-expression, except for themselves. I remember meeting someone in San Francisco, and she was riding a bike, and I said, "Why do you ride bikes?" And she said, "If I walk, I'd have to meet street people, and I don't want to." I think that was her way of dealing with "I want to be personally expressive, that's where I spend my time with my friends, but I understand where it's leading socially."

So they're having ambivalence on that point – that would get us a little bit into the millennials – but they still preach the doctrine of self-expressivism, and it's in Supreme Court decisions, and it's the source of what I call festivals of the first. If you can be the first to achieve some new breakthrough. It's time for nice ceremonies, festivals of lights, holding hands and swaying together. We're still in the grips of personal expressivism, and I can tell you it's still leading nowhere.

KRISTOL: Though it is so strong, it's almost un-challengeable. Of all these different elements of progressivism, it seems to be the most dominant and even conservatives have a very tough time opposing it or saying, "Wait a second."

CEASER: You would have to oppose it in the name of something, some standard, so the standard could be a religious one or it could be an understanding of what virtue is, to use an old name. You would have to take that seriously. And so one would hope with today's students that their doubts about some elements of expressivism generally could be a wedge by which you could say, "If that's the case, what are the things that could guide a life besides merely more expression?" I think that has been some ways in which a certain form of rethinking has made progress at least among some.

Generally speaking, it's hard to stand against this in the tides of our society and especially in going from college back to secondary and primary education where these have simply become shibboleths and where the creativity of the child is all that counts. This goes in some way back to Dewey. You had mentioned that basically he was pro-science but when it came education he had a notion of development without authority, removing standards in the name of democratic self-development. Some of this was there initially, though as I said, Dewey himself, can't imagine him doing rock.

KRISTOL: Today, the Left does seem to have done a good job from a practical point of view, however theoretically problematic it is, of combining sexual liberation but no date rapes. You get to have the good side of self-expressivism without the unfortunate consequences, perhaps. But to curb the unfortunate

consequences you get an awful lot of curbs on freedom, you might say, in an old-fashioned way on campus. People can't – it's an interesting –

CEASER: The point you make about sexual freedom and everything, but now you have rules from a university that tells you when you can touch. Who could have imagined in the name of freedom we would have such legally binding legislation? Court systems set up by the federal government through the universities that control this? Dictates about touching, kissing, and consent inside a set of rules?

I tried to find an analogy to this – it may have been like the Panopticon in Bentham, but I think it's somewhat like *The Truman Show*. The movie *The Truman Show* where everyone is free, but everyone in some sense is being watched. This is the paradox of the modern campus. I look at it, and I say, the students are in many ways more controlled than they were when we had in the 60s, parietals – you had to bring a person back to where there was separate everything, dates ended at a certain time. In some ways, we were much freer, in terms of what we were allowed to do. Freer from regulations and social control than students are today and certainly leaving the law out, in regulations, which are greater.

There are other ways of social control that are exercised today through group-training, orientations, these are when you go and look at them, they're really an exercise in brainwashing. To put a – it may be brainwashing in the right direction, but brainwashing it is. These are the way things are, and you better go along with the program or you're in trouble.

KRISTOL: The Left has no, very little rebellion against it. There are a few sort of old-fashioned liberals, I guess is what we'd call them now, that don't like the brainwashing and orientation and the restrictions, but it's amazing how much it seems to fit into modern progressivism.

I think also, and analogously, you make this point in the article, technology, the New Left was somewhat anti-technology, somewhat skeptical of technology. They found common ground with cultural conservatism in that respect. Now, I think that's totally gone, I think. Total embrace, they managed to embrace both technological progress and individual liberation, which were in some tension with one another at one point, it seemed. And maybe really are, except people don't want to think they are.

CEASER: Certainly, today, I think this is a central change. The old Left was anti-technological. Think, going back to brand, the old New Left was anti-technological. Going back to the commune. Grow your produce. Austerity in your lifestyle. Meet a modern techie, even if you go out to places like Vermont, New Hampshire, and Northern California, meet a modern person living on that farm, they're not hippies. They're rural techies. They can discourse to you on length about how they're going to be able to enjoy every comfort eventually that someone in the city now enjoys in bourgeois life through more technology.

The old brand was Ben & Jerry's, the cow on the hillside, bucolic. The new brand for technology is Apple, which is a blank surface, the same sign everywhere, the same partly bitten apple in white that's not a real apple. There's no home, there's no place, it's a triumph of technology worldwide, a new kind of utopia. This is, I think, the direction in which parts of the Left are going.

One part of the article, long as it was, that I had to exclude for *The Weekly Standard* – it wasn't going to give me every page – but to talk about environmentalism. Which in the 60s was a movement largely against technology, not entirely, but largely against technology, worried about technology. Trying to turn the clock back or restrain it.

Modern environmentalism is entirely pro-technology. The new technologies will relieve the problems of the old technologies. So it's fascination with technologies completely. That's Apple. Companies spend millions and billions of dollars to get themselves from the side of bad technology to the side of good technology, that's rebranding. So that's a change.

It's also a change in this respect, that the source of environmentalism is a science, whereas the source of environmentalism in the 60s was an anti-science, was against science. The source of modern science, of modern technology relies on climate change. Which means that the scientists in their own name as

experts are the heroes of the Left in this respect. Somewhat different from the 60s. And that we are quite happy to say the people's views should be restricted to the higher claims of science. We're moving things to bureaucracies that understand science and from national bureaucracies to international bureaucracies. Face it, the people that meet at Davos and everything, they have nothing but contempt for the ways of the people, which have to be reformed and changed.

So progressivism in that respect has come back to a science, not the science of history but the climate science, and is much more – claims to be much more scientific. At the same time, paradoxically, it's also in the humanities realm postmodern. Postmodern in a way. We make the world according to our will. Climate science is, you may say you make it for the will, but science makes it, nature prevails. It's a return in some sense to nature. These are some of the paradoxes of the modern Left, which they're trying to knit together. But as for the first and second generation, they did a remarkable job of putting together – I don't know how – they've done it and that's why they are strong in that respect.

KRISTOL: And post-modernism, I think, which you discussed in the article, is a very good instance of that where postmodernism, strictly speaking, and multiculturalism, in particular, you know, is anti-progressive, right? Multiculturalism – whether it's a 6th- or 7th-century religious one or 20th-century technological one – they have to be valued similarly. How much of that is lip service compared to the true progressive belief in progress? How much have they actually been knit together? Can they stay knit together? How does that work?

CEASER: That one is complicated, but I'll say in this sense, in terms of day-to-day, the progressives are multiculturalist and relativist in that sense, they prefer to do that. But multiculturalism began with the notion of relativism, that all cultures are good by virtue of being cultures, there's no standard. That was the early view, so you could call that a culturalist perspective.

But look at what multiculturalism quickly became. It became a different view. It was that really when you look at it there is a standard. The victimized cultures are good, the victimizers are bad. So it was really a view that there was a standard. The standard in that sense began to be power. The West had exercised power in the name of science, that this is what destroyed Third World people. Made these people "the Other," and of course, in America, this is the source of the oppression of African Americans and Indians. It was in some ways a clear standard, and that remains to a large extent inside of modern progressivism. That's why you can't say that all lives matter.

You have to admit that some lives matter, if this is what is demanded, and that you should apologize for everything. So that standard remains, as I think, *de rigueur* among progressives. Except multiculturalism in that sense, and that has its own problems. You could say internal contradiction. These victimized cultures occasionally don't act in the name of what they're supposed to, which is human liberation and equality. Rather we find that they can become the source of oppression. So where are women oppressed? They're oppressed in older cultures much more than 20th-century or 21st-century America. Where are we facing problems of slaughter and barbarism? We're facing this in ISIL and some of these places of older cultures. This is in a way called for this exception, that sometimes the old victimizer culture, *us*, the United States or the West, has to step in and bring order to these people.

Either tell them how they have to behave or at the end of the day euthanize them, if necessary. And at that moment suddenly the United States, which is discussed as the oppressor, becomes the savior, is brought in at the last moment to defend us. Obama comes in, and he, at that point, he uses an entirely different language. He says the United States is on the side of the arc of history, we have to enter Libya to take care of this, we can't allow these massacres to occur. This becomes the source of humanitarian intervention. It lasts just a little while because it can't sustain itself against the claims that barring these really oppressive acts of victimized cultures that otherwise they're right and correct and should be the standard.

KRISTOL: So you think ultimately that the multiculturalism outweighs the humanitarianism and the attempt to act according to what you think would be a progressive principle, that women shouldn't be oppressed –

CEASER: Except when push comes to shove. Because women are victimized cultures, but they're victimized more by the victimized, so then you step in. Even the word *barbarism* is used today on the Left sometimes, to prevent barbarism. Ultimately, when you actually look at the culturalism, ultimately progressivism is a philosophy of the Enlightenment. Ultimately, when you get to the end, and it should realize that for its own good, I think a few have. But it plays the game, has played the game of always backing relativity of cultures, or worse, the superiority of the victimized.

That's the Foucauldian, the views that have come from the Left in continental – the Other, the favoring of the Other. American progressivism, progressivism in Europe ultimately remains an Enlightenment philosophy. The problem is, for them, is the unwillingness to work this problem out philosophically, which it really needs to do. Here is a case, I think, where the philosophy is important, for it to understand where it's going to be and how it's going to lead the world insofar as this is going to be an important factor in the West, as much as I might yearn for conservatism. At best, conservatism is going to have to share the scenes for the next X years with progressivism.

KRISTOL: It seems to me that the multicultural version or tinge of progressivism weakens the West because we're not sure it's right for us to intervene, doesn't really cause us to just stay away, which might be a coherent point of view – who are we to say? and if that's what they want to do over there we're not going to intervene – that's more of a rightwing point of view. Certain part of the Right. So you end up with sort of halfhearted interventions and getting out as fast as you can and, you know, hoping things will work out without really investing to make them work out.

CEASER: And doubting what you do the minute you do it. This is why I say it is important for them to work this out because you'll try something, but then when you have the resolve to carry it through, and the resolve is weakened by the other aspect of multiculturalism – all cultures are the same or that the victimized culture is always better than the oppressor culture.

So how can you do something with resolve when you enter it with guilt? That's a difficulty we face. Gee, I don't want to go into the psychology of the Obama years, but it's shown both sides of those things. There's also judgments – I don't want to reduce it to philosophy because people are making judgments on other ground – but you see this curious dichotomy of views. Yes, we're right, and then all of the sudden, doubts or we can't do it, we can't push it through.

Resolve is a tough thing because no one is ever sure they're 100% on anything. But you can't get anything through in this world without resolve. That's a dilemma, that's why I'm an academic and could never imagine myself being in politics because you have to have that confidence and that resolve.

II: Progressivism and our Politics (44:23 – 1:20:36)

KRISTOL: The final part of your essay – after discussing the Original Progressivism and then the New Left and its different components as parts of contemporary progressivism – you call it, I think, “progressivism in practice.” What effect does the actual real existence of progressivism as a political force and controlling a bunch of institutions in America and, obviously, in the West has had. Talk about that a little because I think that's also important.

CEASER: Right. Analysis from the realm of practice, what the Marxists called *praxis*, a big thing in sociology is that you look at the world not through the axis of ideas but through the real things that ideas create or that we find in practice. Class life, institutions, that's the approach that many called for. There is something important to that, always trying to see things through the lens of ideas ignores what's going on, as military people say, on the ground.

It's interesting that when people look at American free-market or capitalism, they often and most frequently study it through the lens of practice rather than ideas. They'll mention the Founders and the Framers, say that they didn't quite understand very much, or they'll mention Adam Smith. But really they go to say what has capitalism given us? What has the Constitution given us in terms of our life? That's

the approach that I think sociologists and historians take, and when they look and explore the macro effects of capitalism, they look at what's happening today, saying that capitalism in some respects has failed us, that the middle class is losing its purchasing power, that American life in some ways is declining and so forth.

The question I raise is, why don't people use the lens of praxis to study progressivism? After all, progressivism has been around now for well over a century and capitalism in its modern form, industrial capitalism, really only began in the 1850s, it's only 50 years older than progressivism. Why aren't we going back and looking at America as it's been shaped by progressivism? I know some conservative historians do this, but by and large, the main line is to say that everything that has happened in the United States, that's characterized it, especially the bad things, have come from liberal capitalism, as if it's the system. The truth is that that's false, clearly false. We have been shaped as much by progressivism, I would say even more, than by capitalism, at least as much over the last century.

Our institutions are based on a large degree by progressivism, even our Constitution had been modified by progressivism. Our government is progressive. What have they been doing all these years? They've been succeeding, and yet when it comes to judgments, anything that goes wrong in the United States is obviously due to the system, and the system is capitalism. So the point of that last part is to say, who really is responsible for shaping America, and if there are problems in America, how can they be placed merely at the doormat of capitalism? That's a false analysis.

Of course, this requires one to open up one's eyes to the influence that progressivism has had, which should be obvious. Okay, we still have an economic system, and the wealthy have a lot of say, and you look at every other system in the United States and say, "Who's the dominant force?" and it's at least as much progressivism as old-style capitalism and liberal capitalism. Who controls the universities? Who dominates the media? Who's extremely influential in government? It's progressives. It's time that they grow up.

In a bit of provocation, I said in the article that progressives suffer from the Peter Pan complex. They won't grow up, and they refuse to grow up. Of course, this is a tactic as well. Progressives adopt this as a tactic because it means whenever a crisis comes up, they can say that the fault is capitalism rather than anything they have done. This comes up time again, and as I think we said at the beginning of this whole discussion with the youth today when they look at the problems in the economy today, they're convinced they come from capitalism, not from progressivism, therefore, the solution has to be more progressivism. If progressivism is so powerful, why hasn't it already solved these problems? That's a little bit of a polemical ending to this, but I think an important point.

KRISTOL: There has been some debunking, I suppose, of progressive policies, obviously the kind of critique of the Great Society and then of other liberal policies, whether from welfare to economic policies and debunking of what happens in the universities, are they really teaching people things? But you're right, it's more individual, it's sort of gotcha kind of debunking, a little more than a systematic narrative, an account of progressivism.

I think another reason – don't you think? – progressives resist it so much it would show them that they are an elite, they very much function as an elite, that they should take responsibility in a sense of being elite, but this way, they get the best of both worlds, of, you know, they're the progressives fighting on behalf of the repressed of the world, but then you look around at universities, law firms, and government, Hollywood, and really? Are progressives really representing the poor and those without power?

CEASER: You look at some of the cities, they've been governed by, let's say the Left, progressives for years. Have they done very well? Why is it the fault of capitalism? Isn't it maybe the fault of progressivism?

I think your point the Right has succeed on doing this on an ad hoc basis is true, but in casting an entire view, it hasn't convinced American youth, that's for sure, and the dominant view is, gee, if something is wrong, we can only solve it by the force, which was supposed to have solved the problem, as I see it, 50

years ago, 40 years ago, 30 years ago, billions and trillions of dollars. At least you should say, take some responsibility for – half of the responsibility.

Of course, we understand in some ways that – and the progressives understand secretly they're elites, they know this. They know that they're in charge of the universities, they know that when they go to Aspen that it's their friends that are there and so on and so forth. But it's much better publicly to say that money is in the hands of the Koch Brothers rather than in the hands – Look at our richest people. Take the top people, the top fortunes, do they rest on the side of the Left or the Right? More on the side of the Left. The major corporations now, more on the side of those who fancy themselves progressive than as capitalist and so forth.

KRISTOL: I guess one problem with this kind of conservative debunking and the reason people stop short a little bit, conservatives are patriotic and they want to defend America so they don't want to expose unless you're pretty far right. Unless you're a Pat Buchanan or something, where you're just going to say the last 50 years have been a disaster in America, and it's almost a country not worth defending anymore. You want to say it's a country worth defending, but you don't want to say look how many things have been ruined by progressives who've had power over the last 50 years.

I think conservatives' patriotism in a way stops them a little bit short of a full debunking of progressivism's power in America.

CEASER: I think that's true, but also it may be the case where conservatism now is less in a mood of conserving. Because it's now the average conservative on the street, I think, is beginning to understand, is the country really the country of the Constitution, and is it really the country of some form of liberal capitalism? Are we conserving what's ours? What's dawned on them is the notion that no, and in fact, the country's controlled by someone else.

Progressives, they say also the country's controlled by someone else, though they know they control a lot. Which really is the conservative party in the United State today in a sense of wanting to conserve. It's no longer conservatives, that's why conservatives are in a sense in a mood to undo what they think is changed and altered America, which is progressivism. They have to undo this. I know that we have some of our spokesmen on the Left who every time conservatives get a little angry and uppity, they start bringing in their Edmund Burke – showing that yes, they too have studied Edmund Burke – says, "Always conserve and be nice," which is a way to try to contain the Right from doing something radical. Reagan's is a call to revolution, which isn't exactly conserving, meaning changing, and conservatives are even more in the mood of that today.

Plus, it's a complete misreading of Edmund Burke, now that I have my microphone I'll take that point to say. Read Edmund Burke, he speaks of conserving what's in Britain. But would he conserve – was he in a mood of conserving what was happening in France? And in some sense the *Reflections on the Revolution* is directed against [Richard] Price, people of Price, the followers of the French Revolution in Britain, warning against them. So conservatism sometimes means conserving, but it also sometimes means conserving what should be conserved. And when the status quo moves too far away from what should be conserved, the conservative is not obliged to take the view of maintaining every institution as it is, maintaining tradition exactly as it is, conservatism is a prescription for change.

That's really where Burke comes in. Burke was a way to react against the French Revolution, be a party of movement. This is the case at least in some corridors of conservatism today. So I would say to those reading Burke, I won't be tamed.

KRISTOL: Plus, Reagan liked to quote Thomas Paine so that was also an element of American conservatism.

I do think Reagan – don't you think Reagan's success in winning the Cold War, getting the economy going again, in a way, probably did make conservatives in the business of conserving for quite a while? Conserving the Reagan Revolution. Conserving or advancing it further, but along the same lines. I do

think maybe in the last five to 10 years, especially with President Obama maybe, conservatism has gone back to early Reagan or slightly pre-Reagan. Reagan as a candidate more than Reagan as an incumbent President. To really say, “No, we can’t just conserve on the Supreme Court, we need originalism. We need more than just to go slowly. We need a fundamental reformation of the size and scope of government and so forth.”

CEASER: I’d say we’re closer today in some ways to when Reagan came in, which was reaction against the Great Society, and then you could say Reaganism was at least on a par, including the Third Way that we spoke of, and the new democratic view was an effort to make itself consistent in some ways with Reaganism. Or at least to embody a lot of conservatism. That’s what Clinton was about, or was forced to be about after 1994. But after the six years, seven years, and now going on eight years with Obama, it’s closer to the feeling that this country has now been governed by progressives. Progressivism is at the core of what is shaping America. It’s time to make a stand. Our attitude, I think, is closer to that view of 1980 than it was to the 1990s and early 2000, when, after all, we had a lot of semi-conservative presidents.

KRISTOL: You think that’s healthy? You would defend that kind of conservatism that’s bolder or more willing to entertain the prospect of radical change against the quote Burkean conservatism that liberals are always encouraging conservatives to embrace?

CEASER: In this situation, yes. I mean, that’s my judgment. That’s where we’re at. I don’t want to use the word *revolution* in the literal sense, but conservatives have to be at higher risk than is normally associated with conservatism across the board. Which means it has to take some chances on things. Chances that favor the possibility for change even though the conservative would like to be in a world where you would always be preserving tradition.

That’s where we’re at in the country, and when you look at what’s happened in the last, say, seven or eight years and the gutting, really, of civil society which has been taking place, the penetration of government into everything, you begin to see this isn’t the free country we imagine it to be, and it is time to do something to stop it. Conservatism quite consistently, I think, can be the party of change. Has to present itself as the party of change, and I think is doing so. One would hope though that it presents itself as the party of change, which represents an intelligent direction rather than merely a cry like in that movie *Network* where people open up the windows and shout, “I can’t take it anymore.” Fine. But what are you going to do? That’s where breaking eggs is not the purpose, it’s breaking eggs for a certain goal and aim.

KRISTOL: Which is hard, I think.

CEASER: It’s very difficult because you open up the door to the notion of change, you open up the door to transformation. And then the people that shout the loudest or have the strangest ideas sometimes will prevail over those who say but we have to have a clear direction, we have to be tethered to certain principles. It’s easy at that point to say, “No, I want to destroy what’s out there. I can’t take it anymore.”

KRISTOL: You say the liberal elites have failed, but then it suddenly becomes “Everything has failed, and we all need to throw out the baby with the bathwater,” and so forth. It is an interesting moment for that reason. On the Right, there’s much more boldness, radicalness – not that you could call it that.

On the Left though, you’d think they’ve had power and they would – but they’re not also in the mode of consolidation, exactly. Hilary Clinton sometimes sounds like she is. I always think that’s a problem. One reason Sanders has done so well, I think – the healthcare issue was chosen very well. Hillary Clinton’s position is “Obamacare was great, and we need to keep it.” But that’s not really a progressive view. The progressive view is closer to Sanders, “Obamacare is good, but we need to move beyond it.” You can see Hillary Clinton being dragged in that direction so while conservatives want to go further and make more radical change in one direction, the Left seems to want to keep going even further in that direction, the other direction.

CEASER: Obama called for a transformation of American society, American life, so he used the language of transformation, and what is he going to say after eight years? “I’ve transformed it so fully and completely that we can stand pat.” Or would his position be, “I began the transformation”? This is what Bernie says in a way, “You’re John the Baptist, I’m the next guy. You began the transformation, and I’m going to carry it through.” And obviously, from a certainly merely political point of view what Obama must want is just that a Democrat be elected, that’s the first thing. He would choose who he thinks is more electable in a heartbeat because that’s what’s most important to him.

But, beyond that, who would he really favor? You could say in some ways he should favor Hillary because she says she’s going to maintain what he did. You could also easily see him favoring Sanders who’s saying, “I’m carrying through this transformation, and it’s only just begun.” Obama’s legacy might be greater under the Bernie scenario than under the Hillary one. I think he probably sees that as well. He keeps saying that his staff and everyone is all for Hillary, maybe that’s a political calculation. I believe he could see merits in both positions and probably wouldn’t want to be tethered merely to the fact that everything is now over.

KRISTOL: I guess his vanity would pull him the other way. He doesn’t want his successor to do even more than he.

CEASER: That would be difficult.

KRISTOL: He wants his successor to pay obeisance to him. That’s why Biden would have been a better candidate from Obama’s point of view. A true successor as opposed to – Bernie has probably challenged Obama too much over the years, I suspect.

CEASER: That’s true.

KRISTOL: What about progressivism, and that part of it? You said at the end of the article that it is in tension with itself. That somehow it’s dominant in so many ways. It’s had President Obama, it had two years with an amazing majority with a Democratic Congress, and then a Democratic Senate for four years so it’s not as if they haven’t had real power.

Yet in some ways, they don’t control much at the state level, they don’t control either house of Congress, they could lose the 2016 election, and they don’t seem satisfied either. That’s kind of a problem for a political movement. Isn’t it? Or isn’t it? You say you want power to do X and then you do X, or you do a lot of X at least, and then your message is well, things are still terrible, we now need to do Y.

CEASER: This would mean whether the end of progressivism – it really doesn’t have an end – is where we are now or whether it is socialism. Socialism has changed as a word, too. Socialism no longer means what it once did, which is government ownership. But socialism today would mean government control of more and more. That could be the direction, and I think is the direction where progressivism wants to go. It does have a further agenda. Until capitalism is completely dominated and suppressed.

KRISTOL: Is that more of an economic agenda in your view or kind of a social-cultural –

CEASER: Social-cultural.

KRISTOL: So cultural socialism.

CEASER: Cultural socialism.

KRISTOL: Is that a phrase? So this sort of PC stuff on campus, the remaking of people’s sensibilities?

CEASER: And greater equality of, say, redistribution of social wealth. Even at the expense of growth.

KRISTOL: You think the economic part remains important?

CEASER: In that sense. Not the taking over and running of everything directly by, say, the government, but the running indirectly of bad corporations through more and more regulation and then greater redistribution of wealth in some way or another would be the direction.

KRISTOL: I guess people like me underestimate that because it seems so pointless in a way. It's silly. Whether the tax rates are 35 or 40 percent is that really going to change America? I guess the Left has such a – and I guess it doesn't seem to address the actual problems of working class America, the economic problems, which have much more to do I think with problems with the family and the education system than this kind of purely economical –

CEASER: You ask an average American, they don't care about income inequality. The young do, only because it's abstract. They care about opportunity, and if their kids are going to have opportunity, they're happy. I don't think most people, you know, begrudge LeBron James making what he's making. It's only when realities are viewed through the lens of ideology that the income inequality has a standing that it does today.

Most people say, "So what? He's rich. It doesn't hurt me that people are richer." They've never shown to me why this hurts me, and I don't think the average American is that much concerned. But boy, when you talk to college students and look at some of these polls, the first thing they mention is this abstract thing of income inequality as if it's the greatest problem in the world. Look at what intellectuals on the Left talk about, income inequality, the new books on inequality. It in some ways astounds me since it's so divorced from the lives that people actually live, but there it is.

The Right has to think of a way to counter this. I don't think it would that hard, but they do have to counter it in some way.

KRISTOL: On the cultural socialism side, I guess what's struck me is just how much the energy really shows up when it's stopping the Christian florist from not helping, not working, choosing not to work at a same-sex wedding. That seems to me – it is the kind of the wish to get rid of any remnants of things that the state doesn't shape or control, or make sure we're moving in a progressive direction. That part, I think – I don't know if socialism is the right term for that or not. In a way, it is the historically correct term for what goes beyond liberalism and progressivism.

CEASER: That's difficult to say. One argument would be it's kind of a perfectionism you have to make everyone perfect. The other one is this minority could always come back to become a majority. Look at the country. The country is, I would say, maybe more likely to go conservative than progressive. The majority is not progressive necessarily. So the people that sound the alarm, "We haven't yet crushed the forces of" – They're right both politically – I think they're split. The Left want to make people more perfect, which means less religious. Control for that purpose, but then the political thing is there is always danger. It's like the Kulaks are going to come back and destroy the Soviet Revolution, you've got to get rid of them. That is prudent because you should always take care of your enemies fully and not give them a chance to come back.

KRISTOL: So that cultural, the attempt to establish more and more dominance, I guess that really can energize progressivism for a long time to come, right? It's going to be hard to actually prevent things from popping up that you don't approve of and like and certain perception of natural differences between the sexes, or you know, failure of certain policies, or whatever. Deficiencies of certain progressive projects. It's going to be hard to keep telling people they're not allowed to notice those or even possibly to act on them.

CEASER: I mean, maybe I'm hyper-sensitive to this coming from the university, but that's what political correctness wants to do in the context of the university. It's not enough just to be the dominant view, you have to transform the whole atmosphere of the campus, let's say, for your good, but also for their good. It becomes a kind of crusade in and of itself. It's a moral crusade. Which goes towards the ends of a more

secular society. Obviously getting rid of a certain form of faith, that was an important part. Going back, well, in the 80s and 90s, the extreme action to the Religious Right as if it was the worst thing of all time.

Now that the Religious Right isn't as strong that isn't the subject of every university president's first speech. We've gotten over that. Now, it's something else. Still, it's a notion of this fully equal society and diverse society. Diverse according to certain standards, which is by any intelligent standard non-diverse. This is not – this is something that's pursued as an end and aim in itself.

KRISTOL: So the oppressive side of progressivism is to be taken seriously in your view? You think it's getting stronger, if anything?

CEASER: I would say it's getting stronger on campuses, and that's what political correctness thing is all about. And it won't rest until it achieves its goal. It's a revolutionary project of its own. Under the umbrella of progressivism, which also has the economic part. The two are moving along sometimes a tiny bit in tension, but basically moving along. When one side gets out of control and doesn't acknowledge the other, well, Bernie Sanders is told to stop speaking, and he says, "I don't like to stop speaking."

That's true. He has to acknowledge that, and he learns. And the good politicians on the Left learn to do both. I mean, that's where Obama's perfect. He knows exactly, he goes in both directions all the time, satisfying both aims. And is very sensitive to doing both, pushing that agenda forward.

KRISTOL: Is the Right's, I think, attitude to take towards it is that, "This is nuts. It's so contrary to human nature and what we know about societies that it can't work," or to be worried about it and scared of it because it can work or at least, it can persuade for quite a long time and do a huge amount of damage. Should we be scornful of it or worried about it?

CEASER: The term *politically correct* is one of the great inventions of all time. It's probably the greatest invention of the Right in the last 50 years because it's the term we use neutrally to describe these policies, but it's the term that the Right invented. *Politically correct* is a pejorative term. No one who's for politically correct uses the term. "Hi, I'm for political correctness!" Every time it's used it's a gigantic trigger warning to remind people of this. I think it began largely as a joke, a cultural joke.

It was funny, it is funny when you invoke the term. It was meant to point out, "Oh, you can't use the word *statesmanship*, you have to use the word *leadership* because it had the term *man*," and everyone would laugh, and it was a lot of fun. As the agenda moved from merely changes in the linguistic forms to a whole series of legal and cultural sanctions, economic sanctions, and it's expanded in that way, it's become a whole regime. Then, it's become a little bit more serious, and you have the reaction against this by people who see that this isn't only an affront to their sensibilities, it's an affront to their freedom.

Across the West, you're seeing this. This is not just the case in the United States, it's the same thing in Europe, you're getting a reaction against this, which is political and which could go in dangerous directions because people are enraged by this. The system of political correctness. I think this current campaign, political season, has to do with political correctness. It explains a lot and same thing in Europe, what's happening in Europe. I would say I don't think you can entirely change human nature. You can beat it down, but it will come back, but you can go a long way towards altering public behavior, making people resentful, and beating people down for what they're willing to say and do, closing them into a circle of resentment until it explodes, perhaps, in irrational ways.

KRISTOL: And the conservative reaction? What advice do you give conservatives in fighting back? What mistakes have they made? What opportunities have they missed?

CEASER: Well, I think the conservative has to give expression to this in the name of, I guess, freedom. I'm a tiny bit worried about this – here is a confession. I was never for, originally, complete freedom on campuses. I always saw the idea, going back to some of my teachers, that look, this is an institution that has a purpose, which is learning and therefore to invite people in who are just going to shout racist slogans or anything, they shouldn't be here because they're not promoting learning.

I was never a libertarian, and I'm still not in that view. Institutions should have their purposes. I'll add this. At least, in secular universities, non-religious universities, it was also understood in theory at least that any limitation on speech would be in the name of the purpose of the institution, which was cultivating learning. You would say, this doesn't belong here because it's not meant to further learning.

But now, we reach this real dilemma, why do people want to limit the speech on the campus today? It's really not in the name of promoting learning, it's in the name of furthering a political goal of diversity. So you can't even trust the guardians anymore to stand for the purpose of university, so I guess reluctantly I've become a kind of half-hearted libertarian, and I sign all these First Amendment things, even though I don't believe they should really guide the university.

We're in a bad place in some ways, conservatives in that. I would like to see a return to a more sensible understanding of freedom. An understanding of freedom, which keeps in mind not only what freedom is, but the purpose of freedom, and to understand within civil society there are reasons to limit freedom in certain circumstances for the sake of freedom, that we're never going to succeed merely on the standard of libertarianism. But for the time being, I've made a little bit of a concession to libertarianism.

KRISTOL: I think I've come that way, too. You can say freedom isn't ultimately enough, it has to be embedded in a deeper understanding of the point of the Constitution and the society. On the other hand, freedom is the first barrier that one can put up and a very strong one, obviously, and one that has great instinctive appeal to people. I suspect we will have a – not sure if *libertarian* is quite the right word – but the appeal of freedom is going to be at the core of the conservative resistance to the nanny state or whatever we're calling cultural socialism and the economic socialism, too. That has some resonance in America. Quite a lot of resonance in America.

CEASER: I would say that a move as far in the direction of freedom is necessary, and then maybe keep reminding persons that for the preconditions of freedom, don't forget the preconditions of freedom at least in our cultural discourse. I think the Right's pretty good on that, and it can do more. It's job, let's say, having secured political freedom is to remind people of the purposes of freedom.

And that's, I think, really one of the contributions of conservatism. It's never been all about money, money, money even though it supplies the basis of the free market. It's never been, in culture, about free expression, free expression, free expression. On the contrary, it's to remind people of standards and to keep those things alive. That's its job of conserving. When you speak of conservatism as conserving, it's conserving those cultural blessings, the benefits of Jerusalem and Athens and the tradition. Without that freedom, honestly, becomes a pretty thin thing.

On the political level, I would say that it's good to add to the word *freedom responsibility*. That's a nice acceptable word. It's a word that gets to notions that rights may have to be limited for just purposes. It's not freedom limited by political correctness. It's freedom limited by responsibility. That still has to be part of the political agenda, which is some limitation on freedom, but in the culture agenda, it's freedom limited by the tradition.

KRISTOL: With progressivism having given up on liberalism, and liberalism having been discredited in some ways, could liberalism be revived as in there are some conservatives who want to – we're the true liberals, and there is, of course, some truth to that – 19th-century liberals, Hayek. I think "Why I'm Not a Conservative," he considered himself an old Whig or a liberal. Is there any chance to do that, or is the word so identified with sort of late 20th-century American progressivism really that conservatives can't really re-appropriate that word?

CEASER: Well, they can re-appropriate it, maybe, somewhat in the economic realm. But I would say even classical liberalism was somewhat deficient in its defenses of tradition. I won't say it's entirely – Look at some of the great people who were in it. You can't say that they weren't defenders in some way of the great tradition, but it didn't make that a conscious part of its program sufficiently. I don't know what the exact word is, whether conservatism would be the best word or traditionalism, these are all words

with problems. But understanding that the blessings of our civilization depend on something that is more than just freedom. I think that's crucial.

And you can go to the – as some have done – they evoke their Adam Smith and not just *The Wealth of Nations* – but the way, “the wealth of nations” is a line from the Bible, they should remember that – but not just *The Wealth of Nations* but *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. That's a good way to enter into it. The true defense, I think, comes from going back further still to Jerusalem and Athens and the whole tradition before that. Those are the works and books, which remind of us of the scale of human hierarchy, and that's where conservatism, I think, still has a great deal to contribute. Which is why conservatives have always had throughout – even their defense of capitalism and money and all that – have always had good cultural journals.

Reminded people of things in that sphere as well. It's been a real contribution. The problem with progressivism I don't think they're necessarily opposed to these things, but they put so much emphasis on overcoming the past that they can't give sufficient credit to those older things. They spend their time saying that the future is the golden age, so if it is, how can you value the past or parts of the past? It's more difficult for them.

KRISTOL: Conservatives had to defend both freedom, but also standards and the high and the low, which don't cut against freedom exactly, in fact you need freedom to achieve these great things, one could argue, but do go beyond freedom.

CEASER: Yes, I think that's true and I think that's – well, that was, I think that was *National Review*, that was Buckley. It was *The Weekly Standard*, and I think that part is understood, and I think that is the, say, the conservative synthesis for modern politics.

KRISTOL: People so much want to have one principle or one guide, but what you're saying is healthy conservatives would have to have two to three guides at once, in a sense?

CEASER: People are always looking for the universal theory. Even in science, too. This is why political science has almost died is because people say, “Well, you can't have a science different than the universal science and the universal science, social science would be something like economics, therefore the specificities of the science should be eliminated.” I think the world is a multi-world of different disciplines, of different zones, different excellences. I think the *Federalist Papers* begins with that premise as well in its more theoretical discussions, some of them that political science can't be reduced to the other forms of sincere or to mathematics, in particular.

But it is tempting because you always want to go to a universal science, which would predict everything. And in science they've gone pretty far in that, but I think there's been some reaction within science as well.

KRISTOL: On that complicated note and the basis for further discussion, Jim, thanks very much for joining me today, and thank you for joining us on CONVERSATIONS.

[END]