

## How Marxism is Disguised as Woke Morality (#305)

Dr. Jordan Peterson (P) and Dr. Yoram Hazony (H)

Discussion of Hazony's new book, *Conservatism, A Rediscovery*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5XotAecfF4>

Nov 14, 2022

*Transcribed and edited by Wm. Gross 11/28/2022*

(H – taster) *Politically, one side or tribe no longer honors the other as Reagan and Mondale did. There is a constant drumbeat of insult, abuse, slander – dishonoring one another. It's like a marriage: if you want a divorce, if you want a civil war, then just keep dishonoring the other person, just keep focusing on everything that's wrong with them – you'll get your divorce, you'll get your civil war.*

**(P)** Why a rediscovery?

**(H)** I think most people have figured out we're undergoing some sort of cultural revolution. I think this hit a high point 2 years ago in 2020 when people started getting fired from prestigious academic positions and media positions for holding regular liberal positions that people had had for decades. I wrote the book to make some order in this cultural revolution. These woke Neo-Marxists are obviously not liberals; and the old liberalism doesn't seem to have the fight and firepower to be able to roll this back. The question is, what kind of a force would be strong enough to stop it? Everybody talks about all the things the Left is doing wrong, but if we're thinking about opposition to it, we need to know what kind of force is going to stop it. And I think to discuss that, you have to go into *conservatism*.

**(P)** How would you characterize what's happening on the Left? What's the nature of this cultural revolution?

**(H)** Since after WWII, both in America and across Europe, there was a consensus in all the major political parties and cultural streams that was kind of an enlightenment liberal framework. The basic idea was that what you need to know about politics is that human beings are by nature free and equal, that they take on moral and political obligations on the basis of consent – and that was assumed to be sufficient in order to guide the political world. There were disagreements within liberalism (progressive, libertarian, classical), but the basic framework held for 60 or 70 years.

That very well-intentioned, very noble liberalism assumes that children, when they're being raised, they don't need any kind of traditional guidance or customary framework – what people call “guard-rails” today – that are inherited and consciously inculcated by parents, by churches, by schools. The assumption was, and for many parents still is (for two generations), that you tell your kids when they're growing up, “Look, whatever makes you feel good; whatever fulfills you; whatever it is that gives *you* meaning in life – that's what you should do, and the important thing is to be happy.” That sounds really nice; but when you raise kids like that, a great many of them reach a kind of dead end. They don't *know* what makes them feel good.

Into that vacuum steps in this Woke new Marxist movement, which has answers; it gives people answers. The surprise is that all of these mainstream liberals thought that if you told

kids, “Just use your reason; think for yourselves; figure it out for yourselves; we trust you,” that everybody would come to something normal. But it turns out that’s not true. When you tell young people for two generations, “Just think for yourselves, whatever looks good to you,” it turns out that a great many of them are much more attracted to Marxism, and some of them even to fascism, than to mainstream liberalism.

So that went on for two generations, and then it basically collapsed. 2020 was the year that the hegemony of mainstream liberal ideas came to an end. There’s still some mainstream liberals running around, but in terms of the assumption of this society right now, we actually have this Woke neo-Marxism seeking to impose a new hegemony. And they’re frighteningly close.

**(P)** It seems to me you could make a case that classic liberalism worked because it was running on stored cultural capital. The institutions you’re talking about were more or less intact — church; family; stable, monogamous heterosexual marriages; and civic society (membership in clubs and that sort of thing) — when all that was functioning, then as a principle, it was possible to treat people as autonomous, reasonable individuals. Because you had already laid the groundwork for something approximating a shared ethos. But as that evaporated, because people became more atomistic and hedonistic, then the shared ethos started to deteriorate, and other idea-sets became more attractive. Does that seem approximately correct?

**(H)** I think that’s exactly right. I would just add the loyalty to a national framework, to a nation. If people are raised with loyalties to a family, to a congregation, to a community, and then to a larger nation, then they know something about where they are. They can criticize, they can argue about how we’re going to organize these loyalties and how we can improve things. But exactly as you said, if they *don’t* grow up with these things, if those things are no longer clear because the cultural capital is running down, the inheritance is being spent. And once that inheritance is gone, then there are no limits, no framework, no common sense. What we call “common sense” is always the common sense of the particular nation or community or family. Once those things have broken down, there is no common sense, and people are actually willing to consider just about any crazy, evil thing.<sup>1</sup>

**(P)** 8.46 – For a hundred years, as clinical psychology developed, they believed that sanity is something internal to the individual, if you were well-constituted psychologically. It’s not very useful because it downplays the social embeddedness that characterizes people that are psychologically stable; and therefore *capable* of happiness. If you’re stable, you’re not anxious, you’re not completely ridden with negative emotion. That doesn’t necessarily mean

---

<sup>1</sup> Peterson and Hazony assume the vacuum was passively created by parents failing to inculcate conservative values and norms in their children; Marxism then filled it. But indeed, neo-Marxists in the Frankfurt school (1940s) intentionally created the vacuum. They infiltrated major universities and teachers’ colleges, indoctrinating their impressionable students. Those students, then filled the hierarchy of major institutions like public education, labor unions, news media, religious and civic organizations, political parties, and corporate boardrooms. The Vietnam war and the civil rights movements in the 1960s, were quickly followed by women’s lib and gay rights movements, etc., used by the Marxists, whose three primary goals are to destroy capitalism; destroy the family; and destroy religion. Their strategy is to create tribes, infiltrate them, and set them against each other. This eliminates social consensus. They then fill it with their own hierarchy, and their own oppression. It’s not passive at all; it’s *active* and *intentional*. – WHG

they're happy, but they're not anxious and frustrated and disappointed and in pain and confused and aimless and all of that — they're not miserable. It seems to me to be impossible to be psychologically intact in isolation. The proof for that is that even hardened; criminals, anti-social types, find being in solitary confinement almost intolerable. If you're married, you have someone who's somewhat different than you, to keep you in check constantly. Like married couples are throwing back and forth information to each other, about how to regulate the relationship and themselves non-stop. That's pretty much all of what information consists of. And then if you have children or siblings, the immediate family, the same thing is happening, that people are monitoring one another and providing each other with feedback about how to behave and how to think.

And then that's nested inside a civic community, and that's nested inside a state or a province, and then that's nested inside a country, and maybe all of that is nested inside some religious presuppositions. It's the harmony between all those levels that seems to be essentially what constitutes sanity — rather than something that's formally internal. Maybe it's like your internal structure reflects that external harmony. And I'd say the liberal emphasis on self-actualization, on the atomistic self as the center of the world, has deluded itself into thinking that any of that's possible without an intact hierarchy of social structure surrounding the individual. That seems to me to be the fundamental weakness on the psychological front, even of classic liberalism.

**(H)** I think you're exactly right. You were pretty much speaking to this in your earlier work when you were telling young people, Look, you need to find your place within some kind of social hierarchy. This is actually the extension of your earlier argument. Both of us are drawing on Durkheim's insight that if you want to know what is it that leads people to suicide, it's *anomia* [lack of norms], the lack of a directional sense, a set of guard rails, which comes from those nested hierarchies that you are describing. None of this means that if an individual is unhappy, can't look for a different place in a different hierarchy. But the point is that wherever they end up, if they're going to be motivated and directed and feel like their life has meaning and purpose and direction, it's because they've found their place in a hierarchy that works for them. And liberalism simply doesn't touch on this central human need.

By the way, the Marxists are pretty much aware of this. They *do* think in terms of hierarchies. Of course, their goal is to *destroy* them; but at least they can *see* them. Whereas the liberals are always thinking kind of in terms of flat land, that by the time you're eighteen or twenty, then you're equal to everybody else. The assumption is that everything is level, but the truth is, *nothing* is level. There are always hierarchies, and people feel good when they've found the right place in such a hierarchy. By the way, that means they have something to aspire to, to move *up* in the hierarchy. They have some idea where they're going in life.

**(P)** You've talked about guard rails and directions, and what made for a good life, say for people who are depressed, who didn't have guard rails or direction, and that was part of the reason they were depressed (though depression is complicated and there are many reasons for it), but it *does* seem to me to be an incontrovertible truth that almost all the meaning that you find in your life, that it isn't merely a consequence of a narrow and short-sighted

hedonism. It's found in the service you provide to the people who are in your social networks. And that would be, first of all, your intimate relationships in your family, and then in the hierarchical nesting – nested structures – that are outside of that, if you're fortunate enough to have them.

The guard rails are that there are codes of behavior that are necessary to abide by, that constitute adhering to the principles of all those relationships. And the direction is whatever the joint venture that you're embarking on with others is directed towards. I don't see that you *do* have a structure or purpose in your life in the absence of those things. If you strip someone of, say, their embeddedness in their educational institution, or a job or career, you strip them of their family, you strip them of all their civic responsibility – I suppose perhaps they have their creative endeavors, if they happen to be creative people, but even then, they've got to be interacting with other people to *communicate* about their creative endeavors, or to monetize them – but without these, there really is nothing. We know too that statistical studies of language usage have indicated pretty clearly that thoughts about yourself are indistinguishable from negative emotion. That's how heavily tinged they are with negative emotion. As soon as you become self-conscious, as soon as you begin thinking about yourself, you're instantly anxious and miserable. They're the same thing.

And so, on the Marxist front, we talked about the collapse of liberalism – the fact that liberalism is in some sense an *empty concept* in the absence of these underlying practices and customs, let's say. They're actually embodied, *acted out*; they're not conceptual precisely. The Marxists, I think, have an advantage over the liberals. And maybe this is one of the things that accounts for the attractiveness of Marxism to young people, is that the Marxists at least have an *attitude* towards guard rails, which is, *destroy* them. But they also provide a direction; and the direction is essentially a *revolutionary* direction. It combines a critique of hierarchy, concentrating on the idea that hierarchies are intrinsically pathological; but then it also provides direction and group membership. So that's pretty compelling in the absence of any structure, say, which is what would be offered by the classic liberal.

**(H)** Right. But notice that this issue goes all the way back to Marx [1848]. Notice that the theory is that hierarchical structures – competition between groups – always means that there's going to be *oppression*. And the goal is always to overthrow the dominant hierarchy. Marx doesn't answer the question of what's going to come after the revolution. He's incredibly vague about it. And this continues to this day. The unspoken truth here is that these Woke neo-Marxists are masters at creating tight, hierarchical structures that people can fit into. That's the reason that people get sucked into this woke thing; they sound so much like robots. They're constantly repeating precisely the new thing that they're supposed to be saying. And the reason for this is because their own hierarchical structure that they're creating is of the tightest and most disciplined kind. There's a terrible hypocrisy in the whole Woke thing. The claim is that they're bringing social justice of overthrowing existing social structures and existing hierarchies. But they themselves are imposing precisely the same thing that they are claiming they are going to destroy.

**(P)** Well, *worse!* They are imposing something *worse*. This is very, very striking historically. So let's take the Marxist position apart. The first oversimplification is that there

is a hierarchy instead of a multiplicity of hierarchies. Because in any reasonably functioning modern society, there are innumerable hierarchies. It's part of the reason that we can live without being too crushed by hierarchical differences is because, as you said before, you can move from one hierarchy to another. And that might be something as straightforward as changing jobs, not that that's particularly easy; but it's not impossible. And so, if you can't find a place in one economic structure, then you can find a place in another. I think that one of the real antidotes to rigid, uniform, monolithic hierarchies, is a provision of multiple games. And I think modern societies do a very good job of that. And so the idea that there is one hierarchy (although you could rank people by wealth) is preposterous — *except* under Marxist rule! In which case everything does tend to collapse into a single hierarchy which is absolutely monolithic, and totalitarian beyond belief.

And that just happened time and time again. So you have to presume that there's some fundamental flaw in the Marxist formulation. And maybe the flaw is something like, Look, you have to accept a moderate amount of hierarchical structuring, and you have to hope it doesn't get too lopsided so that only a few have everything and everyone else has nothing. That's a pathological situation; although it's not *only* a consequence of western economic structures. That is a human universal — that proclivity or natural universal, that power law distribution problem.

Now, if you criticize hierarchy to such a degree that you want to destroy all of it, then all that you do is instantly produce something approximating the most tyrannical hierarchy you could possibly imagine. Because you destroy the differentiated structures — that's exactly what happened in the Soviet Union and China — you destroy all the intermediary distributed multiplicitous structures, and you replace that with tyrant and peasants.

**(H)** That's true, but let me push back just a little, because I think that a healthy society is one that certainly has competition — multiple tribes, maybe different religions — I think these things are probably more important to people's identities, they're more tied to regional, ethnic religious groups, than they are to what job they have. It's always possible if you don't like your nation, to move to a different nation. If you don't like your religion, you can convert to a different religion. But the bottom line is that *big* structures, macro structures, like the hierarchy that constitutes a nation, *those* are the things that are missing, I think, from the liberal picture.

Of course a healthy nation, and here I would insert the word “conservative,” is that the difference between a *Marxist* view of the hierarchy, or hierarchical power structures within a nation, and a *Conservative* view, is that the conservative says, “Look, there are always going to be groups that are more powerful than others. There's no such thing as no hierarchy. There's always going to be competition among groups, and some groups are going to be more powerful than others, like the Anglo-Saxon Protestants in America who ruled for so long.” But that doesn't mean that the most powerful groups have to *oppress* the other groups. In a conservative society there's an ongoing negotiation among the different groups. There's a jostling and a competition, just like in family life.

There's a constant bickering and jostling among children for position; and even between a husband and wife. The reason husbands and wives bicker, the reason they squabble, is because there's a constant trying to find a place where you feel like you're being properly

honored, where you feel like you're being properly respected. And in a traditional conservative society, what's going on is that you inherit certain ways of structuring things, and then you can adjust them; you can try to correct them. But the goal of the conservative society is to have a distribution of honors, a distribution of justices — of what people get, and where they get placed within the society. And that distribution, the conservatives claim, doesn't always have to be evil, as the Marxists say. It doesn't always have to be oppressive. You can have a situation in which the more powerful groups understand that they have a responsibility to the weaker groups, and you can argue about what that exactly is.<sup>2</sup> But a mutually beneficial conservative society is one in which the different groups get things out of the collaboration, out of the mutual loyalty. It's not just the strong that get things, and the weak get crushed; but everybody gets things.

I think a lot of what conservatives are reacting to when they see what the Marxists are trying to build is, "You're trying to grab everything for your group." Whereas a traditional conservative society says, "No. The just balance of honors among the different groups, *that's* what makes people feel good. *That's* what makes people loyal to the system."<sup>3</sup> Otherwise there is no loyalty to the system; there's just oppression.

**(P)** 27.31. Yeah, well the Marxists also have the advantage that — I would say a *twofold* advantage — they can appeal to envy. They're unbelievably good at that. And I think the fundamental motivating force of Marxism is envy. It would be a close race between that and desire for untrammelled power. But we can certainly start with envy. It's very easy for people to be envious of anyone who has more of anything than they do. And one of the things I've been struck by on the Left, is the constant presupposition that "if someone has more than *me*," they got it because they are using power in an oppressive way. It's always the cutoff between the oppressor and the oppressed is whatever status I happen to have as a left wing intellectual. Cause *I* got what *I* have, honestly and through hard work and diligence; but anybody that has more than me obviously took it from the people who are lesser than them. And so, that's definitely an appeal to envy.

But there's something underneath that, I think, that is more powerful — which is a criticism that conservatism is susceptible to — is that hierarchies do tend to degenerate in the direction of arbitrary power when they degenerate. And every hierarchy is degenerate to some degree, because there's a bit of corruption in everything. And so the Marxists can point to the corruption, especially if they're appealing to young people; and they can say, "Well look at that person in that position of authority, and the awful things they did that were oppressive and improper. Obviously, everyone who holds any position of authority is corrupt in some fundamental way. And then obviously the whole *system* is corrupt. Given that *that* critique of corruption has warrant in some sense, it's not easy to differentiate and say, "Look guys; you've gotta think this thing through. Human institutions aren't perfect,

---

<sup>2</sup> This is a Judeo-Christian principle that undergirded western civilization for 2000 years. It has been systematically removed from the marketplace of ideas since 1900. Once it is gone, and no longer undergirds societal laws and values, what will replace it? I think that once Christianity disappears from public life, there will no longer be the rule of law, but only of men. We won't recover until a secular regime adopts Christian morality, as Rome once did. — WHG

<sup>3</sup> That's why the Marxists don't want it. They want loyalty to the party alone. They are intentionally destroying loyalty to any hierarchy but their own. — WHG

and you have to be awake all the time to be sure they don't degenerate *entirely*. But that doesn't mean that they are *fundamentally* corrupt."

This was the claim that America was predicated on a positive view towards slavery. It's like, well obviously when America was founded, slavery was thriving, and so there was a pro-slavery ethos that was part and parcel of the American project at that point, but the fundamental drive of the *system*, and all of the traditions upon which it was founded, was that all men are created equal, men and women are created equal before God, and that was the principle that eventually won out. It's hard to teach young people, I think, to separate the wheat from the chaff when it's so easy just to throw everything out, especially if there's no immediate consequences, and especially when you're lauded for doing so, and all your idiot teachers are telling you that's the right thing to do.

**(H)** Right. Agreed. But the reason I bothered with the historical chapters in the Conservatism book, is because I think there's a widespread misunderstanding about conservative thinkers, about Fortesque, and Selden, and Burke,<sup>4</sup> and for that matter, Washington, and Adams, and Hamilton. There's kind of this assumption that if you're a conservative, then you think that whatever exists, it's fine and it doesn't need to be repaired. When you actually read these sophisticated conservative thinkers, what you find is that *none* of them think this.

The actual view is something much more like what you were describing: there is corruption in everything, but more than that, every good system decays, every good system runs down. This is an integral part — you just see this over and over again in Anglo-American conservative thinkers — that every system runs down, every system decays. That's just the way human societies are. The principal job of the conservative is not to hold on tight to whatever exists; it's to look for restoration. It's to identify what has become decayed, and to look for a model either earlier in history, or sometimes even just looking at the neighbors. During the Polish revolutions they looked to the British constitution for a model.

And so the word *restoration*, it's a lot like the word *repentance*. Restoration is kind of a national political repentance where you look at something and you say, Look, this is decayed; we've gone off course; or there is an inherent evil that can no longer be tolerated. We have to fix it. The conservative's job is to find a way to make that repair, while strengthening the entire system, as a whole. The example of slavery is always on a lot of people's minds, and I think for good reasons. But it's important to notice that Britain succeeded in eliminating slavery on the basis of the Common Law in the 1770s without a revolution, without a civil war.

What happened is that Lord Mansfield looked at the integration of the Mercantile Law over the previous century into the Common Law, and in a lot of ways that was very good. That's what made it possible for Britain in a lot of ways to become a modern economy. But the idea that human beings could be bought and sold as slaves was imported into the Common Law *by* the Mercantile Law at the end of the 1600s. And at a certain point the jurists, the judges in Britain, looked at this and said, What's happening is that we are corrupting ourselves; we

---

<sup>4</sup> John Fortesque (1394-1479); John Selden (1584-1654); Edmund Burke (1729-1797).

are corrupting our tradition by allowing this institution of slavery to be brought into our country. And they eliminated it on the basis of British tradition, English tradition. They said English Common Law does not uphold slavery. A person who is enslaved in England is always enslaved unfairly.

Now the interesting thing is that for the Americans, an important part of the Federalist party's platform during the American Revolution, was bringing the English Common Law in as the law of the new national federal government. Jefferson opposed it. Madison opposed it. But the Federalist Party, the *conservatives*, thought they needed this Common Law inheritance. And America in fact does still have that Common Law inheritance until this day. Now, why is it that if the English could get rid of slavery without this abstract declaration that all men are created equal, the Americans couldn't do it? I think part of this is an optical illusion. I think that the Americans *could* have done it.

But the strength of liberalism in America's founding, and going forward, comes from the fact that while Washington and his party were genuine conservatives, the American Constitution of 1787 is basically, in many respects, a restoration of the British constitution. That's what Washington and his party stood for. Jefferson and his party, Tom Paine — these really were Enlightenment liberal radicals. Jefferson is famous for saying things like, "One generation is a foreign country to the preceding generations." "Each generation owes nothing to the past." "Each generation receives nothing from the past that can't simply be overthrown and revised." I think this brings us to the heart of what we're facing today.

**(P)** I just read a very interesting scientific paper that's oddly relevant to this. It's revolutionary. I think it was published in *Nature*. It showed that there's this idea that's common currency among evolutionary biologists, that mutations are entirely random. And this turns out to be not entirely true. There's a hierarchy of genetic stability. And the older the genes are that code for the properties of a given organism, the more likely those genes are to be restored to their original condition if a mutation does occur, by DNA repair mechanisms.

The reason I think this is so relevant is that there are presumptions that make up our society and stabilize them, have a hierarchical structure. And some of them are old and deep, and one of the oldest and deepest would be the idea that men and women alike are made in the image of God. And so that's a very fundamental proposition. And then you might say that, well, the more fundamental a proposition is, the more other propositions depend on it; and then you might say, it's *those* most fundamental propositions that have to be transmitted from generation to generation.

The more peripheral propositions, which are newer, and they would be again, to newer to genetic variations in a given organism, the more they are free to vary, because not so many things depend on them. And they should vary because their fundamental nature is still up in the air in some sense. But there's a hierarchy of presumptions; and the deeper the presumption, the less it should be amenable to change. I think that could be worked out on the conservative side.

**(H)** I think so. I think you're describing exactly what I'm describing, just from another field. By the way, there's this really fascinating passage in Hayek,<sup>5</sup> — Friedrich Hayek, the great economist and liberal thinker in the middle of the last century — he argues that the emergence of the picture of science as an evolutionary process, by trial and error, is the transference of the old Common Law idea of the *Law* as evolutionary, the Constitution as evolutionary. The transfer of that was completely natural for English and Scottish thinkers who *knew* that the Law was supposedly evolved this way. To begin thinking in the same way about *science* as trial and error, could easily have inspired Darwin as well.

**(P)** We could begin thinking about English Common Law the same way. Basically, under the English system, the presumption is human beings have all the rights there are, *intrinsically*. And then, when people come together and have a dispute, the dispute has to be adjudicated. And once it's adjudicated, that becomes a Common Law principle. And then those principles are supposed to be bound by precedent, and so then the presuppositions in English Common Law that have the most precedent, are the most fundamental. And so it's an incrementally transforming structure, but it's also hierarchically structured. It differs from, let's say, the French Civil Code. It certainly differs from systems of thought like Marxism, which are all *rational* creations and imposed from the top down. And so, English Common Law did have this bottom-up nature, which gives it, I would say in some sense, a preeminent status among legal codes around the world. It's a remarkable body of work.

**(H)** Yup. I think your description is apt. Let me just add a couple of points to that. One of them is that the Common Law is a *development* coming down the centuries of **biblical** law. If you go back to the earliest formulations of legal codes in Britain, a lot of it is taken literally, explicitly, directly from law codes in Hebrew Scripture. And the second point that's important, is that what you're describing — the jostling among individuals which then creates cases which set precedents — that also happens at the Constitutional level, not only at the level of individuals competing with one another for rights. But also if you look at Magna Carta [1215], and the Petition of Rights [1628], the English Bill of Rights [1689], and then after that, the *American* Bill of Rights, if you look at that as an ongoing jostling between the executive (originally the king) and the legislature (originally the nobles), what you see is exactly this kind of trial and error to find the right balance, which literally goes on for a thousand years.

The Constitution that the Americans in 1787 took upon themselves, if you compare it to the earlier English Petition of Rights, their Bill of Rights, you'll see that virtually all of the rights that appear in the American Constitution are actually things that were already worked out over centuries in this trial-and-error effort to find the right balance, in England.

**(P)** So this means Jefferson is *wrong* that each successive generation is a foreign territory compared to the previous, because he didn't, in the manner that you describe, take into account the hierarchical nature of fundamental social presuppositions. And so he might be correct on the fringe and the periphery, but at the *core* he's wrong. The case that you're making is that, while you have the American Constitutional axioms, let's say, expanded to include the Bill of Rights, but that's grounded in English Common Law. And that's a

---

<sup>5</sup> F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*.

consequence of centuries of trial and error — and it's trial and error in a very particular way. Imagine that you and I have a dispute 300 years ago, and we go in front of an English court, the court has to rule in relationship to the dispute in a manner that's commensurate with all previous rulings of that broad *type*. And then the rulings have to be *consistent* enough with grounded human intuitions of what constitutes a *just* settlement, so that when the settlement is handed down, the parties involved actually find it acceptable enough not to degenerate into murder.

**(H)** That's super-well said. I think that's exactly the point. Let's say that we go with Jefferson for a moment. And we say, using *reason*<sup>6</sup> we can come up with the right answer in the 1700s. We don't need 800 years of trial and error for that. If you go with Jefferson, where you end up is with a view that says, Look, I exercise reason; I don't need tradition because I can exercise reason. I don't need the inheritance of ideas and principles and precedents because I can just use *reason*. If you go in that direction, what happens is that even though your intentions are liberal and *not* Marxist, and your intention is just to allow people to be free of previous generations, that's *all* — to think for themselves — if you do that, then what you will come up with is something that actively, aggressively runs down [demeans] the inheritance of common sense and precedence and intuitions that people have gotten.<sup>7</sup>

**(P)** Well, then what precisely is this logic, what is this reason that the liberals are stressing? If you investigate that from a psychological perspective, you think about it as the application of pure logic. But that's *foolish* because people just aren't that logical, and very few people are trained to think logically. And then, with regards to *reason* itself, unless you're a radical empiricist, and you believe that the pathway forward and the guardrails are self-evident as a consequence of exposure to the *facts* — which is naive beyond belief — then your reason is an empty concept. Because if we're reasoning with language, let's say — which would be the most reasonable way of reasoning, because you can communicate with other people that way — every single bloody word you use was crafted by other people; every phrase has a history; every sentence is a fragment of a philosophical tradition. And then, every *profound* idea is very unlikely to be original. And so the very tools of reason itself are established not only by tradition, but by an unbelievably profound hierarchical *consensus*. You and I couldn't even speak unless almost everything we said to each other was comprehensible because of our shared set of assumptions. Again, we can play on the fringes. As long as we're 99% in agreement, we can talk about the 1% where we differ, and nibble away at the edges. But if we were *radically* different in our orientation and in our individual reason, we couldn't even talk!

**(H)** Right. By the way, this point is already made explicitly by Selden — John Selden, the great Common lawyer and constitutional scholar in the early 1600s — that every single word we use is something that was crafted by previous generations, and *that's* the basis for our capacity to be able to live together.

---

<sup>6</sup> *Reason* is the core virtue (or idol) of the Enlightenment.

<sup>7</sup> Elitists tend to think they're the smartest person in the room, and theirs is the smartest generation; all previous generations were ignorant and foolish by comparison. This is the height of pride and arrogance. — WHG

To go back to your question that you started with, if you have a society that has a common inheritance — I'm not saying that everybody has to agree on everything — but there is an inheritance in which 90%, or 95%, or 98% of what we think has been inherited, and we agree on it, then we argue, as you say, on the fringes. That is a very good description of a successful, cohesive polity in which there can be competing parties, in which you can have democratic votes, you can have transitions from the rule of one party to another — but *all* of this depends on a mutual recognition among the different parties, that they're a part of *one* inheritance. And they're willing to honor one another because even though they disagree, and may *hate* each other, they understand that they're part of *one* structure.<sup>8</sup> As you said, *one* inherited logic.

And what we've done today,<sup>9</sup> is to say No! We don't need *any* of that. It doesn't matter how much of it you uproot and throw out, because we trust the *new* human reason that the revolutionaries are going to come up, to be something *better* than what we inherited. That's the heart of their argument.

**(P)** I really believe you see the most egregious example of this in our willingness to redefine the meaning of man and woman. Because, my psychological studies have led me to the presumption that there might not be any more fundamental perceptual category than man and woman, than male and female. And there's the direct perception of that on the biological front, which is a precondition for successful reproduction, in case it has to be pointed out; and then there are symbolic echoes of masculine and feminine that pervade almost everything we conceptualize.

So you see that echoed, for example, in the Taoist conception of reality as Yin and Yang, which is a masculine and feminine dichotomy. There's this bipolarity of *cognition* that has as its fundamental basis the distinction between the sexes. When Canada moved in 2016 to *force* the reconstruction of pronouns onto an unsuspecting population, in the name of compassionate narcissism, I thought, "Well, because this is such a fundamental cognitive category, if we introduce entropy into it, if we introduce disorder, then we're going to destabilize those who are already quite disordered; and the most likely to be destabilized in that manner would be adolescent girls — because there's historical precedent for that." So this idiot insistence that *all* conceptions are up for grabs, belies the fact that there's a hierarchy of perception in relationship to the different degrees of depths of different perceptions. It replaces hierarchical order, *not* with the freedom that's promised by the Marxists and the liberals, but with absolute, bloody, intolerable *chaos*.

---

<sup>8</sup> Any society may tolerate fringe groups, so long as the vast majority share a common social ethos or meta-narrative. But as any fringe group grows in number, and approaches 50% of the whole, civil war becomes inevitable. The Marxists for 100 years have sought to undermine this American inheritance, and to replace it with an entirely different political and social structure. Their goal is civil war, out of which will arise a consensus imposed by the Marxists; all opposing views will be stamped out. That's what we're beginning to see. The social fabric is being torn apart to make way for Marxist hegemony. I believe it is unlikely that it can be stopped at this point. The liberals let the Barbarians in, and the conservatives woke up too late to stop them. Once the Marxists got hold of the universities and media in the 1960s, the rest is probably inevitable. — WHG

<sup>9</sup> That is, those instigating this current cultural revolution that so many have bought into.

I do believe we're in a Tower of Babel situation, in a real sense. We've become intellectually pretentious beyond belief. We're building scaffolds that in principle are designed to replace God. And now we've reached an impasse where we no longer speak the same language. We can't even decide what constitutes a man and what constitutes a woman. And if you can't agree on that, then I don't think there's anything you could agree on.

**(H)** If you ask, where does the individual man or woman today *turn*? They are facing this permanent cultural revolution which is uprooting the most fundamental things that have been inherited. The most fundamental concepts that we use to understand reality are being *smashed*. So where do they turn? And here I understand that this could be controversial for all sorts of people, but I think the bottom line is that if you see the revolution coming, then you understand it's going to destroy everything. You understand that there is literally nothing that is not uprooted. If you see this, what's the force that could stop it? Well, the force that could stop it is *fundamentally* young men and young women, young families — older men and older women— going to that institution which continues to hand down traditions intact. In our society, it is almost *only* at this point, the *Church*; the orthodox churches. By *orthodox* I mean *theologically* orthodox, whether Catholic or Protestant — or orthodox *doctrinally*; or the synagogue, or some other traditional community in which a life of conservation and transmission is *actually* taking place.

It begins with young people saying, “Look, I need to be part of a community.” But the next step is to say it can't just be any arbitrary community; it can't be a bunch of 18-year-olds in a dorm room saying, “We're going to set up a community.” Because they're not actually engaged in conserving and transmitting anything. And so the only way in which you can plug yourself into the chain of conservation and transmission which has been lost, is to find older people who've seen it *done*. You're not going to be able to keep a marriage together if you don't have actual living models of older people who have *succeeded* in keeping a marriage together — so you can see what it's like, so you can pick it up from them. And the same is true for everything else.

If you want to save yourself — I think this is true nationally also, but at the moment — if you as an individual want to save yourself — I'm not talking about the Christian question about your eternal salvation; I'm *Jewish* — I'm talking about, do you want to save yourself in this life, in this world — I know this is difficult, but what you're going to have to do is go to older people who have a functioning congregation, and say, “Look, I'm coming here to *learn*. I'm not coming here to judge you. I'm not coming here to preach the things *I* believe; I'm coming here to learn how a life of conservation and transmission *used* to work. I want to learn that to see whether I can be part of it.”

*That* is a very big change. The best way to fight the oncoming revolution, as you say, the oncoming chaos, is with *order*. But you can't create that order yourself. You have to be a part of some *existing* order. And luckily, it still exists.

**(P)** So in relationship to your comments earlier, about the conservative thinkers, who I think we should also go through by the way, making the case that things did fall apart of their own accord, there's a thinker, Riché Eliade, a great historian of religions, who tracked the commonalities among flood myths across very many different cultures; and came up with a formula for why God or the gods would become angry enough to destroy everything

in a chaotic catastrophe. He said the first issue is that things deteriorate of their own accord. That's just an observation about the effect of entropy, I would say — that things fall apart; if you just leave them sit, they'll fall apart by themselves, 'cause things *decay*.

And then Eliade also said that a very common theme was that the process of entropic decay was sped along by the sins of men. And what he meant by that, was the proclivity of people to be willfully blind. And so imagine that there are small things going on in your marriage; your wife becomes less attentive, or *you* do; your attention begins to be attracted by other people, and you just let it slide. You don't do the attentive work necessary to do the repairs when the time is appropriate. Well then, you *speed* the process of decay.

So one of the implications of this, was that the central organizing principle of the psyche — and this might be the principle which religious systems to some degree, put forward as the highest possible good — something like constant attention to that process of decay, and communication about it, to stem off the ravages of time. You could think about that as an organizing principle of the psyche, a *necessary* organizing principle of the psyche. So the god Horus in the Ancient Egyptian pantheon, was the all-seeing eye that paid attention, and who could see corruption when it emerged, and the Mesopotamian god Marduk had eyes all the way around his head, and spoke magic words. That seemed to be something like a core organizing principle.

You talked about these cardinal, canonical, conservative thinkers, and their willingness to make the presumption that things did go wrong and needed to be fixed. Maybe we could go through them a little bit, if you don't mind. Fortesque, Hooker, Selden, and Burke.

**(H)** Before we do, let me say something about the biblical flood myth, or *story* I should say, and its relationship to the conversation that we're having. Eliade's mapping is helpful. But there is a big difference between the Mesopotamian flood myth, where you have, basically the gods get angry because human beings are annoying; human beings are bothering them; they're troublesome. That story in the hands of Moses and the Israelite prophets, becomes one of God's intention of creating an Edenic world, a perfect world where human beings and animals are all eating grass and vegetables, and no creature hurts another creature.

What you see is that the world intrinsically has the chaotic waters that God's wind or God's spirit fashions the world out of — those waters never fully go away. They're always constantly about to happen. And that affects human nature, in that human beings are incapable of living in this perfect world that God imagined in Eden. The flood story actually has almost the opposite meaning, because what God discovers from the flood is that He thought he was going to give Noah and Noah's children a chance to create the perfect world. The moment that the flood is over, Noah starts getting drunk; there's sexual impropriety. There's all sorts of awful things that immediately happen to Noah who's supposed to be the best of human beings.

That creates a religious framework in which God says, "All right. I can't perfect the world. I have no way of perfecting the world; it's not within my power to do that." Not exactly the way that it's often presented, but *that's* the way it's presented in the text. God doesn't have the power to create a perfect world, and He needs human beings to take up a role as His viceregents, as His associates and assistants in trying to fix the world.

And notice *that* structure is a hierarchical structure. It's not a metaphor of an all-powerful God that we should just obey. It's a *different* metaphor, of a God who actually needs our help. He could *destroy* the physical world, but He can't fix it without our help. That's the fundamental structure that makes Judaism, and later Christianity,<sup>10</sup> different from the preceding religions. It's that there *is a role* for man in the hierarchy of the Cosmos. God *needs* us. The covenant is about us stepping forward and *shouldering* that responsibility.

**(P)** So, the other thing that I've seen on my tours is that the call to responsibility has become somewhat of a clarion call. You can see the Marxists, and the environmental types as well, capitalizing on the attractiveness of responsibility and destiny to some degree, by offering these utopian schemes as a messianic alternative to the *anomy* of liberalism.<sup>11</sup> Let's put it that way. The Conservative approach seems to me to something more like the pursuit of responsibility in humble micro-domains, at least to begin with.

To set yourself right, you should try to set your family relationships right; and maybe to establish a family. Having established a certain degree of harmony and functionality in your family, then maybe you could extend out a few tentacles into the surrounding civic community. You could build from the bottom up. You could build a stable life, and a stable social life, and then a stable political life, let's say, from the bottom up. One of the things that I'd be hardened by is the fact that if you lay out those arguments to young people, you say, "Look, you need to be embedded in a social surrounding, you need to take responsibility for it, and the *reason* you need that, is that's where you're going to find the purpose of your life" — that sounds to me like an echo of this biblical insistence that there actually is something for human beings to do. As long as they don't bite off more than they can chew, and get all prideful about it.

**(H)** You said *maybe* start a family. This might be controversial to some of your viewers, but in the Jewish version of the biblical tradition, starting a family is an obligation that everyone who *can* do it, *must* do it. If you think about that in terms of the responsibility issue, young orthodox Jews are raised to believe that if you don't take on this responsibility, if you don't make it your business to find a wife, and to have children, and to do what it takes to create a stable structure, you're going to be for your entire life unable to understand what it actually takes in order to create human order.

Various people have noticed that many of the European leaders are unmarried and don't have children. The situation in which young people don't learn how to govern, don't learn how to be a king and queen in their own homes, they don't know how to govern a family, they don't know how to hold it together despite the incredible pain and difficulties that often take place between men and women, and children (though sometimes fun) are sometimes

---

<sup>10</sup> The Christian view is *very* different from what Dr. Hazony presents here. We're responsible, but God doesn't *need* our help; he *uses* it. He sent Christ to reconcile men to God through faith in Christ, who is that perfect Man. We are united to Him by faith, and thus become co-heirs in the kingdom. As for the earth, He will restore it at His return. Till then, the world is *distinct* from the kingdom. Thus Christians are *in* the world, but not *of* it. We're sojourners. Our citizenship is in heaven, not here. We're a sanctifying influence, but we're not the perfecters of the world. We are builders of the kingdom, by God's grace and power and as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. — WHG

<sup>11</sup> *Anomy*: a state of isolation and anxiety resulting from a lack of social control and regulation — or the lack of clear moral standards.

incredibly difficult, incredibly painful to raise. This whole concept that every young man and woman who *can* do it, *must* take the responsibility to bring life into the world, to create the world anew, to try to build up on the basis of what's been inherited, to try to make it better than what it was in previous generations — *that* view, I think in many ways, is the bedrock Jewish and Christian view which says, we're not slaves to the gods; we're partners in creating this world. But that means we have an obligation to *do* the act of creation. And the most fundamental act of creation is creating a family.

Once you've done that — you were hinting to this — then you can also learn to create congregations, to uphold nations. All of that flows from the first step of very young people taking responsibility for creating basically their own little world in a family.

**(P)** Well, there is no more profound responsibility than that.<sup>12</sup> And so it's an initiation into profound responsibility. One of the things that happens to a parent — and I think it's very difficult for this to happen if you *don't* become a parent — is that *once* you're a parent, there is definitely someone in your life who is more important than you are. Your orientation to the world matures properly, and it matures under the force of moral obligation.

Fundamentally you have this person now who is, for better or worse, almost entirely dependent on your not-so-tender mercies, you and your wife, who's subject to all your trials and tribulations and inadequacies. If you have any sense at all, that wakes you up as much as anything will. And without that, it's very difficult to shed the constraints of hedonistic adolescence. That's not good for people.

**(H)** I think that's exactly true. As you said, in a lot of ways you can't actually mature until you've created and you are the government of a household. The alternative that mainstream liberalism gives us — that when you reach 18 or 20 years old, you're a rational individual and now you can do whatever you want — we can see in young people that doing whatever they want means that they get too scared to get married, they get too scared to have children. I'm talking about something that even affects orthodox religious communities. You can see it very, very clearly. They look at these responsibilities with terrible fear, as though it's like an enslavement. They need to spend another five years, and another ten years, get more degrees, they need to keep preparing in order to be ready to do it.

That's the *opposite* of the traditional view that says, take the responsibility and then live up to it. You'll grow by living up to it. You'll become a complete person — as the rabbis say — you complete yourself *by* taking the responsibility of marriage and children. The alternative is adolescence that's extended forever. What, you think that when you're 35 years old, and now you're going to start looking to get married, it's going to get *easier* to get married? You'll actually be more capable of it than when you were 23? I don't think that's true at all. I think what you learned during those extra ten or fifteen years of adolescence, is to just care for yourself instead to learn how to create something, to learn how to command something.

**(P)** That idea also highlights in some sense both the practical necessity and the inevitability of *faith*, or the lack thereof. Many things in your life you have to throw yourself into without

---

<sup>12</sup> And yet, since the 1930s, the governments of the world have become increasingly paternalistic, and usurped the responsibilities of the parents in the home through a social welfare state. Again, one of the three primary goals of Marxism is to destroy the family, so that the state becomes the source of education, morality, and provision. — WHG

first knowing that you can do it. I don't mean to do that in an impulsive and foolish manner, like heedless of all risks. I mean that when you get married, you don't know if it's going to work, and in some sense that's even a foolish question. Because the issue is, when you decide to get married, it's the first and foremost decision among 50,000 decisions that are going to determine whether or not you can stay married. And you can boil that down to a question like, "Did I marry the right person?" And the answer to that is always *no*. And they didn't marry the right person either. Because neither of you is the right person in your current unbelievably flawed condition. But you throw yourself into it having faith that you can manage it; and also having faith that the alternative, that no matter how dismal the reality, the alternative is likely to be far worse.

And I would say the same thing is true on the child-rearing front; which, as you pointed out, is *difficult*. It isn't obvious that you're prepared, or that extra preparation is really going to help you. But, what's the alternative to the difficulty? One of the things I love about the story of Abraham, one of the things that makes it such a profound story, is that Abraham is really characterized by quite the protracted adolescence according to the beginning of the story. He's quite old when God finally convinces him to get the hell out of his tent, and to get out there in the world. And God, in that story, definitely manifests Himself as the call to adventure, even to the pathologically underdeveloped. And Abraham steps into any number of catastrophes, as soon as he leaves the confines of his tent and his father's home. But the story is a *triumph* in its totality because, despite the fact he encounters tyranny and the likely loss of his wife at the hands of people who are essentially tyrants, and starvation, and war, and all of the catastrophes of life, he has a great adventure.

And that adventure, as far as I can tell, is something like the adventure of truth, and dedication, and responsibility. And that's very seldom marketed by conservatives to young people, as an *adventure*. You said their default position is often to regard these strictures of community as, what would you call it, impediments and impositions on their hedonic freedom. But there's very little of value in that hedonic freedom. And all of the adventure in life, as far as I can tell, is to be found, weirdly enough, in truth and responsibility.

**(H)** Yup. I completely agree. You have God telling Abraham, "Look, I'm going to give you an opportunity to become a great nation," to become a great tradition, to become a teacher of all the peoples in the world. That's the biggest adventure that the prophets could imagine, was setting up to become a teacher to the entire world, and to create a great nation that would influence the whole world, and would be in covenant with God. The prophets can't imagine a larger scale adventure than that. And yet the whole thing pivots around, "You take a wife; you have to have a child; you have to raise that child. That involves hardship; that involves difficulty. There's all of these descriptions of Abraham's adventures. It takes many generations until you can see the full consequences of what he did. But the first step is taking responsibility, as you said.

We're talking about tens of millions of young people, and not so young people, who are beginning to realize that a career — meaning your place within the corporate economy, which cubicle, getting into that corner office — that's nowhere near the adventure of creating a family, which is creating a little nation which then has the opportunity to grow, if you do it right. I mean, really, these two things are battling one another. Which of them is

more important? The answer that you can have *both* — sometimes it's true, but it's terribly misleading because that cubicle, sitting in front of that computer screen, trying to move yourself up in the corporate game — that's *not* a life of conservation and transmission. That's not a life of *responsibility*. For most people it's almost *nothing* actually.

And so, what we really need to be telling people is, *Look, enough with the fear*. Come join a religious community, a congregation in which people *did* get married when they were young, and they *did* have children, and come see what it's like. By the way, the commandment of being fruitful and having children is only *one* part of your place in the hierarchy. Another part of your place is the commandment to honor your parents. And that also is something that young people find incredibly difficult. Whenever I speak in front of young audiences, the moment I mention *honor your father and your mother*, honor your teachers, immediately somebody says, "Well only if they *deserve* to be honored, right? You're not talking about honoring them if they're *terrible*." Of course, that loophole basically allows every single individual young man and woman in the audience to say, "Well, I judge that my parents are not worthy of being honored." It begins by going away to college and you don't need to talk to them anymore, and it ends by putting your parents in an old age home, paying somebody else to take care of them in old age. Again, it's just simply dumping responsibility on somebody else, paying somebody else to take the responsibility.

Both parts of this, the fear of bringing children into the world, but also the refusal to admit the biblical truth that you have a *lifelong* obligation to honor your parents, your father and your mother. You don't *choose* whether to have that obligation or not. This is *both* barrels against the fundamental assumption of liberalism, which is that you *choose* your obligations. But you *don't* choose your obligations. You don't choose which family you're born into. You don't choose who your parents are, or who your brothers are, or who your sisters are. You don't even choose who your *children* are. So all of these, in the end, are *unchosen* obligations. And the question is, are you going to develop the strength of personality, the power and the wisdom, and the ability to uphold these responsibilities in a way that's impressive and classy and powerful? And it can also be *magnificent*.

You get to a certain age and you've got all of these decades of wisdom. I think of my aunt and uncle who are in their 80s now, orthodox Jews in Israel. They took a drone photograph of them with 90 of their biological and adopted descendants who came to a picnic. You look at this and you say, they built an *empire*. They've begun to alter the face of the world with what they did. What about *you*? Are you just going to sit it out?

**(P)** Though *honor* too — I've been thinking about many of the injunctions on the religious side, as *moral* efforts. So faith, for example, you can pillory it as blind insistence that something that no one could possibly believe to be true, *is* true. Or you could say, faith is the courage that's required to leap into the unknown, and to wrestle with possibility itself.<sup>13</sup> And you could think of honor the same way. I read this book by Frank McCourt called *Angela's Ashes*, and in that book he talks about his father back in Ireland. They were a very poor Irish

---

<sup>13</sup> Faith is not a commodity, nor an attitude. Faith is an act of will, but that only in the sense that faith has must have an *object* on which to exercise itself. In Christianity, *Christ* is the sole object of our faith. We trust in Him alone, in what He has accomplished, and in what He has promised. — WHG

family. And his father was an absolutely unrepentant alcoholic who drank up every cent the family ever made, and had many, many children — a number of whom developed very serious illnesses as a consequence of the poverty induced by the father's drinking, some of whom died. And Frank had the wisdom, even as a young man, to sort of divide his father into two parts: there was sober, useful, productive, encouraging morning father; and there was nighttime and binge father. He did everything he could to extract out the encouraging patriarchal spirit from the best that his father had to offer.

And it seems to me that's something like *honor*. To honor your parents, to honor your wife, to honor your siblings, is to have the best in *you*, serve the best in *them*. It's something like that. It's *active*. It requires *effort*. *Courage* requires effort. It's not something you do blindly and foolishly. So when people say, Well my parents have done things that make them less than honorable in my eyes. There are two rejoinders to that. The first is, Well, what makes *you* so perfect? And so, who exactly is it within you that's doing this judging? And second, you have an obligation to work as hard as you can to foster the best in other people, and that would include your parents and your siblings and the people that you are close to. That's something that you really *work* at. And that's the *honoring*.

You know, when my wife and I got married, to speak personally for a bit, one of the things that we did decide was that we were going to honor each other as husband and wife. And so we tried very hard, for example, not to put each other down, particularly in public. And that wasn't because we weren't often irritated with one another, because obviously if you live with someone, irritation emerges. It's because you have a duty to *honor* your wife or your husband. And if you don't uphold that duty, then you denigrate the relationship and you make yourself look like an utter fool too. You know, if you don't treat your wife with a certain amount of *respect* — well, first of all it does *her* no good; but it also does *you* no good. You entered into the relationship; you have an obligation to keep it as pristine as you can in your public utterances. And that's part of the necessary responsibility that provides a scaffold [framework] for the relationship. *Same* with your parents.

**(H)** I would add that it's not just the *public* utterances. Everybody at this point has these Hollywood images of happy marriages which, just sort of magically everybody is having a good time, and unhappy marriages where people are constantly insulting and abusing one another. What is missing from this simplified version of marriage is that you simply don't have to say everything you think all the time. An integral part of liberalism is, "I want to express myself. I *feel* something, so I want to *say* it, I want to *tell* people." The assumption being that if you say everything you think, then you'll persuade the other person — your wife, your parents — you'll persuade the *world* of the truth of your view. But empirically we can say that isn't *remotely* true. If you say everything you think all the time, then what happens is that you hurt your wife over and over and over again. You bring her to the point where even the things that she *could* do, that you want her to do, she finds painful, and she starts hurting you back.

The whole traditional view that honoring means, sometimes, you *don't* say the truth. I'm not saying you should lie to your wife or your husband. God forbid! I'm not talking about that. But I'm saying that for every ten criticisms that come to you about your wife, it might be

that only *one* of them is worth saying, and maybe that one isn't worth saying *now*. Maybe it should be said *later*.

**(P)** You know, there's empirical data that if you track the utterances of married couples, and then you use the utterance tracking to predict the longevity of the relationship, it was found that if the relationship deteriorates to the point where there's one negative comment for every five positive comments, then the relationship doesn't maintain itself. So 20% negative is too high. But interestingly enough, there's a bound on the other end too, which is that if the positive to the negative exceeds 11 to 1, the relationship *also* tends to deteriorate. And so it's something like *judicious* communication. You don't have to make a case that every time something irritates you, that turns into a war. But you can't be a pushover or someone who is naively blind and expect the relationship to maintain itself as well.

**(H)** So this is actually one of the central arguments that I make in my Conservatism book. Which is that honoring is purposely trying to — in Hebrew the word is *l'chabed* for honoring. The word is to literally make someone heavy. In English we can say that certain statements or certain *words* are significant. Here we're talking about making an *individual* significant by making them weighty, giving weight to their words, saying "It was *important* that you did that. It was *good* that you did that." This is actually the *key* to creating a loyal relationship. People don't feel loved if they're not being honored. People don't feel *good* if they're not being honored. If they're not being honored, they begin to *hate*; they begin to *resent*.

You can say this with respect to husbands and wives; you can say this with children relating to their parents. Take a look *politically*, what's happening in America, what's happening in other democratic countries, where the competing political parties, the competing tribes, no longer honor one another. All you need to do is to go back to look at the Nixon-Kennedy debates from the 1960s, or the Reagan-Mondale debates from the 80s, and just *look* at those videos, at the way they treat one another. It may be that in their hearts they hate one another, and they think they're dangerous people, but look at the way they talk. They're constantly giving honor to the other side, because they value the fact that if the other side wins, they're going to be the loyal opposition. They'll do their best to honor them until the next election; hopefully they'll win.

I don't want to turn this into something, like, too dreamy or utopian. But the difference between that kind of politics and the politics we have today, which consists of this constant, constant drumbeat of insult, abuse, slander, dishonoring one another. Look, it's just like a marriage. If you want a divorce, if you want a civil war, then just keep dishonoring the other person; just keep focusing on everything that's wrong with them, and you'll get your divorce, you'll get your civil war. <sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Both Peterson and Hazony are ignoring the immense impact of social media, with its constant insults. There's no punishment for bad behavior. In the sandbox, when one child insults another child, he or she is quickly put in their place, often physically. A pecking order is thus established, and discretion becomes the better part of valor, a learned response. But this isn't true with social media. Anonymity gives license to unlimited rage and character assassination. It's had a huge impact on the culture, extending even into the education and politics. It was prevalent in Trump's presidency, both against him, and by him against his political enemies. Civility was lost amidst all the tweets. Zingers became the order of the day. The limited number of characters in tweets made it impossible for intelligent and reasoned

**(P)** So, you're construing honor as something like respect and encouragement. One of the things that B. F. Skinner, who was famously able to train animals to do almost anything, he pointed out that the most effective behavior modification, to put it rather coldly, was the use of targeted reward. And so he would watch animals, and when they did something that was approximately appropriate to what he was trying to teach them to do, he would reward them. So, for example, if he wanted to have a rat walk up a little ladder and do a dance on the top, he'd just watch the rat till it got close to the ladder, and when it got close to the ladder in its cage, he'd give it a food pallet. And then it would hang around the ladder more, and eventually it would put a paw up on one of the rungs, and he'd give it a food pallet. Soon he could get the rat climbing the ladder and doing a little dance on top, and all sorts of complicated things. He knew that you could shape behavior with threat and punishment, but that reward was much more effective, although it required a large degree of attention.

One of the things I suggested to my clinical clients in my lectures was that you pay *very* close attention to the people around you. And whenever they do something that you'd like to see them repeat, you let them know in some detail what it was that you observed. And that sounds like the manner in which you're construing honor, in addition to the respect element, which is to give credit where credit is due.<sup>15</sup>

**(H)** Yeah, this is not simply give credit where credit is due. Because as we said before, if your mindset is, "I'm judging; I'm critiquing;" then you'll easily destroy your parents' worthiness in your own eyes, your wife's worthiness in your own eyes, your political rival's worthiness in your own eyes. If that's what you're doing, you're saying, "Well I'm going to judge where it's due," all the time, you're not going to make it. You're not going to succeed in doing the action, the biblical action of giving honor. The biblical action of giving honor is to elevate someone, to make them feel like they are important and worthy, not for you to judge *whether* they're worthy, for you to make them *feel* [sense, believe] they are worthy.

The comparison with the rats is... useful [H. smirking]; but in this case it's taking place in both directions between a husband and wife. If I tell my wife why she is worthy, she comes away feeling loved and strengthened and important. If she does it back to me, then I come away feeling loved and strengthened and important. And guess what? The single relationship, that bond, when it's strengthened from both sides in that way, it becomes something astonishing. The whole thing about, "Well, you know I don't feel attracted to my wife" — of *course* you don't feel attracted to your wife, 'cause you were a young person in the throes of hormonal ecstasy, and that lasts for a few years. But the *key* to an attraction is, if you keep making her feel worthy, then she'll continue to feel attracted to you. And if she

---

dialogue. Proofs and facts are replaced with "likes" as the means of persuasion. The whole world listens in and participates, whether knowledgeable or not. Everyone is a self-declared expert, interrupting others' conversations, being uninvited and uninformed. They dump their unfounded opinions on everyone else. How can civility survive such a melee? Prov. 17:28 says even a fool, if he keeps silent, will be thought wise. But anonymity is an open invitation to foolish and destructive speech. — WHG

<sup>15</sup> Equating behavior modification, to meriting honor, is bizarre. Honor is freely granted by the one giving it, and hard earned by the one receiving it; it's not a conditioned response. We're people, not rats. What good are love and honor if they're not heartfelt? Getting someone to honor us by training them to seek a reward, is neither virtuous nor *honorable*. Do we love God for a reward, and not because He merits it? Do we love others only for a reward? That's ludicrous. They are made in the image of God, and are therefore intrinsically worthy of honor, even when that image is marred. — WHG

keeps making *you* feel worthy, then you'll keep feeling attracted to her. There's a direct connection between honoring somebody, and their feeling a desire for you. And I'm including physical desire — *all* kinds of desire. All of these things are kind of secrets of the traditional society, which have been wiped away along with the biblical tradition. The assumption that we don't have anything to learn from Scripture, or from tradition, basically is the key to our inability to maintain long-term, *any* kind of loyalty.

**(P)** So if you were going to extract out a message to young people (and perhaps not *just* young people) who are watching and listening, from your work, in relationship to how they should conduct their life — we've been touching on that the entire conversation — what would you tell them in relationship to conservatism rather than liberalism, or God forbid, let's say, Marxism? Why tilt in the conservative direction if you're young?

**(H)** The most important thing about tilting in a conservative direction is that you yourself have to lead a conservative life. There's importance in voting for conservatives, but this is not the key to the issue. The key to the issue is, if you're voting for conservatives but you're leading a liberal life — you're 33 years old and you're living with a woman year after year, you're going to the beach on the Sabbaths, you're not a member of any congregation, you don't read Scripture, you're a thousand miles away from your parents, so you don't inherit anything from the community that you grew up in, because you don't go to a congregation, you don't have a *new* community that you inherit from, you talk to your parents on Thanksgiving or, I don't know, once a month — this whole construct is a liberal life. It is a life in which nothing is conserved, and nothing is transmitted from one generation to the next. It doesn't make any difference how you *vote*, if your personal life is one in which you're not part of the chain of transmission in a hierarchical society in which you learn to honor people whom you didn't necessarily choose.

And as you get older, and you get wiser, you accomplish real things by creating a family. As you get older, you yourself become honored. You yourself become worthy of that kind of honor; which means you feel good about your life. There isn't any other way to do it, other than in this way, I believe.

**(P)** Right. So it's not a political issue fundamentally, what you're putting forward. And it also seems to be commensurate with this idea that psychological well-being — sweet word — it's happiness in the more classical sense, which had ties to virtue. It's something that's practiced locally, practiced personally, practiced within the family, practiced within the broader community, and so forth in all these nested hierarchal structures. And that's really the essence in some sense of conducting yourself in a sustainable and traditional manner. And the utility of that is that you actually get a full life, *and* maybe you can live in some degree of productive peace and harmony with other people, which, you know, is probably preferable to horrible conflict and war.

**(H)** All of that's true, and in our current moment — well, it's always *been* true — but in our current moment, where the alternatives are deracinated liberalism [pulled out by the roots], or a Marxism whose purpose really is just to destroy all of the inherited structures and knowledge that have come to us from previous generations. I can't see it; I just can't understand how young people, or even old people whose kids went away to college and never came back — why not *try* a conservative congregation, and see whether that can give

you the kind of flowering you're looking for. But you don't have any other way to get it. I think the best thing that *anyone* can do to fight the cultural revolution, and the Woke madness, is to find a Christian or a Jewish or some other congregation in which you can experience inheriting and honoring, honoring and inheriting *yourself*, and be a part of that. If people don't do that, there isn't much of a future.

**(P)** Well that's a salutary place to draw this conversation to a close, I would say.