

FIRING LINE
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STUDENT POWER

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Robert Theobald, Guest

William F. Buckley, Jr.

Announcer: "Firing Line," with William F. Buckley, Jr.

Mr. Buckley: Robert Theobald is an economist or, rather, a socio-economist, the word he prefers to use, who has been striking sparks all over the place for quite a few years now -- beginning back when in his book, "The Rich and the Poor," he called for a guaranteed annual wage. He has since extended his philanthropies to the poor nations, to whom he also believes we should make guarantees sufficient to permit them to o'er-leap the Industrial Age and swing directly from primitivism to the Cybernetic Age. Indeed, the Cybernetic Age is what Mr. Theobald is the prophet of -- believing as he does that the problem of poverty is essentially solved, that there are no limitations left on the fecundity of our natural resources. So that what problems we are left with are problems of our own making - not Mother Nature's nor Adam and Eve's. Mr. Theobald is an Englishman, born in India where he also studied until matriculating in Cambridge, when he came to Harvard for post-graduate work. He has spent^{much} of his time in America during the past ten years. But there are those who will be glad to learn that he plans to spend much of his time in the future abroad. (Laughter) Mr. Theobald believes that we need yet another revolution, this time in education -- so as better to equip the next generation to receive his ideas. On this point he has been quite militant, and indeed he associates himself with the concept of "student power." Now, student power means something more than what time do the girls have to leave the boys' rooms. (Laughter) I would like to begin by asking Mr. Theobald whether he believes there are prudent limitations to be put on student power and, if so, what they are.

Mr. Theobald: Well, I think that the process of growing up is discovering what the limitations are, and the big question is how much help each individual needs in determining what the limitations are. I think that rules, regulations, etc., are not very likely to work in

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student areas any more than they are in trying to limit the freedom of individuals in many other areas. And I think your question is, at what point are people capable of handling freedom, and how do you help them to learn to handle freedom to live their own lives.

Mr. Buckley: Well, my question also is at what point do you decide that they oughtn't to have freedom.

Mr. Theobald: Well, I suppose that's the same question as when you decide that any individual oughtn't to have freedom. And I suppose that becomes when they impinge on the freedom and the rights of other individuals, which is not the easiest question in the world.

Mr. Buckley: Right. Then, for instance, you would have been in favor of disciplinary action against those students who did not permit the people from Dow Chemical to come into the campus and try to get people into their program?

Mr. Theobald: Well, I don't believe in violence, and I don't really believe in force because I don't think it works. I believe that we are now in --

Mr. Buckley: What if it worked, would you believe in it then?

Mr. Theobald: You're suggesting that there's a difference between morality and intelligence. I don't recognize that either. Something which is moral is also intelligent.

Mr. Buckley: Well, if I could prove to you, let's say, that it in fact worked -- that there were no future demonstrations against the freedom of students at Columbia University to be interviewed by Dow Chemical employment agents -- by the simple expedient of disciplining students who prevented that -- then would you come out for that discipline?

Mr. Theobald: No, because I think you're making life much too simplistic -- in the events that follow from a particular order, or chain or decision, it is not only that particular thing that happens. If you could prove to me that everything that followed from that particular decision was desirable or that there was weight of evidence in terms of that

which was desirable, I would go with you, because then I would admit it was an intelligent action.

Mr. Buckley: In which case it becomes impossible in fact to applaud any action at all, because it is impossible we know both empirically as a result of philosophical inquiry exactly to identify all the results of a particular action.

Mr. Theobald: Yes. That is why I am driving us back to consider basically whether it is wise to use violence, and what I would call violent non-violence, or whether it is wise to try to open people up. In other words, the question seems to me at this point it is no longer the distinction between violence and non-violence, which I believe to be a phoney distinction, but whether essentially you believe that people are good, if you like, self-actualizing -- in the language of Maslow -- or whether they are evil and can only be forced to change through violence or non-violent constraint.

Mr. Buckley: Well, suppose one believes a little bit of the two; that's not irrational or evasive, is it?

Mr. Theobald: I think that you have to act one way or the other because human beings have a highly awkward tendency to behave in the way that you expect them to behave.

Mr. Buckley: That's true, and I know that you don't distinguish between a carrot and a stick, do you?

Mr. Theobald: I don't believe in either.

Mr. Buckley: Uh-hm, uh-hm. Well, that's interesting because now we can agree to disagree (Mr. Theobald laughs) on a number of things. I think you have made your philosophical postulates pretty plain.

Mr. Theobald: I'm not sure that we really disagree on as many things as you expect.

Mr. Buckley: No -- because I think that it's true that in your work you do hang on to the concept of the individual, for which I'm grateful.

Mr. Theobald: In a sense I would suggest to you that I hang on to it better than you are at the moment because I think you're not recognizing the world in which we're living.

Mr. Buckley: I'm sure you've never stressed self-modesty as one of your principal vices.

(Laughter)

Mr. Theobald: (Laughing) Well, I don't think it's one of your vices either, Mr. Buckley.

(Laughter)

Mr. Buckley: I know -- I don't specialize in it either -- but on the matter of student power, it seems to me that where you do have student power is, for instance, at the University of Caracas -- where they get together and decide what faculty members to re-hire, what wages to give them, what courses shall be taught, who can come and lecture, and who can't come and lecture. And, as you know, this has become almost traditional. In fact, the police aren't even allowed. There's actual sanctuary at the University of Caracas -- and, to a certain extent, at the University of Mexico. Now, is this an evolution which you approve of?

Mr. Theobald: No, but you must at this point allow me to say that I approve of student power in certain definitions. I very deeply disapprove of some of the definitions of student power that have been put forward.

Mr. Buckley: Yes.

Mr. Theobald: Just as I approve of some definitions of black power which seem to be exactly the same thing -- and I deeply disapprove of others. What I think is good about the statement -- about student power and black power -- is when it says that a human being is not capable of being alive, unless he has control over his own life. I think that some of the statements of student power have essentially said, we have the right not only to live our own lives, but to take over anybody else's life as well. And this seems to me to be a very dangerous thing. The other thing that I think has happened is that we have had a seeking in many student circles for power without responsibility. And/a good deal of the writing I have been doing recently I have been trying to point out that unless young people can realize that the world will not run without responsibility, we aren't likely to have a world for very long -- in a sense that the desire to be able to quit anything exactly when it pleases you --

Mr. Buckley: Sure.

Mr. Theobald: -- rather than to carry through with something you've committed yourself to.

Mr. Buckley: Yes, but if you are unsuccessful in communicating this truism to the students, what would you face up to the consequences of: removing some of their autonomy, or simply going up and baring your chest to the elements and say, I've failed. And there goes Berkeley.

Mr. Theobald: Well -- I think I'd face up to it, in fact, in the same way we all have to face up to it. When you fail anywhere to get people to accept responsibility, the society is in slightly worse shape than it was beforehand.

Mr. Buckley: Well, I'm suggesting that perhaps you are in a position to exert your responsibility -- that is to say, you might have a situation in which the faculty or administration of a college asks the students to accept responsibility in return for the power. Then they don't do so - now, I suggest that the residual responsibility then is that of the faculty and the administration to remove some of that misspent freedom. / But, you see, I think I would then get a great deal more cynical than you are because I would suggest to you that in many cases the faculty and the administration are not having the responsibility that comes with their powers, and that the breakdown is a co-equal one of the three parts of a university system, and not just the one part.

Mr. Buckley: Well, this is an extrinsic consideration -- a quoque business. So you can say, w-e-l-l, what about Professor Jones -- he's not a very nice man, either --

Mr. Theobald: No, I'm saying --

Mr. Buckley: -- that doesn't mean that Professor Jones oughtn't to exercise his responsibility at that particular moment. It's irrelevant, isn't it, that a policeman might be himself a not very desirable person at a moment when his responsibilities call for him to, say, interdict a robbery?

Mr. Theobald: I would say that you have to go back. My pattern of analysis forces me to go back to ask why the professor is not ready to take up his responsibility; why we have a society in which the policeman is needed at that point. And I would say the

failure has come because we have not given the students the things they need, which is to be able to study the things that they believe are important. You see, I think the learning theory is beginning to teach us that you don't learn unless you want to learn.

Mr. Buckley: Uh-hm, un-hm.

Mr. Theobald: And this is very disruptive, of course, to our whole educational system which says you must learn what we think is desirable. And some of the recent experimentation, particularly the material on the coast where you told certain teachers that certain students were expected to do very well, and they promptly did very well is, I think, very illuminating. And I believe our failure has been in saying to students, look, you must do what we tell you is important -- rather than saying, we will find a way to let you learn what you think is important to you. And I think until you, in a sense, give people that freedom --

Announcer: Following this brief interruption we will rejoin William F. Buckley, Jr., and his guest, Mr. Robert Theobald.

Mr. Buckley: (Some remarks are lost during interruption) -- resources which you have mined over a period of years -- if you decided that something is important and something is not important, are you so much the relativist that you believe your decision is binding only on yourself?

Mr. Theobald: Yes.

Mr. Buckley: For instance, if I say it is important to learn how to read and damn it, if you come to my school, you've got to learn how to read -- and that's all there is to it. And you say to me, but I'm not interested in learning how to read --

Mr. Theobald: I'll say, okay --

Mr. Buckley: Don't.

Mr. Theobald: Don't.

Mr. Buckley: Ah-hah.

Mr. Theobald: Because I believe that as they do what they want to do, they will find it

is impossible to do without reading.

Mr. Buckley: (Sigh) Yes, Paul Goodman said that one time, I remember, and I think it's interesting -- in the first place, your theory is extremely attractive to me, but it is extremely attractive to me in a sort of anti-democratic context. After all, Ezra Pound went so far as to say, education is only for those who will not do without it. Or you have somebody like Albert Jay Nock believing, as he did, that the trouble with the United States -- and he was talking in 1935 -- is that too many people try to get educated in the formal sense of education. And yet, in your own writings and in the writings of most of the bards of the new permissiveness, you get not only a situation in which the student ought to decide for himself, everybody's got to be a student.

Mr. Theobald: No -- no, not me. I never said that.

Mr. Buckley: But there is the gentleman from the NSA, who believes that it is elitist, otherwise --

Mr. Theobald: Yes, but, you see, I believe in pretty out books which I don't agree with; just put out one called, "Social Policies for America in the 70's," which has nine essays -- eight of which I disagree with; the other one is my own. (Laughter) But I think it is very important -- and I do not believe that everybody should be a student in the classical American or western sense. I think if we're going to take seriously this thing we throw around -- you know, rhetoric for uniqueness of the student -- which I think is basically a very important thing to follow through on which, up to now, has been much more honored in the breach than in the observance. And I like to make a distinction, therefore, between skills which are such things as reading and writing - which people will learn when they want to, and which they will find as they develop themselves they have to learn. And, in a sense, dealing with/education is all about -- which is where things are probablistic rather than certain -- in other words, learning to grow up to be able to deal with the environment in which you are, to create the environment in which you

can live -- this, to me, is my great indictment of the school and the university which says that the one thing you ought to be doing which is to say, how you create an environment, how you create a political system, where you are involved in creating a good community, is a thing that is completely closed out to you.

Mr. Buckley: Why is it closed off -- you imply really that there is a vested interest in closing it off.

Mr. Theobald: No, I wasn't implying that at all. I was saying that we have a university system which says you go to a university for four years -- and the university system is set up by the administration. And it's not up to you to be involved in whether that is a good system or not. I'm saying that I think this is a very dangerous thing because it doesn't do the one thing I think we must do with people who are growing up -- which is give them political skills, the ability to live in a community.

Mr. Buckley: Yes, but tell me this: why is it that people with your point of view sort of give up on reforms coming in through natural processes; after all, there are an awful lot of professors, age 25, 24, 23, who, presumably, aren't so far removed from youth as to be incapable of expressing the necessity for these reforms.

Mr. Theobald: I'm still trying to get what you mean by natural process.

Mr. Buckley: Natural process of what?

Mr. Theobald: Well, you said that they should come in by natural process.

Mr. Buckley: Well, natural process, presumably, is the felt desire for reform.

Mr. Theobald: Oh, but I think it does. Look -- you see, you said that I wasn't known for my modesty, and I accept it for the time being. But in a very real sense, I think that I have a very limited view of what the role of somebody who talks, or writes or lectures in these areas can be. And that is to talk to people where they are -- and to say in a sense general things which you know. But then if they don't take it and run with it,

nothing is going to happen. And one of the things I, for example, have been trying to create on the campus is what I call the neutral ground -- where professors, students and administration can get together. Because I believe that they are all interested in change.

And what I find the most serious problem on the university is what I call the myth -- which is that the students believe that the faculty and administration aren't interested; the faculty and the administration believe the students aren't interested, and so it goes.

Mr. Buckley: Yes.

Mr. Theobald: I find a very real interest in change, improvement -- in all of these groups which really never gets going because everybody distrusts each other so completely. I think we've got a parallel on the national scene where I find a very dangerous tendency developing -- for everybody to believe that everybody else is totally evil, and you get more and more direct confrontation between people because they don't believe anything is going to happen unless you bash them on the head.

Mr. Buckley: Is that true?

Mr. Theobald: I find it happening among the New Left; I find it happening, I think, to some extent -- (crosstalk)

Mr. Buckley: (crosstalk) -- do the members of the New Left think that other members are evil?

Mr. Theobald: No, that the government --

Mr. Buckley: I thought they discovered something finally. (Laughter)

Mr. Theobald: (After laughing heartily) It is funny, though, that students, I think, do believe that other students are not interested. When you drive them back in conversation into realizing that the faculty and administration are interested, you eventually find them saying, but I am the only student who wants to do anything! And, again, I think this is one of our great barriers -- this feeling that I am the only guy who wants to challenge and work for change.

Mr. Buckley: Yes. Well, if you have a situation in which there is this desire -- latent desire -- for change, is it your notion that there are institutional barriers, too, effecting that change, which have the effect of paralyzing the processes of reform? The tenure system, and all that kind of business?

Mr. Theobald: No, I think it is a bigger issue. Societies tend to stay where they are; I mean, cultures have to be very stable -- otherwise they wouldn't continue to exist; they'd tend to collapse. And I think we have a situation where the educational system, like everything else, in a sense is built in and makes change very difficult. I think change always will be. I think the place where you suggested at the beginning we disagreed -- it was in terms of the wideness of the change. My suggestion is that we, in a sense, are in as big a change as we were from hunting and gathering to agriculture -- where your whole symbolic structure, your whole language structure, your whole myth structure, has to change. And I think the same thing is happening now, as we move from an industrial age, based on transportation and production, to a cybernetic age, based on communication. I think the rules are going to be very different from --

Announcer: We'll expand on this after a brief interruption.

Mr. Theobald: -- many of the things we've known in the past, you see. I happen to say to some of my poor, unsuspecting audiences that I believe that the centralization of power in the Federal Government is one of the greatest threats we face. And, as I tend to talk to good liberals, they look at me in shock and horror. You know, we get driven back to this reliance on the individual; the question is, what does it mean to give the individual a chance to be free at a time when the old ways we used to do this through holding a job, I'm suggesting, and other things, are not so much available because of the impact of cybernation, in this potential.

Mr. Buckley: Yes. Well, in terms of this interest that I guess we share in emancipating the individual, what is it that causes some people to assume that student power is going to effect this? Is there any reason to suppose that a student body ends up being more free, for instance, when you have a vigorous student council, than when you don't -- just to start at that level?

Mr. Theobald: Well, I would suggest that up to now student councils have engaged in what I call, Mickey Mouse games. You know, basically, do girls stay in dorms up to a

certain hour -- which is an issue I've never understood either, basically. But, I think the issue is much wider than that; the issue is, how does the student come to take responsibility. And I don't think you get them through Robert's rules of order and that sort of stuff; I think you get it through a real reconsideration of the university structure: what it is; what it means; what it means to learn. What it means to learn -- particularly in an era where you can't assume older people know more than younger people. They may do, but because so much has changed there must be many cases where young people have things to teach teachers. This is very distressing. For teachers.

Mr. Buckley: Well, I think that youth have always something to teach older people. But I tend to feel that this rudimentary observation is becoming a mystique in the hands of some people: the notion that after you're twenty-five or twenty-six you just plain don't understand. As a matter of fact, I don't understand. A lot that I see going on seems to me, totemic, irrational -- and I like to hope to the extent that reason survives I shan't understand it. The question really, then, is a matter of accommodation. To what extent does the faculty move out of the way because the students express themselves?

Mr. Theobald: I don't think it has to move out of the way at all. Where this works, it seems to me, is where students and faculty recognize that they are complementary. I think that anybody in any student power movement which says, look, we know all the answers -- has, in a sense, already failed. But I think the big issue becomes the sort of style by which you learn.

Mr. Buckley: Yes.

Mr. Theobald: Now, I think that McLuhan's point -- he's another fad -- his point about the necessity for gestalt -- for totality rather than discipline is well taken. I think one of our problems is that the university doesn't really know how to teach -- except in disciplines -- and, say, my own discipline of economics --

Mr. Buckley: Why doesn't it know how?

Mr. Theobald: Well, because they were taught economics. But what we now do is we teach economics, and I remember talking to somebody from one of the top management consulting firms, and he said to me, I just met a brilliant guy -- he knows all of economics; but, unfortunately, he't not fit for anything except to teach the next generation of economists. You know, if you ever look at "The American Economic Review" -- I don't recommend it because you wouldn't understand it; nobody does except econometricians -- they have become so incredibly away from the world, they they're not (unclear). I have a strange idea that social science or discipline of any sort is to help us to understand the world. And as long as economists don't argue that they are helping us to solve our problems, I have no real worries. When they start saying that they understand this, for example, the new economics is bankrupt -- the new economics is bankrupt because its assumptions are completely false.

Mr. Buckley: Yes, but it turns out that the reason it is bankrupt is because they made a whole series of intellectually arrogant mistakes -- right?

Mr. Theobald: I think this is true.

Mr. Buckley: Yes. Now, on the other hand, isn't it true that just as you will retain somebody to study what it is that causes cancer, and he may end up using a vocabulary that is outside your and my competence as laymen, it is also true that an economist can address himself to certain questions -- his learning is then put at the disposal of us who specify our value hierarchy. But this isn't to suggest that we want to dilute the intensity of his preoccupation in the science of economics, is it?

Mr. Theobald: Well, it would be nice if our economists listened to our value hierarchy. What I have as a gross objection to economists is that they claim to have a value-free discipline while having a value hierarchy -- and then have built-in assumptions and never give us the opportunity to decide what our value hierarchy is in serving us.

Mr. Buckley: I think you're correct.

Mr. Theobald: I will then go further and say that the sort of thing you do not decide in values becomes a highly technical issue, much of which can be carried out by computers.

Mr. Buckley: Uh-hm, uh-hm.

Mr. Theobald: And it seems to me that we have to give much more attention to what are value issues and what are not.

Mr. Buckley: What would be a basic reform of the kind you would welcome -- tending towards this inter-disciplinary approach to learning?

Mr. Theobald: Well, I think it's fairly simple; instead of studying disciplines, you study problems. You study issues.

Mr. Buckley: For instance?

Mr. Theobald: The problem of poverty, and all its angles.

Mr. Buckley: There might be a Ph.D. in poverty -- or anti-poverty.

Mr. Theobald: Yes -- I think you can take it further than that. "You see, I think if you take the seriousness of it, then very interesting things begin to happen. Suppose you take the subject of poverty, and somebody starts to study this. Now, if they go anywhere, you then ask somebody in the town -- ask them to get involved in studying the problem with them. But it turns out they're no good unless they're both good at the technical side you were talking about -- but also the human side of it -- because the real problem is both technical and human.

Mr. Buckley: Right.

Mr. Theobald: And, therefore, your learning process doesn't allow you to get away from the real world. Now, what I think we've done -- we get brilliant people at Harvard who are brilliantly technical -- then we bring them down to Washington or New York or whatever, and we assume that they have the competence to solve a political problem which is only at the most half technical -- usually much --

Announcer: We'll continue this study of Student Power with William Buckley and Robert Theobald in a moment. (Station Break)

Mr. Theobald: (Continuing) -- of the real problems are human problems. And the technical is a very small part of this thing.

Mr. Buckley: Yes -- yes. Now, is the necessity for this problem-solving approach something

that you think has been intuited by students?

Mr. Theobald: I think it has to a considerable extent. I think that if you look at a lot of the work at San Francisco State, which has been the most interesting of all the student experiments, it started from this idea that you must study issues. I think it comes out of a lot of other bases, though. You found it coming out of the whole dialogue movement in various places in the Catholic Church and ecumenical things. I think there really is a new theory of learning which is emerging out of this idea of dialogue and, very briefly, I might capitulate that Gregory Bates put it this way that there are four levels of learning: one is the simple recognition of a fact -- somebody comes into a door; second is the tying in of two facts together -- when the bell rings, I go to lunch; the third level of learning is improving your performance in a given situation -- in other words, when the bell rings, I go half an hour earlier and get better food but I have to stand in line -- if I go an hour I don't have to stand in line and there isn't any food. What education is about at the moment, the improvement of any performance within a given understanding of a situation. A fourth level he points out is understanding the environment which we live in and, therefore, be able to understand -- again, a point I find helpful is that you can't see your environment; it's invisible. And the suggestion in all this is that the only way you can find it is by engaging in the sort of thing we're doing now, which is really testing each other's pre-suppositions, finding out where they make sense, where they don't make sense -- and, therefore, beginning to be able to see the environment sufficiently clearly to live within that environment, not what the myth structure says the environment is. That is what I think the problem-solving technique as opposed to the discipline does for you.

Mr. Buckley: Yes, and for that reason -- taking that into consideration -- the whole of a man not being free unless he is in position to cope with his environment becomes all the more lively.

Mr. Theobald: Right.

Mr. Buckley: Yes -- now, why is this really a critique to be distinguished from

critiques we've heard before about the perils of over-specialization -- about the man who was a great scientist but does nothing about the humanities. Or the man -- the two-cultures argument of C. P. Snow, and so on and so forth. What is it that is distinctive here, and if it is something that is distinctive, is it something that cybernetics has brought about?

Mr. Theobald: I think the urgency is distinctive. I don't think that in a sense anything is new. I think we learned a long time ago that for society to function it had to be honest and responsible, and humble, and loving. The religions have taught us that for a long, long time. What I think is suddenly new is our enormous power -- which means that if we do not observe those virtues, society becomes less and less viable. For example, let's take the whole question of policy-making.

Mr. Buckley: Yes.

Mr. Theobald: We have a society which has accepted lying -- lying through what we call public relations or management of the news, or whatever is the convenient word to avoid using that rather nasty Anglo-Saxon word, lie. Now, so long as you lie, you cannot possibly get good policy. If it is considered justified for a corporation to say, look, computers really aren't changing society -- the society cannot find out. By the time it finds out, it's going to be too late to make intelligent policy because you're going to make policy in crisis, as we are doing all the way along. In my opinion, if we're going to do anything to solve the much -- what everybody agrees are the much more complex problems -- we are going to have to cease to accept special pleading in order to keep your rights as against other people's. Which means that we're going to have to go back to saying that people are not entitled to lie, whatever name you hide it under. And it seems to me that in this sense the critique is new. We now have to take seriously the things we've known for a long time.

Mr. Buckley: Otherwise we will misinform the machines, and the machines will cope with us in ways we didn't intend.

Mr. Theobald: No, although this is possible this is not the thing I'm really worried about. We will misinform human beings.

Mr. Buckley: Are you talking about an ethical problem?

Mr. Theobald: Yes! It's an ethical problem. Machines are only a reflection of us. Machines do what we tell them to. The reason that we can use the machine to knock out the redwood groves by designing roads through that is because we have a value system that entitles us to do this. It has nothing to do with the machine. It's a very convenient thing to blame -- or to put all the responsibility on to. You can say, well, the machine said it. And I detect a very dangerous tendency, in a sense, to make the computer a new god. You know, the computer Has Spoken -- and once the computer Has Spoken, who are we to argue with the computer without realizing, of course, it's value assumption again which determines what comes out of the computer.

Mr. Buckley: Yes, of course. The computers, in a sense, came out "lying."

Mr. Theobald: No -- (laughs) that's right. But they can lie for us because they can answer the question we either say we ask -- or the one we think we ask.

Mr. Buckley: Yes.

Mr. Theobald: And, therefore, you may think you ask one question, and you put in another question, or because you don't program it right.

Mr. Buckley: Right -- that's right, that's right.

Mr. Theobald: And I think there's a great tendency for us, in a sense, to pass the responsibility on to the computer, so that we no longer feel the moral crisis in which we are.

Mr. Buckley: Uh-hm, uh-hm. Well, I think that is correct, and it's interesting to me because it seems to me that you are at once a pedagogue and a moralist -- and maybe this is your first experimentation in inter-disciplinary training. (Mr. Theobald laughs heartily) But I wish it were altogether easy to separate some of what you say from certain other things that you say. Because I think it is a little bit distracting to think through how to make policy based on some of your insights.

Mr. Theobald: Well, let me try and push it for a moment --

Mr. Buckley: Yes, I wish --

Mr. Theobald: Maybe I can give you a science-fiction model, which I don't think is a

science-fiction model. I really do think we're going to have to imagine a world in which we solve problems cooperatively. I don't think we can any longer have people going in and snowing each other to the best of their ability and coming out with a power grab to the maximum extent of people's power --

Mr. Buckley: Hence your dialogue for (crosstalk) --

Mr. Theobald: -- but I can imagine, for example, this sort of pattern, and I've seen it work to a limited extent: you have a problem, a serious problem; you call together the 50 people who are most capable of dealing with this problem; and you put them in front of 50 open mikes. And these people talk to that problem and imagine a solution -- brainstorm the problem, task force the problem in management terminology -- and this becomes possible because they are more interested in the solution to the problem, than they are in their own self-advancement.

Mr. Buckley: Right.

Mr. Theobald: I admit it requires a great change in human nature, but I have done a great deal of thinking about how we can survive with the amount of power we have -- and remain cropped, dishonest and proud people. And I'm failing miserably. Therefore, I have to begin to imagine a world in which it is conceivable that we will act with enough intelligence to survive. And I think that the sort of concept of people meeting together to solve problems can work. I've watched it work to a limited extent. And the solutions that come, when you come into this model, are surprising. You see, at the present time we go into a system, and we really have a box: you have the two sides or the four sides, and they all say: this far and no further. Then you determine within that box exactly where you're going to come out. So the taxi drivers get 30¢, or 35¢ or 40¢, or whatever. But you can't imagine anything beyond that because the box is set. And what I'm saying is that at the present time in most really significant problems, the issues cannot be solved within the box as we are. You almost have to imagine a new world to get ourselves out of the problem. And an imaginary --

Announcer: We'll pursue these points further in just a moment. (Station Break)

Mr. Buckley: Well, I have no doubt -- and fussing around with utopian approaches to problems is a terribly attractive thing to do. Among other things, it's entertaining. (Mr. Theobald laughs) But, is it also true that a lot of problems that were thought of as being insoluble, except with reference to radical, new, improvised ways of dealing with each other -- in fact, somehow in a sort of way we have muddled through --

Mr. Theobald: Oh, Mr. Buckley, I didn't expect it of you! You can't be serious! Look, I read your whole philosophy -- it's not muddling through. It may be an awful mess.

Mr. Buckley: It seems to me obvious that at certain levels we are muddling through.

Mr. Theobald: Yes, we're muddling --

Mr. Buckley: We have not been enslaved by the Soviet Union, nor have we fought a Third World War.

Mr. Theobald: No, but --

Mr. Buckley: I think that if I had been able to write foreign policy, we'd be a lot better off. But you come up with things like: we must renounce force -- you know, which undoubtedly occurred to the first cave man who lost Jane. (Laughter)

Mr. Theobald: No --

Mr. Buckley: And it's all very pleasant to hear people say that. And they say it at the United Nations, you know, before eating other nations. But I don't find that it has a moral significance at this point of a kind that suggests the necessity for the kind of reconciliation that you are talking about.

Mr. Theobald: Oh, all right -- I'll suggest to you --

Mr. Buckley: Sure.

Mr. Theobald: I think that the state, internal and external, of the black-white confrontation is extremely serious.

Mr. Buckley: I do, too.

Mr. Theobald: Okay -- let me push this for a moment. The situation is that we have a growing number of black nihilists who have no escatology -- in religious terms: no faith, no hope. And they are very intelligent people, and they understand that this

society is incredibly vulnerable, and that it can be destroyed.

Mr. Buckley: Uh-hm.

Mr. Theobald: Not completely, but it can be very heavily damaged by the knocking out of certain key parts in society. Now, there are a great many people who don't go along with this total nihilism, but who, in a sense, don't have very much faith either and who will cover this sort of thing. And what they're saying is, look, we will go on covering this sort of thing unless and until you provide us with power over our lives, which is the issue of black power -- the student power issue. And what I'm saying is that if you take that slogan seriously -- the power over somebody's life -- it can only be done within the sort of world that I am trying to talk to. Because, otherwise, that if you take seriously the issue of man being in power over his life -- you take seriously an issue in which powerlessness is abolished, in which you do not have control over other people. It can only be done when you have internal sanctions replacing external sanctions. It can, therefore, only be done in a new sort of world. Now, Teilhard deChardin, and a great many other people have made this point very clearly: they said we have two choices -- we either move towards the omega point -- towards the full development of humanity, or we blow ourselves out. And I think this is right.

Mr. Buckley: Well, why? In the first place, it hasn't proved right.

Mr. Theobald: You're sounding to me a little bit like that person who fell from the top of the Empire State Building --

Mr. Buckley: And I'm doing all right so far.

Mr. Theobald: (Laughing) Yes, and I'm doing all right so far.

Mr. Buckley: Incidentally, I'm perfectly capable of being attracted to apocalyptic thought. Occasionally, I'm in those moods myself. But I tend to feel that the kind of progress that tends to be made is a result of reacting to situations, rather than think-tank sessions.

Mr. Theobald: But, you see, you're making a distinction again. You're falling into the old western dichotomy problem. Conrad Aronsburg caught me out of this mess some time

ago, and it's very helpful. You find it out that there is no such thing as a revolutionary change. You can only get a revolutionary change by evolutionary means. What I am suggesting is that the evolutionary means which are now required would bring about such a revolutionary change. I am not suggesting we jump from where we are into a utopian world. By the way, I don't believe in utopias. I think one of our great problems, you see, is we've forgotten that if we had a truly human world, we would have tragedy. You know, this would be a much tougher world. One of the things I was accused of when I started writing about the guaranteed income -- not the guaranteed wage, by the way -- was that people would sit and laze. My statement about the guaranteed income -- because it requires the people to be responsible -- is a much tougher, harder world to live in. Not an easier one. And whenever I've worked with students or older people who have begun to discover who they are and what they are, I found them, in a sense, living in a much harder -- objectively harder -- situation; but a much more exciting one.

Mr. Buckley: As any educated person theoretically will -- not necessarily happier.

Mr. Theobald: No, I'm still not clear. Let us take your philosophy. Let us assume that we go back to individual responsibility, which is what I hear you talking about. Wouldn't that lead us to a sort of world of which I'm talking? Wouldn't we inevitably have to go in this direction?

Mr. Buckley: You've got to constantly redefine the area over which an individual exercises sovereignty. And one has to grant that as society becomes more intricate, adjustments have to be made.

Mr. Theobald: No, I won't grant you that.

Mr. Buckley: Well, I think it seems to me as obvious as, for instance, if I want to brush my teeth it has got to be with fluoridated water.

Mr. Theobald: But I thought you were against fluoridation. (Laughing)

Mr. Buckley: I am.

Mr. Theobald: No, but seriously, let me try and say why that a great deal of freedom can remain.

Mr. Buckley: No, I didn't say -- (cross-talk)

Mr. Theobald: No, no, I didn't mean -- sorry -- that was the wrong way to put it. Let me say why I think you're underestimating the degree of freedom possible in complexity.

Mr. Buckley: I might be an anarchist compared to you, but go ahead.

Mr. Theobald: W-e-l-l, it's possible. But what I'm saying is I think that what's exciting about the computer, and what's exciting about what it's doing to us, is allowing us to create diverse communities.

Mr. Buckley: Yes, I agree. This is contrary to what is normally thought.

Mr. Theobald: Right. You see, once you have that -- okay, you still have constraints within a given community. But, instead of these constraints being nationwide, which is what we've got -- a culture in a community with very little freedom. And because everything is similar throughout the United States. This is one of the things that really startles me as I go to colleges. You know, every college catalogue says, I have a unique campus. And you get there, and they turn out to be incredibly similar.

Mr. Buckley: Everybody's illiterate. (Laughter)

Mr. Theobald: Well, they're learning to use tape instead. But, it seems to me that basically you can have diverse communities -- you can move to the diverse community which attracts you. And it is not necessary for you to stay in the single type of culture which does not appeal and does not attract.

Mr. Buckley: There's a question here.

Question: At Cornell University last year, there was a vote, and they came close to dissolving the student government. And just recently they took a vote on radically restructuring the government -- and about 800 people out of the 9-10,000 who were eligible to vote bothered to vote in it. They want change; however, they apparently

don't want student government, especially in the form that it is now. What would you recommend for some sort of dialogue?

Mr. Theobald: Well, I think that -- it was very interesting: I was out at Antioch, which is in very much the same sort of bind at the moment. But student government really doesn't work because it is a confrontation model. I think we have got to go to the point -- I come back, in a sense, to putting practical weight on what I am saying in theory -- that all you can do is, you can take your problem and invite everybody who is interested in it to work on that problem and come up with a solution. Now, there are some very strange angles to that, though, because once you say that the people who did not volunteer no longer have the right to kick -- since what comes out of it is a unique process -- a unique discovery which would have happened differently if someone else had been in that room at that time. Therefore, by saying --

Announcer: We interrupt briefly and will return to William F. Buckley, Jr., and Robert Theobald. (After Station Break -- some remarks are lost)

Mr. Buckley: -- the absentee.

Mr. Theobald: Well, why was he an absentee?

Mr. Buckley: He just wasn't interested. Provided they didn't impinge on his freedom, he wasn't concerned enough to participate in the discussion.

Mr. Theobald: You know as well as I do that the thought of a community that does not impinge on your freedom is an impossibility. There is no such thing.

Mr. Buckley: I know it's impossible, but this is what we were talking about a moment ago. The question is whether or not we can maximize.

Mr. Theobald: But, you see, you go back to the statement. I'm not saying that anybody should be cut off. I'm saying that I think we have to recognize what democratic theory recently has failed to recognize -- which is, if you will not participate, there is no way in which you can control. In other words, we push very hard for everybody participating whether or not they agree. What I am saying is, democracy is participation, and there's no

way to avoid this. In a sense, you can't complain about things that you don't get involved in.

Mr. Buckley: But you can! I'll try right now. As a matter of fact, a lot of these people you're referring to -- these nihilists -- have probably not endeavored in the past to make any constructive contribution to anything at all.

Mr. Theobald: Oh, no -- I think --

Mr. Buckley: I don't think that simply because I've declined to exercise, let's say, free speech, that I forfeit my right to have it, should I desire to --

Mr. Theobald: I wasn't suggesting that you forfeit it, you see, because the processes are continuous processes.

Mr. Buckley: Yes.

Mr. Theobald: I'm not saying that they're cut out forever. But let me take up the nihilist point. I think that we have got to recognize that one of the things that has happened so far in black-white relationships is, we've said to black people, you may come down to City Hall and we would love to talk to you, but you must be nice people; you mustn't be angry; you know, you mustn't be hurt -- you must have pleasant discussion with us. I think this is unrealistic. If we're going to talk to these people, we've got to realize that they have cause for anger. And I think we have failed miserably to face up to the fact that if we're going to break out of our situation, we have to listen to the anger, and cope with the anger which has come from very real, objective conditions. I think we have failed in some real ways to give these people a chance to be heard. And I think that being heard is a necessity, if you're not going to become cut off.

Mr. Buckley: But I don't see why a commitment to hearing somebody is also a commitment to hearing that person be angry or uncivil. Maybe, in fact, that person cannot control himself. There are people who take out their fist and swear at God, Himself. And this, I think, is in poetry and tragedy perfectly understandable, but the processes of a

reasonable exchange of points of view are processes that call for the dehydration of anger.

Mr. Theobald: Yes, I agree. But if you have been pent up for a long time, you're not going to find this very easy. I'm not saying I approve, but we must make a distinction, I think, between what I would like to see -- and what I think is necessary to accept. We've been building an awful lot of steam under the boiler, to use an analogy, and now we say we want to let off the steam -- we want to give you a chance to get involved. And, in a sense, we get very upset when we find there's some steam in those people - that they are very uptight, to use the language. You see, the only thing I'd say is that this was a unique process. But the thing that I found most astonishing as I watched this process happen is that the process is now being called convergence.

Mr. Buckley: Yes.

Mr. Theobald: The fact that people really do begin to see the answers are the same. People committed to a problem can, from the most improbable philosophical backgrounds, in a sense, realize they can come to a harmonious solution, and this is the only way. The amount of range that there is for action at a particular point in time is fairly narrow. You don't jump a culture from point (a) to point (b). Most people begin to say, look, we are here; we'd like to be somewhere else -- and begin to realize that everybody would like to be somewhere else. You may find a remarkable amount of agreement. And I find when white and black or teachers and students and faculty get together and agree that they're all striving for change, then there begins to be rather substantial agreement. So long as you have three parties striving against each other, you stay radically polarized.

But, as soon as you begin to say, look, this is one situation -- where we are all involved in it, --

Mr. Buckley: Provided there is disequilibrium. Right?

Mr. Theobald: I don't follow you.

Mr. Buckley: Well, otherwise, there's a continuous stand-off, right? And things don't necessarily --

Mr. Theobald: No, because you cease to see someone as an administration person; you cease to see him as a faculty person. You begin to see him --

Announcer: We've run out of time, gentlemen. Our thanks for this discussion on Student Power to William F. Buckley, Jr., and Robert Theobald -- and our guests, students of Hofstra and Queens Colleges.

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