

You're just another damn progressive, aren't you?

by Donald H Marks

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It's quite common I think for people to presume what are another person's core beliefs when it runs to politics, philosophy, science. In what can be a hostile political environment of interpersonal relationships, often people are labeled based on political and professional affiliations, the relationships they attend, their expressed preferences for political candidates, their position in society or in business, the car they drive, the clothes they wear and how they wear them, who they marry or what family they have married into, race, their commonly perceived class, presumed wealth, and a myriad of other obvious and subtle tags that we all wear.

General political descriptive terms I often hear include right winger, conservative and progressive. Yet, I infrequently hear the term Centrist. In my own experience I have found people more likely to label someone as a progressive, but I have only rarely heard someone labeled as a centrist, because it seems almost as an afterthought whereas labeling someone as a progressive seems to be more intentional and descriptive.

I present the following discussion of centrist versus progressive versus leftist philosophies as an illustration to better define terms but also to explain to individuals who really know me why I am definitely best described as a centrist.

If we're not really sure what we're talking about, then it's hard to make good arguments that are convincing and simply casting invectives. Remember that these are general trends and generalizations, and individuals within each group may hold diverse views.

Centrists vs Progressives - what are they, how are they different from each other, and are these even important questions to ask?

Centrists Focus on practical solutions: I and my fellow centrists prioritize finding common ground and workable solutions to social, economic and political problems, rather than adhering to strict ideological positions. Centrists favor moderate approaches to policy, avoiding extreme absolutist and potentially confrontational stances on either the left or the right. Centrists tend to evaluate issues on a case-by-case basis, considering the specific context and potential consequences of different policies. Those who know me can see this being true. We centrists often express reservations about excessive government intervention in economy or social issues, while recognizing the need for some regulation and social programs. See for example my comments in a separate writing found on my personal blogpage on the possibilities of Universal Basic Income.

Centrists believe individuals should take responsibility for their own lives and choices, while at the same time being realistic and acknowledging the role of social factors in shaping opportunities. An example here is that while centrists recognize the continued presence of racism, greed and bias in relationships, as a Centrist I would never make a statement like “if you are not an active anti-racist then you are a racist.” Do any of you recognize that contemporary speaker and author? I think that a lot of my progressive friends would actually go along with that kind of statement which I find unrealistic, impractical, provocative, confrontational and definitely not the kind of thought pattern which would decrease racist beliefs. Quite the opposite.

Centrists also have distinct approaches to various issues that clearly separate themselves from progressives. I would start by saying that although some people would say that both centrists and progressives are generally left-leaning, I disagree with this. I think that centrists are intentionally not left-leaning and especially don't like to be labeled as leftists. In contrast, progressives I have known are proud to be considered left-leaning and don't like to be considered centrist or moderate.

Here are some specific policy areas describing how centrists differ from progressives. Of course, you may find a lot of this as generalization and it definitely should be considered so in my opinion. As always, I welcome your comments directly back to me.

Economics:

- **Centrists may favor a mixed economy with a balance of market forces and government regulation. A centrist might support a gradual increase in the minimum wage, while a progressive might advocate for a significant increase to a livable wage.**
- **Progressives often advocate for stronger social safety nets and government intervention to address inequality. This may be a good time to refer you to my writing on the developing trend in a post-labor A.I. economy to having Universal basic income. My experience with progressives is that they prefer equality over equity but don't always appreciate the differences.**

Politics:

- **Centrists: Generally favor pragmatic solutions and incremental change. They may be more willing to compromise and find common ground with opposing viewpoints. They are, after all, in the center.**
- **Progressives: Often advocate for bold policy changes and social justice. They may be more likely to challenge the status quo and push for systemic reforms.**

Religion:

- **Centrists: Often hold diverse religious or spiritual beliefs, including deism, agnosticism, or a personal spirituality. They may value the role of religion in personal life and community but not necessarily in shaping public policy. In my own experience, I have found that people in general and progressives in particular tend to assume that centrists are agnostic or atheist, which is definitely not necessarily true.**
- **Progressives: Tend to be more secular or non-religious, emphasizing reason and evidence over faith. They may advocate for the separation of church and state and oppose religious influence in government. I have also found that progressives can exhibit very little tolerance for anyone with religious beliefs and can subtly or blatantly make it disadvantageous for others to express religious feelings in their presence. Any of you who know me directly and want a more specific example in this regard are welcome to contact me.**

A centrist might attend church services for personal reflection and community connection, while a progressive might prioritize involvement with secular community organizations focused on social justice.

Science:

- **Centrists: Tend to respect scientific consensus but may be more open to questioning established theories if presented with compelling evidence. They often prioritize practical applications of scientific knowledge. This can also explain my satisfying career in internal medicine, an area where there are not many not as many absolute truths and causation can be elusive. One specific area that comes to mind is the recent Covid epidemic and the heavy-handed and often not fact-based government programs that followed.**
- **Progressives: Tend to reflexively embrace scientific consensus and advocate for policies based on scientific findings, yes they perceive them. Yet they may be more likely to challenge traditional beliefs or practices that conflict with scientific understanding if they conflict with their accepted and preferred knowledge set.**

Healthcare:

- **Centrists may support a mix of public and private healthcare options. They may be open to market-based reforms or incremental improvements to the existing system. Here [is a link to my recent article on keeping politics out of health Care](#) (fat chance).**
- **Progressives generally advocate for universal healthcare and a single-payer system.**

Up to this point, I have concentrated on the differences between centrists and progressive. I did mention the word leftist at the very beginning of this article. I think this is a good time to distinguish leftist from progressive. The simplest way to understand the difference between "leftist" and "progressive" is to look at their focuses and scopes.

The term leftist typically describes individuals or groups advocating for radical changes in the structure of society and in the economy. It often includes a broad spectrum of ideologies, such as socialism, communism, and anarchism. Leftists tend to emphasize class struggle, anti-capitalism, and systemic change. In fact this is a great opportunity for me to challenge my acquaintances who say that they do not emphasize class struggle, who are not anti-capitalist and who do favor gradual systemic change. Maybe you're not a leftist after all. You could actually be a progressive or, God forbid, a Centrist

Progressives and Centrists generally focus on reform within the current system to address social issues and promote fairness, justice, and equality. They advocate for incremental changes through legislation and policy improvements. Their goals often include social justice, environmental protection, and economic equality, but without necessarily dismantling the existing system. Trying to encapsulate all of the above as best I can, I would say that leftists in contrast often seek more radical, structural changes, while progressives and centrists favor gradual reforms within the existing framework.

All in all, those who know me and understand my opinions are going to find me at the center, not as a progressive or a leftist. I am very comfortable with that.

This full written report with illustrations and references and many other of my writings are found at my blogsite www.dmarks.blogspot.com

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