

CONVERSATIONS

WITH BILL KRISTOL

Conversations with Bill Kristol

Guest: Harvey Mansfield, Harvard University

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I: Conservatism and America (0:15 – 24:58)

KRISTOL: Welcome back to CONVERSATIONS. I’m Bill Kristol. I’m pleased to have back Harvey Mansfield from Harvard University. Harvey, welcome.

MANSFIELD: Thanks. Good to see you again.

KRISTOL: Good to have you again. Let’s talk about conservatism. You are notoriously a conservative at Harvard, and I don’t think you normally shy away from the term too much. So but what about – this is a liberal regime. You’ve written about that a lot; liberalism is *the* American doctrine, somehow. What does it mean to be a conservative in contemporary America?

MANSFIELD: You know, it’s not easy. It’s a difficult position, in America. You start off on your heels, so to speak, in a defensive posture.

In the first place, the general atmosphere is one of progress, going forward, and conservative doesn’t seem to mean going forward. And everything else is going forward. We believe in innovation, new products, new this, new that. We have a growing economy – growth. And everything that’s modern and new seems to be better than everything that’s not modern and old.

So conservatism starts off with a disadvantage, and it’s political as well. The liberals are for progress, and America has always been for progress. And progress according to them is in accord with history. If you’re for progress, then you’re on the right side of history. If not, you’re on the wrong side, and that’s a bad place to be. Strangely enough, that makes liberals into something like conservatives because they think that they have the support of history. So, in a way, they’re for the status quo, a moving status quo, which they think is going inevitably forward. That’s their belief in progress. And progress consists in making America more equal, more equal in many different ways. You can always discover inequalities in America or any society.

And so the liberals, so to speak, always have something to talk about, some new liberal measure of progress that is equalizing something that’s been unequal. They have their agenda, and conservatives confront this. So there was a famous statement of William Buckley – said – he was the one who wanted to say “Stand in front of history, or in front of progress, and say stop.” But stop in the name of what? That’s the difficulty. A policeman will say, “Stop in the name of the law.” So what are you going to use to back up your demand to stop?

And this becomes still more difficult when you look at the origins of America or the Founding of America, conservatives want to look back to the Founders, they're the ones who got things started right. But they founded a regime that was quite new; it was based on modern political science – that's what they called it – the political science of Locke and Montesquieu, famous liberal philosophers of the 17th, 18th centuries. And but that wasn't – that wasn't enough. They found that republics had heretofore been inadequately thought out and defended. And so they made a great number of innovations in republican theory and they touted those innovations. And Hamilton in one of *The Federalist Papers* says, "Harken not to the voice, which tells you to stop or go slow." So with all this, conservatives start off on the defensive, I would say, to put it mildly.

KRISTOL: And do you think, some people say, "Well, American conservatism, therefore, I guess, is kind of a defense of good old-fashioned American liberalism against newer versions of it." I've never really been quite satisfied with that. But what is your – it's partly that, I suppose.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, it is partly that. I think that's a beginning. I think that conservatism in general is confronted with a dilemma between going back to something that was better in the past and going slow with headlong change that needs to be, if not throttled, at least moderated and made more sensible.

And if you do the latter, go slow, make the liberals do what they want to do but more slowly and more prudently, more sensibly, then you're kind of making yourself into an instrument, or even a slave, of the liberals and liberalism. And there's nothing new or interesting. You've got a conservative disposition, so that's one of the meanings of conservative, like a conservative investor, is one who doesn't take a lot of risks. So this is the less risky way to go. You're just going with the flow, with the flow of history, and a little more slowly, although you keep backing up. And you have to admit changes, which once you opposed and now you have to favor. So it's not a stable position, and it's not a stout position, as Buckley wanted.

So the other, then the other idea or possibility, is that conservatism rests on some principles, and principles mean that you don't just accept what comes along but you've got some ideas of your own and you want to propose them. And often those ideas, if you're a conservative, will require going back to some time that's better, like, for example, the American Founding. So, as you say, conservatives should go back to the American Founding, but the trouble with that is, that's it's disruptive. That turns conservatism into something of a revolutionary movement because it's just as revolutionary to go back as it is to go forward, or perhaps more so.

KRISTOL: And maybe more difficult?

MANSFIELD: More difficult, yeah. More noble, more challenging.

KRISTOL: That's true.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, but then, and you abandon your conservative temperament or disposition against taking too many risks and you do take a risk. So that was, say, a Newt Gingrich with the Republican Revolution. That was something new but it upset people, too. And it's hard to pull off.

So then what can conservatives do? But, I suppose, they can find some principles, which are permanent and which are not necessarily part of the American Founding, just because they're permanent. And those would be virtue or virtues. I think that perhaps the best thing and most interesting thing that conservatives would do would be to speak again in terms of virtues rather than values.

KRISTOL: I want to follow up with that but one more word on going back. I do think that's – the trouble with going back, of course, is also that it's just indiscriminate, it seems, and so you go back to these bad things in the past. Or un-replicable things of the past and then you have a kind of nostalgic conservatism or whatever.

MANSFIELD: That's right. And the liberals will point out the bad things that you're going back to as well as the good. And, yeah, like abortions in the back alley, that kind of thing.

KRISTOL: Right. Slavery.

MANSFIELD: Senator Ted Kennedy's famous remark about those who oppose abortion.

KRISTOL: So, yeah. I mean, I think, Buckley's statement. I've always thought it intriguing because, "Stop, stand and thwart history, yelling stop," whatever it was at the founding of *National Review*. But then what? Obviously, he had given this some thought, and other conservatives have since then.

But as you said, there has to be some standard or principle to which one can appeal, which is not entirely or mostly, I guess, incompatible with the spirit of modern America. So where do those principles come from? And so you explain the virtues then. One hears virtue and one thinks, one doesn't think, modern America particularly.

MANSFIELD: That's right. But we do have some virtues, and maybe we should spend some time looking for those. And one of the great ones, I think, that is also in American Founding but little noticed is the virtue of responsibility. That is an American virtue.

It's a word that was used in a new sense in *The Federalist* to mean something that hadn't been seen in republican government before. Republican government had always spoken of responsiveness or to use responsibility, in the sense of *responsive*, that a government should do what the people wants it to do. And that's what real republicanism or real democracy amounts to.

But the notion of responsibility gives government a kind of scope and office-holders a certain charge, and it gives opportunity to people with ambition – the take-charge type of person who sees an opportunity to do something that maybe wasn't demanded but in his opinion, or his vision, is called for. And to do that, and then to face election, or accountability or responsiveness, at the end of a period of time. So in other words, it's a kind of virtue, which allows somebody who's in charge a certain leeway to act, and to act freely. And this will be for the common benefit because people don't, as a whole, a kind of crowd, don't see things very well or don't predict things, don't have much foresight; whereas one person thinking by himself can do that.

And this was another great virtue of the American Constitution, that it gives opportunity to single individuals or to groups of individuals, in other words, sort of monarchical types or aristocratic types, within a democracy take advantage of the good points of other forms of government and mix them together in ours. So that's one way, I think, that conservatives could go in appreciation of a responsibility – talking a little bit more about that.

There's the virtue of self-reliance, which is another American virtue, which needs to be thought out and described and made relevant to our situation today. One of the great faults of liberalism is its reliance on the welfare state. And the welfare state means a great attack, abandonment, of self-reliance in citizens. So what is that and is it connected to responsibility, what is that a liberal individual should be doing with his life? How should he be behaving in such a way as to bring our country to something better than what we have?

KRISTOL: So responsibility for the leaders, for the few, and self-reliance for citizens?

MANSFIELD: Self-reliance is maybe a democratized version of responsibility. Thinking of yourself as in charge of your life, not as pushed around. That's one great trouble of our social science, which has an alliance with liberalism. Social science likes to see how people can be pushed around, how they can be incentivized, how they can be – what laws of behavior can be found which will enable them or their governors to run their lives for them. So I mean this can be made political and I think in an attractive way.

But it also needs to be turned into a virtue and a principle. We don't need always to talk about principles but also about virtues. Virtues are more universal than principles. Principles rise and fall or have to be, you know, unless they're really permanent principles.

But most principles, political principles, are temporary, for our time. What do we need for our time? But you need to connect those, to show how they're connected to virtues, which are permanent features of human nature and which can be found in writings and historical examples of all times – and that are open to conservatives to read and to explain.

KRISTOL: And so conservatives need to look back at the Founding and, I suppose, at American history but also beyond. Is that an important role for conservatives to sort of liberate American progressives from a very limited horizon that they have?

MANSFIELD: Yeah. They have very limited horizons. They can only see that everything might be better or would be better if only they were more equalized. That's obviously not true.

There are many inequalities, which deserve to be admired and prized. And so conservatives should talk about the opportunity for this, but they should also talk about, for making such virtues possible and active, but also they should talk about what those virtues are a little bit more than they do. They just – and they tend to say, describe them as self-reliant and then stop. What is the self? What does that mean?

KRISTOL: It seems easier to paint the picture of the opposite or the undesirable state of affairs. I think people do rally to that. No one wants to live in a nanny state. I'm not sure where that phrase – does it come from Mrs. Thatcher maybe? I'm not sure where that phrase comes from exactly.

MANSFIELD: It does sound British, doesn't it?

KRISTOL: Yeah. But it's in the spirit of Tocqueville I suppose, right? I mean, people don't want to be taken care of as nannies take care of five year olds.

MANSFIELD: Well, you could say, it used to be understood as paternalism, just the opposite of a nurse, but your father, paternalism – that's already in Kant as a great enemy of the liberal way of life.

KRISTOL: But the nanny state is a softer version, I guess.

MANSFIELD: Exactly, yes.

KRISTOL: Paternalism.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, paternalism made feminine.

KRISTOL: Yeah. Which thinkers, I mean – so if a young conservative said, "I have the instinct that this is right, and I need to sort of liberate myself from what I'm taught in colleges and think harder about the ways in which a liberal regime can be – lift itself above itself a little bit or lift people in and above the horizon they kind of naturally fall into." Who would you recommend?

MANSFIELD: Well, you already mentioned one – Tocqueville. Tocqueville, I think of as sort of Aristotle in modern dress. That's a little bit controversial but still – try that out, which means then go straight to Aristotle.

Look at the virtues that he presents in his *Ethics*. There's eleven of them in Books 3 and 4, 5. So and you'll immediately recognize those as virtues and it's important, too, to look at the way he thinks they work, means, they have – they're in between, too much and too little, which is also way of identifying

them. You'll be surprised to see how much, how relevant that is, to modern life and to *any* human life – his discussion of the virtues. But then if you want to see how they especially operate in democracy, that's definitely Tocqueville is the place, is the man – the man to look at. But you could also look at John Stuart Mill to see what liberals thought about this, how they changed the notion of virtue but also how he, for example, tried to hold onto the virtue of excellence, or at least eccentricity.

KRISTOL: Right. Independence. I don't know –

MANSFIELD: Independence. Yeah, you can be a little crazy. I mean, we still believe that, so that must have some relevance to the way we live. You can justify a little eccentricity together if you connect to excellence. It's a form or the outward form or somewhat decayed form of excellence. At least, it's standing out from the crowd.

And Americans want to do that. We believe, "I'm just an ordinary guy with an independent mind." So we all believe we're ordinary guys *and* that we have independent minds. The problem is that ordinary guys usually don't have independent minds. Conservatives, I think, should work with that notion and see how you make the connection between ordinary person and independent mind.

KRISTOL: I've been struck, just how much in the last few years this phrase, American exceptionalism, has caught on, I think, among conservatives in particular. Somewhat different. I mean, with a somewhat different meaning I think that it was originally – I don't know originally, but that it was used in social science, for example, where it really had to do, the early uses of it has to do with America's failure to become a socialist party compared to European countries, it was more of a –

MANSFIELD: You were exceptional compared to the normal history of human beings, I guess.

KRISTOL: Right, what was weird about America that didn't lead it to have socialists and the dominance of liberalism. I think Louis Hartz and others wrote a lot about this. But now it's sort of become, I think, a rallying cry for conservatives, along the lines you were just saying, more for the nation as a whole than for individuals. I think somehow America has to be more than just another well-off welfare state. It's striking how much.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, exactly. So and exceptionalism is somehow connected to great, greatness. And you can find that very much in the Founders. *The Federalist* speaks of greatness. A farewell to greatness. That's what will happen to us if we don't pass this Constitution, they said. And our greatness consists in our – that's – if that's the character of our exceptionalism, it isn't just that we're idiosyncratic and we're different from the others. No. Our difference matters, and also our difference has something universal about it.

So in the Founders, you get the notion that America is not just America, it's an experiment and it's not just based on American ideas, it's an experiment in self-government for all of mankind. Never before has a republic succeeded in maintaining liberty and maintaining its structure, its existence, for a decent amount of time. All the preceding republics have failed. So can we really exist under a self-government?

And then, of course, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, that same notion – can we keep it up? So and, if we can, then we're exceptional, in the sense that we set an example for everybody. We're the first successful republic. And I think that's really true, that's our exceptionalism. But we do it not just for ourselves, but for the rest of mankind and not to impose it on them, but to set an example. You can do it, too – we've done it.

KRISTOL: And I do think, don't you think in the 20th century, this sort of got – something was added to it which was also saving you know other democracies against stronger enemies and so that sort of post-World War I, and then post-World War II and the Cold War, the American exceptionalism, sort of spread out into this kind of America's role in the world, as well.

MANSFIELD: America can be proud of itself, I think, contrary to the present administration. I think America deserves to be proud of itself for its record in the 20th century.

Three times, we saved the world, really, from authoritarianism, totalitarianism. The First World War, the Second World War, and the Cold War. And we did it without asking for or getting a single acre of territory in addition. Well, I mean, we got our territory in the 19th century, you could say, so we were a satisfied power. But still most powers that save other people end up with some of the territory of the people they saved. That's how the Roman Republic proceeded. No, we didn't.

So there was something selfless about it. Even though we prospered, and we end up as a sole superpower, so to speak, without ever intending it. But having knocked out all the bad nations, it seemed that there was only a good one left, mainly the one that knocked out the bad ones, which is a lesson to isolationism and neutralism. That if you want to be a successful country, you have to defend yourself – and make sure that the enemies, which you have are defeated.

KRISTOL: But somehow yeah it's hard to – and that's always just – it's hard to justify that merely on sort of narrow self-interest, I would say but under broader self-interest, well-understood but a little beyond that also because –

MANSFIELD: It is. Narrow self-interest tells you to relax, things won't get any worse and –

KRISTOL: We have oceans, oceans protecting us.

MANSFIELD: We do, we have oceans protecting us and we have our wonderful complacency protecting us. Yeah. So, don't worry and let's come back to America and stay where we are. Don't think that we have a mission or that we're exceptional in any way. We're no better than the rest. I think that's very wrong and very bad.

KRISTOL: And even liberals, it seems to me I think you put this out somewhere, when Lyndon Johnson wanted to sell his domestic program, he called it the Great Society.

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: Not just the good society, though I think the actual – didn't Lippmann write a book? I think "good society" was a term that was in use.

MANSFIELD: You're right, you're right. Walter Lippmann wrote a book on that, that's right, yeah.

KRISTOL: But somehow it had to be a higher endeavor.

MANSFIELD: That's right. Americans somehow like that word, *great*. We often say it instead of *good*.

KRISTOL: I guess that's right. Yeah, that's a good, that's a good point.

II: *The Federalist* (24:58 – 48:58)

KRISTOL: You've written about *The Federalist*, and you've recommended *The Federalist* as a guide for not just conservatives but for all Americans thinking about republican government, free government, I guess all, not just Americans, right. So what's the sort of?

MANSFIELD: Among those Americans, political scientists that need to spend much more time with *The Federalist*. They need to study it very carefully because *The Federalist* is a statement of political science applied to politics in a very prudent way. And political scientists should learn what political science can do

and how it operates at its best. There are a lot of political scientists in America today who criticize the Constitution and pay no or little attention to *The Federalist*. But they should recognize that this was political science at that time. Is it better or is it worse? I have to say it's *better* than what we have today.

And that's because in *The Federalist*, you get this great sense of self-consciousness and of introspection. And that's what one could call the wisdom of *The Federalist*. They really knew what they were doing, and this applies especially to Madison and Hamilton. But to the others, as well, because this was a convention, which took place, and the deliberation, in common and in secret, in the summer months of 1787 and so it wasn't just those two. But in *The Federalist*, you especially get Madison and Hamilton.

Hamilton had the idea for *The Federalist*, and he brought in his friend, a younger friend, Madison. So it was actually the two of them, plus John Jay around too, but not for many of them. So those two.

And one thing that they did, was to start off by comparing republican government to good government. Americans were making an experiment of the possibility of self-government as good government; will self-government work? So far in human history, it has not. And so it isn't just that they understand republics in terms of, as we would say, republican values but that they compare what republics do with what good government requires. And so for example, good government requires two kinds of power or two understandings of power – energy and stability, every government must have a way of keeping itself stable, on its feet and capable. But it also needs to be able to act quickly, and with force and energy. That's another great word, besides responsibility, which occurs for the first time or is developed for the first time, in *The Federalist*. So those are two requirements of good government, energy and stability. And so what do republics do or what can they do to do this?

And *The Federalist* found that previous republics had been sadly lacking in both. They didn't – weren't very energetic, they couldn't react quickly. They lost time. A great example, the Dutch republics fighting Louis XIV in the wars with the Duke of Marlborough. And also the American republic fighting its war of revolution right before – in their recent memory. So those were two cases where republics failed to be able to move armies and take decisive decisions quickly and forcefully. And so they thought, well, our republic needs a strong executive.

And so America is the first republic with a strong executive. I don't think very many people realize the innovation that was required to do this because a strong executive means a monarch – a monarchy or a monarchical element, at least, in the republic. You're taking advantage of what the power of one person concentrated can do. And so that's one thing they did.

And then as to stability, the main trouble there in previous republics was in the legislature. So the legislature would pass hasty legislation based on immediate, and whimsical, or passionate majorities. They gave too much power to the majority in the sense of the *present* majority. So *The Federalist* decided that the way to make a republic better was to address this problem of hasty majorities, which they called the problem of majority faction. That's peculiar to republics. Republics are often mostly worried about the few or the one. Those are the real enemies of republics. But, no, *The Federalist* had the wisdom to look into republics and see its weakness was that the republic *itself* would do something hasty and passionate and destructive. So how to cure the weakness that is endemic to republics? That was their main concern.

And so they introduced a kind of stability, which was in the separation of powers. Separation of powers was a way to keep the power active and energetic but at the same time to check it, and to prevent single group, of the few or one person, from dominating. So there are these three branches and the legislature is divided into two branches itself. So they introduced a kind of complexity, a complexity that would make the government more stable because it would force it to act more deliberately than otherwise. So, in America, to get a majority, you can't just say, "What do you want?" But you have to gather together a coalition. So it's a kind of, you could call it a coalition or a composed majority, as opposed to an immediate, or passionate, or willful majority, which was always the case in previous republics. So this

complexity adds to stability. So that was the great wisdom of *The Federalist*. It departed from republican theories or experience in the past.

KRISTOL: And the Constitution itself, they anticipate, this will become a source of stability so it won't be easily amended. And, of course, *Federalist* 49, which I think is very important, where there's the rejection of the idea of appealing to the people whenever there's a dispute between the branches, which that would – and they explicitly, Madison explicitly says, that would cut the veneration that's needed for –

MANSFIELD: Veneration, he used that word, yeah, a very conservative word. A very sort of untraditional word.

KRISTOL: But veneration for something that the people created so it's not anti-democratic. A very kind of very successful squaring of the circle there –

MANSFIELD: It is and not merely traditional. There is reason behind it. So and they succeeded – they succeeded in that, as I think there is veneration and great appreciation for the Constitution now and both parties, all around. The liberals do their best to undermine it, but they, on the whole have not succeeded.

We still have our Constitution with its – we still have our process of amendments. We do, however, have our Supreme Court. And judicial review and justices who believe in what the progressives call the "Living Constitution." So there is now a kind of undercurrent of anti-Constitutional feeling, but still it's an undercurrent, it doesn't really dare present itself except in the writings of a few – I'm trying to think of a pejorative word that isn't too nasty – a few irrational law professors. So who want to redo everything. But most people are not just content, but, I think, quite proud, admiring, of our Constitution, and it also has the admiration of the rest of the world.

KRISTOL: And it's amazing that you have populist movements in America – the Tea Party – that are explicitly, that describe themselves as constitutionalist. It's sort of a contradict – not a contradiction, but normally you might say populism is somewhat anti –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, you could say the Constitution takes aim at populism, if populism is understood as a kind of willful, strident, local, or temporary majority. But, yeah, these are populists in favor of the Constitution. That's right, that's a gladdening paradox.

KRISTOL: Yeah. Enlightened populism I suppose. I'm struck – teaching *The Federalist* recently, just a couple of classes – the degree to which, I mean, the importance of holding republican government to the standard of good government, which they don't really make – they somehow just do it without ever quite explaining or defending perhaps that they're doing it. It's pretty – when you point it out to students, they're a little struck by it because it's so contrary to the way we tend to perceive, which is to say, was that democratic and is it fair? And if not, it has to be changed. But that's not the way *The Federalist* proceeds.

MANSFIELD: We identify democracy with good government. So there isn't any other good government or any – So, immediately that gives you this difficulty that do you really – do we really have democracy now or don't we? If democracy is the only good thing and we're not perfectly democratic, as no society ever is or can be, then democracy must be something way out in the future. But, no, we really, we have it now.

And that's because people in our democracy consent because they see the advantage of inequalities that produce good things for them and freedom for all and give opportunity to ambition because there are some people who don't want to be ordinary guys.

Somehow, our democracy is in the hands of the ordinary guys, but we still want to have our extraordinary people, outstanding people, and give them some scope. So you need some standard, which is actually *above* democracy by which to judge democracy. You have to know what helps democracy as opposed to what makes it more democratic.

KRISTOL: That standard isn't really presented in *The Federalist* as the virtues of the people or that will create this kind of admirable citizenry or help foster it. It's more – that the government will keep, will be able to function well and defend itself and defend the country. So you might say it's presented in a utilitarian way, not in a kind of high-minded –

MANSFIELD: That's right. They wouldn't want to go about reproaching the American people for not being sufficiently concerned with the standard of good government, though they speak of the genius of republicanism, which is in America. And so they somewhat take that for granted and they try to instruct that, just as Tocqueville later used the phrase, "instruct democracy," that's what democracy needs, a certain instruction. On itself – and the same thing with Tocqueville – democracy needs to be instructed as to what itself is doing that makes it work. And making it work is different from making it be more democratic.

KRISTOL: And it doesn't just run itself, I think, right? That's sort of a modern political science myth about *The Federalist* understanding of the Constitution.

MANSFIELD: That's right, just an automatic automaton, or a machine, a machine that would work of itself. That's a phrase of an historian. But no. No, it doesn't.

KRISTOL: And nor does the – I mean, this is and, I guess, modern political science's favorite *Federalist* paper is *Federalist* 10, which is the one that inclines the most in a slightly mechanist way, you might say, expand the sphere, and sort of the problem of majority faction takes care of itself, which, I think, Madison indicates isn't quite right.

MANSFIELD: I think he does, yes, extend the sphere. Those are the two principles of political science of *The Federalist*, to first extend the sphere – that is, make it larger so that the country is more diverse, if it's larger, it will be more diverse; if it's more diverse, there won't be a single group that is the majority. And that means that the majority will have to be composed of different parts, diverse parts. And that means, and here's the conclusion, that your majority will be more moderate and more sensible, more rational, than if it's the majority of a single, homogeneous, small, people.

KRISTOL: And probably the representatives of that majority will have to be more thoughtful or –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, they do have to be thoughtful and they have to be well chosen. So you can give this opportunity for ambition and if a bunch of rogues and jerks and fools use that opportunity and crowd out the others, then you're going to lose, and your republic will go down. So it isn't that it works automatically. The idea of extending the sphere is something sort of automatic but it's not inevitable and it still depends on intelligence to make it work.

KRISTOL: And don't you think *The Federalist*, I mean, somewhat self-consciously or purposefully sort of overstates somewhat the automatic-ness of it and the – you might say, understates the importance of the few or the representatives or the executive, just personally, as opposed to the mechanisms?

MANSFIELD: Right, yeah. You know the difficulty with relying on virtue is that some people have more of it than other people do, and that doesn't seem fully democratic, so it's something that you have to defend before democracy and to make each person see what in him is sort of aristocratic and virtuous, what in every individual human being, there's something that's better. And so you have to make people aware of that, though, like better half – that's your wife, never your husband. But still that indicates kind of an appreciation for this better that is in each one of us and that needs to be brought out and made visible to people so that they can act on it, improve it.

KRISTOL: But also visible in a democratic way, I suppose, in defending the republic and the executive part. I think whatever, there are eleven papers on the executive – really striking – and then when you look

at them and read them somewhat carefully, you know they're pretty bold. Hamilton is pretty bold in making clear how far you have to go to have a strong executive who may have to be not simply responsive to the people, and you want to protect him from having to be responsive to the people in various ways. But it's still for the sake of the people.

MANSFIELD: That's it. So that's the argument which he makes, and it's a clever argument, that a single person is more responsive to the people than a committee would be because you know whom to blame – the person at the top is the one who carries the responsibility, so you blame him. And then you don't have to look into secret transactions to find out what is happening.

But it's enough just to blame the person at the top and that is something that a democracy can appreciate and see, and also not be misled about, with false accusations about secret transactions. Nonetheless, of course, there are plenty of such accusations, so it isn't easy. But still that is a way in which he tried, Hamilton tried, to show how this seemingly very monarchical office is more democratic than a seemingly less monarchical office would have been.

KRISTOL: And do you think *The Federalist*, I mean, it seems to me that there has been – I mean, it was really not read seriously maybe 50, 60 years ago. I think, it was just after the progressives and the New Deal, it really was kind of an historical relic and also viewed as aristocratic, I guess, in addition to out-of-date. But it does seem that that – there has – the rediscovery of *The Federalist* by you and many others, and Martin Diamond, and many others who went back with more of an open mind, you might say.

MANSFIELD: I hope so.

KRISTOL: That's really had, I think, some effect.

MANSFIELD: And you, too, Bill –

KRISTOL: I did write my dissertation –

MANSFIELD: – wrote his dissertation on the judicial power in *The Federalist*. So yeah, I think that has, that wonderful work has come back to some appreciation. We have to bring it to the attention of the liberals, though.

KRISTOL: Yeah, and how do we do that? Well, they should be less complacent about – well, you've done that, and tried to do that, to remind them of their own interests and sort of being liberals who aren't just –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, pushovers.

KRISTOL: Yeah, or just representative members of the democracy. They have a certain elite status that they should think about. But they seem amazingly unwilling to think about their own standing.

MANSFIELD: *The Federalist* tries to make necessity apparent to democracy or to republics. That's their – sort of you could say their theme almost from especially the beginning that –

KRISTOL: Because why?

MANSFIELD: You need a strong government – a strong government really means a capable government to make sure that a republic meets its necessities and those necessities include avoiding domestic division and avoiding foreign invasion or domination. So republics previously have been based on wishes. And I think that's a general comment one can make to the liberals today – that they resemble some previous pre-American republicans in basing their political thinking on wishes.

KRISTOL: But there will always been some of that, right?

MANSFIELD: Always be some of that, yeah. There can be responsible or reasonable wishes. So, no, you don't have to drop your wishes altogether but mere wishes, wishes that neglect necessities. So I think that's –

KRISTOL: And then it sends the message that necessities aren't overcome, I suppose, would be the other message by modern technology or modern economics or, conservatives have their own wish to avoid this message too, right? I think you've commented on this? They want to believe it's a spontaneous order or –

MANSFIELD: Yes, that's right. Yeah, they believe the same as the belief that our Constitution works automatically like a machine. Yeah, that's Friedrich Hayek's notion, libertarian notion, of a spontaneous order that comes out like the order of the market. That's his model for social order or political order, generally. And so you just let – just let the thugs take over. It's as if – it's as if spontaneous order won't yield a maelstrom of thugs. Look at what's happening in Iraq right now – spontaneous order for you.

KRISTOL: I supposed Hayek, I mean, he would say, or his defenders would say with some merit, I think – I mean, he did write a book called *The Constitution of Liberty* where, I suppose, that shows he – it's a funny tension in Hayek, this spontaneous order, but then he actually is quite concerned about the rules and the laws.

MANSFIELD: Yes, all that. The libertarians are very concerned with the rule of laws and they're quite fierce in punishing those who want to disobey laws that they've consented to. Once you consent, you've had it. Yeah so that, somehow that has to be added into spontaneous order. Spontaneous means, what you've consented to. The fact that you might want to go back on what you've consented to, which is a very human thing, especially when what you've consented to turns out to be to your disadvantage, you want to get out of the deal. So, no, they won't let you but that doesn't seem to be spontaneous anymore. Spontaneous would seem to be you just let people – you let go. You don't exercise any restraint or any punishment.

KRISTOL: I suppose some of that is a healthy reaction against what you've called rational control or the claims of expertise, or science, you know kind of, we don't know everything so let the market work it out.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. And in that way it's very reasonable and to be commended. But there is such a thing as going too far.

KRISTOL: Right, right.

III: Two Meanings of “Constitution” (48:58 – 1:01:29)

KRISTOL: Let me ask you about the constitution and its – you've written about this – and its two meanings at least. I guess, the constitution as a regime in an Aristotelian sense and then the constitution as the Constitution in a more document – allocating powers and seems to be more concerned with process than with substance, so to speak. What is the – is there – what is the relationship of those two in the American case?

MANSFIELD: Well, yeah, so, those are the two meanings of *constitution*: constitution as setting limits to government, and constitution, in the way the opposite, as showing how government pervades society and constitution as a regime which makes a certain way of life.

And that latter is the older, more ancient, conception comes out of the political science of Plato and Aristotle – Greek word – *politaeum* – meaning regime or constitution. And the other one is a modern notion that government needs to be limited and the constitution having a set, and, finally, written,

Constitution is the way to be sure of those limits.

So a limited Constitution means, well, that, you're protecting the liberties that your – that your government is designed to preserve and that you have – your country has a constitution, so your country is constitutional, whereas other countries that don't have such a constitution are unconstitutional.

So the Constitution then becomes a kind of term of distinction; some people have it and some don't. Some countries pretend to have it like the Soviet Union used to have a constitution that it pretended to have. But still you bear in mind what is constitutional versus unconstitutional, and the Supreme Court uses that distinction. So that means – whereas where the other meaning of constitution, every country has a constitution, good or bad, in the same way, say, as every human body has a constitution and so you say either a strong constitution or a weak constitution. So those are the – that's the beginning distinction.

And I think the American Constitution actually shows both of those things. It shows a Constitution that limits; it limits by making a distinction between ordinary law and constitutional law. Constitutional law comes from the people. The Constitution has been ratified by the people, that's a law which they've passed; and, whereas the ordinary law comes out of the legislature. That sets up a distinction between those two kinds of law, and that's the distinction that the Supreme Court uses when it decides whether a certain law or way of proceeding is constitutional or not. So that gives you something to hold onto.

And that means that if the people are the source of the Constitution, that the people are the unlimited source and underneath them is the Constitution, and then underneath the Constitution is the legislature, which would include the president and Congress that passes laws. And then at the bottom, then you come to the people again, who are citizens, and obedient to the laws that they have set up as procedures to pass. So the people are the top of the pyramid and also at the bottom, and that's the kind of secret or surprising paradox of self-government that, on the one hand, you're in charge of things, and, on the other hand, you're obedient to whatever government that you've set in charge will decide for you.

So but then you can raise the question what if the people don't inspire a decent or hold the government to a decent Constitution and what if they become ignorant, and testy, and thuggish, and so on? But what if they live in such a way as to destroy the freedom that they wanted to protect with their Constitution? So then you have to see that the Constitution needs to have a spirit and not just laws. And this spirit can be venerated. As *The Federalist* said, when you venerate the Constitution or you appreciate it, you admire it, you're going beyond consenting to it, you're actually living by it.

So you're – and we do that in many ways. So we often when we want to decide something, we'll take a vote. That's our democracy, that's our way of governing, as part of our way of living. Or also, since I was speaking of the importance of the strong executive in our Constitution, the large amount of one-man rule or one-person rule, which you see in America – so many institutions are governed just by one person – so we've kind of bought Hamilton's argument. A single person is a more responsible way of governing than otherwise. And that pervades our way of living and so our politics becomes part of our way of life.

And so I think that's – and that needs to be protected, that spirit of Constitutionalism, needs to be protected by our education so that we don't just allow people to grow up ignorant and uncaring about the government that they live under. Its virtues and some of its problems are, or at least ought to be, conveyed to them in the education that we give to kids and actually to citizens as well in the way that they are shown to understand things – lessons, say. So we need to keep always an idea or our minds on the – on both parts, of both definitions of constitution – just the one isn't enough.

KRISTOL: And it seems like – I'm just curious – history? I mean, what do you think is the key for citizens or for young people for that matter, how do they sort of come to understand this, both what the spirit of modern constitutionalism, liberal constitutionalism, is in America, and how it – what threats there are to it? Do you think it's primarily political philosophy, or history or both? I guess I'm struck how there are

historians who try – you know, who would emphasize that that’s really the crucial thing to study. People who teach political philosophy might say, “No, more important to read Aristotle.” I don’t know, maybe both I suppose?

MANSFIELD: Maybe both, I would say, for sure, yeah. Yes, we need to have an understanding of the political science that is behind our Constitution, and the sort of thinking which begins with Plato and Aristotle comes to Locke and Montesquieu and then to Tocqueville. Those are the main names I would give for students to study. But also you should definitely have a look at *The Federalist* and at the Constitutional debates. And since all of this is best shown in the lives of particular, and famous, or notorious Americans, history is very important, too.

So the two things need to be – need to infuse each other. Sort of a study of great Americans, especially, but of ordinary Americans, but especially great ones. When you study ordinary Americans, always the relationship should be made between those people and the great ones. And the principles, or ideas, or political science, which they take for granted or sometimes understand and sometimes improve. So both history and political science or political philosophy are needed, and together.

KRISTOL: Yeah and maybe also history, it’s not just American history since one has to sort of compare. This is a big – the theme of Tocqueville in a way. I mean, he wrote a whole book on America, but he implicated that sometimes you need to compare America to other –

MANSFIELD: It would be nice if we were in a position where we could say, “You mustn’t be so parochial, don’t just study American history.” Unfortunately, we don’t study it enough, nearly enough in order to make – be able to make, that reproachful comment. Yeah, but if we only studied American history, yes, that would be bad, too.

KRISTOL: And we don’t study other people’s, other nation’s history with a view towards in this way, either. We could learn about –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, the comparative view. Yeah. And that’s, and there again you can talk about comparative government or comparative political science. All political science is essentially comparative and so I mean if you want to – if it’s a universal subject, which covers politics everywhere, you can’t just be concerned with your country.

In order to be concerned with your country, you have to be concerned with other countries and the different ways they govern themselves. And, so, that’s – yes, by all means, let’s not simply focus on America. But if only that were our problem.

KRISTOL: It is, yeah. It’s amazing how we study world history but don’t actually study actual world history. Of course, it seems to be some made-up kind of theory of world history or such thing.

MANSFIELD: I expect so. I’m not too aware of what’s going on in world history classrooms.

KRISTOL: You’re not missing much probably, yeah.

MANSFIELD: I’m afraid I’m not.

KRISTOL: Do you, since we’re on this topic, what about that those – I mean, people complain the students today are much less well-versed in America, in American history than they were 30, 40 years ago, 50 years ago.

MANSFIELD: That’s were I come in –

KRISTOL: Yeah, so is that true?

MANSFIELD: Yes, yeah. I had a wonderful high school American history teacher. She wasn't that wonderful, actually, but she did one wonderful thing, which was make me learn all the names and the dates of the American presidents.

It's amazing how useful that is. Information, when you hear a year, you know who was president, or when you hear of a president, you know what year that was. So it gives you a kind of structure. That's the kind of thing, which used to be done and is no longer. And, unfortunately, the grade schools or high schools get these potted history textbooks with opinions and exaggerated examples, that they're rather tendentious and unconvincing, actually.

IV: What's Wrong with Feminism (1:01:29 – 1:33:20)

KRISTOL: So we've been talking about the Constitution, and politics, and forms of government. But someone watching could easily say – and you and I would probably say also – well, but that's only part of the history, there are all these other social and cultural trends that are huge and that in a way overwhelm these other attempts to educate or instruct.

And one of them certainly that you've written about, a lot, is feminism and other related trends, Sexual Revolution and the attempt to have a gender-free society and so forth. At the end of a recent article in *The Weekly Standard* actually you wrote – the conclusion was detailing the disastrous consequences of feminism. Like on campus, "How could we recover some sense of feminine modesty and male restraint?" So that seems to be a task beyond *The Federalist*, you know, or –

MANSFIELD: It is, it is. All right, so this is really difficult.

KRISTOL: Yeah. So what happened? And –

MANSFIELD: I mean, one could make the transition from politics to feminism by saying that I think that feminism is the most important political event that's occurred in the last 50 years or so since in it came along in the 1970s. And also the most worrisome. I don't think it's a good trend at all.

KRISTOL: So it's sort of the most serious product of the 60s, you'd say, in a way?

MANSFIELD: It is the most serious product of the 60s, even though it wasn't kind of a main actor in the 60s. But it came along right after, right after the late 60s, with the Sexual Revolution, and a kind of revolution in mores generally.

So what is feminism about? Let me also begin by saying that I sort of like women. And that's another reason why I'm taking this out, it's not just politically important, but I look on women with – with as much admiration as I think it's possible to have, and I fear for their present situation. So this is very much in the course of helping or what's meant to be helpful comment on what they're doing.

So feminism seems to be about an escape from nature. It's an attempt to say that there's no natural difference between the sexes, between male and female. And this is done in interest of equality – that nature has heretofore condemned women to second-class status.

The Second Sex, that's the name of Simone de Beauvoir's famous founding book. It was not an American book, of course – French, existentialist, wife and so on, wife of Jean-Paul Sartre, she was. In the 1950s it was written, came over here and was translated right away. Women everywhere read it, at least anyone, any woman that was in the habit of reading a book read that, I think, in the 1950s. I remember that, the power and immediate strength of that.

The Second Sex, so women get the short end of the stick from nature and that's because of motherhood

so that mainly they – it keeps them from being – motherhood keeps them from being single-minded the way men are. Men are successful because they know how to, or at least the best of them and the most capable of them, know how to stay away from their distractions and to keep one thing in focus, whereas women because they're mothers are always at the call of their children and they seem to like this or to be naturally inclined toward this in a way that a man is not.

And, so, that acts as a kind of drag on their ambition, on their single-mindedness, on their ability to compete, on their – and finally on their equality with men. And so men seem to do better in all the things that gain social recognition. That doesn't mean necessarily the most important things. It might be that the home and the family is more important than politics and business. That's what Tocqueville said about American women; he praised the virtue of American women for their virtue, for their willingness to stay at home and not to venture into business or places where you gain fame. But it's not surprising or really very much worth blaming that women didn't follow Tocqueville's advice – I think it was more advice than description – and wanted to have the same sort of recognition, public recognition, that men did. And certainly nature in the form of motherhood and having a womb seems to get in the way of that.

And, so, that's the main principle of feminism, that there are no natural differences between the sexes. And then there's another principle that goes along with this, just that the differences which you see are historically created. This was what Simone de Beauvoir argued, historical materialism. And the differences that exist between men and women have been made by men in the interest of men. And that was the thesis of Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963.

The feminine mystique is women being placed on a platform to be admired by men, the way I admire women. And so that's to keep them from doing anything interesting or relevant or important with their lives but just serving, so to speak, as toys or as playthings for men, not a sufficiently important human function to satisfy a decent or thinking person.

So those two things go together and the trouble is that the two – those two principles are really in contradiction. If women want to be as independent as men are, then they mustn't think of themselves as socially constructed because to be socially constructed is to be dependent on outside forces, on society in general, and not on yourself. So but, on the other hand, if you're going to depend on yourself, then that means that you have some self that comes to you from nature; there's a natural love of freedom or desire for independence or recognition which you want to satisfy. And that – but that, if it's natural, then the trouble is that that might be in a woman, different from what it is in a man. So they're stuck. If you go one way, you lose all your faculty really for independence. If you go the other way, then your independence is perhaps not going to be the same as a man's independence. And so that's the difficulty.

And what it comes out to in practice is the notion of modesty. Women used to be required to be or expected to be – better to say, expected to be modest in their – in sexual matters, in dealings with men. And that was kind of a part of the double standard of sexual behavior; when woman misbehaves sexually, adultery and so on, that's much worse, more serious, than when a man does. So, and that means that a woman has a kind of obligation to be modest, to be the one who says no, the one who hesitates and keeps charge or keeps control of things in a sexual situation.

And so but if you're going to say that men are equal to women, then feminine modesty has to go. Feminine modesty is just another name for the feminine mystique. And so that's what Betty Friedan was attacking, and that's what Simone de Beauvoir was attacking. There is – I mean, there are today many different kinds of feminists who are less radical than those two. So I don't mean to put everybody in the same basket. But those two are the most interesting because they're the most radical and also still the most powerful because it's with reference to them that everybody else defines herself, that every other woman, let's say, "I'm a certain distance toward them but maybe not the whole way."

KRISTOL: Well, what's wrong with the sort of, I guess, obvious, more timid criticism of feminism and attempt to accommodate it to some degree to say, "Well, that may all mostly be true – we don't believe

that social construction of reality stuff, most women are different – women are generally different from men and most women will have different preferences from most men. But let that all sort itself out, just have equality of before the law, equality of opportunity; you could even avoid sort of affirmative action if you don't like that. But why, I mean but just let – let people choose. Women will choose somewhat differently from men and that's fine." But why do you need a sort of social doctrine?

MANSFIELD: I think you do.

KRISTOL: Yeah, so this is your point, I think. So I think that is sort of where – wouldn't you say that's where the country is today, I think, or where most conservatives are –

MANSFIELD: It's a kind of example of spontaneous order that people are hoping for –

KRISTOL: Don't tell women what to do, on the one hand –

MANSFIELD: But the thing is how will they choose? That's the difficulty. And so if they choose against modesty, then we have these troubles, which we've seen in the universities, recently, of general accusations of a rape culture. Not to be dismissed but also not to be accepted because it doesn't seem to be rape that's so much in question as just being bullied or put upon.

I like that phrase, for what men do to women most generally, that women just have memories of many times in their lives when they've been put upon by men and they want to get away from that. So one has to be sensitive to that reasonable natural feeling. So but if it's – it's just very hard to know then how to reconstruct some sense of modesty, of what you, how you would behave, if you had your choice.

And if you're in a situation where it's expected that sex is the consequence or the conclusion of every meeting between two young people, then the woman is always going to feel pretty close to or in danger of feeling pushed around or pushed into – into consenting to something that she won't like. So this idea of choosing and letting things go depends upon the idea of consent. Will women have a fair chance to consent if there aren't some rules of modesty, which gives them – which give them a way to say no?

That's what they need. You need a way to say no, and the idea simply of saying, "Well, let's do it by consent" doesn't work, because they're brought into situations where you take your clothes off and you jump into bed with a man – that's too late to say no; and, yet, according to the official doctrine, it isn't too late. So – so and the woman feels unable to really control the situation, especially if she's young and she's inexperienced in such matters, and dealing with older men.

All of – this is another sort of gender inequality – that – I was talking to a Harvard senior. He said, "When I was a freshman, on Saturday nights, all the girls in our dorm were invited down to the final clubs by senior, Harvard seniors, and we were left with nobody, with the other boys. So then when I became a senior, I invited them, too." So that's again one of these facts of life that men are interested in younger women and younger women are interested in older men, that, you know, that deny or contradict the official doctrine of gender equality. So there are all these complications which make it more difficult for a woman to say no, unless there is a kind of atmosphere of respectability for feminine modesty, of respect for feminine modesty.

KRISTOL: And does that atmosphere require a kind of legal support in the sense that not having simply a society in which laws are gender-blind and in which –

MANSFIELD: Yes. I think probably right. Or at least expectations or conventions. We don't need to do everything by law but you can do things by convention or expectation. There are certain expectations that should go with your sex – that the man pays. Even if the money comes from his wife. And things like that.

Then, in other words, you should appeal to the sense of protection that a man has and to the sense of

modesty, we should respect that, that a woman has. And so this feminism has, I think, in many ways largely has succeeded, has certainly largely succeeded in taking over of our way of thinking but it's done quite well in business, and professions, jobs, careers.

For one thing, it's done away with Marxism and – or you might say it's done away with the hippie notion, that careers are bourgeois and they have no authenticity to them. But now women, every one of them wants a career to be respectable, to have your office with your name on the door so that you might say the careerism of America is very much reinforced by the success of women. And so those men who thought that women couldn't do jobs or be lawyers or doctors and so on, they were certainly proved wrong. But it's at home, and in the intimacy of sex, too, that we still need recognition of the difference between the sexes.

KRISTOL: But it sounds, that recognition, sounds like it would have to cut against two such powerful, some powerful doctrines in America, both consent and equality, really. And that's tough I guess; and that is why feminism has been so successful, I suppose, that it's in some way with the grain of America or modern liberalism.

And how does one appeal, so what are the principles, to go back to our earlier discussion, or virtues, to which one would appeal to kind of stop that total triumph of equality and consent over traditional gender roles?

MANSFIELD: Yeah, the total triumph of equality and consent means it's bad for women.

KRISTOL: Yeah. So you'd have to really make a substantive argument that –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, yeah, because they're more vulnerable than men in sexual situations. They're the ones that get pregnant; they're the ones who get more serious sexual diseases. And the third most important thing is they don't have the ability that men do to walk away after a sexual encounter and say what's next?

KRISTOL: And this isn't changed by modern technology? You're not a believer in that.

MANSFIELD: No, it's not. Nor by modern principles, nor by Simone de Beauvoir. So the vulnerability of women needs to be recognized and protected.

KRISTOL: And you don't think – I mean, I take it from this discussion – that I'm sure modern contraception was obviously a very important thing that changed mores in some ways, but you think it's less central than the –

MANSFIELD: And less central than – yeah.

KRISTOL: – doctrinal change or the –

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Contraception made – or easy contraception – made it possible or was an instrumentality, but it didn't make people behave differently or didn't need to make them more libertine. And that's a word I use without embarrassment.

KRISTOL: That's good. And so the Sexual Revolution and feminism, I mean what does – do you have – did they just happen, just sort of happen at the same time, or does one imply the other? As you say, one seems against the interest of the other in some ways.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, the Sexual Revolution, I think, was very much in the interest of men. And but and women seeing that, said, "Well, we want in on this, too." So if a man can be sexually independent, why can't a woman? And so we shouldn't just be camp followers of rock bands the way they were in the late

60s. But, no, we should have the same rights and the same adventures. The right to adventure that a man does. And so the feminists bought into the Sexual Revolution. And the women's movement is more in the 1970s, just shortly after the late 60s where you had the Sexual Revolution.

So that was a very big mistake of the women because, I think, that led them into connivance, into this male thuggery or predatory behavior, so it put them in situations which give the advantage to a man. So in colleges now and I think it's the same outside colleges, this great advance in women's equality has produced advantage sexually for men – again, because a man can walk away from sex in a way that a woman can't. She just – they don't – women don't think that way; they want sex with love. As someone put it, women want love first and sex next, and men the other way around.

KRISTOL: And so feminism, even though it followed the Sexual Revolution, it sounds like you might argue is more fundamental in terms of the effect it's had on America. I mean, you could have more or less rigid sexual mores, and presumably might not change the country that much and –

MANSFIELD: Right, yeah. No, we could have relaxed sexual mores if it weren't that it came with this doctrine of gender neutrality based on general gender non-difference.

KRISTOL: And do you think, is there some reaction against the doctrine of gender neutrality? It does seem like it flies in the face of nature, so I mean there's a way in which this should always be –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, it is, it does, yeah. Yes. In practice, I think there is, yeah. So I think it's probably the case say in colleges, I think it's certainly the case at Harvard from the asking around that I've done, that the majority of the undergraduates don't have lives of sexual adventure, to put it mildly. They give you a free condom, as a freshman. And one student told me, "I put that in my drawer, and it stayed there for 4 years."

KRISTOL: But it's hard to rebel against feminism, I mean, overtly?

MANSFIELD: It is, it is. Yeah I've been trying to make it a little easier to do that but I don't think I've succeeded.

KRISTOL: Maybe the success is still to come. So you've been critical of Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan. But I'm sort of curious, what would you recommend to young women or young men, obviously? Or not-so young women and men to read?

I mean, how to you get outside of this contemporary perspective where, maybe unnaturally, people have sort of been talked into or talked themselves into this gender neutrality and pretending that there's no problem with just, everyone just consents, it's freedom, it's equality and we don't need to think about men and women, sort of qua men and women?

MANSFIELD: Jane Austen comes to mind, obviously. I think she's a very popular novelist these days and I think most educated women have read her. Or if they haven't, get to it right away.

That's very much about men and women and their relationship, characters, enduring characters, of women and of men. There's diversity among men and diversity among women, both of which are shown, but also the differences between men and women. And part of it is bound to the time that's she's writing about, in the early 19th century, but some of it, as any reader can recognize, is universal.

Jane Austen is dealing with the way the world looks to women and to men somewhat differently. And the difference therefore between public and private, the public realm in which men operate and the private one in which women do more than operate but in a sense command or dominate. So her novels are all about private life and not hardly at all about public life.

Public life is shown to be there and there's a certain awareness of it. For example, an issue of slavery in the British colonies at that time. But in her novels, it's all about private lives. And that helps – you see the universality of what's she's saying. So you can see that also there were – that the independence of women is not a new idea; these are characters that have their own independent thoughts and their own likes and dislikes and they have their ways of accomplishing things too. So they're not – they're not totally bound under as submissive sex objects, under patriarchy. No. They're intelligent – some of them – and they can make good things happen. So that's, I think those are very liberating, the novels of Jane Austen.

And then in American novels, I think of Edith Wharton and Henry James. Henry James, I've done a little work on myself in the book I wrote *Manliness*, I discussed his novel on feminism, *The Bostonians*, which I think it uncannily precise in its prediction of what will happen that's written at the very beginning of the 20th century. And you saw the feminism that was coming and that on the whole it would not make women more happy.

But on the other hand, too, in *Washington Square*, there's a novel about a woman who has a dominating father, really a tyrannical father, but who turns out to be the heroine of the novel because she keeps her dignity. She's the only one who keeps her dignity throughout, even though she's the one who also suffers the most. So this is great sympathy for women, and it's not hardhearted, male disdain or disinterest. And then Edith Wharton, about the troubles of women in a male-dominated society, and do you join it or do you – or can you stand against it? So I think that's the way to go and maybe certain movies, too, whom I – which I'm not well enough prepared to cite.

KRISTOL: And I suppose those novels, I don't know Wharton at all or James well at all but they all seem to have that sort of a teaching that or observation that you can't have it all. I guess, that's a very important aspect of getting people back to thinking about themselves, not in this abstract way that –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, the feminist slogan is "You can have it all," and that's wrong. I think that's really not the case. You can have more than a man can have but you can't have those things – all those things as much as a man can have.

So there's always a price to be paid for independence. And independence is never – human independence is never perfect. Males are much more independent and yet they're much more dependent because they don't – a man needs a wife, that's his dependent. And the trouble with being an independent woman is you don't have a wife. So you know the sexes are both in their way independent and both in their way dependent. And the slogan, "You can have it all," couldn't be more wrong.

KRISTOL: And I suppose a society can't have it all either. I mean, that sort of cuts against a modern belief that all good things go together.

MANSFIELD: Yes, the personal is the political. If you can't have it all as an individual, that same thing applies to a society. In a society, you can have both sexes and many different ways for each sex to live a decent life. And so there is a kind of balance as a whole, which is possible. But –

KRISTOL: There are still tradeoffs between –

MANSFIELD: Still tradeoffs for individuals, yeah. So, yes, the society is always going to have limitations. Human society is imperfect; our life is imperfect.

KRISTOL: That's an important conservative insight.

MANSFIELD: It is an important conservative –

KRISTOL: Liberals pretend to, intelligent liberals would agree with it but then not want to actually –

MANSFIELD: Live by it.

KRISTOL: Think there are any actual implications of that, I suppose. I'm just curious on these – the Jane Austen novels – what always strikes me or sometimes has struck me, and also this is true in Shakespeare in the comedies – is that the women are always superior – I mean, not always – but are often superior to the men. They end up sort of notionally happily married to men, who seem, however, as a reader, inferior to them. Maybe somehow that's – you know, it's really true in the Shakespeare, Shakespearean comedies, I think, where the women are really impressive and the men are often somewhat buffoonish.

MANSFIELD: You could say that in a gender-neutral way, that if the women are more intelligent, it's because they are more intelligent – the more intelligent people don't dominate society in general, but society dominates them more than the reverse. And let women take that as their consolation, that they're more intelligent but that that very intelligence keeps them from dominating.

KRISTOL: And that seems to be Tocqueville, right, in those chapters on men and women. It's a tough teaching to maybe get people to rally to, you know.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, yes, it is, it is. Yeah. It's somehow without the promise of adventure.

KRISTOL: Right and without at some level, accepting maybe the limitations of justice. You know, it's unjust, unjust, this outcome is somewhat unjust but –

MANSFIELD: That's true, that's true. I would say, most generally, that feminism has brought more justice and less happiness, not just to women but also to men and to children – let's not forget them.

KRISTOL: On that provocative and interesting note, thank you, Harvey, for joining me today. And thank you for watching CONVERSATIONS.

[END]