

CONVERSATIONS

WITH BILL KRISTOL

Conversations with Bill Kristol

Guest: Harvey Mansfield, Professor, Harvard University

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I: What is Manliness? (00:15 – 33:22)

KRISTOL: Hi, I'm Bill Kristol. Welcome to CONVERSATIONS, and it's a great pleasure to welcome back Harvey Mansfield.

MANSFIELD: Well, it's good to be here.

KRISTOL: On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the publication of your excellent book, *Manliness*.

MANSFIELD: Thank you.

KRISTOL: So we should talk about manliness the topic and also *Manliness* the book.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: How did you write – why manliness?

MANSFIELD: Well, I've been so – I had had it in mind pretty much all my career, you could say. I had as a kind of model of manliness my mentor or professor at Harvard named Samuel Beer. Both as an undergraduate and then graduate student, I studied with him. And he was a kind of model of manliness.

Once when he was being honored by Harvard, the *Harvard Gazette* called me up, a woman reporter, and they said, "Well, what was special about Sam Beer?" And I said, "Always his manliness." And it was a pause and then finally her female voice said, "Could you think of another word?" And yeah. And so that's the situation right now. People want to think of another word. So this is a kind of assertive, you could even say possibly, manly title that I wanted – also without a subtitle. Just out there by itself. What does that mean?

Then I also – another influence on this book was my late wife, Delba Winthrop, who was a graduate student, wrote a dissertation on Aristotle in which she developed the notion of assertiveness in philosophy especially. So that manliness is assertive, and that's for sure. And so I wanted to write about that quality, too.

So what is manliness? It's – just to start off with a definition, rough definition, it's a person who likes to be in charge in situations of risk and has a certain take-charge attitude, plus a kind of authority about him, a kind of command. I'm saying "kind of" a lot because all of this needs to be made more definite and more specific.

But risk. So some people abjure risk, are adverse to it, but a manly person seeks it out. And most manly persons are men, but not all. One can think – my big example, of course, is Margaret Thatcher, very manly, very assertive in situations of risk which she did not seek to avoid at all.

But still mostly men and not all men. In fact, manly men are most critical of men who are not manly. If you're a woman, you're excused and so they don't look down on or have contempt for women, but they do look down, they disparage those males who aren't manly.

And this already makes a difficulty for the definition of it because it means that it's really a judgmental quality. It's something you have to see and observe and, therefore, it's something that might be contentious. Other people might disagree with your judgment as to who is manly and not.

It's not like – and here's another word that you could use instead of *manliness*, it's not like *masculinity*. Masculinity might be the features that all males have, just qua male. And so that's the way it's usually treated in the scientific literature, in social psychology or evolutionary biology. They speak of masculinity. And some of the feminists too have – they have doubtful, suspicious views, you could say, of certain manly traits. And so they call this masculinity. And you can find in universities and also in university press books studies of masculinity.

But that I think is to be distinguished from manliness, which is a certain subset of male and maleness and isn't merely confined to maleness. And I think there are levels of manliness. So – and I'm writing about manliness as a kind of generic feature. But you could think of raw manliness, truly vulgar. There are certain vulgar things that men do, say, to assert themselves that women don't do. Men spit and they cuss and they tell dirty jokes and they read porn and they drink beer. These are things that women don't do.

Well, I once had a woman professor, Eva Brann, who said to me the only one of those five I can do is read porn, which she said she does. So that's sort of vulgar manliness, very outspoken and, you know. On television you can see professional baseball players and football players always spitting, always. They can't stop themselves. And they spit to make a point, perhaps, punctuate. I don't know. Professors don't do this.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Maybe you ought to make a list of the points, which you're making in a lecture, and one, two, and three, and you just spit after making each one.

KRISTOL: If you were using chewing tobacco, you'd have to spit because –

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Yes, right.

KRISTOL: They don't do that either.

MANSFIELD: No. But you'll use chewing tobacco in order to spit. That's why it's done. So that's this vulgar manliness, and then it could be refined into gentlemanliness. And a gentleman you could define as a person who doesn't take advantage of others who are weaker or in a disadvantaged situation.

So you don't take advantage. That means it's not because you're weak that you're nice, but you're nice despite the fact that you're strong, or gentle. You're gentle. That's really the word. So that's gentlemanliness. But then there are kinds of high occupations, which are manly: statesmanship and certain chivalrous knights of Middle Ages and the samurai and other – in Japan and other countries. A cowboy is a manly fellow.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: So there are many different kinds of manly men of that sort. But then – and then, too, at the very top, and maybe we can come back to this – there's I think a kind of philosophical manliness, an assertiveness on behalf of human reason. So that's – those are levels of manliness.

KRISTOL: We'll come back to several of those, but I guess what strikes me listening to you, and it would certainly strike, I think, viewers, is the book comes from a sort of philosophic, you might say, interest in

this quality of the human soul or some human souls and human body, related to the human body and all that stuff.

And it's not – I do think the reaction, which it's 10 years later – I'm curious what you'd have to say. I was struck – I would say I was guilty of this, too. You would so much assume the book would be – is a polemic against the gender-neutral society. We'll come back to that. Or not polemic against exactly, but a study of. And so the book, it seems, was taken much more politically and sociologically, if that's the right word.

MANSFIELD: Uh-huh.

KRISTOL: Than philosophically, but it's –

MANSFIELD: Polemically. Yeah.

KRISTOL: Yeah. And polemically as well. And as you say in the book, it's a book for thinkers, not a how-to book about either how to live your life or even how to fix society.

MANSFIELD: Yes. Yeah.

KRISTOL: Tell me about the reaction to the book and what you – what struck you about it.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. You could say it's partly my fault. It is a little bit provocative. And as I said this, I was trying to attract attention with a single-word title, but –

KRISTOL: You gave up –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, that's right.

KRISTOL: If you had the subtitle –

MANSFIELD: Well, yeah –

KRISTOL: It's a philosophic study of a quality of the human soul, it wouldn't have been quite the same.

MANSFIELD: That's right. That's right. No. None of that came out in the reviews. So I – this book came out in 2006, and for two, three months after that I was on TV or radio just about every day. It was published by Yale University Press. Thank you, Yale. And their representative became my sort of – my social secretary.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

MANSFIELD: For that period of time. "This is what you're going to do." One highlight was being on "The Colbert Show."

KRISTOL: Yes.

MANSFIELD: That was where I played defense, a fairly manly defense but not very distinguished. So, it was reviewed by everybody in every newspaper, all the big intellectual journals, except not the political science journals. It was not reviewed by a single political theory or political philosophy or political science journal. This was something –

KRISTOL: Even though published by –

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: Even though you're a Harvard professor, and it's published by a university press?

MANSFIELD: Yeah. And despite the content.

KRISTOL: Yes.

MANSFIELD: The rather academic content of it.

KRISTOL: Yes.

MANSFIELD: And at least in several part – not a very academic treatment, but still sure, I was talking about big names and big texts, for the most part. So that was –

KRISTOL: That's interesting.

MANSFIELD: That was interesting. And by – I really got under the skin of the feminists. And what happened was that almost all the major newspapers and magazines that were on the liberal side, which means most of them, gave it to a feminist to review. And so this was – this was fun for them.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. And I kind of enjoyed it, too, and I slapped back when I could.

KRISTOL: Yeah. Even the friendly reviews – I'd say even ours in *The Weekly Standard* – they were, I guess, just easier. They were more interested in and focused more on the gender-neutral society, the opening chapter and –

MANSFIELD: Right.

KRISTOL: A little bit of "Unemployed Manliness," the conclusion, and a little less on what's between, which is quite –

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: Yeah, maybe a little bit more difficult, but –

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: A lot of Hobbes and Nietzsche and Aristotle and so forth.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. But also some more attractive stuff that you might have thought would have –

KRISTOL: Yeah. Tarzan and Kipling and –

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: Your literary endeavors, Henry James.

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: I think people – I was struck looking back a little bit how little –

MANSFIELD: Hemingway. I tried to cover everything that would be remarkable for manliness that one would think of – every author, especially Teddy Roosevelt.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Among American presidents and so on. So yeah, and Kipling, including his “femalism” or deadly – the female of the species is more deadly than the male.

KRISTOL: Yes, that’s good. Right.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. So that’s a kind of challenge for manliness, a mother-bear type of –

KRISTOL: Do you think in another year that it would have been treated differently, or is it just that it’s more difficult and that you’re – I think you wanted it to lead people to the more philosophic side through the more immediate, right?

MANSFIELD: Right.

KRISTOL: And I guess in any year when most of people stop at the more immediate, right? That’s why – some get led beyond.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Right. Yeah. Well, yeah, that’s a picture of what happens when you try to teach philosophy. A lot of people just stop. They’re interested. They’re intrigued. And they go so far and then they stop.

KRISTOL: And you expected that.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. I guess I expected that, but still I wanted to show something and work it out for myself and others.

KRISTOL: And I think it was important. I suppose to begin with the more political or the more immediate.

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: Because otherwise it is just an academic –

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: You could have written the history of – you could have done it beginning with Plato and every thinker. I’m sure there were books like this.

MANSFIELD: Yes. Right.

KRISTOL: There were books that go through in a sort of academic, in a somewhat formulaic way sometimes.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: You know, the history of political philosophy and this thinker on X topic and then the next thinker on X topic, and you avoided that very much, I think.

MANSFIELD: Yes. Although there are – I’m not sure there are such books.

KRISTOL: Not on this.

MANSFIELD: I think that – yeah, not on manliness. This is I think really the only book on manliness under that name and, you know, with the extent of coverage that I think I offer in this book. So –

KRISTOL: Yeah. Why is that actually?

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Nor has it been all that popular. I mean it sold very well for considering it was one of my books. But it didn't get as many copies sold as most, you know, decently –

The fact that it was reviewed everywhere might have led you to believe that I would have sold many more copies than I did. But and then there has been a kind of – there's a steady continuing interest in or purchases of the book. But no, it is not – and it's not, I don't think, regarded as something you have to read, say, if you're studying feminism or if you're studying the whole question of sex differences. So it's – yeah, it's still up there in a kind of limbo.

KRISTOL: And do you think that's because our society doesn't want to think too much about sex differences and the issues raised by manliness, or is this beyond just our time in our society that somehow it's a – I don't know – so, you think –

MANSFIELD: I don't know because it's got a lot of jokes in it.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

MANSFIELD: You would be entertained, if you want to be.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: But no. It just –

KRISTOL: But the fact that Delba's thesis on Aristotle was maybe the first to bring out this side of it, which – the assertiveness and how important that is. Maybe there's a broader resistance, I don't know, to thinking about this set of topics almost?

MANSFIELD: Yes. I talk about that a little bit. It's against the mainstream of modernity. Modernity doesn't like manliness. Modernity likes reason, rational control, technology, science. Whereas manliness goes in for drama.

KRISTOL: And academics maybe don't like manliness. It doesn't fit into the topics –

MANSFIELD: It won't be scientific. Yeah.

KRISTOL: They want to talk about.

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: They want to talk about the social contract or sovereignty, but things that are abstracted from this core fact that there are men and there are women and –

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: The implications of that, I guess. Is that right? I mean –

MANSFIELD: Yes. No. I think that is right. That is right. And yet everybody is interested in the subject of how men and women are different, and everybody has opinions on it. So I certainly encountered that. So when I was on the radio or a talk radio show or something, a lot of people called in, and they all had their views, some of them interesting. And so that – yeah, so it's on a, you know, a kind of a winner of a topic, I think.

KRISTOL: And you're calling attention in the first chapter to the gender-neutral society as kind of *the* breakthrough if you want to use that term, the novel thing about our – or a novel thing, maybe *the* novel thing about our times politically.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: It's certainly been vindicated or strengthened in the last decade, wouldn't you say? Has anything happened that's either surprised you or made you rethink the claim –

MANSFIELD: No. No.

KRISTOL: That this was kind of a deep attachment that we have?

MANSFIELD: No. I think the description stands up pretty well. There's still a push in the direction of gender neutrality, as we saw last week when the Secretary of Defense announced that the United States military forces would not be holding anything – refusing any position to or rank or job to women. So I think that – so that's still a very powerful force working in the direction of gender neutrality. But also the resistances to it are still present.

KRISTOL: And do you, at the end of the day, think, sort of, the gender-neutral society is a problem because it can't be achieved or because it will be achieved? I'd say that's an ambiguity in the book.

MANSFIELD: That is – that is an ambiguity.

KRISTOL: Well, maybe it's not an ambiguity.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: It's just a – just a statement.

MANSFIELD: Let me start by saying that this really is something new in human history. The radical and revolutionary character of gender-neutral society is obvious and yet very little appreciated.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

MANSFIELD: People don't realize that we're undergoing a great experiment, and it's not regarded as an experiment. It's just regarded as something that was for some reason overlooked.

KRISTOL: No one thought of.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: I'm struck by that, too.

MANSFIELD: No one thought of in the whole of human history.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Except a few people, Plato, Karl Marx.

KRISTOL: Right. Aristophanes.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Aristophanes. Yeah. Just a very few people. And of course, they dismissed it. So and they were dismissed. And now suddenly we're doing this thing, and we're doing it totally without consciousness, and we're doing it for the first time. And the experimental character of it.

So we are experimenting as to what manliness is. Now, the gender-neutral society I would define as a society in which your sex matters as little as possible. It doesn't give you your place. It doesn't give you your situation, your job, your duty, your rights. All of that is effaced. All those distinctions based on sex are to be done away with.

And so I mean, you could compare it a little bit to the color-blind society that we're attempting with race. And that also was difficult and new.

When you're walking down the street and you see another human being approaching, the first two things you notice about them is the sex and the race. Maybe not – I don't know in which order or maybe it's right together both. And yet we're living in a society in which you're not supposed to notice either thing or draw any conclusions from it.

KRISTOL: Sex is more fundamental, don't you think? I don't know. There are only two of them.

MANSFIELD: I suppose it is. I suppose.

KRISTOL: I mean, I know you're not allowed to –

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: Maybe you're not supposed to say that these days, but there are only two of them.

MANSFIELD: No. It is more fundamental, and it's different because one sex calls for the other, or is a counterpart in the other.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: And that isn't the case with the racial differences.

KRISTOL: Yeah, but you're right. We're trying to –

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Yeah. There's something incomplete about each sex that we're abstracting from or not recognizing.

KRISTOL: And your argument goes beyond the public-law character of not discriminating and not, you know, treating the sexes equally in law to the claim that we also as a society want to move towards gender neutrality.

MANSFIELD: Yes. And that's the principle of one of the statements of feminism is "the personal is the political." So it used to be that the personal was – this is under, you could say, a standard liberal theory – that the person is supposed to be apart from, separate from the political, and that politics is about your formal rights. And it's not the business of the government to stick its nose into your private affairs, especially your sex.

But the feminists wanted the government to intervene on behalf of women and to make their lives equal to men. And equal to men meant the same as. So that's I think very important. That equality isn't secure, isn't really equal unless it's utterly the same.

And this begins with sex itself. So sexual differences is about having sex. That's the most fundamental, most obvious thing about it. And the gender-neutral society is saying that there's no differences between the sex. There's a difference in the sex act, but even that can be minimized.

So we have now same-sex marriage. That's a consequence of a fact that the two sexes are thought to be pretty much the same. If the two sexes are pretty much the same, then there isn't any real difference between a mother and a father, and there's no reason why two mothers couldn't be – take on the role of father or both of them take turns doing it or one of them take it mostly.

KRISTOL: Like if there is even such a distinct role as father.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. It's a little bit more difficult for fathers to be the mother, and that's I think somehow recognized. And that means that there is still a difference between men and women that that's being covered over with – in same-sex marriage. But same-sex marriage comes out of feminism, I think, the feminist view and the gender-neutral society.

Other resistances to gender neutrality can be seen in housework. And that's still a changing situation, that's part of our experiment. That men and women are equal, that should mean that they should be equal in the things that women used to do all by themselves, namely – or mostly by themselves, namely housework. But it still seems to be the case – I don't know how you measure this, but I've seen the measurement that one-third of the housework is done by men and two-thirds by women.

And that also there is a kind of comparable inequality the other way between men and women as to who brings in the income of the household. Yet there does seem to be a movement toward equality. And there are certain male things, like taking out the trash, that women prefer not to do and maybe cooking for women, which has more science, more interesting.

But still – so that I think is still in abeyance because there are a lot of men who in a reactionary way look down on housework as women's work. I don't think that view has been expunged yet to make ours a perfectly gender-neutral society. And women too discover that perhaps it's not totally in their interest to do housework 50-50.

And that's because a man, if he's doing half the work, might want to be half in charge of the situation. And that's not something that a woman wants to see. She would like to decide when the house is clean. I saw a funny episode once of a TV show called *Desperate Housewives* in which the man and woman changed roles and the woman got the job and the man stayed home and did the work. And his way of doing housework was not to clean the whole house at once but to clean one room per day. So one-seventh of the house was clean. That meant that the house every day was mostly dirty.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: And this is a nice rational scheme. So routinize the job and made it more technologically feasible and agreeable to the man. It was totally unacceptable to his wife.

And so things like this can make a woman think that she wants to be the one to decide when the house is clean and when or whether it's clean, and she would like to be in charge. So these reactionary thoughts do occur.

KRISTOL: Are you surprised by how much they occur or how little, I guess? I mean, is the gender-neutral – is the striking fact of the relative success of the gender-neutral society much beyond what people might have thought possible, or is it the –

MANSFIELD: I think it is. I think it is. I think that all of the male chauvinists are really still quite astonished. And now women in combat, to come back to that, that's a difficult thing. Very little opposition.

KRISTOL: It doesn't seem – it doesn't – very little opposition. And very little public – I mean, I've talked to many people privately like veterans and others who serve.

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: I can't believe it but actually getting Senators to speak up against it, very hard.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. No. You can't do that. Yeah. So, the women are asking for this, and I think most men think, "Alright, let them have it. See how they like it."

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Same as homosexuals wanting same-sex marriage. "Let them have marriage. See how they like it." But if, you know, if you were facing – in battle and facing a unit that was composed entirely of women, you would not be as fearful as if it were the *Wehrmacht* that you were –

KRISTOL: The most eloquent opposition, I think, have been women, clearly women who served in non-combat.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: And understand the difference between combat and logistics and other support operations.

MANSFIELD: Right. Yeah. Not too many women will volunteer, I don't think. We've got a volunteer army so I'm not –

KRISTOL: Right. We'll see.

MANSFIELD: But very few will be sort of pioneers, but it's hard to think – of course, there are a lot of women in the military in non-combat situations.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: It's a good situation for lots of people, and especially women. Women like, in general, to work for the government. But maybe I should be careful about reactionary remarks.

KRISTOL: Yeah, probably. And I should even be careful about listening to them these days.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: It's just passively, you know, nodding or not even nodding.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: But keeping my objections to myself could get me in terrible shape if I ever want to be a, you know, a professor or a –

MANSFIELD: Yeah. A dean, as a dean or a president.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Of a university. That's true.

KRISTOL: But the degree to which – just to finish up on the women in combat thing – as an example – I mean, in a way the objection – if it's an objection – well, there's not many people, not many people that are actually going to – it sort of misses the point – doesn't it? – because then the whole institution gets changed as a result of the requirement that it be gender neutral.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: The military does. Society does.

MANSFIELD: Right.

KRISTOL: And the fact that you may end up with 4 percent or 25 percent is somewhat secondary.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. The military is changed by the requirement that it not – that it avoid keeping a "hostile environment."

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: That's now a requirement put on all universities and employee – employers. So and that will have to apply to the military as well. That's changing its connection and embrace of the vulgar manliness that I described and defined before.

KRISTOL: Which was once thought to be important, however, to military –

MANSFIELD: Yes, that's right.

KRISTOL: You know, success.

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: And *esprit* and all that sort of thing.

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: But we've transcended that, I guess.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: Therefore, producing – this last sort of more sociological point before we get to the more political-philosophical side of the book – producing what you call at the end of the book “unemployed manliness.” That's a very good phrase, I think. Say a word about unemployed manliness.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Well, manliness is something natural, which cannot be done away with. And you can take away the occupation of a man or the pride that he takes in being a man and doing things that a man does, for example, taking care of your family, protecting your family, and providing for your family by being the breadwinner. So that has been taken away from men now. So that good aspect of manliness is unemployed.

KRISTOL: And I mean, the implications – I mean, what is it just –

MANSFIELD: Well, it's going to sit there and find some avenue to express itself, like voting for Donald Trump.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

MANSFIELD: A great – an example of a man who deserves to be unemployed though manly.

KRISTOL: Right. Vulgar manliness.

MANSFIELD: Yes. Vulgar manliness, a demagogic manliness but he's appealing to the manliness of, I think, his supporters with his outrageous remarks and his willingness to take on the establishment, which means – which includes especially the gender-neutral establishment.

KRISTOL: Yeah. When he talks about political correctness, when you think about it, what is he really capturing there?

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: Some of it is this, right?

MANSFIELD: Yeah. I think a good part, most of it probably. Part of it is racial, but part of it's also sex. Yeah.

II: Manliness and the Liberal Society (33:22 – 1:14:14)

KRISTOL: Your mentor and teacher, Sam Beer, your model for manliness, was a liberal of the old kind, I think.

MANSFIELD: Yes. Right.

KRISTOL: Which raises the broader question about liberalism and manliness. You have a chapter on the manly liberal. But how did this – I mean, liberalism doesn't seem to have anticipated – liberals, liberal political philosophers don't seem to have anticipated the gender-neutral society.

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: So how did this come out of liberalism or is it against liberalism or working out of liberalism?

MANSFIELD: Well, liberalism began as a kind of reaction against society as against social conflict and social repression. It began by formalizing, by looking for rights that were based on human nature and, therefore, did not depend on human convention, especially on religion. And so it looked for and found features that are not male or female but human.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Because male and female immediately gets you into society because you've got the relationship between the two. So what the male and female have in common, and so the early liberals, Hobbes and Locke, let's say, looked at a situation that they called "the state of nature."

This was a phrase and a concept that was invented by the first of them, Hobbes, Thomas Hobbes, in the 17th century, which is how people look when you take them out of all social relationships and no police, and they're just by themselves, and they don't have any of their social attributes.

And Thomas Hobbes said that that's – he called that a state of nature, and that's a state of war. That's a state in which every man thinks – and by man, he means human being – every human being thinks himself or herself to be the best there is. He said that human beings suffer from a superiority complex. We each of us think that we are solely capable of running our lives and that we are sufficiently wise. There is nobody who's wiser than us to whom we should defer for advice or especially for rule. So each person wants to rule himself.

So he said that's what's characteristic of all human beings, male and female. And you put them in that kind of situation and imagine what it would be like and you see immediately that war would result because each wants to – thinks himself solely capable of ruling himself.

And that means that ruling others when they might rule him or when they endanger you, you are going to be necessitated to anticipate what they will do to you and do it to them first. So that means the state of nature is a war. And when men look at this and imagine it or else live in it as in a revolutionary situation like the Civil War in England in the 17th century, then they'll see that they need to give away their right to rule themselves and set up a common power through consent.

So all government, all rule, all authority in a society comes from consent. It's not because you're better than anyone else that you should be the ruler, but it's because you're elected. And that's the only principle which is fundamental.

Now, that means that you do this out of fear. You choose a government out of fear, a sovereign power out of fear. And fear is a totally unmanly principle. Fear and the desire for security are the opposite of manly. So you could say that men and women, all human beings start off very manly and immediately have to resign this in order to make reason, science, comfort, prosperity, economy, all those nice things of society possible.

So Hobbes starts out by looking at everybody as if, you know, he – it's not that some people are more manly than others. But all of us have a kind of logic to our complacency, to our self-satisfaction, which would lead us to demand everything as if we were a male totally in power.

And then the experience – you get a cold bath. Your experience or your imagination of what would happen if everybody was like this, you get a cold bath, and you realize that you must give up your fundamental liberty and become a subject to the sovereign. Now, this subject will have certain liberties, and so Hobbes refers to the liberties of a subject, but they're only the liberties of a subject.

They're kind of liberties within the need to respect or rather obey all the power, all the laws that the sovereign sets for you. So that's the beginning of liberalism and it's a way of denying the sex difference and so – and of repressing the manly or assertive or prideful character of human beings, calling that all vanity.

KRISTOL: So manliness gets, you know, gets you in trouble and so liberalism has a sort of anti-manliness –

MANSFIELD: It does –

KRISTOL: I was thinking it could also be – this, I guess, follows with the abstractness of early liberalism, which I think is intended – the social contract, the equality. It's, you know, we have to get away from princes and peoples or better, natural aristocrats and, you know, and so forth because that leads to all these problems. That's a big change, I guess, from Machiavelli even.

That must also cut against – that is in a way – does it foreshadow slightly the gender-neutral society? I mean, Machiavelli talks about men and women in a way that I don't think Hobbes does, at least.

MANSFIELD: Right.

KRISTOL: And maybe not Locke. I don't know.

MANSFIELD: Right.

KRISTOL: But that's sort of if you want to talk abstractly about individuals having rights, you gradually erode this massive difference among two sets of individuals.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Hobbes is imagining that women could be as nasty and as assertive as men. And that would be in the state of nature. And to make them complacent and obedient as wives, you have to have a sovereign, and that comes – that sovereignty comes from consent. So somehow women and men are consenting to the establishment of a society, which is fundamentally characterized as unmanly, as above all concerned for peace and as opposed to the war in the state of nature.

So and that is abstract. The abstraction is part of the principle. You're looking for a principle, which itself is abstract, which will tell you what all human beings are like. And that principle will be certain and exact because it will operate on all human beings. So you don't have to be of a certain type or think in a certain way.

But this is based on your raw, sort of unrefined nature. And so I think that's how liberalism starts out. But then Locke comes along just after Hobbes and changes it. He retains some of the manliness. He too starts with a state of nature, but it is – which is mostly – well, it's characterized by great inconveniences, which sounds like a lot of conflict.

But he doesn't describe it quite as strictly and provocatively as Hobbes, as a state of war. In fact, he distinguishes it. So but it's characterized by disputes that also lead to the formation of a government, which also has to be by consent. But the people who consent have rights against the government as they did not, according to Hobbes.

They have a right of resistance when the government goes against the very principles that it was founded to preserve and tries to oppress the people who have consented. And so that leads to the need for elections, not just a one-time consent to a sovereign but frequent, or at least fairly frequent, elections every now and again to show that the government still has the consent of the people.

So Locke thinks that slavery is not only inconvenient, but he says a vile – he says slavery is such a vile state. So that's a certain pride there that's denied by the status of slave, a certain lack of manliness. So, this pride in being a free person and standing up for your rights, resisting, that comes back in Locke.

And what that again sort of begins to serve as a justification for a distinction between those who pridefully resist and the women who make for security and domesticity. So the sexual roles of traditional society are retained by Locke.

He does say in his *Thoughts on Education* that all children have a love of dominion, which reminds you of what Hobbes said about men and the state of nature. But that love of dominion has to be educated out of them, even beaten out of them so that they learn not to think that their will will always triumph.

So education becomes a kind of education in domesticity or willingness to obey. And Locke teaches children to be or wants children to be taught to mind their parents, you could say. So that's kind of a double feature of liberalism.

But it was always in the potential of liberalism that women could be equal to men because that's how they begin in the state of nature. And it seems characteristic of the history of liberalism that the state of nature from being the beginning of things comes out as the end.

Instead of the state of nature being something you want to get away from, an original equality that is against everybody's interest, you decide or find that that state of nature, being the more natural situation is, ought to be the goal, too. So you should go back to or you should go back – you should head toward the state of nature this time with all the conveniences of and prosperities of society. And so then women began to wonder why they seem always to get the short end of the stick.

And so there was a liberal woman, Mary Wollstonecraft, at the end of the 18th century. And John Stuart Mill in the 19th century wrote a book on subjection of women, which could have been the basis for modern feminism because he took up all the objections to treating women equally or to giving them equal access to jobs and that, you know, women are too emotional or they are too envious and various insults that have been directed towards women.

And he answered them all. And that could have been a basis for feminism that would succeed, but it wasn't the basis of our feminism today. Our feminism today comes out of Karl Marx and Nietzsche, two opposite sources, both of them very illiberal.

And so Simone De Beauvoir was a kind of historical Marxist she called herself – herself. And Betty Friedan was, if not a communist, very close to communist in her time at Smith and afterwards. And Shulamith Firestone, Kate Millett, Germaine Greer, these women were from the Left and not from liberalism.

And so their feminism was not designed to – it was not designed to give women equal opportunity but to make sure that women had equal dessert or equal result as using this distinction, which has become very common, between equality of opportunity and equality of result.

So society had to be changed in all its private aspects. And it's from them that the slogan that the personal is the political, that that slogan came from. So, that I think was a very important difference. The civil rights revolution for blacks mainly came from liberals or liberalism from Martin Luther King who said the liberal principles are fine. They give you – they give our citizens equal rights. Let's apply that to our black citizens for the first time.

But the women were different. The women took up against liberals even more than against conservatives. They thought that liberals were hidden opponents of rights for women, that institutions which they had set up, for example, universities, were perfectly free and open, but in fact they weren't.

So that was true at Harvard. When I was younger and living through the feminist revolution, it was directed against the liberals at Harvard who were then in charge. It wasn't conservatives who were in charge but were attacked for being still conservative in their views about women.

KRISTOL: Somehow liberal feminism, I mean, could it have resisted the more radical feminism, or does it itself somehow have an unstable ground, I guess, would be the question? It does seem on race you could really have a principled liberalism that would say equal opportunity but not quotas or only temporary quotas. I mean, all these debates we have.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: Because ultimately it is just skin color and it shouldn't – you shouldn't discriminate, but you don't have to remake society. But somehow with the sexes, it seems like the liberal feminist middle ground is a little hard to sustain.

MANSFIELD: That's right. Yeah. Tocqueville tried to sustain it. And of course, that was in 1840 when he wrote the second volume of *Democracy in America*, and he has five chapters there on women. And he praises American women for the pride that they take in willingly accepting the bonds of matrimony, and those are definite bonds that apply to them and not so much to men.

So in other words the sexual double-standard, that it's still bad for men to womanize outside marriage, as we say, but it's not as bad as when a woman does it because the principle of – they are in charge of the family, and the principle of the family is sexual fidelity.

So Tocqueville praised women for that, but I don't think American women listened to him, not surprisingly. And so they decided that they wanted the same sexual liberty that men had. And when that sexual liberation movement came in the late sixties, first it was confined to men. There were the Rolling Stones who had their camp followers, but the camp followers decided they didn't want that status and they wanted to be equal and so they wanted the same sexual liberties that were now being claimed by men. And so as I said before, the Sexual Revolution turned especially on the question of sex and also of domesticity.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: So it's hard to defend domesticity for women and sort of honor, recognition, and exciting employment for men. And it's hard to defend sexual license for men and not for women. So in other words, whereas for race the blacks could claim and be given and recognized for equality in everything, the women would still have to accept the inequality of working at home and remaining faithful.

KRISTOL: The radicals in a way were intellectually correct, weren't they in –

MANSFIELD: Yes. They were more radical and more exciting, more interesting, and more correct. Yeah.

KRISTOL: The liberal middle ground was a little bit disingenuous while publically equal rights but, you know.

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: It will just work out this way, but –

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. My wife can have a job, but everything at home will stay just as it was.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: I guess at the end of the day the law either has to back up in a way some of the distinctions or not.

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: And if it doesn't, then the whole state-society distinction – it's sort of a little artificial in that way I suppose, you know.

MANSFIELD: Yes. Yeah.

KRISTOL: You see it especially on the sex issue.

MANSFIELD: The formality of liberal rights breaks down and especially in regard to sex.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

MANSFIELD: The sex differences. Yeah.

KRISTOL: And then where does that leave us though because we're not going to get back to –

MANSFIELD: Right. So that leaves us with these unemployed men, unemployed manly men and women with grievances.

KRISTOL: Unhappy women, right.

MANSFIELD: Unhappy women because their principle is equality, but equality is really impossible unless the two sexes are exactly the same.

But since they aren't, since there is this general distinction between assertive men and caring women, who are really much nicer, more gentle, more public-spirited, more less selfish than men, that difference is still there, and there's no way to justify it or to accommodate it.

So we've got these, as I say, these unemployed men and unhappy women.

KRISTOL: So, it's –

MANSFIELD: They've got more justice, less happiness.

KRISTOL: Right. The Tocquevillian – it seems like a Tocquevillian formulation.

MANSFIELD: It is. Yeah. And equality is – once you accept that as your principle, then you have to react whenever you find that you're not getting it. So the more you get of it, the less tolerant you are of remaining inequalities.

This is also Tocqueville's point. And you get angrier and angrier over less and less. So and small differences, names like "house master" and so on. Well, that has to do with race, but it's a general point about equality that it gets more and more insistent as justification for anger or for resentment gets less and less.

And so those who are getting equality don't think that they need to be grateful for what they've been given because that's their right. And those who make sure that they have this equality and are sacrificing

for it don't like it that people are ungrateful and resentful if not rioting for – against conditions that are much, much better than they used to be.

KRISTOL: I was just thinking about it as you talk here that in a way is it fair to say the message of the book or a lesson of the book is no abstraction from manliness so that it's neither at the social level, practical level, nor at the philosophical or intellectual level can one be – is it correct to – is it possible, I suppose, or correct to abstract from this important aspect of the human condition? I mean, I suppose one could call it something other than – manliness itself is maybe only a partial way of looking at this.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, it is. And even a somewhat partisan way.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Right. Because you could also have a book called “Unmanliness.”

KRISTOL: Yeah. Womanliness.

MANSFIELD: Talk about womanliness. That's not for me. People have asked me whether I'm writing a book on womanliness. The answer is no. I'm leaving that –

KRISTOL: Someone could.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, someone could. Yeah. Someone could.

KRISTOL: But I think the consequences of the abstraction you argue are damaging both for society – the attempt to abstract is somehow damaging to society in ways you explain and also intellectually a kind of failure to really think about human things as they are.

MANSFIELD: Manliness is something dramatic. It insists on being noticed. And if you're not noticing it or leaving it in the shadow, then it's not satisfied, not happy. And that's a way in which the manly men stand up for the assertiveness of human beings generally.

KRISTOL: And in your discussion of what's called philosophic manliness, the highest level or whatever, thereto I think your argument is contrary to normal academic accounts of philosophy and political philosophy that you can't just talk about reason and people reasoning their way to conclusions, that somehow this assertive manliness is very important for philosophy.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Manliness is something irrational. It's an insistence on your importance. And you are not going to be overlooked. You want to defend yourself, and you'll do it in a spirited way. And this desire for a spirited self-defense is what the Greeks called or what Plato called, especially, *thumos*. T-H-U-M-O-S, it's spelled – *thumos*, the spirited part of the soul, that in you which makes you want to defend yourself.

And women, of course, have this, too, but men have it in a way, which makes them more dramatic and more obvious. Both sexes get angry, but a woman gets angry in a bitter way because she knows or senses that she can't express her anger and get away with that in a situation where she is usually at a disadvantage.

Whereas a man, when he gets angry, lashes out and loses it, you know, as they say. And but when people get angry, they need a reason for it because then you've been slighted by somebody. Somebody is mistreating you. And when you give that reason, you generalize it and you raise it to another level, to a level in which it's not just an attack on you personally, but it's an attack on the sort of person that you are.

You're – “I'm not the sort of person that you can do that to,” and I'm a certain type even. So this is the kind of reason that tells you that there is a distinction within all human beings, those who deserve to be

treated with contempt and those who don't. And so and you've got a reason why you don't deserve to be held in contempt.

So this is the kind of irrational thing, getting angry, which leads to a rational expression. I think that is what is most interesting philosophically about manliness. And so if I'm writing a book about this irrational thing, I'm using reason in the book, but it's a reason which justifies it, gives reasons for an irrational or unreasonable thing, namely anger.

Anger is something that you show when you think you are important and you've been slighted. Self-importance – this is something that wise women recognize as a kind of need for a man, for a husband. He needs to think that he's important. But in this it's a kind of universal thing in human beings, but in this sort of men, you could say, act for the whole of the human race.

The way in which most people or everybody defends his importance is by having a name. Everybody has a name, which is peculiar to himself, even if you're John Smith, that's yours. And you want to make sure that people spell it correctly and use it accurately, and you'll correct them if they don't because not getting your name right is not respecting you.

So this is a way in which we act on behalf of our individuality because our humanity isn't abstract or universal except as each of us is an individual. And manliness stands up for this in an assertive way. Now, maybe it's true also that there is no – there's no other way to explain manliness than as a reasonable reaction – unreasonable reaction to what is reasonable.

If manliness is and seeks to be dramatic, then a person is most dramatic when the situation is chaotic, disordered, and out of control. So that the person who asserts himself in this situation is claiming to find meaning in this assertion, so that there's not any meaning anywhere in the world except for me. So you look on yourself as center stage.

Now, the philosophers who first discussed manliness, and that's Plato and Aristotle, attacked this way, this manly way of looking at things. So these people who have talked a lot about the sexes and are said to have been male chauvinists were actually mainly opponents of male chauvinism.

You can say almost all of Plato is directed against manliness. So Plato tried to show that nature is – which is around us, our environment – is not disordered or chaotic, but is orderly. Nature is intelligible. Nature is divided into natures. Each of them is intelligible. There are trees and bushes and sky. All these things are understandable.

And there is a kind of seasons in the year. It's an order that we live in, and it's not that – therefore, it's not the case that we have a constant justification for anger because we are the sole source of meaning. So nature or intelligibility of the world as a whole is a way of calming manly assertiveness.

But still it's a question whether nature is really all that intelligible. Aren't we just saying that it's an orderly cosmos that we live in? And it isn't really the case. And you can be misled by your senses or by what is visible to you in the naked eye.

If you use the tools of modern science – which are the microscope to look at very tiny, very, very tiny things and the telescope to look at very, very large things, infinitely small, infinitely large – what you see is not regularity but rather alarming chaos.

KRISTOL: Chaos. Yeah.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Right. An exploding universe, expanding and exploding. The Big Bang. These are rather fearful things to think about. They suggest that humanity, which is the sole source of human reason, are very fragile. And so far we've found no humanity or no human reason, no reason of any kind in any part of the universe except right here on Earth.

And we know that right here on Earth is not eternal. It's not going to be there forever because the Sun is a kind of furnace of atoms and at some point it's going to run out and then we'll be done for. And so will this mean then the disappearance of human reason from the whole universe?

Well, it does seem though that we still can't understand the situation. We can perhaps exaggerate the intelligibility of things and the orderliness of things, but still there is that orderliness. We are in a – in, you know, an environment – we use that word – an environment that is friendly to us, and we worry about it, that it might become unfriendly.

But still right now nature is in certain ways kind to us, keeps us going, keeps us sane. But and so it seems that if there is something there to be understood, there needs to be something there to understand. There needs to be human reason, and human reason has a certain claim to be outstanding or to be noble or to be respected because it understands what is there to be understood.

And what is there to be understood would be incomplete if it weren't understood. So human beings can make a reasonable claim to superiority in the universe. We are the best and most conscious part of the universe, which is mostly made up of things that aren't at all conscious, that don't know what they're doing, that have no awareness.

We are the most aware part of the universe, and we should respect ourselves for that situation. And that justifies a certain assertiveness on our part that's part of our reason and that secondly, you could say, our reason, justifies our reason even though we don't have answers to all the big questions.

KRISTOL: Would it also be the case that we wouldn't really be driven to use our reason as we should to understand the universe and break through whatever conventions in this we're told without a certain kind of assertiveness or manliness? That manliness is a huge obstacle to reason in many, many ways.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. That's right.

KRISTOL: And that seems to be the main thrust, you might say, of what we're told over and over.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: But without manliness would you –

MANSFIELD: Right.

KRISTOL: You wouldn't leave the cave, right? There has to be a certain –

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: Proudful wish to know more than what someone just, some tale you've been told?

MANSFIELD: Yeah. So philosophy is mostly directed against manliness because manliness makes you think you're too important, more important than, in fact, you are.

And so Socrates said when he was defending himself in the *Apology* of Plato – the *Apology of Socrates*, written by Plato – he's defending himself to the Athenian people, he says that he or someone like himself will do good for you. And so he doesn't make that claim simply qua his own name, Socrates, in his own name, but he makes it as a claim of a certain kind of human being.

So that's a generalization. That's a kind of withdrawing from the most manly assertiveness, which says that "I am me," and that the *who* is more important than the *what*. So that suggests then that manliness can have – is necessary to understand or discover the *what*.

The *what* is impersonal. It's scientific objectivity. It doesn't have to do with human importance and yet it's – and so, therefore, it's very different from the *who*, which is all about human importance. But the *what* seems to justify the *who*. And I think that's – so the philosopher has to be a manly fellow in the end, I think, yeah, even as he puts down manliness.

KRISTOL: I think that's a very good note on which to end. And thank you very much for this very thought-provoking conversation, and thank you for joining us again on CONVERSATIONS.

[END]