

# CONVERSATIONS

WITH BILL KRISTOL

## Conversations with Bill Kristol

**Guest:** Harvey Mansfield

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*Taped Feb 2, 2017*

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KRISTOL: Hi, I'm Bill Kristol, welcome to CONVERSATIONS. I'm very pleased to be joined again by Harvey Mansfield.

MANSFIELD: Hello.

KRISTOL: Professor of Government at Harvard University and author of a wonderful forward to a wonderful new book by his late wife, Delba Winthrop, on *Aristotle: Democracy in Political Science*. So say a word about the book, and we'll talk about Aristotle.

MANSFIELD: That's the name of the book, maybe I'll start with a word about her.

KRISTOL: Please.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, she was born in 1945 and died in 2006 of cancer, a little sooner than everyone would have wished. But she – this is her dissertation that she produced in the year 1974, and it's going to be published now for the first time by the University of Chicago Press, with not a word changed.

This is very unusual, almost an event in publishing. Usually one never gets one's dissertation published without some editing, but this was extremely well written. She was a small woman, not quite five feet tall, and she was not smart but *very* smart.

KRISTOL: I will agree with that, yes.

MANSFIELD: She had an unusual name, first name, Delba. And a Yankee name, Winthrop, for a last name. But she came from a Jewish family and picked up the Winthrop at Ellis Island.

KRISTOL: Yes, that was a good acquisition by her grandparents or whoever that was.

MANSFIELD: So, so that's Delba Winthrop.

KRISTOL: So why didn't she publish the dissertation? I think I asked her this a few times. She always sloughed off the question.

MANSFIELD: Yes, the same thing with me. I urged her several times, continually during her life, but she always said, "Well it wasn't ready." And she didn't quite want to go through it. Perhaps she needed to study Aristotle a little more; that's kind of an infinite task.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

MANSFIELD: So I waited after her death for a while, and now I think I'm going to go against, not exactly against her wish, but against her spoken statements.

KRISTOL: Right, well you shouldn't take her spoken statements too literally. That's a lesson of her own work.

MANSFIELD: That's right, that's right. There's no such thing as a literal statement. So, this is a study of Aristotle and Aristotle's *Politics* and Aristotle's *Politics*, Book Three. It's a translation, a new translation of, a literal translation of Book Three, which Delba Winthrop thinks is the fundamental essence of Aristotle's *Politics*. And she gives an argument for that that I won't go into, but she does defend that choice of Book Three.

So she has her own literal translation, and then in a study following the text, an interpretation – a wonderful interpretation, a mixture of imagination and reflection. And it's a wonder.

KRISTOL: Yeah, no, I really look forward to it. I've read a little bit of it but really reading it more carefully. So where should one begin?

MANSFIELD: Well, let's begin with "by Zeus."

KRISTOL: That's good, "by Zeus," yeah.

MANSFIELD: In the middle of Book Three, Aristotle suddenly says "by Zeus"; and then, for goodness sakes, he says it again about a page later. So two oaths, two times that he swears. This is the only time in all his writings that Aristotle swears.

KRISTOL: One doesn't think of Aristotle as a big invoker of divine –

MANSFIELD: Or a passionate fellow.

KRISTOL: Yeah, right.

MANSFIELD: Who can't withhold himself. This is a sign that, of a nature of the text of Aristotle's *Politics* that the statements are often statements from a certain point of view which is not Aristotle's, of which he reports. And the number of points of view – the democratic point of view, the oligarchic point of view, the philosopher's point of view, the citizen's point of view. So there are all these points of view which he sets forth, and refines, and argues with.

So this, this first "by Zeus" occurs in a discussion of democracy in which he deplores the fact that in the most extreme democracies, the majority will decide on its own to despoil the rich. "Let's take all the money away from the rich." And he says that, that seems quite unjust. And then suddenly, "by Zeus but the democracy decided to do this." So, the first thing is Aristotle's judgment that this is unjust, and then it's the democrat's answer. He doesn't really have an argument. And so he calls in the god, by Zeus, to help him out.

KRISTOL: Help the democrat out.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, to help the democrat out. So this is a sign that democracy can't really defend or explain itself in the terms that it would like, according to which all are equal and the equal majority can do what it wishes. And so, and they call on Zeus. Zeus is a kind of *who* that stands behind their *what*.

The *what* is everything should be equal; and the *who* is that's the god, he says so, his words. Now the trouble with the appeal to *who*, the god, it assumes that *who* rules. But *who* rules is always in the name of some *what*: so if you call on the god, and then he comes and answers you by himself calling on another god, you would get an infinite regress of personal authority backing up a statement of principle.

So that indicates that the *who*, or the "by Zeus," is really a stand-in or a personification of a *what*. And the *what* is the democratic equality.

So then a page later, Aristotle has another "by Zeus." And this time Zeus says something different.

Zeus says, "An association of human beings is different from a herd of animals." Now this is a statement by Zeus in this case; it's clearer that this time the *who* has a *what* in his mind. And the *what* states a difference in nature between human beings and animals. Suggesting that nature is not composed of equal parts – equal parts of matter, like pieces or scattered parts, all defined by their matter and therefore equal as bodies. But that there's a hierarchy; there's a ranking. Some bodies are more impressive, more capable, more different.

In other words, the whole of things, the universe of things is heterogeneous; it's not homogenous. It's not everything the same. So this Zeus answers the first Zeus. The first Zeus just said, well, if all of us are equal, then most of us can decide on our own without any other higher authority or objection from anyone.

It's essentially the democratic view, is essentially that the stronger should rule: the stronger being the more. The more, the many, the most people, the majority.

KRISTOL: And no qualitative distinctions.

MANSFIELD: And no qualitative distinctions but just an assertiveness of rule. And so the second "by Zeus" is an answer to the first, suggesting that the democrat needs to have some understanding or some recognition of the differences in rank and hierarchy, in a people but also in nature as a whole.

It's characteristic of Aristotle in this, especially in this Book Three, that he's speaking of *both*. He's speaking of the whole universe of things, and he's speaking of a whole people. And he's suggesting that the philosopher who's interested in the whole of things can learn something from politics, which is a whole of human beings.

KRISTOL: So, yeah, I want to get to that because I think one of the most striking things about Delba's account is the philosophic counterpart or underlying character – Behind politics, behind different, let's say, democratic and aristocratic political views is a view of nature; and that Aristotle gives an account of that through the politics, kind of amazingly.

MANSFIELD: It is.

KRISTOL: But why, so what does it mean? So both the democratic view and the aristocratic view are appealed to, appeal to Zeus for backup, is that right you're saying?

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: So they're each insufficient.

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: Neither can be, neither is self-evident, if we can put it that way.

MANSFIELD: If you asked in politics, “*who rules?*” Is the most important question. *Who* rules, or *what* rules? The thing is it seems that you need both. The who rule-who rules, the answer is always *who*, but they have something in mind; it isn’t just power that they want. That would be sort of modern political science. But they want the power to do something particular, some particular things. They have a program, as we say.

So the *whos* stand for a *what*. To explain the *who*, you have to look for the *what*. But then when you get to the *what*, it turns out that the *what* always needs to be espoused by some human beings. So the *what* consists of a statement or a principle, which has to be asserted or set forth or pushed by some human beings. And to do that you can’t assume that you’re just addressing fellow philosophers who will be convinced by the arguments on behalf of your *what*. That your statement is, if it’s true, it’s sufficient to gain immediate recognition by everybody. No, you have to persuade. And to persuade you have to understand that there are different kinds of people whom you are addressing, and therefore the pureness of the, sort of the truth of your *what* has to be modified or qualified to make it persuasive. So every *what* when carried into politics is compromised by the fact that it’s *who*. It’s espoused by some *who*, and addressed to another *who*. So politics, a politician has to be aware of the differences of people.

KRISTOL: Are these two basic *whats*? Is that fair to say? These democratic and the, what’s the other –

MANSFIELD: Yes, the democratic and the aristocratic. So, Delba’s book is about the whole. Because she says Aristotle is about the whole, with a “w.” And the whole – the democrat is the one that first comes on the scene, because the democrat is the one that wants a whole and that thinks in terms of the whole. The democrat stands for the people, and the people are a whole by including everybody.

However, there’s a problem with everybody, see? That the whole is constituted by equal parts, but it’s also constituted by unequal parts or parts that are different from each other, diverse. And each part making its own different contribution to the whole.

So, if you want to define a thing, it seems that you always need to distinguish between the *class* and the *standard*. Suppose you want to define a tree: you want a definition that includes all trees or that, all things that at least resemble trees. So that’s the *class* of trees. But you also want a definition that prescribes or describes the best tree, or the complete tree, or the perfect tree, the tree that has all that a tree should have. So, a definition must include the best, and it must include all instances of the thing.

That’s easy to do or easier to do with a tree, much more difficult to do with a human being. Because a human being, the best human being can be quite different from the average, or the sort of most general human being defined. So, the class and the standard come to be distinguished, especially when you refer to human beings. And in politics then, the two typical parties in any society are those who represent the *best* and those who represent *all*.

So the democrat begins with his assertion of a need for *all*. And, but there’s the oligarch or the – which means literally “the rule of the few,” in this case the few best, however you define *best* – the oligarch wants to make a distinction among these *all* and say that some are better than others, and some are diverse from others, not necessarily better but just different. And the whole, therefore, must be understood to include not just everyone as equal, but everyone as contributing differently.

So you can take a present day case, say the welfare state. Now, the welfare state, on the one hand, has policies or programs which address all Americans as equals. So the signature case would be the Social Security Program, which is – and this was passed by the Democrats in 1935 and this is what begins the welfare state. But the welfare state is not really described fully by this; you’ve also got to consider that it

has a certain – to be a whole it has a kind of spirit of a welfare state. And different parts to it making different contributions: there's beneficiaries, there's tax payers, there's politicians, congressmen, there's economists that figure this out and decide. So the welfare state is a – plus there are people who oppose it. So the welfare state as a whole, a whole society, is made of all these different elements which are –

And Aristotle indicates this by using two terms for the common good, or the same words but in a different phrase. So there's "the common benefit," that's the actual word that he uses, a common advantage, in which *common* is an adjective describing *benefit*. That would be like social security that we all have sort of equally. And then there's "a benefit in common." So with *in common* is a prepositional phrase that qualifies the *benefit*.

So "the common benefit" versus "the benefit in common." The benefit in common includes contributions of diverse elements or diverse things. So this is a whole which is both sort of "all of us as equals," and "all of us as quite diverse."

KRISTOL: And the mixture – so there's a democratic and an oligarchic element, you might say.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, so the real whole is a mixture of democracy and oligarchy.

KRISTOL: And somehow the political mixture reflects this philosophical?

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: I think that's one of Delba's key –

MANSFIELD: That is, but it's also the other way around.

KRISTOL: Yeah, okay.

MANSFIELD: And perhaps even more the other way around, so the philosophical learns from the political. So, if a philosopher wants to understand the whole of the universe, he has to consider the diverse parts of it. And especially the difference between human beings and a herd of animals, following the second statement of Zeus.

KRISTOL: Which difference, however, would also point to differences among human beings.

MANSFIELD: Yes. Of course.

KRISTOL: Because if it's reason or speech or whatever, that distinguishes then there are better and worse –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, so they are better and worse among the human beings and then – but just also differences. Different occupations, different characters, different – And also there isn't just virtue, there's different virtues, too.

KRISTOL: So it's more heterogeneous.

MANSFIELD: Men and women, for example, and this comes out in Book Three and also in Delba's discussion of it. Men and women make different contributions according to Aristotle. Men tend to be more courageous and women tend to be more moderate. So you need each of those, making diverse contributions to a whole, rather than sort of a unisex society in which everyone is assigned the duty of being like everyone else.

KRISTOL: And we take this democratic principle and the oligarchic principle are not simply at odds with each other though, they're somehow mixable or – ?

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: I mean that's important.

MANSFIELD: Right, they are somehow mixable and that's – yes. And that's why you have to get the, you have to get the democrats interested in what will make their society of equals possible. And you do that by impressing them with the differences among people.

And you have to get the nobles who desire to rule by themselves, the oligarchical party, to recognize that they are not an independent or self-sufficient unit on their own, but they need the ordinary person. And their nobility, their sort of higher moral virtue, is reflected in the, in the freedom that the ordinary person has.

So that Aristotle, from this point of view, comes to be a philosopher of freedom. If you look at a history of political philosophy, I think most of them would say that the ancients or Aristotle stand for virtue, and the moderns, the people like John Locke, stand for freedom. And there's something to that.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: But Aristotle is as much concerned with freedom as he is with virtue, as Delba shows I think in her argument. That a free person will go wrong, and act in a way to ruin or spoil his freedom if it's licentious, if he doesn't use it with virtue. And a virtuous person isn't virtuous, on his own, unless he's free.

So, and this is related to the sort of passionate element in human beings. The *thumos*, or the spiritedness which makes us resistant to being ordered around. And this sort of ordinary resistance that people don't like to be bossed around is reflected in the nobility of the best of us, of the best human beings. Because the best human beings also stand above what is average or what is determined or what is expected, and they're sort of the most outstanding types of human being. So they, the best sort of validate the possibility of freedom that you see on the average.

And the free, on the other hand, validate the nobility of the best. Because they show that nobility is not just an accident, but it's in the nature of human beings.

So, the physicist who wants to understand the whole universe without understanding that human beings have something special about them, have some freedom, and therefore also nobility, they get things wrong. Those are the natural philosophers that Aristotle opposes in his time, and they resemble very much I think the materialist physicists of our time today.

KRISTOL: And they're the democrats, so to speak.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, they're philosophical –

KRISTOL: In the philosophical realm.

MANSFIELD: They're metaphysical democrats.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: So physics without the physicist. The physicist is an intelligent person. The rest of the universe that he studies, and that the standard model tries to describe, this big equation, forgets that there's a difference between an intelligent person or part and an unintelligent part.

KRISTOL: And the physicist and mathematicians, in my experience, more than anyone else, are acutely aware of the distinctions among themselves.

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: The really great mathematician as opposed to just extremely good mathematician and so forth. They're very aware of this rank.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, they're like chess players. They're very competitive. Yeah.

KRISTOL: Yes. But then they think the universe is just flat.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, the universe has no competition so it's all flat. So this is an example, perhaps the leading example of why the two parties need each other. As much as they oppose each other, the oligarchical versus the democratic, nonetheless, each finds its validation and its success, you could say, in the other.

Now, if philosophers can learn something from politics, then they're no longer just natural philosophers but they become political philosophers. So, this would make political philosophy central to all philosophy. Because politics shows you the central heterogeneity of things. That all things have this democratic aspect and also hierarchically and therefore oligarchical aspect.

So now this is also how Aristotle opposes Plato. Plato, in his *Republic*, talks about philosopher kings. And there's a famous passage where he said, "There'll be no end to unhappiness among human beings until philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers." But he says this is going to be an accident, a coincidence, see. And for Aristotle, I don't think it is quite a coincidence. Because he shows it's not the case that the philosopher doesn't want to rule, as Plato says. Plato says, [philosophy] isolates philosophers from all the rest of mankind because they're the only ones that don't want to rule. And this is what creates the opposition between philosophy and politics.

But for Aristotle, no: the philosopher can learn something in philosophy from politics. So, he has a motive to rule, or to look at rulers; and to try to understand and learn something from them. When you rule, it's a case of reason meeting unreason. You're doing your best to think out what you should do, but you also, you have to meet the unreason of the people and the situation, the events that confront you. And persuade.

And a sort of a boundary between reason and unreason is the passions, the passions which make you angry on behalf of what you think is right, and also make you resist what other people think is right. And passion is an outstanding character of politics and political life. So, Aristotle in this view comes out as a philosopher of freedom and not just of, of deadening or soul-destroying virtue.

Now that suggests, too, that the central thing for Aristotle is *moral virtue*. Moral virtue is also the meeting of reason and unreason. Moral virtue is how you deal with your body, especially the two first moral virtues are courage and moderation – the men and the women, you could say. Yeah, so that courage deals with your fears, and moderation deals with your pleasures. And those pains and pleasures, those are the things that arise from your body.

Your injustice, injustice comes from a fact that everybody has a preference for himself. That's because you have a body, you can't help taking care of your body, and if you forget that, you come to grief.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: So moral virtue is not a philosophical virtue, because it isn't based simply on intellect. And the problem with courage is not so much to know what it is, is to actually do it or practice it. And the same thing with moderation. The moral virtues have to be practiced, they have to be done. But so it's not intellectual virtue, but in each case you need to use your reason in order to avoid the vices which accompany moral virtue.

So moral virtue is not determined, it's always based on a choice. And freedom is a choice. And that's how the first democrats that Aristotle resorts to in Book Three of *Politics* are disputing. Politics is disputing. Now, why do you dispute? Because it isn't absolutely clear what's worth having.

So that indicates that you have a choice, and that you have a free choice. But it's also the case that you mustn't make a bad choice. So, if you make a bad choice, then you probably put an end to your choice. So you must protect yourself, and you must choose well and not badly.

So freedom isn't unconnected to virtue. Say the right to choose: we have "the right to choose" versus "the right to life."

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: The right to choose depends on your choosing well, and it isn't a matter of unconcern how people choose when they have the right to choose. And so politics has to take account of that. So the philosopher of freedom has to be concerned with virtue, how people actually exercise their freedom.

KRISTOL: Now, if, let's say, philosophic materialism is erroneous, or half erroneous, the democratic view of things, what's the analogy, if I can word it that way, in the oligarchic – what's the oligarch exaggeration or half error?

MANSFIELD: The oligarchic exaggeration would be shown in the philosopher, as if philosophy could rule.

KRISTOL: As if it was simply separate from the body.

MANSFIELD: Yes, as if it were simply separate from the rest of humanity and forgetting that it's human beings that are philosophers. And that philosophical problems arise out of the problems that human beings have. Really, out of your body.

KRISTOL: And wouldn't a religious view or a certain kind of religious view also be that kind of mistake? I'm just thinking, you know, kind of I don't know, separate the soul from the body maybe more than can be defended or –

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: Too high a standard, as it were, of purity, kind of.

MANSFIELD: It is, yeah. That's right. As if the spiritual were capable of existing on its own without any connection to the fact that it's human bodies that have spirits. So bodies are different from each other; they have different capacities.

KRISTOL: And so the philosopher or the political philosopher learns, politics is the best example of this, both possibility and necessity of mixing these two views.

MANSFIELD: Yes, yes.



KRISTOL: So you really do learn from politics; it's not just an unfortunate thing you have to dabble into.

MANSFIELD: That is right.

KRISTOL: Or dip into.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, it's not just something you're subjected to which distracts you from your true vocation. So yeah. So the philosopher would be the highest type of pure oligarch, and then also the sort of nobles or people, ambitious people.

KRISTOL: Who exaggerate the difference between themselves.

MANSFIELD: They exaggerate, they do. They exaggerate the difference between themselves and ordinary people who don't have ambition.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: And the world does seem to be divided between those who just can't live without being outstanding in some way. To them that's – a person who's not outstanding, that's not living. And on the other hand, those who can't imagine trying to be outstanding when you've got such a nice, comfortable, secure life without that incubus.

So, yeah so that's right. The oligarchical needs the democratic flavor. And so Delba talks about the need for *an ethical mathematics* and a *mathematical ethics*. An ethical mathematics, that's the obsession with quantity and the equality of things, needs to be made more ethical to recognize the difference in virtue among equal persons.

And then the other thing, the mathematical ethics, that people who are full of virtue need to recognize the importance of quantity and of actual number. Delba makes frequent use of the great work by Jacob Kline on Greek mathematics, called *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, in which he discusses the nature of Greek mathematics. One could say this much quickly: that for the Greeks, *one* is not a number. You know it's an interesting statement.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: That when we ordinarily say *a number of*, that always means more than one. So, when you count something you count one; so you count *one* is for a unit. It's what permits you to count, and therefore it isn't something that you count. So five apples, that's five ones: one, two, three, four, five, that you counted you have. Human beings have the ability to recognize different shapes and therefore to see similarities or images that enables them to count. Human beings are the only animals that count. And that in a way that has a double meaning but–

KRISTOL: Yeah that's good.

MANSFIELD: But you can see, but that also means that a *one* isn't just one, two, three, four, five, but a *one* is a, stands for a unity. And so every in this way Aristotle says every regime is a *one* or is a *unity*. And this he presents in Book Three of the *Politics* as monarchy or kingship.

So every regime is, in a way, a kingship because it has a single end. This would distinguish him from sort of liberals today. I mean *liberals* in the generic sense, who believe in pluralism that their society is made of a different plural, different character, different notions, different types of people. We're all diverse, diversity. Harvard today is all about diversity; it's the only word they know. And Aristotle would say no, but there's also a unity to it. So, if you go to another country, being an American, you'll see that it's different. It's different as a whole.

So a *one* stands for, and kingship or monarchy, stands for this oneness. Which is characteristic even of a society that stands for pluralism and that prides itself on its diversity. So that's a little bit of Greek mathematics.

KRISTOL: And Harvard loves diversity but doesn't want to acknowledge – well, sort of does and sort of doesn't want to acknowledge that diversity would also imply ordering. I mean, right? It's not simply equal.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, the correct word for Harvard's diversity is *conformity*.

KRISTOL: Right. Real diversity would be –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, but now we're straying from Delba's wonderful book.

KRISTOL: Yes.

MANSFIELD: Let me, now we can't talk about this book without using the word *assert*.

KRISTOL: Yes, that's a major discovery of hers, or assertion of hers.

MANSFIELD: That's a major discovery, yes. That's right. So I think she is – *assert*, you can find that in other works of Aristotle and also in works of, the importance of assertiveness, in psychological studies of speech or communication. But for Delba, it's the essence of political speech, and she's the only one who sees this or has seen this. And finds it extremely important in understanding both *Politics* and Aristotle's view of politics.

So Aristotle sometimes says "I say" something, and sometimes he says "I assert" or "people assert." And "I say" means you could have, you say this, or you could have said something else. And you're not putting your soul behind it. Asserting, you're putting your soul behind it. It has a certain oomph from you, you mean this. And it's a *what* with a kind of *who* enclosed in it. And you're demanding to be listened to or honored, so you assert.

So democrats assert and oligarchs assert. And you see this, this verb, the verb is *phemi* in Greek, again and again "to assert." And maybe philosophers need to assert. Asserting, if you have to put your oomph behind it –

KRISTOL: Yeah, that seems paradoxical though.

MANSFIELD: Yes, paradoxical. Mostly philosophy is, or would understand itself, as rational and reflection and not an assertion. An assertion is passionate and therefore irrational.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: And suggests that you have no argument behind it.

KRISTOL: You're not fully defensible.

MANSFIELD: Not fully defensible. And it's probably the case that people who assert, assert because they have to, and they don't have a complete argument and a defense. But maybe with our human imperfection, with the limitations to our understanding, we do have to, even the best of us and in the highest and most difficult cases have to rely on assertion.

So human beings assert their superiority, one-to-another, and in making much of the distinction between humanity and the rest of non-human universe, that's a fundamental assertion that we are perhaps entitled to make. Perhaps we can't fully prove that we're superior.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: But it's reasonable to suppose so, or to say so, or to assert so, and to behave therefore in that way.

KRISTOL: I've always thought the Declaration of Independence, our Declaration of Independence, maybe I learned this from you, I mean, "We hold these truths to be self-evident" is a nice example. It's not simply these *truths are self-evident*, which would be so to speak philosophic statement, presumably.

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: But that it is important that if you're going to declare independence that it's *we hold*—

MANSFIELD: Yes, that's right. That's very good.

KRISTOL: — a certain truth. It's a little paradoxical because if it's true, it's true; you don't have to hold it.

MANSFIELD: No, that's right, hold it means you have to defend it against those who resist it.

KRISTOL: And assert it somehow. It seems like it's a similar thing.

MANSFIELD: So human beings have to assert their humanity against the rest of the universe which is, doesn't care.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Sort of resists our importance, tries to make us feel insignificant. The tiny oasis of reason of which we've so far found no counterpart anywhere else.

KRISTOL: And freedom, yeah.

I have an impression, maybe I'm wrong about this, that somehow the democratic view in Delba's count is a little prior. I mean is — are these two views equal so to speak or —

MANSFIELD: Yes that's right.

KRISTOL: Or does democracy gets a little advantage kind of? I don't know.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, so that's maybe the last point that she presents. Aristotle, the philosopher of freedom, but also Aristotle the democrat. So there was this —

KRISTOL: That seems contrary to the normal view.

MANSFIELD: That's right. There was this well-known Aristotle scholar who believed that Aristotle was the greatest philosopher that ever was, and that democracy was the best form of government there is, therefore Aristotle was a democrat. And that's a little bit too easy.

KRISTOL: Yeah.

MANSFIELD: But she does think that, on the whole, he ends up with a qualified democracy as the best form of, practical form of government.

The best regime which he discusses in books seven and eight of *Politics* is not practicable, because the *demos* is completely excluded from citizenship or, as it seems, even from existence. So that's a best regime that sort of abstracts from the fact that there's an ordinary, non-philosophical people that are to be contended with and have their own desires, their own love of freedom, which you have to respect and take account of.

So, in Book Three, he ends with a discussion of, there's chapters on monarchy. And I think the typical interpretation is that he sort of gives way, he makes as much of an argument for democracy as he can, and then gives way – I guess it's in chapter eleven; there's seventeen chapters, so the last half-dozen chapters are about monarchy. And then he sort of gives himself over: "*Well, too bad, democracy fails and we have to turn to monarchy.*" But, no, as he points out, monarchy is, at the state of Greek civilization, was primitive and obsolete, no longer possible. So, something of the same view that we have today.

So, Aristotle the democrat. The other thing about – just as democratic philosophers today think that democracy is the only form of government – which is wrong – still it is somehow the presumptive form.

And if you look at modern philosophers, they begin from a democratic beginning, which they call "the state of nature" in which all are equal. This is a notion invented by Thomas Hobbes and developed by John Locke, Montesquieu, and several others. And it's still somehow a fundamental notion behind the rights that the Declaration of Independence sets forth.

So "the state of nature" is a democratic beginning in which all are equal. And all are fearful, see. Aristotle begins from a democratic beginning in which all are *discussing*; they're not fearful. They're asserting, they're making – they're using their equality to demand their freedom. And in doing so they illustrate that *freedom* is a fundamental thing. And also that one should begin one's understanding of democracy not from a pre-democratic thing – like "the veil of ignorance," that's John Rawls' counterpart to the state of nature. You shouldn't try to begin from an abstract, non-political understanding of human beings, but you should go right into a democratic discussion between the democrats and the oligarchs, and the reasons that the democrats give.

Because, after all, they want everybody to be a citizen, but it turns out there are exclusions. Aliens, there are children, slaves, or you know, foreigners who are visiting.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Or resident foreigners. So how do you explain those? And that leads to an opening for an oligarch: so you don't really want everybody equal. You have to be mature, you can't be a child. And you have to be born here; you can't be a foreigner. So, in other words, this sets up the discussion or the debate.

So you begin from a democratic *debate*, that should be the democratic beginning and presumption of – And so Aristotle the democrat teaches us, or democratic political scientists – they're all Democrats with a capital D to a man, and to a woman, today. But they have perhaps more sustenance from Aristotle if they would think about it, and read this book very carefully, you know then they presently know.

KRISTOL: Well they should read this book carefully. They should read your excellent introduction to this book; then they could read Aristotle. They could be busy for quite a while learning things.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. By the way, Delba has an introduction to her book, and she also has a note on the translation at the very end of it. And in the note on the translation she tells a little bit more about how she

started this and the spirit in which she's investigating. So, if you, when you get this book, I would begin at the end.

KRISTOL: Okay.

MANSFIELD: It's an appendix called "A Note on the Translation."

KRISTOL: Yeah, reveals more than just, yeah, the mechanics of translation.

MANSFIELD: It does indeed, yeah.

KRISTOL: Good. Well, everyone should read the book, and Harvey, thank you so much for taking the time to discuss it.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, it's my pleasure.

KRISTOL: Thank you, and thank you for joining us on CONVERSATIONS.

[END]