

Conversations with Bill Kristol

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KRISTOL: Hi, I'm Bill Kristol, welcome to CONVERSATIONS. I'm pleased to be joined again by Harvey Mansfield, Professor of Government at Harvard University.

MANSFIELD: Always a pleasure, I have to say.

KRISTOL: I thought we would discuss today your excellent essay, which made a big impression on me when I read it when it came out when I was in graduate school, "Liberal Democracy as a Mixed Regime." It appeared in *The American Spectator*, which was then called *The Alternative* before it became more mainstream, I guess, and became *The American Spectator*. And, was republished in your excellent book from 1978, I think, [The Spirit of Liberalism](#). So people should look at the essay. But I thought it's not – the book is out of print, unfortunately and disgracefully, really. A terrible statement about the publishing profession, that that's the case.

MANSFIELD: Well, that's Harvard Press – all right.

KRISTOL: Things have declined at Harvard. And the essay, I was reminded of it, and looked at it recently and was struck by how interesting it is. And though people can look at it online, it's not as accessible as some of your other works, so I thought worth really walking people through it.

And we had a discussion recently about it, and I thought other people also were, at a seminar and other people, as you know, were very struck by the formulation. So I mean, "mixed regime" – sounds like Aristotle and classical political philosophy. And liberal democracy sounds like modern liberalism. So what's the –

MANSFIELD: That's the idea. The title is a kind of paradox. I could say at the beginning that I was working from the – with the advantage of the understanding of Aristotle that I got from the PhD dissertation of my late wife, Delba Winthrop, whose dissertation, which is called [Aristotle: Democracy and Political Science](#) has recently been published.

So this is a kind of simplified version of some of the things which she says on the basis of a much closer examination of Aristotle's text. But yes, "mixed regime" is Aristotle. "Liberal democracy," that's us. And it doesn't seem to be a regime which is mentioned or featured even in Aristotle's [Politics](#), his book on politics.

So what's on? I could begin by stating a problem in our understanding of liberal democracy, which I think is – and which I try to address through Aristotle. So first this problem. If you look at liberal democracy, which we live in right now, it seems to be divided into people who run things and who have ambition and who desire to be outstanding in some way and people who don't. Sometimes known in the political science literature as “ordinary voters,” a somewhat condescending designation. “Ordinary voters.” And “ordinary voters” sit back and they choose the rulers who then rule them, only it's not called ruling; it's called representation.

And so the ordinary voters are, so to speak, given the impression that this is their government; they're in fact ruling. But if you look at it, it isn't. The people who are doing the ruling are these ambitious types. I teach at Harvard and I see a lot of Harvard students that are full of this ambition. They like to use the word ‘impact.’

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: An ugly word. And that's what they want to have on the world, an impact on the world. And that's ambition and it can, of course, can take many different forms. But they all seem to sort of coalesce in a single type, so that our liberal democracy is divided into the liberals, and I'm going to call them that, the ambitious ones. And they are fewer than the ordinary voters, many fewer.

And then the ordinary voters who are the many and who don't see the point in being ambitious. They want a secure life and they don't, they sort of think of themselves as in a niche. They don't want to – they may want to improve their standard of living, but they don't seek to be on top and run things in a way that the others do.

So that our liberal democracy seems to be divided between the few and the many. And that's what Aristotle would say, and what I think somebody just coming to our politics and looking at it without knowing much about its principles would say, too.

And the trouble is that the division between the few and the many on the basis of ambition is not the way liberal democracy looks at itself. Not at all. And the big difference is that the liberals, the ambitious types, look on themselves as democrats. They don't all belong to the Democratic Party, but the Republicans too among them, also think of themselves as democrats, as part of the people and who are selected by the people and not rulers over the people.

And you see this in American political science, which is also, reflects the self-understanding of liberal, a democracy. They refer, as I said, to “ordinary voters” and they also refer, they use the word ‘elite,’ a very common word. Everybody knows that there are elites, which exist. The only trouble is that the elite doesn't look on itself as an elite. And the elite spends a lot of its time attacking elitism as if there were kind of an *ism* that went with being on top that was unattractive and shameful. Not something you say, “I'm a member of the elite, thank you.”

So that's something not to be and an impression not to give. So political science conveys this with its notion of a causal mechanism. Now we're going to get into how Aristotle comes in.

KRISTOL: Yeah, because I think so far one could say – sociologists, Marxists, Machiavellians – I mean all of them would understand that society consists of the many and the few, more or less. I mean, there's either the exploited, à la Marx, or in Machiavelli's case, of an interesting sort of character. Sociologists study elitists –

MANSFIELD: Well, some of those, like the Marxists, who look forward to a totally equal democracy way off in the future. But it's true. It's not uncommon to see this distinction between the equals and the unequals, but in such a way that the ascendancy of the unequals is not justifiable.

KRISTOL: Right, whereas Aristotle gives us –

MANSFIELD: It's justifiable. And that it's also a form of rule and not just representation. Now if the political science talks about these causal mechanisms which means that a thing is caused by its preceding cause – a cause precedes the effect.

In the famous case of billiard balls – when you strike a billiard ball, it moves according to the motion that's been given to it. And it hits according to the laws of motion, hits what it hits – other balls, and goes in the pocket. And so that's sort of what Aristotle would call efficient causation and this is what, the kind of causation that you get in modern natural science.

So that this political science looks at science as natural science and it doesn't make a distinction with human things. And therefore the notion of intention is lacking from its causal mechanism. A thing doesn't happen because you intend it to happen. That isn't how you explain the behavior of a billiard ball. You don't need that.

But how do you understand ambition as being caused by something outside it? Well, you just say that ambition is just a thing which improves your career and your career gives you more of what – of satisfaction. It's a kind of quantity. It gives you more and they don't want to really specify what the more is more of.

And so they usually don't talk about ambition, but when they do, it's always in the form of careerism as if it were a kind of self-promotion. But if you look at an ambitious person, they don't understand themselves as yes, I want to be in on it, but I want to have an impact on the world, remember? And that means you have, your concern is not merely or even mainly with yourself, but it's on the rest of the world. And you want to extend yourself to the rest of the world and that's beginning to give you the idea of ruling.

So now let's turn to Aristotle. And Aristotle, when he looks at politics, looks at it fundamentally from the standpoint of the few and the many. That there is always that difference between the few who want to rule and the many who also want to rule, but differently. And the few want to rule to justify their fewness, or whatever it is, and the many – their many-ness.

And this usually takes the form of money or wealth. That the many represent or are the poor because it just works out that most people are poor and a few people are wealthier. That was true in Aristotle's day and it seems still to be true today. So empirical fact, something in nature, I suppose.

So that you've got differences between the poor and the rich, but it isn't such a great difference because what you're seeing is that the poor and the rich want the same thing. They both want more and they don't know what the more is.

Well, it's more money. Money is fungible. What are you going to do with your money? What is the purpose of having wealth? Well, the purpose is to improve life. So now you're beginning to go from more to a definition of more. You're beginning to go from a quantity to a quality.

And there are, if you want more quality, then perhaps it's possible to have less of a competition or less instability. Because the poor, as poor, always want to exploit the rich and the rich, as rich, always want to exploit the poor and there's nothing holding them back and they will go after each other.

KRISTOL: I guess they could split the difference.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. No, they wouldn't be willing to split the difference because you always want more. And there's nothing in the equation, there's no limiting principle. The limiting principle comes, say, when you look at just more life, a better life or a longer life also has a kind of quantitative aspect.

And you mean when you say that a human life. That's a human life. A human life is a life belonging to a certain species which is really an aristocratic species. And the rest of nature, we're the only species that

is aware, could be aware of itself and aware of the world, which has ambitions, which has intentions, which has intelligence.

So we're kind of aristocracy; but then as humans, we're a kind of democracy. That every human has the natural equipment of the human being, which includes rationality, reason. You can understand, you can talk, you can think. You can suffer, feel, enjoy. So these are all human things. Those are all qualities.

So you can see already then, too, that there is a difference between certain democratic qualities and certain aristocratic qualities. Aristocrats are tough, they're tense. If you're ambitious, you want to accomplish something. To accomplish something, you have to push yourself. You have to use your stress. Stress is a good thing if you want to be ambitious. It's not a bad thing as it is generally speaking, according to modern psychology.

Whereas the many are softer, more tender, more receptive. You begin to see some of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* here. That the forms, the things with more definition, impose themselves, invisible things impose themselves on matter which receives those forms. There's a human matter and then there's a human form. And the human form seems to be located more in the few and the receptivity to it in the many.

So that's already, Aristotle's metaphysical look and those, you could say, represent the liberals and the democrats that we saw back in liberal democracy. So we're beginning to get some sense of human dignity and of the differences between humans, too, that some of them have this ambition and some, sort of much more intelligent than others. We all have intelligence, qua humans, but there's a terrific difference in intelligence which is, you could say, is a kind of natural aristocracy.

So wealth is no longer the standard and the standard is now something not quite visible. You can infer it from human behavior that there are these differences in intelligence, say. But what an intelligent human being is, you have to define. You can get examples of it, but the examples are not as important as the definition, which is invisible.

So the qualities are not visible in the same way that human beings have and in the same way that behavior is. Although as I say, there are these kind of transitional qualities like tough, tense versus soft and tender which go on the way from quantity to quality.

And these two tendencies, the poor and the rich, don't have any, as I say, inherent motion towards a limit or a mix, something that would allow them to live together in harmony. So that has to be introduced by intelligence and that means by political scientists or a philosopher.

And Aristotle gives three different ways in which the poor and the rich might be mixed. And the first way is to just have the poor and the rich as we began, together, both there. Not the poor or the rich, but just – nor the rich over the poor, but just there. And that you could call democracy. That's a kind of democratic mix because everybody is represented and included. The rich as rich and the poor as poor. Or, so that's the democratic mix.

Or another mix would be to find a middle position between poor and rich, so the middle class and this would add a certain stability. And the middle class are afraid of being poor and they're also afraid that the rich will take over from them. So they're always looking from both sides, like they're in the middle, it's an in-between position. And that's a sort of oligarchical mix because the middle class take on the attributes of an oligarchy, defending themselves from both sides.

But then there's a third mix, and this is the true mix, and that's a mix which transcends wealth and doesn't try merely to split the difference on the basis of wealth, but goes to another thing all together, and that's virtue.

So virtue becomes something which transcends both poor and rich. Aristotle has a list of eleven moral virtues, which he gives you in the [Nicomachean Ethics](#). The first two are courage and moderation. I won't

try to remember all of the other, the other nine, but that's good enough to start with those, two, just to give you an idea of what he means.

Some people are courageous. And to be courageous, or moderate, those are especially the virtues of the body. Courage is the virtue that helps you deal with fears, you're afraid of something, always afraid and need some courage. Moderation helps you with the pleasures of the body. You can be tempted into wrong pleasures or too much pleasure or even too little if you're that type, the kind of person that has an apple for lunch – not enough – no martini. The principle is one martini, not none, not two.

KRISTOL: I don't remember that from Aristotle.

MANSFIELD: That's my working example of what moderation means so that you can get the idea that, just because the virtue is a virtue doesn't mean that it's ascetic or opposed to any idea of pleasure.

Right, so those are the virtues. And those virtues are ordered in a certain way in their regime and the regime calls for certain virtues. And the most famous agent polis was Sparta, which was order all for the sake of courage.

And in general the Greeks and the Greek cities were much more martial, much more dedicated to war, to the necessities of war. And the virtues, which are needed or displayed most in war, then are today a frequent comparison of modern philosophers like Montesquieu. We today are devoted to commerce and peace, and they were devoted to virtues, and especially martial virtue, which called for sacrifice to the common good in a way that commerce does not.

So this ordering can lead in a regime to the separation of powers. So we have our separation of powers as explained in [The Federalist](#). And so those powers are the three faculties of the soul. It's one thing to judge and be a judge, another to be a legislator and a third to be an executive, to run things.

And they each have different lives. They go together with what they do. So a judge talks with other judges, but especially lives close to the law. He has to know what the law says and then to interpret the law and to find a way of understanding the law which applies to a particular case. And so he usually sits and reads, talks to a few people. And then if he's on a court, maybe participates in a deliberation like the Supreme Court.

Whereas a legislator doesn't think the law is given because he's thinking in terms of making a new law. So he looks on the present law as the status quo and the status quo doesn't have any special authority as it does in judging. So in order to legislate, he needs to talk to a lot of other people of different kinds. And so his day is spent in talking to lobbyists and to advocates and to fellow representatives or senators to see how we can get a majority together. How he can represent his district, but also do something that's for everybody's good. It's a lot of addition and subtraction looking for a majority, who have to be more, much more congenial type than as a judge.

And then the third is the managing that an executive does. He runs things. And he decides. And he's much closer to what might be called just ruling. Choosing a policy and seeing that it gets accomplished. So he's interested in the effect, the execution, the carrying out.

So this is the way in which our separation of powers can be understood as an ordering of the soul because those are activities of the soul: judging and legislating and executing.

And if you look at *The Federalist*, it first describes a separation of powers in terms of their separation and the fact that they must be made equal, no one of them superior to the rest. And how it's necessary to make them counteract. So that's the word which is especially used: action and counteraction.

So government is generally characterized as action and counteraction. Those two go together, and that very much comes from Montesquieu, that all power needs to be checked by other power, so balance. So

that draws your attention away from the actual, what the different parts are actually doing. And those are maybe more difficult to define.

In “Federalist #37,” they talk about the difficulty of defining the powers. But then at the end of *The Federalist* or the last half of it, the actual different branches of government are discussed, it comes out that they do different things, and they have a different intention than merely checking one another. They want to accomplish something, namely good government so that the republican government is a good government.

KRISTOL: But the intention or character of the powers in *The Federalist* is sort of backed into or hidden a little bit as implied by the lists of –

MANSFIELD: Yes, you show that very well in your PhD dissertation. I remember.

KRISTOL: It was puzzling to me why they don't want to say more explicitly.

MANSFIELD: Now let's come back to Aristotle and look at this situation of a mixed government.

Now he also remarks that to get to this mix, you have to have some understanding of freedom. And he finds his understanding of freedom to come from the democratic claim, because you got your soul and your body. Your soul decides on certain things which are rational, intelligent, to do, but your body resists often, as when you do something that you know is wrong, but nonetheless you go ahead and do it.

So there's a certain resistance to intelligence that's characteristic of humans, as well as the intelligence. This is often left out by scientists when they're talking about the characteristics of the human species. They forget that yes, we're intelligent, but we also resist intelligence. For example when somebody claims to be wise, and wiser than you are, that doesn't mean that you're necessarily going to obey what he says. Because you think, well, hmm, how does that affect me, how does it look to me?

And that's really, when you say that “me,” you're especially talking about your body, the most private part of you, that which you control yourself and nobody else does. And to some extent therefore your body controls you. And your body can be understood as claiming freedom from your intelligence, your wisdom, or the wisdom of wise people.

And the claims of the body are especially close to democracy because democracy means all as equal, and all human bodies are much more equal in their desire, each of them, to be one's own. To have one's own and to promote that, than your soul, which is dominated by your intelligence.

So the democratic claim to freedom comes precisely from, you might say, the quantity of your body. It comes back to the importance of the fact that we not only have intelligence, but we have, so to speak, anti-intelligence built in to your soul. There's a kind of resistance, a battle that goes on in your soul, between your body and your smarts or intelligence.

And so this is a better and fuller description. It also begins to justify democracy a little bit more than you might guess from the superiority of intelligence. So democracy is a desire to rule freely.

Now we see that the democrats are no longer just poor; they make a certain claim to rule. The oligarchs also make claims, that the best should rule. And they're pushed into – by Aristotle the political scientist – pushed into redefining wealth as wealth of things that are good. Wealthy things are what makes you good. So your wealth could even be understood as your intelligence. That's your equipment that you have either from nature or from what you've learned from your learning, your education.

So, politics then consists of a competition of claims, claims to justice. Justice, the good of a commonality of the community. So, and justice is again an invisible quality. It can be defined, but it can't be seen except in certain great actions.

So, where our claims to justice are often expressed in appreciation and reverence even that we give to great figures, great human beings. So in America, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, people of that quality. And we learn about how they lived and what they did. That inspires us. It's way above the common or ordinary voter, or the ordinary possibility, or even the ordinary ambitious person – way above them.

But still it's something that we need. It's something which is our very best, that holds us together as a community. And if we lost that or changed that, changed our appreciation for George Washington to say to somebody like a Napoleon, then that would totally change the nature of our community.

So this mix which has an existence in the soul of the best man, perhaps not even better than George Washington, but somebody who understands George Washington, because as I've said sees all the wonderful things that he did in the circumstances that he faced, but who understands this. And this understanding is reflected in George Washington, the noble deeds of the city, and also in the worshipping or the civil religion of the city. And all this amounts to a kind of a speculation of what is best, and what is virtuous, at least within the reach of most of us.

So, the moral virtues are a way of looking at the actions of a body which presupposes that there's a soul behind them. Which presupposes that you are capable voluntarily choosing to do the right thing. It doesn't prove that that soul exists, but the way we understand it suggests that we believe that there is such a soul.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: Now let's come back to liberalism, applying all this modern mixed regime, as opposed to Aristotle's. So the modern mixed regime says that we are all equal and it begins from this famous state of nature of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.

There is however, we're all – we, means all of us humans. So there is a kind of the same superiority of human beings to the rest of the world which is non-human, animal or just inanimate. Then human beings have this capacity to master or even conquer the nature of the non-human world. But how is it going to do this? So, how are we going to live in such a way as to show that we're all equal and at the same time to show that we're superior to our nature?

And the answer is through acquisition, or economics, or commerce. 'Acquisition,' that's Machiavelli. And 'commerce,' say that's later, that's Locke, Hume, Montesquieu: the economic man. In other words, we much overlook or not talk about the soul or about intention, but devote ourselves to the gaining of more, without trying to define more what – as Aristotle wants us to do.

And that means that human beings are equal because the body is primary. It's only if the body is primary that we can all understand ourselves as equal. And the body can be primary only if we forget about or suppress the notion of soul, which includes this notion of intention or of voluntary action, that you do something freely.

So, it's freely – it's freedom now understood sort of in a diluted way, as released rather than as aiming at something and having the power to aim at an intention, at a goal. And this means that democracy and oligarchy, which are claims to rule in Aristotle, become these two things of liberal democracy. 'Democrats' who live their ordinary lives, and 'liberals' who are dissatisfied with that, who couldn't live unless they were outstanding or extraordinary in some way they could explain to themselves is better.

So the democrats instead of being rulers claiming freedom, turn into beneficiaries of the acquisitions and wealth-getting of liberals, understanding these liberals as simply the ambitious.

So, and then the party conflict which we have is not between democrats and oligarchs, but within the liberals, within the oligarchs so to speak. Because the liberals have the duty, or you might say the human

function, of assertion, of self-assertion, of promoting themselves. And the result of this is beneficial to the rest of the community, which otherwise would relax and not do anything.

So this self-assertion of the oligarchs is no longer simply oligarchical, but it benefits the democracy as a whole. As when wealthy people get wealthy, they can't do that without improving the standard of living of the consumers.

So, government is not a cure for souls. It's not a way of mixing the qualities of one's soul. And this came out of the way in which liberalism got started.

Liberalism got started as an attack on the soul, because the soul, it thought, had been misinterpreted, appropriated and abused by the priests of Christianity. So that Aristotle's strange doctrine, soulful doctrine, had been picked up by Christianity and the Aristotelian soul had been made into a Christian soul. And the Christian soul was something that could be manipulated by Christian priests because priests talk to God in a way that the rest of us don't and they tell us what God wants us to do. And this is a kind of indirect form of tyranny. They in fact are doing the ruling, but they're pretending that they're merely executing the will of God.

And then modern representative government is a kind of secularized version of this indirect government that our leaders – we now call them leaders not rulers – whom we elect tell us what to do. But they say that this is what we wanted when we chose them. So your taxes are – they take money away from you. That's perfectly justified because you wanted it. And when you voted for us, you voted for these exactions and troubles and all the – so this famous statement of Hobbes, “the criminal is the author of his own punishment.”

KRISTOL: But you get to sort them out, so. There's a certain accountability which there isn't in the –

MANSFIELD: Right.

KRISTOL: In Christianity, I suppose.

MANSFIELD: Yes, right. So, but there exists a famous division among the quote “liberals” unquote that I'm – a word which I'm using much more generally than it's usually used.

KRISTOL: Yes.

MANSFIELD: I'm using it just to mean all ambitious types in a liberal democracy. But those types are divided, but especially it's between businessmen and intellectuals. And this is a distinction which was introduced by Rousseau, I think, mainly, who identified the businessman as the bourgeoisie. And those are people who are not real citizens; they are town-dwellers. That's the literal meaning of bourgeois. Town-dwellers who have their freedom because the King gave it to them. And so they don't have the real freedom. The real freedom is the freedom that you give to yourselves.

So this is this – a critique of the bourgeoisie was picked up and turned into a great distinction between those who are ambitious by getting wealth, and those who are ambitious by getting reputation through speech: intellectuals. Intellectuals are people who are smarter than the rest of us, and who show it by publishing.

So a publication is necessary to an intellectual. It's not necessary to a philosopher, as we know from the case of Socrates. The greatest philosopher of all never published. But an intellectual publishes, so he advertises to the world his intellect. This is a form of ruling, you could say.

And the businessman – and the thing is that the two of them hate each other. The businessmen looked down on these intellectuals as being snobs and people who could never meet a payroll. Then I think there are these two great achievements in life: if you're a businessman you can run a payroll, and if you're an intellectual you can teach and you can run a class.

KRISTOL: Right.

MANSFIELD: So, and a businessman would be as much at a loss in a classroom as an intellectual would be in the office of a manager. Neither of them could do the other.

KRISTOL: I wonder if that's true.

MANSFIELD: Neither of them under – if that's really true. And then there may be a third class of politicians. But anyway so this is the way in which the liberals or liberal democracy becomes invisible to itself. That it wants to understand itself as coming out of human equality, and human equality only. So that inequalities have no justifiable separate status.

And this leads to all the problems of authority under liberal democracy. There doesn't seem to be any justified way in which I should obey you or you should have authority over me. And so people get the very exaggerated notions of autonomy, on the one hand, and on the other hand, they want to help out other people.

And they do that by making them beneficiaries. But to make someone your beneficiary is to patronize that person, take away his sense that he runs his own life. And so you make them feel as if they don't have any standing, no separate justification. Things are pushed onto them, so-called benefits, which they don't care for and tend to resist in this elemental freedom resistance that humans have.

So you get this division between licentious types who don't know when something is wrong, and lazy or idle people who are benefited, but resent the benefits or and especially the benefactors – their so-called. They hate the elites that they get everything from. And the elites despise the multitude. So this mix of liberal democracy is always in this, in danger of subsiding into the corruption of lack of virtue, lack of the understanding of a virtue.

KRISTOL: The business party, let's say the republicans, their corruption would be to simply be oligarchs I guess in the normal sense of oligarchs and have no sense of –

MANSFIELD: No responsibility.

KRISTOL: Culpable responsibility and the intellectuals would become –

MANSFIELD: Also no sense of responsibility and they would just –

KRISTOL: Indulge all their ideas and –

MANSFIELD: Yeah. Regardless of the harm they might do thereby.

KRISTOL: So it's important that each of those classes of liberals, if you want to call them that, or elites –

MANSFIELD: Yeah.

KRISTOL: – has a bit of an understanding of the whole in which they operate, not just –

MANSFIELD: That's right.

KRISTOL: Even if they're pretty focused on their own work.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. And this whole is much better explained to them by Aristotle. So if they begin to see why there is such a thing as soul and why there is such a thing and why liberals tend to deny it.

KRISTOL: But the liberals – how much are you – I guess you’re improving the kind of understanding of the mixture, of liberal democracy as a mixed regime, from the Liberal understanding to an Aristotelean understanding?

MANSFIELD: That’s right.

KRISTOL: Is that a fair way of saying it?

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: But that’s necessary. That’s not just willful on your part or something.

MANSFIELD: No, no, it’s not an imposition of mine.

KRISTOL: Right. You’re seeing what’s there.

MANSFIELD: Yeah. I’m telling you what’s there and what’s there is Aristotle to use one word. But yeah. So I’m just trying it. And then Aristotle understands liberalism better than liberals do, that’s what I’m saying.

KRISTOL: And the early liberals who set this all up sort of understood it.

MANSFIELD: Yes. They understood the step they were taking. Because they saw better what Aristotle meant. And they thought they saw what was a danger in Aristotle and no doubt that danger exists. So, I don’t think it was unknown to Aristotle. There isn’t human life without danger.

KRISTOL: The appropriation of soul for –

MANSFIELD: Yeah. The appropriation of soul for kind of divine right tyranny.

KRISTOL: But you’d think it’s important to recur, so to speak, to Aristotle now because otherwise we just forget the kind of, really the right way to mix these elements and to –

MANSFIELD: Yeah, you forget what the early modern philosophers knew, not just what Aristotle knew. So you forget the reason for, original defining reason for liberal democracy.

KRISTOL: Which was?

MANSFIELD: Which was an attack on the need – the felt need, perceived need, misperceived need maybe, for an attack on the soul.

KRISTOL: You need to bring the soul back now because otherwise it gets – liberal democracy can’t survive –

MANSFIELD: Yes, and this includes an Aristotelian appreciation for religion. So this is all together without referring or basing one’s understanding on religion. That will be a separate argument against our, as an improvement over liberal democracy. But I’m presenting the Aristotelean one.

KRISTOL: And finally, these politicians need to understand a little more than the businessman and the intellectuals?

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: To sort of manage the tripartite – the people, businessmen and the intellectuals – to manage that mixing properly.

MANSFIELD: Yeah, they have to see the separateness of those functions, but also what they're aiming at. And what they both lack, which is an appreciation of virtue.

KRISTOL: So it's virtue that's missing.

MANSFIELD: It's virtue that's missing.

KRISTOL: Along with the soul.

MANSFIELD: Along with the soul.

KRISTOL: Should virtue and the soul be brought back explicitly, I guess is my final question? I mean, would you recommend politicians talk about this particularly? Or is this somehow to guide them, but to let the businessmen be businessmen and let the intellectuals be intellectuals? Or is there a problem with just letting it all play out in a kind of, in a way that there's no –

MANSFIELD: If you try to bring back the soul explicitly, you'll encounter opposition from the intellectuals who still remember the – you might say the origin of liberalism or have some awareness of it.

But maybe we need to do that. Certainly Tocqueville at the beginning of [*Democracy in America*](#) in the introduction refers to the degraded souls of people. And he was talking not so much in America as in Europe. Democracy with its inability to justify authority of any kind leads to degraded souls. So I think I would give it a try.

KRISTOL: And I think you couldn't look up to the kind of forms of greatness that you said are so important, have some understanding of and see that it's more than just a quantitative difference, so to speak.

MANSFIELD: Yes.

KRISTOL: Between Lincoln and the rest of us which are –

MANSFIELD: And that our science of psychology needs to make room for the soul.

KRISTOL: Well, that's an ambitious undertaking for a very ambitious essay, which I'm glad we discussed. It's about more, ultimately, than I think this particular regime and this – businessmen, intellectuals. You've given us kind of a bit of a history of political philosophy and certainly an account of Aristotle that's very, and the relevance of Aristotle, I would say, that's unusual and helpful. Requires more thinking and work.

MANSFIELD: Thank you very much.

KRISTOL: Which our viewers will do.

MANSFIELD: That's enough praise.

KRISTOL: That was more than enough – not more than enough, but enough. Yes, a just amount. Harvey Mansfield, thank you for joining me today to discuss this excellent essay, "Democracy and the Mixed Regime," and really beyond the essay itself.

And thank you for joining in CONVERSATIONS.

[END]