

**THE MANLY MAN'S MAN: HARVEY MANSFIELD,  
CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL THEORIST AND ACADEMIC  
PROVOCATEUR, ARGUES THAT WOMEN - AND SOCIETY -  
NEED TO COME TO TERMS WITH 'MANLINESS'**

Boston Globe - Boston, Mass.

Mar 12, 2006

C.1

*Ideas*

Word Count:1367

*Critical Faculties. Christopher Shea's column appears biweekly in Ideas.*

**WHO IS NOT JUST** a man, but a manly man? And who today can even say the words "manly man" without smirking? These questions are at the heart of "Manliness" (Yale), the new book by Harvard government professor Harvey C. Mansfield, who has long shouldered a reputation as the campus's most outspoken conservative.

In answer to the first question, Mansfield nominates, among others, the marshal played by Gary Cooper in "High Noon." When the town's sniveling semi-men slink away from the task, Cooper boldly goes out to fight the thugs arriving in his town. As for the second question—well it just shows how wanly gender neutral our society has become: Manly men scare us.

Liberals at Harvard may balk at the suggestion that Mansfield is an academic Gary Cooper. But while some of his conservative colleagues complain privately about affirmative action or grade inflation or women's studies, Mansfield has unfailingly stepped forward with his rhetorical Remington blazing away. Most recently, he stood by president Lawrence H. Summers, whom Mansfield says he considered a manly man—at least until Summers's every third sentence became an apology.

While polishing his role as the Last Conservative Standing at Harvard, Mansfield has also built a reputation as a political theorist solid enough that even liberal political scientists see him as a model for how to practice a humanistic brand of political science. His books "Machiavelli's Virtue," "Taming the Prince: The Ambivalence of Modern Executive Power," and "America's Constitutional Soul" are dense, learned, and steeped in classical

thought.

"Manliness," which mates his interest in Great Books and culture-war combat, confronts two trends he has long deplored: academic gender studies, which see "male" and "female" as fluid categories constructed by society, and feminism, which says there is almost nothing that men can do that women cannot. Nonsense, Mansfield thinks. For better and worse, men are more willing than women to stick out their necks for causes, ideas, and people. They possess a greater taste for the physical and intellectual combat that has led to mankind's (yes, mankind's) greatest achievements. "I don't think we need to preserve manliness," he said in an interview. "I think there is plenty of evidence that manliness is around us. But women need to come to terms with it-society as a whole does." The gender-neutral society is by definition a mediocre one, with male greatness viewed as threatening to the social order and men and women crammed into boxes they don't fit in.

Needless to say, Mansfield's rhetoric evokes visceral reactions. "I think you have to say it is a cry of desperation," says Robin Lakoff, a professor of linguistics at Berkeley. "Here is guy who has seen his male privilege vanish as society became more equal. He wants to turn the clock back." But if it weren't such a controversial topic, it wouldn't be manly to take it on.

Mansfield's definition of manliness is maddeningly imprecise: Basically, he says, you know it when you see it. Mansfield sees it in firefighters, warriors, and great thinkers, but also, interestingly, in Margaret Thatcher. It is a "quality of the soul," he writes in one typically opaque passage. "A manly man asserts himself," he writes in another, "so that he and the justice he demands are not overlooked." Mansfield believes that the great philosophers understood the manly man, and his own idea of manliness becomes a bit clearer when he let's them do the talking.

Plato and Aristotle, for example, described how the quality called "thumos," or spiritedness, which men supposedly have in abundance, helped keep cities safe and spurred vigorous debate in the agora. Thomas Hobbes, in "Leviathan," puzzled over how to keep manliness in check so that men who come together under government would not hack each other to bits. And Nietzsche famously idolized the "superman," whom Mansfield would applaud if Nietzsche had tempered him with a bit of mercy.

In describing manliness, Mansfield trusts common stereotypes more than social science—a move sure to endear him to feminists. When it comes to believing in male-female differences, Mansfield makes Summers look like a piker: Mansfield cites the relevant psychological studies, but he does so disdainfully. Statistical social science, he believes, is unmanly. It breaks men and women down into measurable attributes while failing to see them whole. Stereotypes, on the other hand, are "democratic," possessing a respect for the wisdom of the past.

The common understanding is that men are aggressive while women are caring; women are "faithful or at least unadventurous" in sex relative to men; they are "soft," "sensitive," and "indirect"; they cry and complain more. Of these cliches, "not one has been disproven" by social science, Mansfield writes. Thumos plus vaulting ambition has its rewards. It is no accident that corporate boardrooms remain largely male, despite two generations of gender-neutral ideology. "Men," Mansfield writes, "have the highest offices, the leading reputations; they make the discoveries, conceive the theories, win the prizes, start the companies, score the touchdowns."

Nor should it surprise that women are losing the housework battles. "Manly men," he writes, "disdain women's work." Mansfield allows that women can sometimes do manly deeds--Thatcher prosecuting the Falklands War, for example, or Grace Kelly picking up a rifle at the climax of "High Noon." But Mansfield says it should be obvious they are doing something unusual for their sex. Forcing manly men to wash dishes, or to curb their aggressive ways in politics or business out of deference to "sensitive" women, does violence to nature and gelds modern society.

As might be expected, Mansfield's critics in the academy are many. Theda Skocpol, a colleague in the Harvard government department, says Mansfield has "identified some qualities that are very important in human endeavors," but flatly rejects his binary view of humanity. "I don't think Harvey realizes to what extent we have moved beyond these traditional ideas about men and women. Most people believe that to be an effective leader you need to combine traditionally male and traditionally female abilities."

And while few scholars today say that there are no behavioral differences between men and women, surely most scholars will say Mansfield exaggerates their depth and permanence. He cites the Berkeley linguist Lakoff, for example, for her work documenting how women frame requests

in an apologetic, super-polite way. But Lakoff says much social science work has shown that these linguistic quirks are based on social circumstance. Low-status males are apologetic, too, in the presence of high-status men, and women in positions of authority shed many "female" traits. Anne Norton, a political scientist at the University of Pennsylvania, says Mansfield takes a "cartoonish" view of modern masculinity and "projects it backward into history," ignoring scholarly work that shows how the concept of manliness has changed over time. It would make his story a lot more interesting, she says, if he acknowledged that Achilles, in Mansfield's words "the manly hero par excellence without whom a book on manliness can hardly be composed," probably slept with other men-and is described as being as pretty as a girl.

Mansfield gives the impression that he'd rather live in ancient Greece, but even he does not propose undoing a century of feminism. He endorses, perhaps as the most that could be achieved, the mommy-track world. Women would be free to compete for any job, but no one would expect women to have 50 percent of the top jobs—and taking time off to raise children, or staying home to begin with, would be applauded. In private, women would be "free to be women." In sexual matters there would be a reversion to female modesty and male gentlemanliness.

Of course, the big question here, what readers really want to know, is: Does Mansfield do housework? Indeed, he confesses to doing an unmanly amount—the dishes, laundry, and bed making. "I am sure he finds household work undignified," says his wife, Delba Winthrop, a lecturer in the Harvard extension school, who does the cooking. (They have hired help to do the cleaning now, but didn't always.) "But that holds for women, too. Somehow, it gets done." Sometimes even manly men have to compromise.

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