

Faith Liddell ([00:00](#)):

I'm Faith Liddell and welcome to the Festival of Ideas. And this session is on marriage and sex, not sex at dawn, as in the title of Chris Ryan's fabulous book, but sex at 10:30 AM, which it may seem still a little early to be talking about such intimate matters, but these are not just intimate matters. They are also essential ones in our lives and the powerful evidence and arguments you're about to hear me well, change the way you think about your own sexuality, your relationships and your attitudes about received wisdom air. Chris Ryan is literally a qualified to write about the science of human sexuality with a BA in English and American literature, and then an Emmy and a PhD in psychology from Seabrook university in San Francisco. He's an international consultant in hospitals around the world and a lecturer at the university of Barcelona medical school, but he's also lived and worked in a variety of cultures and social settings from teaching English to prostitutes in Bangkok and self-defense to land reform activists in Mexico to managing commercial real estate in New York and working with the women in community service in San Francisco.

Faith Liddell ([01:21](#)):

He's a well rounded man, a well-rounded man with a mission drawing from these multicultural experiences. His research has focused on trying to distinguish the human from the cultural exploring the prehistoric roots of human sexuality. This is a festival about planning in uncertainty and Chris Ryan is a man, the richly researched and compelling new narrative about us as sexual beings that through a certain enduring and he would see damaging assumptions. Some of them, in some cases into the air, in some cases out of the window, he throws up new questions for us. He basically casts us all into new uncertainties, but I think also as you'll discover a, also provides us with new kinds of freedom to Chris Ryan. Thank you.

Christopher Ryan ([02:20](#)):

Thank you. Good morning. Am I on good? I wasn't sure how to begin this morning's presentation until about four 30 this morning when the couple in the room next door started going at it and, and I was awakened to the sound of a woman in ecstasy, and I thought isn't that ironic? So interesting. So let's begin with a discussion of what scientists called female cops, dilatory vocalization. It's a very dry phrase for something that we, we all know in love. Show of hands, if you dare, how many of you have heard a heterosexual couple having sex in the hotel room? The neighbors, God help us, our parents just about everyone. It seems. Okay. and how many of those cases was the man making more noise than the woman?

Christopher Ryan ([03:16](#)):

Not a one. Very interesting. Isn't that? Now this is just one of many different pieces of data that we we recount in our book that point to the notion that human females are every bit as a little bitterness and sexual as the male, despite what we've been told for thousands of years you know, the stent, what we call the standard narrative in the book, posits that women are the discerning passive on interested part of the equation and what they're doing is sitting back and she was saying the best provider from among their potential suitors. Whereas the men are running around trying to you know, hump every leg. They can find like little dogs. In fact, what you find, if you look at the, the animal kingdom is that the human female is one of a very few number of species in which she is willing and able to have sex throughout her menstrual cycle and throughout her life cycle, whether or not that sex could possibly lead to pregnancy.

Christopher Ryan ([04:18](#)):

In fact, if you think of the number of times you've had sex and divided by the number of children you have, if you're the least bit lucky, you're going to find a ratio of a thousand to one or more most animals, the gorilla, for example, a closely related primate, the females have sex 10 to 15 times per birth. No more than that. Most animals only have sex when the female is ovulating. So we can begin with this insight into the nearly unique nature of human sexuality, particularly as it pertains to female ability and readiness to engage in sexual acts, the only other there's only a handful of other animals that share this quality with humans, chimps, Bonobos, and dolphins, all of which are highly intelligent, highly social beings, which further reinforces the thesis in our book, which is that for human beings and these other species sex is not primarily about reproduction. You ask most people why we have sex. They say to have babies, but only 1% or less of our sex acts result in babies. And I'm sure all of us can think of some types of sex acts that can't possibly result in babies, right. And we engage in them with, with great enthusiasm. Okay. So these are, this is the the U S hardcover and paperback version. We've got the Australian version outside.

Christopher Ryan ([05:49](#)):

Let's talk about the standard model. All right, the standard model, which is a story, all heard the standard narrative of human sexual evolution, posits that at the heart of male, female interaction is an economic exchange. Men are trading something, meat, shelter, protection status to a woman in exchange for her fidelity, her sexual exclusive access to her sexuality. And that's how men can assure their paternity of any children that resolved. Now, according to the standard narrative, this is something that's always been at the heart of human nature, this male obsession with female sexual behavior, as a way of controlling a paternity assuring paternity, what Casella and I argue in our book is that this obsession with female sexual behavior that we still see today, where women are being stoned to death in the desert for the crime of having been raped, right? It's still with us or shamed in high school because you wore a skirt that's a little too high, or because she had a boyfriend that somebody didn't approve of, we still see this happening.

Christopher Ryan ([06:59](#)):

But what we argue in the book is that this isn't human nature. This is a response to a particular economic situation that our species found itself in no more than 10,000 years ago. With the advent of agriculture, it's very difficult for us to understand how radically our society's changed with the advent of agriculture pre agriculture. We're living in hunter gatherer bands no more than 150 people. Everyone knew each other quite well. And the central organizing principle of the hunter gatherer band, whether we're talking about Aboriginal Australia or the Amazon or the Inuits and Alaska is sharing, there's an African expression that cause Hilda told me the best place to stay to store extra food is in your friend's stomach, right? This is a common, nearly universal trait of hunter gatherer societies. Now, you might think that I'm making the argument that our ancestors were noble savages, this old tired argument.

Christopher Ryan ([07:57](#)):

I'm not, I'm not saying that they shared things because they were inherently more generous than you. And I I'm saying that they shared things because it simply made more sense. It's a more efficient, effective way of organizing societies and a pre agricultural world in the post agricultural world, where you have accumulated resources, you have a harvest that has to be stored in protected and distributed. You have a house that you've spent years building. You have livestock that you've spent your life cultivating and growing the herd. You want to make sure that those things pass on to your children. So

that's when it becomes important to control your wife's sexual behavior. It's not human nature. It's an economic response to agriculture. That's why, if you look in the old Testament, the line, we all know they'll shop in our covet, thy neighbor's wife, right? Seems like it's saying respect your neighbors marriage.

Christopher Ryan ([08:50](#)):

But if you read it in context, it says nor his house, nor his servants, nor his is, she asks, I think is the actual word in the king James version nor his livestock. So it's about not coveting thy neighbor's stuff. It's not about respecting his marriage. So that's the standard narrative that we argue against in the book we people often say, well, how can you possibly know how our ancestors sex lives functions? There are no fossils of sexuality. So we look at four different areas. We look at primatology, particularly chimpanzees and Bonobos, which are equally related to humans. They're by far the closest related to us. In fact, they're more closely related to humans than the Indian elephant is to the African elephant. Okay? Very in terms of DNA and genetic drift, we're very closely related to them. Now you'll often hear about chimpanzees, particularly in a discussion of the primate origins of violence and things like this.

Christopher Ryan ([09:50](#)):

And you know, whether or not warfare goes back into free history, but it's intellectually illegitimate to discuss these issues. Only mentioning the chimpanzee often termed our closest primate relative. It's not, as I was saying in a few minutes ago in the green room, it's like, if you have a brother who's in prison for murder and another brother who's working in, in Sudan, helping refugees and the completely selfless, wonderful guy. And when people talk about you, they only mention your brother in prison, right? Chimpanzees are violent. There's warfare, there's rape, there's infanticide. There's all sorts of nastiness in chimpanzee societies, but Banabos in over 40 years of observation in the wild and in captivity, not a single case of infanticide rape, murder, or lethal combat between groups has ever been witnessed. Now, I think that's relevant. But when you read about these things, you'll often hear chimpanzees our closest relative.

Christopher Ryan ([10:51](#)):

There's a very political element to these discussions. So I hope all of you will remember that, but novos are equally relevant. Anthropology. We look particularly at societies that live presumably more or less the way our ancestors did because they're pre agricultural. There aren't many of them left, but we access as much of the information about those societies as we can. And we also look at first accounts from travelers and Jesuit missionaries and whatever sources of information we have, what you find is that they tend to be pretty relaxed sexually. And we can talk about that a little bit later in the Q and a, if you want some examples of those societies, we look at comparative primate anatomy, physiological response, which we'll talk about in a few moments, particularly if there's anyone here who's easily embarrassed. I won't be bothered if you get up and leave, because this could be pretty embarrassing if discussion of testicles and things like that bothers you. And then psychosexual reality. What turns us on what of pornography are we interested in? What sort of issues do people come to when they go to relationship counselors and things like that? Okay. So here, as I was saying,

Christopher Ryan ([12:07](#)):

The, the line leading

Christopher Ryan ([12:11](#)):

To chimps and Bonobos split off from the human line about seven, well, five to 7 million years ago, these things are very approximate. And then the chimps and Bonobos split one to 3 million years ago. So you can see any other sort of we have the, the gorilla down here, which is a harem based alpha male system and the orangutan, which is dispersed and the Gibbon, which is the only monogamous age. [inaudible] No a little bit more about bonobo social life. We know about the Chimp life. We've all read Jane Goodall and seen these, the documentaries on television. The bonobo social life is very different. It's female centered. You could even say female dominated, but interestingly, the way females wield power is different from the way males wield power, which leads to confusion in anthropological studies when anthropologists claim that there are no matriarchal societies in the world and there never could be. And it's absolutely impossible.

Christopher Ryan ([13:15](#)):

A lot of that is because

Christopher Ryan ([13:17](#)):

They're expecting a matriarchy to be a mirror image of a patriarchy. They're expecting to find women dominating men with their feet on their necks, the way men tend to dominate women. But what you find is that in societies where women have a lot of status equal, or even greater than male status, as in Bonobos, this society doesn't, isn't organized around dominance, it's much more collaborative and collective. And the males are in general, far better off in such societies, both human and animal. Yes. Do I have some applause there? I did it. I did an interview the other day for men's health magazine. And at the very beginning, I don't know if you're familiar with the magazine, but it sort of centers on how to get laid, I think is the main and the, at the beginning of the interview, the journalist said, look, I'm really sorry. You know, I have to tell you from the get go, this is going to be about how to use your book to get laid. I said, all right, we can work with that. So the whole article, I kept hammering the same nail, which is guys, if you want to get laid, make women feel safe, comfortable, relaxed, you know, just because she's dancing provocatively doesn't mean she wants to be with you just that, you know, the way she dresses, she's not sending you any messages, just chill out and things will work out fine.

Christopher Ryan ([14:42](#)):

I don't know if they'll hear the message, but I sent it okay. So, but although society's very low stress, very high sex the great private biologist friends Deval put it succinctly. He said that chimpanzees use violence to get sex Bonobos use sex, to avoid violence. So there are two paths that that are our close relatives have taken very differently. No infanticide in murder, as I said, and no sexually exclusive pair bonding. Now you do find that among Bonobos, we use them we're promiscuous in our book, but we don't mean promiscuous in an uncaring casual sort of sense. What we mean is the original sense of the word, which is mixing. It doesn't mean unfeeling and Bonobos are extremely emotional, extremely soulful animals. So in no way, do we mean to say that Bonobos or the anthropology, the anthropological studies that we discuss?

Christopher Ryan ([15:42](#)):

We're not saying there's unfeeling sex. Remember these people have known each other their whole lives. So they've gotten multiple sexual partners, but they're very deeply connected to all of them. And there can be unique relationships pair bonding. We're not arguing that pair bonding doesn't happen in our species, so that there's anything wrong with it when it does. But we're saying it's not necessarily sexually exclusive in societies that don't demand that now Bonobos sexuality features face-to-face sex.

One of the only other species that, that do this, certainly one, one of the only primate species, other than us often female induced females are quite, libidinous all possible combinations except mother son. That's the only combination you won't see. But interestingly, the mother son relationship is the most enduring, profound relationship among Bonobos. In fact, a males status in the male ranking.

Christopher Ryan ([16:37](#)):

Isn't determined by how big he is, how strong he is, how dominant he is over the other males. It's determined by where his mother's rank was or his and his mother's rank is determined by how much the other females like it's very interesting. So sex is used as an antidote to stress and conflict, as I said, and the ratio of sex acts of sex acts to birth is 500 to one or more. All right, now this is where easily embarrassed people need to leave or cover your eyes at least because we're going to see what happens when you throw some food into a group of Bonobos, particularly apples, which they very much love when you throw as a comparison. If you throw some food into an enclosure of chimpanzees, what happens is the dominant male will, or the males will take control of the food and share it with their henchmen. And maybe if there's an ovulating female around, she might get some because she's smelling pretty good. And depending on how much there is, it might a little bit might filter down to the babies and the other females. That's what happens when you throw some food into enclosure of chimps, we're going to see now what happens when you throw some food into an enclosure of Bonobos

Speaker 4 ([19:05](#)):

[Inaudible],

Christopher Ryan ([19:10](#)):

But oboe handshake is a book written by an Australian woman named Vanessa woods, which I'd recommend to you. If you're interested in knowing more about Bonobos, her husband is a very well known primatologist and she knew nothing about Bonobos or primates in general when she agreed to marry him and move with him to Congo, which is that's love. And and she wrote a book about her experience, living with him there and working with the Bonobos. It's very interesting book. And she provided that, that film as well. Okay. Darwin was very interested in this question and, and, you know, the original title of our book when I was working on the manuscript was with Darwin, didn't know about sex. And the idea was to talk about how Darwin's the paucity of sexual experience in his life. Allowed him to have some pretty Victorian views of female sexuality.

Christopher Ryan ([20:09](#)):

He married his cousin first cousin. And as far as anyone knows is the only woman he ever had Congress with. And I think it's the way you can say that. So he certainly didn't have a lot of experience and, you know, he had the chance, he was all around the south Pacific, but when the other men went on shore and Tahitian, whatever, he stayed on the boat and, you know, wrote his notes. But he was very interested by sexual swellings in chimpanzees and Bonobos at the time Darwin was writing. No one knew a difference between the two because it made him question the, the central assumption that females are not interested in sex and would never provoke sex that they're just sitting back, waiting for the men to fight it out. And then maybe making some sort of decision because the sexual swelling is obviously an invitation to sex.

Christopher Ryan ([21:00](#)):

It's it provokes the males and that didn't fit into his understanding. So he was you know, our book is not at all a trashing of Darwin or arguing against him or insulting him in any way. In fact, I'm pretty sure that if he were alive today, he'd be the first to reassess his theories in light of all the information that's come to light since he wrote in 1860s. He was always very dependent on data and very interested and very willing to throw over his theories if, if new information presented itself. So, and he knew about some of the alternative theories at the time from Lewis, Henry Morgan and others, which you'll see if you read our book now sexual swellings, you know, if you're like me, which I hope you're not for your sake you look around and you just see horny primates everywhere.

Christopher Ryan ([21:58](#)):

And I'm looking at you. I see a room full of horny primates here. You know, some of you are in denial, some less. So but you know, I look at something like this. I see chimpanzee sexual swellings, and it's not just in a Victorian society. I, this still exists today. I Beyonce. Does anyone know who Beyonce is? Or what was the other one is famous for her, but sorry, J lo J-Lo to Sylvia's daughter was visiting us. She's she's an adult. She was she's 23. Now she was 21, I think a couple of years ago I was working on the,

Christopher Ryan ([22:36](#)):

And

Christopher Ryan ([22:38](#)):

She's very curvy. And of course, as her stepfather, I'm not supposed to notice that. But at one point she said something, she was, she lives in Africa with her father and Mozambique, and she said something about how she was dancing. And people said, she looked like J-Lo. And I thought she said, jello. I said, you look like jello when you dance. I don't know. Is that an African thing? I don't know. No, J-Lo not jello anyway. That's neither here nor there. But here we have the butt bra. Now this is available online or in any fine lingerie distributor what is the point of this? Why would a woman wearable bra, you know, or get what are they, you know, butt implants. I don't even know what they're called, but they exist right now. What is that appealing to, if not this primitive sexual swelling

Christopher Ryan ([23:36](#)):

You know,

Christopher Ryan ([23:37](#)):

We can say, oh, it's just fashion. Well, but what is fashion? You know, dig, dig, dig, and you find chimpanzees and Bonobos. You know, why do women have what scientists insist on calling pendulous breasts, pendulous? There there's no, there's no reason that we have women have to have the fat cells in the breast. Lactation does not depend on the presence of those fat cells. It's completely separate. There's really no convincing explanation for the presence of the female breasts other than as a signaling device, a sexual signaling device. So when I hear women say, you know, men shouldn't look at my breasts, they're about giving them to babies. They're not about actually, no, I'm sorry. They are about attracting the attention of men. And they're very effective at that. The theory is that when our ancestors went from being on all fours or knuckle, walking as chimps and Bonobos, where the sexual swelling was behind and became upright, the sexual swelling shifted to the visual field where you're looking at someone who's upright, which is why the cleavage looks an awful lot, like a butt crack. I'm sorry, but it's true.



Christopher Ryan ([24:53](#)):

All right. The,

Christopher Ryan ([25:00](#)):

Now, first of all, I have to say, the Italian in question is a good friend of mine, and he permits me to use this photo and he lives in India. So he'll never know. Anyway, you might think that gorillas have huge testicles. In fact, a gorilla's testicles are about the size of kidney beans, and you can't even see them here. That's a gorilla. I photographed in Holland on a warm spring day, lying out in the sun. And if they're ever going to be visible, that's the time. And there's nothing there. They're about the size. They're very small and they're inside. They're tucked up in the body. They don't descend the way they do in chimps and humans and Bonobos the bonobo. I don't know if you, how well you can see, but a bonobo and a Chimp have testicles about the size of an extra large chicken.

Christopher Ryan ([25:49](#)):

They're massive. And humans are somewhere in between Italians, closer to the banana end of the scale. Apparently. Now this, the reason this is my favorite chart is it's, it's the only chart I've ever made that I have any, I'm not visually talented particularly, but this chart is full of information. Now, first of all, you'll note in the gorilla, the male is much bigger than the female. Same with the orangutan, roughly double the size of a female. The reason for this is that it's in species where the males fight each other for access to the females. The evolutionary pressure is on size and ferocity of the male. So they grow bigger and stronger over time. Whereas in strict more or less a monogamous species like the Gibbon, you'll see they're exactly the same size humans, chimps Bonobos, about 15 to 20% difference in body size.

Christopher Ryan ([26:54](#)):

Now this indicates a promiscuous promiscuity. There's some competition between males, but not really much. In fact, the evolutionary pressure shifts from the individual male to the spermatic capacity of the male. And that's why the testicles grow much larger and evolve to be stronger. And that's why male humans produce so much more sperm than we can ever use. And the testicles are outside the body. As you see here, here and here, but inside the body here, here, and here you'd want them to be inside the body to protect you. When you're having all these fights with the other gorillas, you don't want your guys swinging in the breeze, but here it doesn't matter if they're outside because there's not that much conflict between males and they need to be outside the body in any case, because the lower temperature allows the sperm spermatozoa to last longer. So, as I say in the book, having external testicles is like having a special refrigerator in the garage, just for beer. You know, you're the sort of guy who expects a party to break out at any time. And you want to, you ready?

Christopher Ryan ([28:02](#)):

Yeah. So what else do we have here? Here? We see the sexual swelling and the human female is here. And the Chimp and bonobo is here in the gorilla orangutan. And given there is no sexual swelling, right? Again, another indication of a permissive hewas species, or as primatologists referred to as multi male, multi female species. Also, you see here that chimps humans, chimps are human and Bonobos, sorry, face each other, having sex. The others are all rear entry. So there's also this sort of intimacy if, and also Bonobos they French kiss, which is grosser to me than the sex thing we saw earlier. They hold hands, they kiss each other's fingers and toes. They're extremely affectionate sweet animals. Okay. Now you know, this was just to show that it's not only primates that have external testicles, but it's also to remind

myself that my life has come to a point where I'm showing slides of squirrels with and it's not just animals that have these external testicles. It's also

Christopher Ryan ([29:11](#)):

Cars,

Christopher Ryan ([29:11](#)):

At least in the United States. I don't know if you have this yet in Australia, but it's a, if not, it would be a wonderful import export opportunity. And so the last thing I want to say, you know, Arthur Miller had this great line about an era is over when its basic illusions have been exhausted. I guess what I want to leave you with is I want to make sure everyone understands that our book is not an argument against monogamy at all. My parents have been married for one year. Monogamously as far as I know. And if not, I don't want to know. We are in as much as I, as I'm arguing that we're a highly sexual species, perhaps the most sexual species on the planet, we're also a very loving species. And for some people, sex and love are necessarily part of the same package for other people.

Christopher Ryan ([30:04](#)):

They're not, but wherever you fall on that spectrum it's important to understand that sexual long-term sexual monogamy comes as naturally to our species as vegetarianism. If you look at our teeth, you look at the chemicals in our saliva, you look at our digestive system. It's clear that we're omnivores. There's really no question that our ancestors evolved eating both meat and plant material. We're every bit as omnivorous in terms of sexuality, as we are in terms of our diets. So the fact that you choose to live as a vegetarian, doesn't make you a herbivore. It makes you an omnivore. Who's choosing to live as a vegetarian, as an herbivore. So making the choice to be a vegetarian, it doesn't mean that barbecue suddenly stopped smelling. Good, right? So our message isn't that you should go out and become swingers or have an open relationship or whatever our message is, simply choose whatever path you're choosing with knowledge, with compassion, and with the understanding that you're going to face certain challenges. If your decision conflicts with your evolved design, I'll leave you with that thought. Thank you.

Faith Liddell ([31:28](#)):

Nope. We've got some people leaving venues for breakfast. We're obviously a little bit off putting, and now there's a microphone just here, near the front and then up at the back. So don't be shy just if you could start to prepare and come up to my phone and just to get us started, I thought I'd just ask you, you know, the philosophers, evolutionary psychologists, the primatologists you've kind of knocked quite a lot of them off their perches, a in the process of kind of coming up with this alternative narrative. I just wondered how they have reacted to your your book-in. Well,

Christopher Ryan ([32:06](#)):

That's a good question. Unfortunately, most of them haven't reacted at all. I was kind of hoping we'd get into a big dispute with Steven Pinker in the New York times or something, but not yet. I keep, I keep provoking him. He hasn't responded, but I'll tell you a lovely story about this, which is that just before maybe two, two or three months before the manuscript was, was finished Kilda and I were talking about this question, like, how are people going to respond to this? And of course we didn't know, the book was going to be a bestseller. We're completely unknown. It's our first book. We were just happy that it was being published. We had no expectations at all. But I did feel, you know, cause Hilda says, you



know, w what about friends, Deval and Helen Fisher, who are two people that we don't criticize them personally, of course, but we disagree with some of their conclusions, but we use a lot of their research to build our own arguments.

Christopher Ryan ([33:02](#)):

Right. And they're both primatologists she's an anthropologist, he's a primatologist and he's actually an, a fault ethnologist, but he works with primates. And so I thought, well, you know, I want to, I'm going to write to them. So I wrote to both of them and I said, look, we've got this manuscript coming out. We very much respect your work, but we do disagree with some of your conclusions. So I'd be happy to send you the material that's relevant to you, where we talk about your work. And if you think we're being unfair or we're missing something, I'd love to hear it. And, you know, I don't know if that's ethical. I mean, I don't really know whatever some people have said that was dishonest of me to do that. I don't really know why, but anyway, so I sent it off. Helen Fisher was too busy.

Christopher Ryan ([33:47](#)):

She said, thanks. But I don't have time. Friends live all wrote back. And he said, okay, well, this is pretty interesting, but I think you're missing this. And you know, what about that? And then I wrote back and we, yeah, we looked at this and what about that study? And we went back and forth a few times and then he said, well, I don't know. You might be right. You might be wrong, but it's certainly an interesting book. And this is the sort of discussion we need to have and good luck. And I said, could I quote you publicly? And he said, sure. So on the back of the U S edition, there's a blurb from friends of the wall saying what might be right. Might be wrong, but it's a hell of an interesting book. And to me, that science, you know, he's not personally invested. He doesn't care if he ends up being right or wrong about every little thing he's written, what he cares about is moving the discussion forward. And, and that's the approach that I hope I'll always take as well. Yes. Question. Thank

Faith Liddell ([34:41](#)):

You. That was really fabulous. I'd like to hear what you've learned about the face-to-face six and the thing of feelings and six and what, what, what you've understood about that space of intimacy and sexuality. You know, it's a very vexed question between men and women about women always clamoring for more feeling. And, you know, men are pretty strong on quickies and everybody cooperates and, you know, transacts around all of that, but often not with enough satisfaction about the end. So what have we learned from the Bonobos, or what have you come to understand from your study of this area about that feeling of that space of six and feeling?

Christopher Ryan ([35:18](#)):

That's an interesting, interesting question. Not, you know, obviously we can't really know what Bonobos are feeling, right. Just we're looking at them from outside. But there does seem to be in bonobo societies. And I say advisedly friends of all writes very much about the culture of Bonobos and chimpanzees. And I think they deserve to be considered cultured beings because they do transmit knowledge through the generations. There are many examples of this you know, in, in bonobo societies, you see deep affection that sometimes relates to sexuality and sometimes doesn't, and I think that carries over into our species as well. And in the book I write that sex and love are like wine and cheese. You know, they go great together, but if you're really hungry, a piece of cheese is pretty good, you know? And and I don't think there's anything shameful about that.

Christopher Ryan ([36:23](#)):

I think we've, we've been indoctrinated with a lot of teachings that really don't have our best interest at heart. It's been very interesting to see the responses from women readers to the book, because I mean, the whole response to the book is completely different from what I expected. I expected 50% irate screaming, conservative, you know, how dare you. It's been about 5% anger, 95% positive. I expected a lot of men saying, Hey, yeah, man, right. You know, this is, this is why I'm a horny dude. And most women saying, oh, this is just a, you know, an agenda male agenda, whatever. In fact, we've gotten more emails from women thanking us for the book than for men we've even gotten emails more than one from women saying I had to stop and every 10 pages, seriously, that one blew my mind. Because it's, it's not really a sexy book. I mean, there's no, you know could be you're not getting back to some of these women saying, you know, w what's your phone number?

Christopher Ryan ([37:40](#)):

No, no saying, I'm saying,

Christopher Ryan ([37:43](#)):

Y you know, what, what was sexy? And they S they said that it would just felt liberating that they thought there was something wrong with them. They, you know, that there, they felt like, oh, I'm much more near than a woman's supposed to be. And that, you know, just sort of brought it out and left them feeling liberated. So I didn't talk about other societies and the anthropological stuff, but there are some fascinating studies of other cysts of a hunter gatherer societies in which women are not shamed. And they feel, in fact, there's a wonderful, I don't know how much you're okay with finding there's a ritual we describe, and I think it's the kulina in Brazil where the women will get up in the morning and the men are just lazy bastards as, you know, whatever society we're lazy and they're lying around in their hammocks.

Christopher Ryan ([38:32](#)):

And the women will say, okay, we need guys to go hunting because it's been a while. And so they'll get together at Dawn. And they go around in the village from hut to hut and they sang very suggestive songs, which basically translate to, we want meet you lazy guys, never give us enough meat, go, you know, bring us some meat, blah, blah, blah. And while they're singing the song, a woman will go up and bang on a man's hut or on the post where his hammock is strong. Meaning that if you come back with me today, I'll sleep with you tonight. Right? And you can't bang on the hotter, the, or the post of the man you're sleeping with at the time, your normal partner, it has to be someone new right. To motivate them. So then the men will get up and grumble and complain.

Christopher Ryan ([39:17](#)):

And by the way, if a man doesn't want to have sex with that woman, he'll pretend he's ill. So no one's feelings get hurt, bad stomach. But anyway, so then the men, we'll, we'll all complain and they'll, they'll leave the village together. But they hunt dispersed because they make too much noise and they have a better chance, but before they disperse, they agree. They'll meet at a certain point at a certain time of day before they go back into the village. So then they'll spread out, they'll go out. These people, hunt monkeys, mostly a couple of them will kill monkeys. And most of them won't, they come back, they cut up the monkeys. So every man has a piece of meat when they go back to the village and the women don't know who killed what, and they'll sling the meat down. And that we quote directly from the anthropologist cause his, his account is so funny. It's very dry academic, but he, you know, they sling the

meat down with smug expressions and then the women will cook it and everyone eats. And then they'll, they'll go off into their various places and have sex. And at the end, he says the kulina engage in this ritual quite often. And in quite good humor.

Faith Liddell ([40:24](#)):

Well, one of the myths you just don't bust is women's need for intimacy, but we might come back in a minute to erotic plasticity in women as well. Do you want to ask your question? Yeah. So I was wondering if you would comment on pornography and its growth on the internet.

Christopher Ryan ([40:39](#)):

Yes. Well, porn not, we talk about pornography a bit in the book. Pornography has driven virtually every one of these technical advances in communications in the last few decades. There's a book called the erotic engine that talks about this in detail, that the advent of, of VHS home movie recording you know, watching tapes at home the well even projected and projecting, you were talking about early 20th century pornography. The money for these new technologies initially comes from the porn industry and then Hollywood comes in afterwards. So the internet was driven in its early years by this hunger for porn and and the huge amount of money to be made there. I, I see it as yet. Another of just how sexual we are, how libidinous we are as a species. And yet we've got these social institutions that are, you know, trying to keep a lid on it.

Christopher Ryan ([41:44](#)):

And when, you know, when you repress these energies, they're going to be expressed. The problem is that they're expressed in perverted twisted destructive ways. But they will come out. And I, you know, I think I look at the, the scandal in the Catholic church that's been going on for thousands of years. It's come delight in the last couple of, you know, the last decade or two, but this is what happens when you take an extremely sexualized animal, an animal that experiences at sexuality to its toes, literally to its toes, our toes curl when we have orgasms. That's the one way, gentlemen, if you want to know if she's faking, look at her toes now, of course, I've just ruined it for you. If you're with a woman in this audience, because now she'll do it on purpose. But the reason our toes curl is it goes right back to our ancestors in the trees millions of years ago, if you're having an orgasm, the last thing you want to do is fall out of the tree. So you grab on you, hold on till it's over.

Faith Liddell ([42:49](#)):

Can you say a little bit about male reactions and female reactions to pornography as well? I think it's, I think that's a really interesting, and again, going back to our kind of prehistoric roots about what men are compelled by, and then actually the range of what women are compelled by. Well,

Christopher Ryan ([43:05](#)):

Women are, women are fascinating. I say that as a scientist and as just a regular guy. For example I think you're referring to the studies by Meredith chevres where she, she got straight and gay men and women hook them up to genital blood flow monitors. Okay. So these are, these are devices that actually measure the diversion of blood flowing into your, your genitals, which tells you how physiologically excited you are by something. And then they also on the table, they had a dial where they would indicate on the dial, how turned on. They were by whatever they were watching. And she showed these people gay porn, gay, male porn, lesbian porn, straight porn hot men and women just walking down the

beach or working out in a gym. So sort of like sec, make me, you know, attractive people been in a non-sexual setting.

Christopher Ryan ([44:06](#)):

And she also showed them bonobo porn. And and what she found was that the men both gay and straight and the lesbians all were turned on by what you would expect. So the gay men were turned on by the gay porn, but not really by the lesbian porn the straight porn, you know, when the guy came into the room, the gay guys like that, you know? And so it sort of fell where you would, it did, and also their, their indicators on the dial matched what was happening in their genitalia. The straight women would indicate what you would expect, you know, oh, I like the straight porn. I didn't like that. I liked that. I liked that, but their genitalia showed they were turned on by everything.

Christopher Ryan ([44:48](#)):

Mm we're. Consciously aware of it. It's not that they were lying. It's just that there's a disconnect in particularly in straight women and nominally straight women, because actually the, the sort of logical conclusion from this is that a lot of women who consider themselves to be straight are actually bisexual. That, that a woman's sort of more typical point on the Kinsey scale is like in the middle. Whereas men tend to separate out there. There are fewer truly bisexual men, you know, with men, the, the curve would look like this. Whereas with women, it looks like this. And other, a convergent example is someone gave testosterone shots to gay and straight men and women. And they found that the gay men, when they got the testosterone, surge became more focused on men, the straight men became more focused on women. That lesbians became more focused on women and the straight women became more focused on everybody.

Faith Liddell ([45:55](#)):

Next question. Fascinating. Thank you, Christopher. I believe you said that Gibbons are the only monogamous apes, what differing selection processes were there compared between the Gibbons and compared with the other apes, you mean evolutionary

Christopher Ryan ([46:09](#)):

Selection pressures. That's a very good question, which, which I haven't considered, honestly. The Gibbons are the only Asian ape, which could have something to do with they live in Southeast Asia. And in fact since the book was published just a year ago some researchers have started to indicate that some subspecies of given aren't actually monogamous with it's very difficult to study Gibbons because they live up in tree tops. They're in very small social groups. It's just a male female in there and they're young and they're very quiet. They don't make any noise at all when they have sex. So you can't even spot them that way. In fact of the hundreds of species of primates primates around the world, do you know how many social group living primates are monogamous that is in living in groups with more than one male? So not like gorillas where there's one male and not one, not one except us, if you believe the propaganda or their propaganda, I guess my books, propaganda too, but it's extremely, extremely rare or, or doesn't exist at all. So yeah, I, I can't really tell you what the selection pressures were, but yeah, it's, it's, it's interesting and they may not in fact be monogamous it. Yeah.

Faith Liddell ([47:40](#)):

Great. Yes. Thank you.

Christopher Ryan ([47:42](#)):

How come all the questions are from women?

Faith Liddell ([47:46](#)):

And just start by saying, it's interesting that we're everyone speaking so far, it's women, I'm probably the oldest woman to have spoken as yet though, significantly older than you are. I would think one thing that hasn't been touched on is the extreme change in sexual habits and so on since I was a child and since I was, you know, extremely horny as a teenager, and you couldn't do anything because you were so incredibly scared about getting pregnant, that was what stopped us now, of course, our teenagers and so on, very promiscuous. Do you think this is going to have any law? You know, how do you see that from your point of view?

Christopher Ryan ([48:29](#)):

Well, I, I, I certainly, I don't know how masturbation was seen

Faith Liddell ([48:36](#)):

That was also considered to be rather wicked, but also much less satisfactory. I was not that I was able to experience the real thing. And when I did, of course, I got pregnant straight away. So

Christopher Ryan ([48:52](#)):

There you go.

Christopher Ryan ([48:54](#)):

Well, you know, I think that first of all, I need to say, I don't have children. So to get that on the table, it's very easy for someone to talk about how to raise kids. There's never had kids, right? So I want to admit that. But I think that if you look at the United States, you look at the parts of the country that have sex education programs and the parts of the country that have what they call abstinence only programs. They call it sex ed, but essentially the message is just, don't just, don't, don't, you know, they don't talk about why they don't talk about ways to get around it. They don't talk about ways to have sex that other than intercourse, you know, they just don't, they're all embarrassed and they don't talk about it. Those are the parts of the country that have the highest rates of STDs, the highest rates of teen pregnancy, the highest rates of sexual violence against girls and so on.

Christopher Ryan ([49:47](#)):

So I think it's quite clear both looking at regions of the United States and looking internationally places like Holland, Sweden, Finland, and so on, where they have extensive sex education programs in the schools, they have condoms available easily available for free, you know, kids don't have to go into the drug store and feel embarrassed and so on. Those are the places that have the fewest number of problems for kids facing these things. Now, whether or not the kids are emotionally prepared for this is something that, that I can't answer. But again, it seems that in societies that have less shame and more openness about these discussions, the kids mature more quickly. I was reading an article recently about how common it is in Holland for 14, 15 year old girls to have their boyfriends over and actually sleep in the house with them because the parents approach is, look, they're going to do it anyway.

Christopher Ryan ([50:50](#)):

I want to know this guy. I want to meet him. I want to be part of this, you know, make sure everything's okay. And you know, they're gonna, they're going to do it upstairs in her room, or they're gonna do it in the car, or they're going to do it at some friend's house. And if they're doing it here, at least I'll know the person. And, and you know, it won't require breaking my contact with my daughter or son for them to take this step into adulthood, which frankly they're going to take whether we like it or not. So I do think there's something to that. We also, sorry, just quickly, we also talk in the book about a study done by James Prescott that shows that the more freedom there is in adolescent sexual behavior, the less violence there is in societies across the board. So there's a connection between

Faith Liddell ([51:39](#)):

The two. Thank you. Now we've got very little time. We've got two more questions and three more questions. Oh, can we, can we take them in a row and then quickly answer, all right, can you manage three at a time?

Christopher Ryan ([51:50](#)):

We'll just,

Faith Liddell ([51:53](#)):

I'll try and remember them if we can make them quick so we can get through. And we have a man as well, which is great. So let's take them all in a row and we'll try and answer them. Well, my question was with interbreeding in hunt together as societies, and if you don't know who your father is or your brothers are, how does nature get around this?

Christopher Ryan ([52:11](#)):

That's a good question. Humans Bonobos and chimps are all what are known as female, like saga MIS species, which means that upon reaching sexual maturity, the female generally leaves her, her natal group that she was born into and goes into another group. So now these groups would get together typically seasonally for festivals like in Edinburgh and that's where the females would normally leave their group and join other groups. So that's, that's generally how it was handled. Always intrigued me is why is the particular way in which how society chooses to distinguish the fixes and the way in which it does the girls, for example, wear dresses and skirts, whereas guys tend to wear traditionally the same sort of clothes that I'm wearing at the moment. Women wear my cup guys, generally don't, although there had been some societies where they are suddenly Gilt hair, long guy's hair short.

Christopher Ryan ([53:10](#)):

Can you, can you say anything about that? I can't, other than that, it's, it's clearly cultural and somewhat arbitrary because there are plenty of societies around the world where men's hair is long, the Italian with the big balls there, you know, he's there are too many societies around the world where those things are completely variable. So it's not, there's nothing biological about that. I don't believe next. Sorry. Debrief. Okay. when you treat women as controllable resource packets, you allow first of all, they're winnable, which means that while it might be worse for the average man, the best man, it's actually better having that. And also an argument against, well also that means in war as well as our civilization. Also if you an argument against for monogamy is male does desiring female youth, because if you're going to have to pick a partner, the younger, they are the longer they can bear children, because I don't think that matters if you're have multiple, have you



Faith Liddell ([54:18](#)):

Got that comment? Great. Thank you. Next. Thank you. So refer to where you were talking about when you showed straight women, do you want to speak into the microphone? Oh, sorry. Thank you. Just pull it down a bit. Yes. Okay. Yep. Straight women, titillating material and their mind. They said it wasn't doing anything for them, but their body, their biology showed differently. I was really interested in that. Cause I thought that's a cultural thing. That's mind to me mind over matter. And I don't, even though, as you were discussing earlier, things have changed sexually. They haven't changed radically. I find because you get this same statement, unfortunately from women. Oh, he's only, you know, about their husband generally. Oh, he's only interested in one thing. That's what you know, and they, they must've had joy and pleasure in sex, but they've lost it. And I think that is really sad because especially me, you know, I'm 70, I don't, perhaps I'm too old, but I don't feel, thank you for your comments. Do you want to just comments really? But do you have any quick responses to either of those or if you wanted, shall we, should we continue the conversation? Well, if we're on a tight deadline one minute. Yes.

Christopher Ryan ([55:38](#)):

I'm not sure what, I don't know what that last company,

Faith Liddell ([55:41](#)):

I agree. Individual conversations outside. I'm sure you'd be happy to chat. Oh yeah. Yes, yes,

Christopher Ryan ([55:50](#)):

Yes. You're right. It's very cultural. And one of my big complaints about sex research is that almost all of it is focused on American undergraduate students because it's done by American grad students. And those are that's the subject pool that's at hand. So, you know, you've got 18 to 22 year old American girls answering some question in their psych 101 class under fluorescent lights at eight o'clock in the morning. And that's taken to be indicative of female sexuality around the world. You know, I afraid you'll read, you know, 40% of women never have an orgasm. I asked a, in Mozambique, how many women never have orgasms? She said, none. Everyone has aura. There's no problem. There's no women are going to the doctor complaining that they're not having orgasms. And in that part of Africa anyway it's very cultural. Yes. So we're all going to Mozambique. Let's all go to Mozambique.

Faith Liddell ([56:50](#)):

Let's all. Give a big, thanks to Chris Ryan for his fantastic.