

Introduction of Charles Murray
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It has fallen to AEI's new president to take the helm amidst terrible storms. He has done so with good cheer and is steering our ship with steady assurance and resolve. Despite my has-been status I know that I can still speak for everyone associated with AEI on one point—to express our great appreciation and admiration for Arthur Brooks.

In October 1994, just as *The Bell Curve* was hitting the bookstores, *The New York Times* published a careful smear of Charles Murray, in the form of a cover article in its *Sunday Magazine* that strongly implied that (I am being delicate here) the man was a bit unbalanced. For the cover art the *Times* dispatched a photographer to Charles's hometown in Iowa where he was visiting his parents. Several hundred pictures were taken over the course of an afternoon—many came out well, some even portrayed the subject as downright handsome. But a few shots late in the day caught him squinting into the setting sun, and in one he was unrecognizably cockeyed. Naturally, the *Times* selected that one. It ran under the headline, "America's Most Dangerous Conservative."

The incident provoked a furor in the halls of the American Enterprise Institute. Not the article or the photo—those were tired old tricks to spring on a guileless soul like Charlie. Rather it was the headline. Jeane Kirkpatrick, Robert Bork, Irving Kristol, and probably others were thinking, "Hey wait a minute—I thought I was America's most dangerous conservative!"

But the headline's premise was wrong. Charles Murray is not a conservative. He is an old fashioned, heart-on-the-sleeve, do-gooder liberal. He is happy—I sometimes think eager—to upend the established order of things to help the poor, downtrodden, and unfortunate and to dethrone the comfortable, smug, and well-fed. What makes him hard to categorize, and virtually *sui generis* among public intellectuals, is that he is a liberal who has avoided the two catastrophic mistakes of modern liberalism. The first is to confuse the fortunes of liberty and equality with the fortunes of the state. The

second is to hugely exaggerate the malleability of human nature, and thereby to romanticize the possibilities of programmatic approaches to human betterment.

It was the second of those apostasies that got *The Bell Curve* into trouble. The book's capital sin was not its discussion of differences in average intelligence among racial and other groups, but rather its demonstration of the reality, durability, and pervasive social consequences of differences in intelligence among individuals. That was indeed dangerous. It meant that social engineering, like physical engineering, faced hard natural limits, and also that the modern quest for equality was in important respects self-defeating. But the points were so fundamental, and the evidence and arguments adduced for them were so powerful, that attempting a frontal, on-the-merits rebuttal would have been problematic to say the least. So, for many, a simpler line of attack was adopted: the effort to anathematize the authors and thereby render their work untouchable.

The effort failed of course. Good books have lives of their own, and Murray's tend to be organically robust and long lived. *Losing Ground* repays careful reading a quarter century after its publication. *The Bell Curve*, and also *Human Accomplishment*, will be studied and debated a century after he and all of us have passed on. The secret of his success is that he is the opposite of the political incendiary the *Times* and others have sometimes portrayed him to be. What he is is a social scientist of relentlessly empirical bent, indifferent to the political conventions of the day and focused on bigger game, larger questions which others are missing. For Charles, econometrics is not for generating freak shows of amazing and trivial correlations, but rather for testing, explaining, fortifying our deepest intuitions and understandings from everyday life. In many ways, the culmination of his work to date is his latest book. *Real Education* finally combines his interest in variations in innate abilities with his interests in culture, policy, and institutions. It integrates theory, fact, statistics, ethics, and direct conversation with the reader to spectacular effect. If you have not yet begun your Murray education, *Real Education* is the place to start.

Learning to live with the natural constraints of the human condition can be liberating; making practical use of those constraints can be the highest form of creativity. So it has been with Charles. Along the way, the effort has made him, and his wife, editor, and sometime co-author Catherine Bly Cox, the most wonderful of colleagues and friends—vivacious and hard-working, principled and curious, learned and kind.

And that is real happiness, rightly understood—which happens to be his theme for the evening. Now Arthur Brooks has recently published a superlative book of his own on the subject, *Gross National Happiness*, and you may suspect that Charles is simply buttering up the new power structure at AEI. But Charles got there first, with *In Pursuit* back in 1988, and his longtime interest in the nature of happiness has been inspired by the American founders and, most of all, by his great teacher and constant muse Aristotle. AEI's Irving Kristol Award for 2009 is a specially bound set of the complete works of Aristotle; it is inscribed:

*To Charles Murray
Exemplary social scientist
Whose measurements are means to moral understanding
Engaged Aristotelian
Who teaches of human heritage and pursuit*