

# CONVERSATIONS

WITH BILL KRISTOL

## Conversations with Bill Kristol

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### Table of Contents

**I: Scholarly Beginnings 0:15 – 5:54**

**II: *Losing Ground* 5:54 – 17:58**

**III: Welfare and Education Reform 17:53 – 29:41**

**IV: In Pursuit of Happiness 29:41 – 41:56**

**V: *Coming Apart* 41:56 – 48:11**

**VI: *The Bell Curve* 48:11 – 1:07:28**

**VII: Space and Future Discoveries 1:07:28 – 1:12:35**

### I: Scholarly Beginnings (0:15 – 5:54)

KRISTOL: Welcome back to CONVERSATIONS. I'm Bill Kristol. I'm very pleased to have as our guest today Charles Murray, whom I consider to be America's leading living social scientist. Welcome, Charles.

MURRAY: Thank you, Bill.

KRISTOL: I don't know is that praise?

MURRAY: Oh, I'm dazzled coming from you, especially.

KRISTOL: Maybe damning with my praise, given what some of your social science colleagues do. But, no, it is genuine praise, meant as genuine praise. So I think people will be interested to know, how did you become a social scientist?

MURRAY: You know, it's one of those funny things that you can remember about when you were a kid. I can remember reading the *Reader's Digest* when maybe I was 12 or 13 years old and seeing an article about the Rand Corporation. And I swear I read that and I said, "That's the kind of place I'd like to work." I'd never heard of a place like that. That sort of indicates to me that there was some deep proclivity towards this kind of work.

The more direct answer to that question is I was over in Thailand with the Peace Corps. This was 1965 to '67, right after college. And my wife at that time had been a Fulbright scholar; she was Thai, she had to stay in the country to work off her teaching obligation and so I had to stay in the country and find some work.

And I ended up getting work in a study of northeastern villages, and it was part of the hearts-and-minds kind of effort that the U.S. military was having at that time. And I did that work, and I wrote that report and in the course of that, I started to learn about regression analysis, and I said, "This is really cool." I was hooked. From then on, I never thought of doing anything else.

KRISTOL: And you went on to get a Ph.D. in —?

MURRAY: I went back to MIT for a Ph.D., and my explicit purpose was I wanted to learn every quantitative method known to man so I could augment my tool kit.

KRISTOL: But somehow I think I've read most of your books and there's plenty of data in them, but I wouldn't say you're a big user of super-fancy quantitative methods, regression analyses, etc.

MURRAY: Yeah, you need to know what they're good for and not good for. And, well, here's my take on them. If you have an important relationship that you have observed in life about the effects of marriage or the effects of unemployment or whatever and you want to see if that insight is correct, quantitative methods are really helpful to check out whether you're just making it up or whether the evidence is really there.

What you should not do is run regression equations, see a statistically significant coefficient and then from that try to infer that something important is going on. As far as I'm concerned, quantitative analysis primarily validates, or fails to validate, insights that are more obvious than quantitative statistical tidbits.

KRISTOL: And you've written, I think, about your experience in Thailand and the insights, the non-, non-quantitative insights you got from that which I think changed your point-of-view on things.

MURRAY: Essentially, most of what you read in my books I learned in Thai villages. I'll elaborate a little on that because it was, it's fascinating to me, anyway. I'm up there in these Thai villages, and I'm trying to analyze whether government assistance has improved the life of the villagers and whether they like that stuff or not. And initially when we're talking to them – this is anthropological quasi-participant research – a lot of times, they can't even remember that there was a well project or a double cropping project or a fish farm project. And then when you finally remind them of it, they so, yeah, well, the crops failed so we didn't do that anymore. Or they put the well in a place where we told them that it was going to be bad water if they put there but they put it there anyway. Instead, when you got them talking around the fire at night, it turned out there are two things they really wanted from the Thai government. First, they wanted the Thai government to catch water buffalo thieves because that's a big deal to lose a water buffalo.

And secondly, they wanted the Thai government to allow them to make moonshine for personal consumption. They were very reasonable about this. They said, you know, not to sell, just they ought to let us make enough to drink. And I suddenly was struck first by the enormous discrepancy between what Bangkok thought was important to the villagers and what the villagers wanted out of government. And the second thing I got out of it was that when the government change agent showed up, the village went to hell in terms of its internal governance.

And when you saw villages where you did not have the change agents, you had some very sophisticated self-governmental mechanisms that they had developed naturally. All of those things, when I came back to look at social programs in the United States, kept reminding me that, gee, this inner-city Detroit attempt to help delinquents is running into the same problems that they ran into when they tried to introduce double cropping in a Thai village.

KRISTOL: So you were a skeptic about sort of do-gooding big-government's efforts pretty close to the beginning?

MURRAY: That was part of it, and another part, I was really impressed by the degree to which human beings left alone to organize themselves did a pretty good job of it.

## **II: *Losing Ground* (5:54 – 17:58)**

KRISTOL: Well, those are two good themes to follow up on. I mean, your first, I guess, famous book, maybe your first book, I don't know, was *Losing Ground*.

MURRAY: That was the first famous one.

KRISTOL: The first famous one. In 1984, and that I'd say people, at least, took to be more on the first side, the first of your two hypotheses the sort of damage government can do. How did you – and this was on welfare primarily, though, not only. I don't know, I'm just curious how did you –

MURRAY: It was actually much broader than just welfare. And that's one of the things – people talk about *Losing Ground* as being a book about welfare.

KRISTOL: Well, that's partly because you helped inspire the welfare reform efforts later, and so people think, you know –

MURRAY: Actually, it deals also with crime and with education and with job training and a variety of other things. But the common underlying theme was that during the 1960s, we changed the rules of the game and we changed them, specifically, for poor people and, even more specifically, for young poor people and, most specifically of all, for black poor young people. And what a lot of these things did, which were well meant, was they made it profitable for people to behave in destructive ways in the short term. Excuse me. Profitable for them to do things that were destructive in the long term, but look at it in the short-term.

KRISTOL: And what led you to that? I mean, you obviously have a ton of data in the book on a ton of different issues. But was there one thinker who influenced you the most, one experience, one study? I'm just curious. Or just an accumulation of work you had been doing during the 70s? I mean –

MURRAY: I had been evaluating social programs on contract to the U.S. government throughout the 70s for an organization called the American Institutes for Research. So we got a contract. We go out and we evaluate such-and-such a program, write up the evaluation report.

One of those involved chronic delinquents in the south side of Chicago, which are really chronic delinquents. And it was a program to provide non-custodial alternatives. Don't lock them up, give them residential facilities that are less restrictive, and so forth. And in the course of that, I remember specifically one 16-17 year old who was really irritated that he had been finally thrown into reform school and he was irritated because he said, "They picked me up for lots worse things than that before, and they never sent me here. Why did they send me here now?"

And as I listened to him, he was looking at a system, which from his perspective was completely irrational. They had let him get away with all sorts of things for arrest after arrest, and he was finally being punished, and the whole thing made no sense. And that example stuck in my mind, and the same thing happened with all kinds of other programs where from the point of view of the recipient, it made a lot of sense to do things that were going to kill your future.

KRISTOL: So, people were behaving rationally –

MURRAY: In the short term.

KRISTOL: In the short term. I'm just curious. I remember reading Ed Banfield's book. You knew Ed? *The Unheavenly City*, which was what, 1970, I think?

MURRAY: '75, '74.

KRISTOL: Which goes on, which it stresses the difference between short term and long term. But I don't know –

MURRAY: Ed Banfield's book was a brilliant exposition of a lot of the same kinds of things I was saying in *Losing Ground*. He was prematurely right. In 1974, people weren't wanting to pay that much attention

to it. Then in 1975, James Wilson, James Q. Wilson, comes along with thinking about crime and that does sort of break the logjam.

KRISTOL: You think that – that’s interesting. I had never really thought about what, what was the moment when it became respectable to say the incentives and all these, many of these Great Society programs were skewed and self-defeating, really? I mean –

MURRAY: I think Jim Wilson’s book was a major event there. And actually it wasn’t just the book’s publication, he had an excerpt from it in *The New York Times Magazine*. And the title of the article was “Lock ‘Em Up.” And that was such a stunning thing to read in 1975, and it occurred at a time when so many people living in urban areas understood just how bad the current problem was. That got a response. And, all at once, I think a lot of the things that were going on in the liberal reform efforts came under a new kind of scrutiny.

KRISTOL: And I guess written by a Harvard professor, so they –

MURRAY: Yeah, but written by one of the greatest crafters of social science prose who has ever lived. He wrote beautifully.

KRISTOL: How important, since you mentioned it – I’ll come back to ask you about *Losing Ground* and the reception to that, which was not uncontroversial. Even though you’re pretending that the ground had been laid for nine years before you did that book. But what about prose? You’re a very good writer and a compelling writer, I believe. I don’t know, how important is it?

MURRAY: It’s huge, it’s hugely important. Well, another of the finest social science writers who ever lived was named Irving Kristol. And it’s so important because, look, the kinds of issues you’re talking about with public policy are ones in which you have to use persuasion combined with evidence that people will actually read.

So a James Q. Wilson in thinking about crime, conducted absolutely no original analyses of his own, he took the entire literature, this technical literature that was very abstruse, and he made it accessible through his brilliant prose to a large audience, and it had an impact whereas all those separate articles had not. And I think that if you go to all the books that have had, as they say, changed the conversation, they have had that in common.

KRISTOL: And it seems to me that Jim Wilson and you actually both didn’t beat people’s heads in with your conclusions. I mean you sort of – I think you’re good at this – you lead people. You often say upfront, “I have a certain set of views that you may not agree with,” but I’m going to lead, you know, but you sort of lead people to think them through themselves. I think that’s very –

MURRAY: This has been something that I started with *Losing Ground*, and I think I pretty much repeated it with every book where I structure the book saying, “Look, I’m going to give you a lot of data, and at the end, I’m also going to give you my interpretation of what those data mean, but I have a particular set of predilections and philosophical leanings that you ought to know about.”

I think that that ought to be standard operating procedure for all social scientists so that when Christopher Jencks writes a book, he starts out by saying, “I’m a social Democrat. I’m going to give you a really fair reading of the data on inequality or whatever I’m writing about, and then I’m going to give you my policy analysis of that, but you should understand where I’m coming from.”

I will say, even though it sounds self-serving, that whereas I do that, I know of virtually no social scientist on the Left who starts out by saying, “By the way, I’m a social Democrat.”

KRISTOL: Yeah, everyone they know is so they don’t feel they have to say it, you know, I guess. But it was despite your good prose and a certain, and a genuine, I think, willingness to let people draw what

conclusions they wished, the book was met in '84 with a certain amount, it generated a certain amount of controversy, I remember?

MURRAY: Well, it felt to me like red-hot controversy until I found out what red-hot controversy was really like with *The Bell Curve*. But, yeah, in 1984, it got a lot of people – it was a two-stage process, Bill.

KRISTOL: Yeah, tell me.

MURRAY: First, the book came out. You got a couple of people like Robert Samuelson wrote a column on it, a few other visible people.

KRISTOL: Where were you? You were at the Manhattan Institute so it was viewed as center-right, I guess?

MURRAY: Libertarian-right, actually, yeah.

KRISTOL: In New York, right? And you weren't that well known?

MURRAY: I was completely obscure.

KRISTOL: I mean, you weren't James Q. Wilson or Christopher Jencks.

MURRAY: I was a nobody.

KRISTOL: How does a book – people will be curious – in looking back, how did it take, was there some moment that caused it to take off, or was it just general and you published it and –?

MURRAY: I think it was the review by Nick Lemann in *The New Republic* because Nick Lemann – I think I'm quoting it fairly directly – said there is a horrible authenticity about my description of the problem. And for *The New Republic* audience, this was a very important thing to say to get the interest of people, and then as soon as it became understood that the book was being taken seriously by people like Nick Lemann, it was as if "we've got to discredit this guy."

And that was my first experience with the lengths to which the opposition will go to say, "The man is a racist or he is a sexist or he makes up data, fudges the data, he's writing at the behest of sinister contributors." It's not enough to – by the way, what I'm saying is as true, I think, of the attacks on people writing on the Left as it is of people writing on the Right – but it is not enough to take on the arguments that are in the book, you've got to demonize the writer. And I think that's one of the most pernicious aspects of current, the current political debate.

KRISTOL: I wonder – I guess it's always happened, I was going to say when that really began. But it does seem like the mid-80s was a particular time of that. I mean, that was '84, your book. I came to Washington in '85, and Bob Bork was in '87, and there was just a moment there where somehow I don't know if it's the Left and the mainstream culture was sort of losing control, and they sensed it and they just had to discredit anyone who challenged certain premises or –

MURRAY: I'll tell you what really struck a nerve with *Losing Ground*. This, I think, became clear very soon. If you read *Losing Ground*, I care about poor people. And my argument was not that we were spending too much money, it wasn't that we had welfare queens that were fraudulently getting the money. I say it, I think, explicitly in the introduction to the book – the worst thing about the policy is that it's hurt the people we tried to help.

And that's the province of the Left. I mean, we had our assigned roles. People on the Right are supposed to worry about welfare queens and we're spending too much money, and people on the Left, "Yes, the programs may not work as well as they should but at least they care." And here is this guy on the Right

pretending that he actually cares about these people and that struck a nerve.

KRISTOL: And it also, I think, maybe – correct me if I’m wrong – you respect, respected the poor people enough to think they behaved rationally in response to incentives. I mean, you weren’t patronizing them and saying, “These people are just brought up in a certain way, and you can’t expect better.” You were making an argument that actually the system was, in a sense, was driving them – not driving them, but leading them towards these decisions.

MURRAY: Yeah it’s ironic –

KRISTOL: A system they hadn’t set up –

MURRAY: The Left started out by saying, “The system is to blame, so it’s not their fault that they’re poor and that they’re out of work.” And, in a funny kind of way, I was saying, “Well, yeah, the system is to blame; the system is to blame for systematically luring them down the primrose path.”

### **III: Welfare and Education Reform (17:58 – 29:41)**

KRISTOL: And looking back, what is it now almost, well, it’s 40 years this year, right? 30 years. I can’t do math. 30 years. That’s why I’m not statistical scientist. 30 years this year. So, what areas has there been the most progress in welfare, crime, education, and which the least? Is there any lesson – are there lessons to be learned from that?

MURRAY: Crime. And we go back to Jim Wilson who had you can’t calibrate exactly how much his influence was but it’s substantial. I mean, think about the huge change in prison policy. I think we probably went too far in the other direction but what we did need to start putting a whole lot of people behind bars where they can no longer victimize people. The whole broken ideas – broken windows philosophy of law enforcement, which took hold because of Jim Wilson’s article on broken windows.

And we’ve had falling crime rates for a long time. I understand that there continues to be a very sophisticated debate about how much you can attribute to various causal factors on the reductions in crime. My way of responding to that is to say, “Okay, yeah, it’s hard to know for sure, but if we were still imprisoning at the rates we were imprisoning in 1980, we’d have a million fewer people in prison. If tomorrow we released a million people from prison, what do you think would happen to the crime rate?” To me, the changes in law enforcement and criminal justice policy were crucial in creating the reduction in crime.

KRISTOL: I suppose, maybe, it was easier to get political support for that because an awful lot of middle class people and voters were affected in crime –

MURRAY: Including liberals living in the Upper East Side of New York. If you look at which kinds of public policies get reformed, in an oddly high proportion of cases, they are reforms that benefit the upper middle class.

KRISTOL: Sort of sad. The ones who need the least help. Welfare, I mean, you are considered somehow the father or godfather or stepfather or something of the 1996 welfare reform legislation. Is that, how significant did that turn out to be in your opinion?

MURRAY: Well, it was hugely instructive. It showed that you don’t actually have to do something to get a behavioral response, you just have to announce that you’re going to do something.

One of the – the welfare rolls declined precipitously, which is good. I think the Welfare Reform Act was a good thing, even though it wasn’t a panacea. But what was fascinating is those rules started to drop as soon as the law was passed, before there had been any kind of sanctions or anything else.

The Left had done such a good job of saying, “If this is passed, you know, we’ll have Calcutta on the Hudson” – a line from our friend, Pat Moynihan. And you’re going to have these draconian consequences. . . . Then, a lot of people just left the rolls because there were a whole lot of people that were on the rolls because it was convenient but not because they really needed it that bad.

So you got a huge behavioral response because of a specific policy reform, and it would be nice if folks had noticed that and said, “Maybe we could extend that to other areas,” but they didn’t really do that.

KRISTOL: So, yeah. And education would seem to be, looking from the outside, it may be the toughest to get any change in, right?

MURRAY: Oh, we had a big change called No Child Left Behind. You know, I feel guiltiest as far as my career is concerned because when No Child Left Behind was being proposed –

KRISTOL: This is early Bush Administration in 2000 –

MURRAY: In 2001, around, I was deep into a book that would eventually be called *Human Accomplishment*. I was just totally locked in on it, barely noticed this. When I finally looked up and saw it had been passed, I said, “This is the most idiotic bill I’ve ever heard of,” and I never said that during the debate.

In education, what you have is a series of, I think, terrible reforms, with No Child Left Behind being one of the worst, because of what I consider to be the educational romanticism which infects Left and Right alike, which says all the children can be nuclear physicists if they get the right opportunity.

Well, they don’t literally say that but they do literally say in some cases, every child can go to college or handle college-level material if only they get the right opportunities. I think that this kind of thinking about education has slowed what could be real progress. I think it has punished kids who do not have that peculiar set of intellectual gifts that make you thrive in college, but do have other gifts that they could. Education policy, I think, has been one of the most poorly handled.

KRISTOL: Any one or two things, if someone, some presidential candidate called you up and said, “What should I make the core of my education reform agenda?” what would be the –

MURRAY: A changeover from the college degree as the standard of educational success to certifications. Give a young person something that he can take to an employer that says what this person knows and what he can do as opposed to, you know, how long it took him to learn it and where he did it.

The CPA, the certified public accountant exam, is a really good example. If you can pass the CPA, that is credible evidence to an employer you actually know a lot about accounting. And the fact that you got that score because you went to an online university that cost you a few hundred bucks as opposed to the University of Virginia or something doesn’t make that much difference. We could extend that to all kinds of things, which would enable young people to get training that they could take to the marketplace, it doesn’t take them four years to do it, doesn’t take them \$100,000 in student loans to do it. There are reforms that could be done.

KRISTOL: I think some of that is beginning to happen just because of the technological possibility, don’t you think, of online education and the pressure of what’s been called –

MURRAY: This is one case where market forces are going to revolutionize education, I think, in the next 15 years for the better, and the educational establishment will not be able to withstand it, in large part, because college education has gotten so bad except in the hard sciences.

I mean, people will still be lining up to send their kids to Harvard and Yale and Princeton, no matter what. But to spend a whole lot of money to send your kid to the second-tier state university or a private

college? No, people won't put up with that much longer.

KRISTOL: And the ability online to take a class, take a competency test, and have a discussion with some teaching assistant, if you want to do that, and even physically go sometimes but not all the time, I think all of that really is a game – I'm not normally a believer that technology by itself changes things fundamentally, but I think in this case, it really could break it open.

MURRAY: I bet we both had the same experience that we have taught a seminar via a TV hookup or something. It feels very much like being in that seminar room, and your interactions with those students are the same kinds of interactions you'd have if you were physically there.

KRISTOL: And the way I think of it at the state level, you mentioned UVA, I live in Virginia, if there's a great economics class at the University of Virginia, are you doing the students at the other, I think, 12 other state campuses in Virginia a favor by not allowing them to watch that class, which is probably a lecture class anyway, so it's not as if they're –

MURRAY: There's no Q&A.

KRISTOL: Right. So, why are you not letting them watch the excellent class that's taught at UVA if they're enrolled at a southern Virginia community college, rather than making them take a class by someone who may not be nearly as good a professor who's physically there? At least, give them the choice. I just think, at some point, some governor is going to realize he can save a lot of money. There will be huge resistance to this, of course, I suppose.

MURRAY: There will be resistance but it's going to be resistance by the universities themselves, which are under enormous financial pressure. And, of course, now you can have these massive online courses – MOOCs, I think they're called – where you can listen to Sandel at Harvard lecturing on ethical theory or something. If you stop to think about it, the idea of going to a university and sitting in a lecture course is really one of the worst, worst uses, most inefficient uses of a university's assets.

KRISTOL: And even in the K through 12 environment, again, an excellent – where it is probably more important to have a teacher there for, you know, students aren't sort of sitting taking notes. But still, you know, excellent. . . . Well, I think we've seen this with some of the Khan Academy and some of these other things, the ability to do stuff online, partly online, and to break up the monopoly – also the really 19th-century notion that – if it is even a 19th-century notion – that everyone should go at the same pace. And that all seems, it's going to look crazy.

MURRAY: Education, education is going to be a happy story. In the past, it has been a miserable story.

KRISTOL: That's good to hear. I'm cheered up. You're considered such a pessimist sometimes, you know, that you think education is going to be happy story. That cheers me up. I actually agree with that, I think. There are some changes that would help, I think, accelerate the process and also make sure it's not just taken advantage of by a few people who are able to do so. You know, the most well-situated to do so, but –

MURRAY: But a lot of the reforms in education cannot be blocked by the teachers' unions, they cannot be blocked by the federal Department of Education, they are going to happen for reasons beyond their control.

KRISTOL: It's funny. I came to Washington to work at the Education Department. We got to know each other – I kind of met you before, but really then when I worked for Bill Bennett. And I've often thought that we fought hard for school choice and all kinds of other things, sensible reforms on the whole, I think, and got nowhere, basically.

And I've often thought the most important thing we did at the Education Department, which was done

really on the side and almost not quite inadvertently but very much a sort of afterthought, was we defended the homeschoolers who were beginning to crop up all over the country. And people forget this now but they were really, the states were trying to shut them down in many cases. And we had one person, two people on the general counsel's office who helped some of these local groups defend themselves against efforts to shut them down. But parents –

MURRAY: That's a huge accomplishment.

KRISTOL: Yeah, in retrospect. But we didn't do it, we just helped a little bit. In retrospect, I think doing that was probably more important than all the other stuff we did to try to reform the big bureaucracies, which was sort of a lesson, too, I think, that often the way you change policies is to go around the existing institutions. They're awfully hard to change directly.

Fred Smith once said this about Federal Express and the Post Office. Conservatives, when he was a kid – when I was a kid – we spent a lot of time complaining about the Post Office, this massive government bureaucracy, unionized, I think, and therefore, you know, very inefficient, expensive. And everyone kept suggesting Post Office reform proposals, I think, the Republicans in Congress, and, of course, they went nowhere. And then Fred Smith invented FedEx. And then the fax machines and email. And who really worries about the Post Office?

MURRAY: You don't really need the Post Office anymore. And, you know, a lot of that's going to happen, I think, with lots of domains of life. In some cases, the bureaucracy can fight back, and they can simply maintain a government monopoly, which prevents these kinds of workarounds. But technology is a big help in this regard.

KRISTOL: Good. I'm glad to hear that.

#### **IV: In Pursuit of Happiness (29:41 – 41:56)**

KRISTOL: So you wrote *Losing Ground*. You survived the attacks on you and all that, and I think it really had a big effect on policies, many policies, but obviously, especially welfare policy, contributed in crime. Then what, then you sort of took a different tack, I think, for your next book, *In Pursuit*?

MURRAY: Well, *In Pursuit* – not a very good title, but I'm stuck with it – *In Pursuit* was the book I really wanted to write when I left my employment from the 1970s at a social science research institute.

I had gotten fascinated by the idea that – well, this sounds like such a pedestrian idea – the complete disconnect between your material condition in life and the degree to which your experience – experiencing lasting and justified satisfaction with life as a whole, which is my working definition of happiness, and how does public policy feed into this.

And I had the idea of using as the dependent variable – if I can introduce some jargon, the thing that you're exploring as the phenomenon you want to explain – why not use as the dependent variable the degree to which people are enabled to pursue happiness? And that's how you judge whether food stamps are a good idea or whether an education reform is a good idea, the rest of it, that's ultimately the template.

And it was very abstract and as I started to work on it, it's almost as if I had to get, push aside a whole lot of underbrush to get to that core topic, and that underbrush was *Losing Ground*. And after *Losing Ground* had been written, I was able to focus in on this almost a philosophical disquisition on the relationship of public policy to the ability of people to pursue happiness.

And I will say that the result of it was a book that got very little attention when it came out, but that first remains my own baby. I mean, that's my favorite of all the books I've written. But, secondly, if you look at everything I've written subsequently, it goes back to that well. A lot of the themes in *In Pursuit* are to be

found in *The Bell Curve*, *What It Means to Be a Libertarian*, *Human Accomplishment*, *In Our Hands*, all of them. So, for me, *In Pursuit* is at the center of everything I've written.

KRISTOL: And how does putting things in that context of the pursuit of happiness, lasting satisfaction or enjoyment as opposed to the normal, I don't know, way economists might think about or social scientists might think about what public – what goal public policy should pursue? I mean, what difference does it make?

MURRAY: Well, suppose you're thinking about something like poverty, and we have a measure of poverty and so we say X percentage of people are below the poverty line or above the poverty line. What does that really mean?

Yes, it has some relevance to your level of material existence and so forth. But we've all known poor people, low-income people who have lived very happy lives. They've had families that have been sources of great joy to them. They haven't been rich, but they've never gone hungry. They've – they've done work that they enjoyed doing. They had self-respect about what they did. They could legitimately take pride in themselves.

And we also know other people who've had exactly the same level of income who've lived absolutely miserable lives for a variety of reasons. Well, it's important – let me back off, and say I'm not saying that level of material resources is unimportant; I am saying that we ought to be focusing on the difference between those two examples I just gave and said, "Why is it that life has been so successful and that life has been so unsuccessful for reasons unrelated to economics?" And so that leads you to ask a whole new series of questions that you wouldn't ask if that weren't your dependent variable.

KRISTOL: And those questions – I can imagine someone saying, well, those are interesting questions and if one were writing a grand psychology of human beings, they'd certainly be fascinating to explore, but how do they affect public policy?

MURRAY: Well, the framework that I chose to analyze it is Abraham Maslow's "needs hierarchy." Abraham Maslow being a psychologist from the 1940s, and his needs hierarchy became quite well known.

And he started out by saying man does not live – does live by bread alone if there is no bread. So, first you've got to have physical survival, you've got to deal with that. And as soon as you've dealt with that, then things like safety come into play. You know, you've got to be safe from a leopard jumping out of a tree at night. And after you have dealt with that, then you can successively move up to other needs being filled such as dignity and self-respect, and ending with the thing which we talk about all the time now, self-fulfillment.

So you talk about those as the enabling conditions for the pursuit of happiness. You can't pursue happiness if you're starving, you can't pursue happiness if you are totally under threat all the time, etc. But what you then say is, well, how do they interact? So that if self-respect is also a deep human need, how does that interact with the way you acquire the food and shelter and the rest of it? If there is an interaction, it has public policy implications as to how you enable people to satisfy their material needs but also maintain their self-respect?

And you're starting to get into some fairly obvious implications, that you know what, just handing out the food and shelter is impeding the self-respect big time? And that's an important public policy implication. So, I'm just giving you one example of things that I've worked through.

KRISTOL: No. That's interesting to me because I'm not actually a libertarian, and I think that you are more or less, or you say you are. But actually I would say that's contrary, isn't it, to a lot of libertarians who don't like this notion in a way of focusing on happiness because they might say that what you just said would imply the government should start getting in the business of, well, if we can judge this

hierarchy of needs and judge people's happiness, let's, by all means, adjust public policies to make people happier. You're sort of on a very slippery slope away from arguably a kind of limited government to, you know, nudging people in certain directions and –

MURRAY: "Nudging" is a very big word these days. Yeah, and I spend a lot of the book pointing out how that tends to backfire. The government is not in the position because the government, the way I put it in the book is, whenever the government says, "Well, here is this problem such as poverty or not enough housing or this, that, or the other thing, that we've got to solve and we will take care of that," in some sense, they are taking some of the trouble out of life, as they look at it.

But from another perspective, they're also draining some of the life from life because the stuff of life consists of coping with the problems around us. They can't be insuperable and unmanageable problems or we'd get miserable. But we have to cope. So I go to preserving my libertarian credentials, I think I work very hard, saying, "Actually, the government is inherently problematic when it tries to get into that kind of thing."

However, let me point out that at the end of *In Pursuit*, I say, look, Adam Smith could admire and be a friend with Edmund Burke and vice versa and that's the way I look at it. I am a Smithian but I'm not only a Smithian who loves *Wealth of Nations*, I love *Theory of Moral Sentiments* even more. And you put those two together, and for me I will use the modern term "libertarian" to describe what that produces but I'm not hung up on the word. To me, Adam Smith had a profoundly correct view of how human society should work.

KRISTOL: I think that's important. I hadn't really thought about it this way before but you're able to both make the case for a limited government without signing onto what some modern libertarians or some of the economists in a way sign on to, which is a kind of "We don't have the foggiest idea of what's right and wrong or what makes people happy or not, therefore, we just should stay out of the way and let people do whatever they want." I mean, it sounds like you, I mean, like Smith, you sort of have a practical argument for the market and for limiting government without necessarily a relativistic or sort of account of –

MURRAY: When they say we ought to leave them alone, you've got to really leave them alone. So, that, for example, you could legalize drugs, in my view, in a libertarian world where people were responsible for the consequences of their action and if they were drugged up and unable to hold a job, that was really pretty much make taking drugs really painful. You can't have legalization of drugs if you have a welfare state that steps in and so forth.

I sometimes make the case that in a libertarian world, people are absolutely free in their intimate relations to cohabit with each other or marry each other or have serial girlfriends and boyfriends. They can do whatever they want.

But, guess what? In a libertarian world, the nuclear family is going to be incredibly strong because in a libertarian world, women and men have huge incentives to want to form family units just because they're economically viable, especially from the woman's point of view, if she's going to have children, in a way that a variety of other alternatives aren't.

So, to me, there is an underlying paradox that the United States in the 19th century was pretty much as close to a libertarian state as we're going to see, and the family was incredibly strong, social pressures were incredibly strong. There were all sorts of ways in which the civic culture was incredibly vital. Those weren't abnormalities; those were the results, to me, of freedom.

KRISTOL: Yeah, and I suppose you could argue, and maybe you could talk about your most recent book in this context, *Coming Apart*, that now you in some parts of the country at least, you have the worst of both worlds, which is a paternalistic state that protects people from the consequences of their decisions in a way, but also a kind of libertarian ethos in terms of the family and so forth that allows people to be

foolish and impulsive, whatever you want to say in the short term and one ends up with –

MURRAY: Yes, and a lot of the blame for that goes to, I think, the elites. I think the elites have fallen down on the job. You aren't nearly as old as I am, but even you can perhaps remember back to a time of when, for example, it was considered unseemly to build a 25,000-square-foot house even though you could afford it, that that was getting too big for your britches, that was sort of putting a in-your-face toward people who do not have as much. And the whole sense of unseemliness has died.

A lot of the ways in which the elites formerly set the standard and also were supposed to live up to that standard, those have been lost. I'm just basically saying you're right. We now have an ethos, which refuses to say, "Here are virtuous ways of living that ought to be applauded and celebrated." And, instead, we're all saying, "We're nonjudgmental." We're abdicating a very important responsibility.

**V: *Coming Apart* (41:56 – 48:11)**

KRISTOL: But what's interesting, one of the interesting things about *Coming Apart* which was published, what, a year and a half –

MURRAY: Two years ago, yeah.

KRISTOL: 2012, yeah. Is that somehow the elites, having said all this, have managed to save themselves from the consequences of what they profess?

MURRAY: Isn't it interesting the Baby Boomers have managed to make the world work for them in every conceivable way while neglecting their obligations to the rest?

Yeah, in terms of marriage and working hard, and for that matter, often times being deeply engaged in communities and even religion, the elites are behaving pretty well within their own communities. But they are so increasingly segregated from the rest of America that it's almost "I'm doing okay, Jack, and so you guys can take care of yourselves." Yeah. It's a nice time to be a member of the American elite if you don't worry too hard about the rest of the country.

KRISTOL: And the argument of the book was that the increasing gap between especially, what, the top 20 percent and the bottom 30. Is that?

MURRAY: Well, you have two different kinds of contrast. The upper middle class is a pretty big group, that's about 20 percent. And if you compare them with the working class, which is about the bottom 25-30 percent, a big gap is opened up there.

But the real problem, I think, lies in the people around the country, which is a much smaller percentage of the population, people who have national influence on the culture or the economy or the politics, they tend to, well, we are talking in Washington, DC, and if you move west and north from where we are sitting, you have one of the most intense concentrations of great affluence and great power and education at elite universities that you will find anywhere in the country – which means anywhere in the world.

And this area that I'm talking about is big enough that kids can be raised in it and live their lives in it, with very seldom moving out of it into any other world. And then they go on to their elite colleges and then they go on to their nice professions. And the country is increasingly being run by people who if you sat them down in Topeka, Kansas would feel like they were in a foreign country.

KRISTOL: And your account of at least the bottom half, third, I'm not sure, of Topeka, Kansas, and almost everywhere else is pretty grim. I mean, that certainly got a lot of attention when the book was published. Just the family decomposition and social decomposition.

MURRAY: And one of the reasons was that I limited the data to whites, non-Latino whites, because a lot of times you can take a look at the social problems and say, “Well, they’re very bad but, of course, they’re concentrated in the African American community or Latinos or something.” And by looking just at whites, it concentrated our attention.

And also there are just too many people who now know what small-town America is like. I grew up in Iowa, a town of 15,000. We didn’t have a meth crisis in small towns then. You now have the problems in the inner-city, which have in many ways spread into a much broader range of American communities.

KRISTOL: And since the book has come out and there’s been a ton of literature about it – friendly, unfriendly or just some of it in between, I guess. Have you learned, are you more convinced that things are dire or do you think you overdid the –

I mean, that’s what struck me the most reading the book and teaching the book, actually at the Hertog Program, for a very interesting three-hour discussion. I would say the students were willing to believe the elite side: A, that they’re doing well. Weirdly somewhat contrary to their own doctrines, they’re living much more responsible, socially integrated traditional lives. And, B, that they’re totally out of touch with the rest of America.

You have that quiz where you ask people if they know anyone in certain walks of life or watch certain, seen certain movies, etc. It is pretty startling the gulf. But they really balked, I would say – these mostly are upper-middle-class kids – at what they took to be your excessively dark picture of what’s going on, not just in the bottom five or ten percent, but really a pretty good chunk of, as you say, white America.

MURRAY: Well, you know, I actually –

KRISTOL: Has any of the data been challenged interestingly –

MURRAY: I live in that America. I live out in the western part of Maryland in a small town. It’s a blue-collar and agricultural community. There’s a working-class community that my kids went to school in. And there are, you know – it’s a good news/bad news thing.

The good news is those communities are still filled with really good people and people that are resourceful and deal with their problems. But we also see in that same community, we see parents whose daughters, much to their chagrin, have had a child without getting married. We have seen increases in drug use. Parents are having lots of problems with their kids that were unheard of 30 years ago in such communities or 20 years ago.

And so are they still good places to live, the particular towns – the town where I live and the adjacent towns? The answer is yes. Are there also just at looking at, do we know that there are problems that are growing and that are going to threaten those communities’ ability to function in the future? Yes, we also know that.

So, if you say, was I too dire? I might have been too dire in some cases about how much deterioration has occurred already. I wasn’t being too dire about the degree to which we are on a trajectory where we know what the consequences will be.

#### **VI: *The Bell Curve* (48:11 – 1:07:28)**

KRISTOL: I suppose your most controversial book was *The Bell Curve*, published in what was that –

MURRAY: 1994.

KRISTOL: ’94. How did you come to write it? What was, maybe you should say a word about what it argued, and then what the reaction was?

MURRAY: Well, how I came to write it first. In 1986, I got an invitation to be on a panel commenting on two papers that were to be presented at the American Psychological Association. And one of them purported to explain differences in crime by using IQ, and the other one purported to explain differences in unemployment using IQ. And my first reaction was, "But don't we know that IQ tests are biased and they don't really measure anything?" And then I read the papers, and I also saw the bibliographies and I realized there was a literature out there, it was extremely sophisticated, rigorous and that nobody was talking about.

And I got interested in IQ and its relationship to social problems. And by 1989, I had decided I was going to write a book about it, but then Dick Herrnstein, a professor at Harvard who had written on IQ in the past had an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* which led me to think, "Ah, Herrnstein is already doing this." So I called him up. I had met him before. We'd been friendly. And I said, "If you're doing a book on this, I'm not going to try to compete with you." And Dick said to me, "No, I'm not." And he paused and he said, "Why don't we do it together?" And I paused and I said, "Let me think about that." And I called him back later that afternoon and "Let's do it." That was the –

KRISTOL: So it was his idea?

MURRAY: Yeah, it was – that was the extent of our negotiations. And it was, I will say parenthetically, he just became a dear, dear friend. It was a wonderful collaboration.

So, anyway, we did this book. And what is it about? Very simple. It was said in the subtitle: *Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. And we were saying IQ interacts with all these important phenomena whether it's crime or poverty or single parenthood or a variety of other things, and this has effects on the social structure because we live in a world which is increasingly hospitable to people with high IQs and increasingly difficult for people with low IQs.

It turns out that in order to write such a book, you have to confront the issue of race because in *The Bell Curve*, as in *Coming Apart*, we had some chapters that were exclusively using white data samples to say, "Look, the relationship has nothing to do with race issues there." But, if you want to extend the argument to the whole country, you've got to say, well, can you interpret IQ scores for people of different ethnicities?

So we had chapter 13 was "Ethnic Differences in IQ." That's what created the firestorm. So the book comes out and, there's actually a rather nice review of it in *The New York Times*. There was a very collegial panel we had at the American Enterprise Institute with scholars from the Left and Right treating it as a serious work. And then it hit the fan.

It's hard to recreate now the degree to which that book was just at the center of conversation. I remember I think it was two or three months after the book came out, I had given up reading the newspaper. Catherine, my wife, was in charge of reading everything and telling me if I had to respond to something. And she reported three months after the book came out, that that morning's *Washington Post* had two op-eds and two news stories that all referenced *The Bell Curve* in one way or another. And it was like that all the time. And the accusations leveled against us were hideous. I mean, the reaction to *Losing Ground* was nothing as compared to *The Bell Curve*. I was in – I was shell-shocked for months.

KRISTOL: And then what? I mean, basically, does anyone challenge the basic data today?

MURRAY: Oh, yeah. They –

KRISTOL: Well, the argument of the book, I take it, as I recall, was you couldn't make sensible public policy for the country without understanding that the objects – or what the right term is – the people upon whom these policies would be having an effect are very different in IQ, among other differences. And that therefore you can't just assume everyone is the same and has 110 or 100 or 120 IQ. Or probably in the case of policy-makers, a high IQ is that's what they think, they think everyone is like that.

MURRAY: Well, you know in a lot of ways, we were making arguments that prefigured what I said in *Coming Apart*. In fact, *The Bell Curve* was very widely talked about but very little read. So I was able to recycle a lot of material from *The Bell Curve* in *Coming Apart*, and nobody ever noticed. There was relatively little argument about the thesis of the book. It – I don't want to say all – but 95 percent was about race. And –

KRISTOL: 95 percent of the argument?

MURRAY: Of the argument. About the book, yeah. It was about race. And what really struck me, standing back from it now, is that if you ask people of our generation – your generation, my generation – what was *The Bell Curve* about, what they will say is, “Oh, wasn't that the book that tried to prove that blacks are genetically inferior to whites?”

And if you go to the discussion of race, you will see in italics, sometimes, statements about “we don't know what the reasons for ethnic differences in IQ are, we are agnostic about the sources of those, that people get way too excited about the idea of genetic differences.”

I would go back during the height of the storm, and re-read the race chapter to say, “How could we have written it better?” And I continue to think to that day, it's beautifully written. People, I decided it was like a Rorschach test. People were projecting onto that text their own anxieties, and so they would say, “This is an angry book.”

And it's the most un-angry book you've ever read. It is a un-polemical book. It was, we made it almost deliberately boring in some cases. We, you know, here is for me, the most telling factoid about the criticism of *The Bell Curve*. You will never, ever find a direct quote from the book because we actually wrote it saying we want this, each sentence to be such that you can't just lift it out of context. They never quote the book. It was really something, quite an experience. I do not recommend it.

KRISTOL: I'll try to avoid it. It was a good book. And I do think it had real policy implications in terms of the education system and the ways in which we're not being serious about, we're not doing things that would benefit – Especially, I think the book, as you said about *Losing Ground*, in a way, your main object – maybe this is why people hated it, also – your concern was not for the high IQ people who you thought, I think, were doing okay in America, it was more that policies were not thinking about the fact that a certain number of the people impacted were not very high IQ –

MURRAY: Exactly. That we were having a society which was, is designed to be an affirmative action employment program for attorneys. We are in all sorts of ways creating a very complex society that, and with complex ethical rules and standards, which is just fine for those of us over-educated people who love all the complexity and subtlety and all that. And it makes it much harder to live a life if you're a person who doesn't have that peculiar skill set.

A friend of mine, actually, Ed Crane, who was formerly president of the Cato Institute, he said, “What you're really saying in terms of people living moral lives is that everyone has a moral compass, but some are more susceptible to magnetic storms than others.” And that was actually a nice notion. It's really easy to make that moral compass whiz around if you create the kind of society we are.

So, yeah, that was the focus of our concern in the book. It became what I think of as a stealth book because after four or five years, you saw increasing references to the kind of cognitive stratification that we were talking about. They never called it that. It was always linked to education as opposed to IQ, but a whole lot of the propositions of the book entered the public dialogue, and they never referenced *The Bell Curve*, never mentioned IQ.

KRISTOL: And now, you find liberals worrying, and not without reason, certainly, about if very high-status people marry other high-status people, and low-status people marry low-status people, then it's going to increase social difference between classes and decrease mobility among classes. But –

MURRAY: We did say that a while ago, didn't we?

KRISTOL: Yeah, I guess as long as you say the word "status" or "educational achievement" or something like that and don't actually suggest that it could partly be IQ, you're okay, sort of?

MURRAY: Yeah, you're okay sort of, and especially if you manage to frame it so that race does not enter into the discussion whatsoever. I did develop a real contempt for a lot of academia. I know too many people who are quite famous in academia who said to me privately, "It's a wonderful book," and whenever they were asked to comment publicly, they would trash it without a second thought. It happened in a really interesting number of cases with some names that would be very interesting to you if I revealed them, but I won't.

KRISTOL: That's very gentlemanly of you, though it's unfortunate, of course. So, often being a gentleman is contrary to actually –

MURRAY: I don't want to reopen those fights.

KRISTOL: Yeah, I guess not. And so that preoccupied you for a little while, I suppose? But you moved right on, actually, and didn't dwell on that?

MURRAY: I dwelled on it for a while.

KRISTOL: Did you? Dick Herrnstein died fairly –

MURRAY: Dick Herrnstein died just a few weeks before the first bound copies came out.

KRISTOL: Is that right? I didn't realize he died before it came out.

MURRAY: He was diagnosed with terminal cancer on the same day we sent in the very final bit of draft for copy-editing. And he died just a few months later. And so partly, I was grieving at the loss of a dear friend, and part of me was saying, you know, "If Dick were still alive, we could call each other on the phone and say, 'Did you see what this idiot said?'" And we would have had that kind of mutual support.

So, I think it's probably true that I was clinically depressed for some time after *The Bell Curve* came out. And, okay, I will admit it. The piece of writing I think I'm proudest of is the afterword I wrote to *The Bell Curve* for the paperback edition because I think if you read it, it will sound extremely cool, extremely detached, slightly amused. That was a complete misrepresentation of mind, but that I managed to pull off. That voice is a source of real satisfaction.

KRISTOL: And that was within presumably about a year?

MURRAY: Yeah, that came out in June and – or I was done writing it in June and the book had come out in October. So it was pretty soon after.

KRISTOL: And do – I don't know if you follow it even, but, I mean, do people on campus today or in social science environments today, they just don't talk about it? I mean, they can't sustain the assault because what's the basis of it at this point, there's no – no one has done anything to disprove – I remember, weren't books published, essays about it?

MURRAY: There was a cottage industry in such books.

KRISTOL: No one disproved anything, right?

MURRAY: No. And, in fact, the – See, Dick and I deliberately did not push the envelope in any of our claims. We really pulled our punches with some things, which we could have stated more strongly. So it's not that we were prescient about what the state of the knowledge was. We were very cautious. And, so,

essentially the substance of *The Bell Curve* is part of the conventional wisdom now, it's just not – it's always put in terms of educational attainment.

KRISTOL: And from a policy point-of-view, assuming it's not a good thing for a society to be increasingly diverging, if it is, and increasingly lacking contact between these two, roughly two different parts, and mobility from one to the other, assuming that's the case. Is there much to be done about it? I guess, maybe, is there a fatalism implied in *The Bell Curve*, or is that not fair?

MURRAY: Well, when I revisited that in *Coming Apart*, because a lot the material overlaps, I try to say to people who are in the privileged elites, "To what extent are you living in an environment which is not nearly rich as it could be in terms of your human life, and to what extent are you systematically depriving your children of some of the experiences that made you who you are?" And the good news is that I get when I say that to an audience of older people, I see a lot of heads nodding.

Very affluent people, who have done everything they possibly can for their children, are sort of saying, "My children have missed out on a lot that I had." I also try to point out, you know what, you can live in a small town like I do 60 miles out of Washington, and you really aren't losing anything. The Internet and the rest of it means you have access to all sorts of stuff that you formerly had to come to the big city for. When I do want to come to the big city, it's an hour and half away. Big deal.

You don't have to live in McLean [VA]. You don't have to live in these enclaves of the cognitive elite. And your life will be the better for it.

I also – this will sound facetious but it's not – I regularly play poker at a casino in Charles Town, West Virginia, which is a microcosm of the real America. And I'll be sitting there at a table with all kinds of people, every ethnicity, every socioeconomic group, every kind of profession or non-profession. And that kind of experience just constantly reinforces to me that not all the interesting people in this country have gone to Harvard and they don't all live in McLean. There are really interesting, funny, engaging people out there, and you shouldn't pull away from them. They're, Americans are a marvelous set of people.

KRISTOL: And from a policy point-of-view, apart from encouraging people to live in Burkittsville [MD], not McLean, is there anything to be done?

MURRAY: You know what? We need jawboning. One of the critical comments of the book by a libertarian writer actually was that "Murray offers little more than plaintive moralizing," because I don't offer policy solutions.

Well, plaintive moralizing has a lot to be said for it. And a lot of the ways in which America has changed its ways had its origins in just saying to people, "This is not the best way to do things." The Civil Rights Movement is a classic example. The Great Awakenings, religious awakenings we've had, are examples.

And if I'm correct that life is truly richer if you're more deeply engaged with a variety of people around you, you're more deeply engaged in your community and so forth, if I'm correct in that, it ought to be an idea that has resonance. And if it has resonance, it can very easily be picked up. So, I consider my role in life now much more jawboning than saying, "Here is a plan with six points that will solve the problem."

KRISTOL: I do think, don't you think, that things like – I mean, take the public school system and the fact that it's – which I'm not against – that it's locally controlled or regionally controlled and that therefore the kids in Fairfax County go to very good public schools, pretty good public schools, and the kids in somewhere else, less, a less well-off place, go to worse public schools. There are certain ways in which just basic public policies probably reinforce the stratification where other policies might not. I don't know. I mean –

MURRAY: Well, education is one of those things, which drives the segregation because parents want to send their kids to good schools. And here is where the empirical record made me feel comfortable about

sending my kids to a mediocre public school, but it was a safe public school, it was a nurturing public school, but it wasn't terrific.

The fact is that so much of the kids' intellectual and academic achievement occurs because of things in the home that you are not – your kids are not going to lose 10 IQ points because they went to a mediocre public school. And on the contrary, my daughter who went to Middlebury from this mediocre public school, and I who went to Harvard from a mediocre public school in Iowa both had the same experience.

We were when we went as freshman, we were around a lot of other people who had been in Exeter or Andover or very fancy schools. And they were sort of blasé about all this. And, but my daughter and I when we were freshman were on a huge high. We were so excited to be out in the real world.

Did we know a little bit less because of our indifferent education? Yeah, and we also caught up in a year at college. So, I'm saying to any parents who are listening, go ahead and send your kids to a school as long as it's safe and nurturing, and don't worry too much about whether it's the best public school you've ever seen. It's okay.

KRISTOL: Safe is, of course, something that's not the case, and nurturing, in the inner-cities.

MURRAY: Exactly right. I would never, I would never send my children to a lot of the DC public schools.

KRISTOL: And it's terrible that we consign these parents in DC to sending them to these schools.

MURRAY: Exactly right. So I'm a big school choice advocate.

KRISTOL: So *The Bell Curve* is respected without being acknowledged, I guess, these days?

MURRAY: I would like to think it's respected. I'm not even sure of that. But it's worked its way –

## **VII: Space and Future Discoveries (1:07:28 – 1:12:35)**

KRISTOL: I think that's the case, too, yeah. Other books, anything else you've done that somehow is having a comeback, or something surprising to you?

MURRAY: Yeah, I may have a book whose time has come. It was called *In Our Hands*, came out about 10 years ago. It argues for a basic guaranteed income for everybody age 21 and older that replaces the entire welfare state, replaces all transfer payments, actually, including Social Security and Medicare.

And I like to think it's a well-argued book where I anticipate the problems and talk about how they can be avoided. And I'm beginning to see references to a basic guaranteed income and references specifically to the book as a way out of this hole we're digging ourselves into fiscally that we will not be able to avoid forever. So that's one bit of good news about a book that's making a comeback.

However, Bill, I'll have to tell you that the book that I have been associated with that will still be read 500 or 1,000 years from now is a book about the Apollo program that my wife and I did together back in the late 1980s. It's a story of how we got to the Moon, focusing on the people on the ground. And it essentially is a unique source book.

And so my prediction is a thousand years from now, World War II will be a very obscure thing, nothing that happened in the 20th century will still be talked about much except that was when we first left Earth, and there will still be people who will consult our book *Apollo* for original source material. That's the one that will last.

KRISTOL: That's good to know. Now, are you depressed – I hadn't expected to talk about space, but I'm actually personally somewhat interested in this – are you depressed by the fact that we seem to have managed to, literally, have regressed in our space efforts since '72 –

MURRAY: We regressed a lot.

KRISTOL: I mean, has there ever been a case in human history where you would have, sometimes things stall out but to actually, we could not do, if I'm not mistaken, right, what we did in 1972 or 1969?

MURRAY: We were able to put into Earth orbit at that time a tonnage that would be way beyond. It stopped so fast that we had two fully built Saturn 5 vehicles with their spacecraft ready to go except for putting the gas in them that we never used. It is – it is very, very sad.

The good news here is, I think, eventually, it's going to be private money that resuscitates that. And one of the, one of the good things about the huge private wealth is that when it's somebody like Jeff Bezos, the head of Amazon who is a big space nut, that a lot of that money is going to be spent, I think, probably getting us back into space again, and in a way in which it can be sustained because there are economic benefits to it. So, strategically, I'm optimistic but looking at the way we threw away the legacy of Apollo is very depressing.

KRISTOL: Yeah, I know. It strikes me as so unusual for a country that has no external crisis. It's not as if we were going bankrupt or were invaded by someone. We were wealthier today than we were when we did Apollo, and we just shut it down. And I think the space shuttle, I assume, was a terrible mistake, and we ended up diverting the whole program to, you know, going back and forth to a space station. I mean –

MURRAY: It was emblematic of the times. That was when we were getting out of Vietnam. It was a time in American history when there was very little vision, and there was also frankly very little nerve.

KRISTOL: It would be interesting if the private sector could save us. I suppose that's happened in history, though, a lot of the exploration, the discoveries were – some were government-financed but a lot were private, or at least partly private, certainly.

MURRAY: If you asked me what is one of the great underestimated forces for what's going to happen to American life in the future, it is the size of the private wealth that can do things now that are mammoth in size.

So, Bill Gates Foundation can say we're going to get rid of polio worldwide, we are going to do such-and-such thing. And I talk to people who are in the field who see how that foundation's money is spent and they say this is not your run-of-the-mill NGO or government program, this one actually works. So, you know, this great public wealth – private wealth may be able to solve problems that government can't.

KRISTOL: On that hopeful note, we should – we should stop. And thank you very much for taking the time.

MURRAY: This has been great fun. Thank you so much.

KRISTOL: And thank you for joining in CONVERSATIONS.

[END]