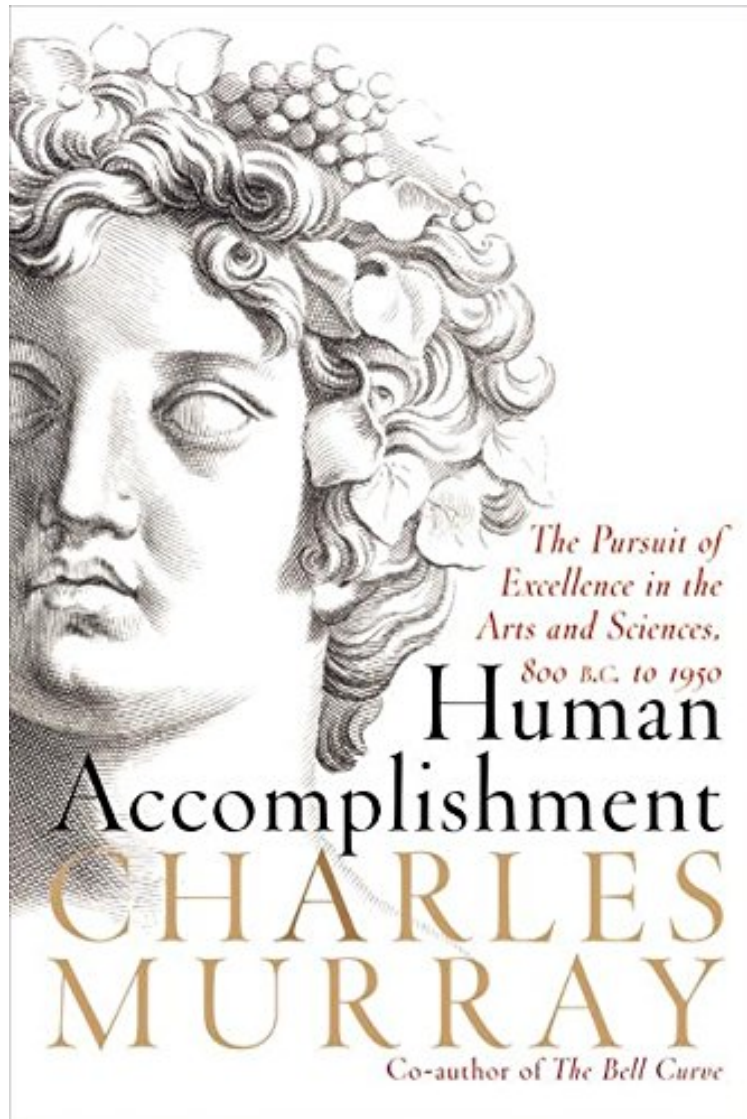


[Free read ebook] Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 B.C. to 1950

Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 B.C. to 1950

Charles Murray

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Charles Murray : Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 B.C. to 1950 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Human Accomplishment: The Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 B.C. to 1950:

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following review helpful. Could Have Been BetterBy SpazmonkeyThe superiority of Western Culture and what makes it superior. Man oh man this is the hottest topic since race and intelligence was covered in the Bell Curve. So controversial, so juicy. Something nobody else has the balls to realistically cover. Where's my fork and knife- I'm ready to dig in. Then I read the book. WTF? Seriously man? In this book Charles Murray is just a shadow of his former self. Is he too scared to be controversial anymore? He spends a lot of time defending himself in absurd detail, which in reality is boring and uninteresting reading. Such justifications should be put into a foot note or in an index at the end, maybe in a final chapter. The first few chapters start out pretty good. In them Murray muses about Western history and the Roman empire, the Greeks etc. Good reading, but not really diving into the juicy stuff. So I'm getting giddy. It's gonna get good any moment. It just got worse. Murray decided to not touch anything other than significant figures in art and science. He spends most of the book justifying his methods and reasoning. Yes you can objectively measure excellence. Here let me devote most of a chapter explaining how. In trying to justify himself to the PC police he really made a book that isn't interesting to his ideological supporters nor to the PC people. He ignores all kinds of really juicy topics, including a lot I probably haven't thought of, but just off the top of my head the world uses Western mathematics (yes it has its origins in the middle east, but was refined by the Greeks). This is obviously a superior system. The world uses it because it is the most effective ways to build buildings and run banks. One could argue the entire world has significantly adapted Western mathematics, philosophy, legal structures, government structures, thought patterns, values etc. because they are effective. Murray doesn't feel any of this is worth exploring. The social sciences are too hard to turn into data tables. Umm ok murray can you just write about them instead of turning them into a statistical bell curve or whatever other curve you found? Apparently not. Umm ok I guess we are going to skip over a lot of hot topics, but surely you must have some really juicy stuff related to significant figures in science and art. This is when Murray goes on and on about figures that most people never heard of or don't care about. He regurgitates some stuff from the bell curve in regards to, well, bell curves. He never really hits anything interesting, just stating the obvious and then trying to justify his "controversial point". He breaks it down into absurd and boring detail with numerous charts on where significant people were born. I guess kind of interesting, but without anything else substantial- a snooze fest. And what is his point? Most scientists and artists were born in West Europe. Free societies lead to more innovation and monoarchys can even be relatively free regarding tolerance of deviant ideas and innovation. A few nods to Christianity helping Western development but not a lot of deep elaboration. And look I just summarized hundreds of pages and countless charts in less than a paragraph. Seriously, why couldn't the author do that? He has a talent at making things boring which can only be refined by a college professor. He seems almost afraid to really state anything too controversial and feels the need to explain himself repeatedly so we don't mistake him for a quack or racist. Look the white hating left wing zealots are going to call you a racist no matter what so why even bother boring the rest of us with endless paragraphs about the obvious? Murray the first thing you need to ask yourself as an author is who your audience is going to be? Are you writing this for fans of the Bell Curve or are you trying to justify yourself to the PC police? Murray never really seems to decide, trying to pander to both in a really unremarkable way. Pick one or the other and it would be a better book with a more coherent thesis. And the thing is Murray is rich. He knows all kinds of well educated and connected people. He has the resources and fame to write this book that most people don't have. And yet he really let us down. Maybe he would do better with a good co-author. I really feel this book needs some heavy editing and a version 2 or v. 3 released or something of that nature. The grammar is precise. The author is sharp and witty. The charts are accurate. But a good book goes beyond that- it must be interesting to read and therein it falls short. The basic topic is great, just the execution was ho hum, leaving most people saying "so what?" I mean whoopdy doo most scientists and artists come from Europe. That's all you have to say? And do we need a thousand charts to hammer in the point, along with endless rants about how this is legitimate science? Listen Murray, when you say that most great historical figures were born in Europe we believe you. You don't need to justify yourself in absurd detail. Now get into some far more insightful and controversial topics on Western culture will you. The other thing is that he seems excessively focused on art like some kind of rich snob. He sneers at the Romans for not really placing a high value on artists and not being as innovative as the Greeks in art. The fact that the Romans conquered the known world is of little consequence to Murray. He doesn't seem to care about Western culture's ability to put food on the table or to win wars, but rather with the art they produce and of course scientific innovation. He rambles on about things that only he cares about and tries to explain statistics for the "rest of us" as they did in the Bell Curve. But unlike the Bell Curve, most of that information seems irrelevant. We don't need a lot of charts and mathematical models to analyze Western culture. It seems artificial, like a vague attempt to recreate the Bell Curve and somehow bask in its glory once again, without really saying anything as new or interesting. I like the book, I really do. I thought the first few chapters were great. I feel the topic is top tier. The author perfectly suited for this task. Yet in the end the whole thing just disappoints. I would really hope that at some point Murray could show the humility to pass this book onto some "hungry" younger protgs who can significantly edit it and add some more meaty insights and arguments. And please cut down on the boring and redundant information and justifications and place them in a separate chapter or category so I can actually read the book without falling asleep. I guess we get a free taste of college life here if you want to be bored to death by uninteresting facts. But I'll leave this on a positive note: ok

book, good concept, needs to be revisited. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A compendium of proof by Customer I find it silly that Murray doesn't use the time frames of B.C. and A.D., as they still are fully functional, but that's a small point in analyzing the wealth of human achievement of the West, and how it clearly intersects our world—even as it is disparaged, today. This book is being purposefully overlooked, because it says what everyone once knew—that Europeans gave the world as we know it, to everyone, due to our inbred, genetic altruism. That is not 'P.C.'—but then, Truth rarely is. And for that, I am very thankful to have purchased a copy of this book. I need, want, no, DEMAND that others know, that without the residents of Megala Europa; from the Solutreans, to the British Empire, to the American Experiment up until 1963, coming on the scene—from the unique achievements of of the Caucasoid Rulers of Egypt, to Tesla's experiments— you'd all still be living in yurts, looking at scribbles and wondering what they meant, instead of a literate, computer-glutted techne-derived society, that is the pinnacle of what Adam's line has achieved. Not that we needed proof, mind you. But Murray's book is a good one for book clubs of literate readers, use as a history text in private schools, and in Arts in Society classes in Christian colleges— those who still value the Socratic adage of an 'unexamined mind,' and the genius of a Michaelangelo, to start the necessary unlearning of the indoctrination of the last hundred years.

A sweeping cultural survey reminiscent of Barzun's *From Dawn to Decadence*. "At irregular times and in scattered settings, human beings have achieved great things. Human Accomplishment is about those great things, falling in the domains known as the arts and sciences, and the people who did them." So begins Charles Murray's unique account of human excellence, from the age of Homer to our own time. Employing techniques that historians have developed over the last century but that have rarely been applied to books written for the general public, Murray compiles inventories of the people who have been essential to the stories of literature, music, art, philosophy, and the sciences—a total of 4,002 men and women from around the world, ranked according to their eminence. The heart of *Human Accomplishment* is a series of enthralling descriptive chapters: on the giants in the arts and what sets them apart from the merely great; on the differences between great achievement in the arts and in the sciences; on the meta-inventions, 14 crucial leaps in human capacity to create great art and science; and on the patterns and trajectories of accomplishment across time and geography. Straightforwardly and undogmatically, Charles Murray takes on some controversial questions. Why has accomplishment been so concentrated in Europe? Among men? Since 1400? He presents evidence that the rate of great accomplishment has been declining in the last century, asks what it means, and offers a rich framework for thinking about the conditions under which the human spirit has expressed itself most gloriously. Eye-opening and humbling, *Human Accomplishment* is a fascinating work that describes what humans at their best can achieve, provides tools for exploring its wellsprings, and celebrates the continuing common quest of humans everywhere to discover truths, create beauty, and apprehend the good.

From Publishers Weekly Co-author with the late Richard Herrnstein of the neo-racialist book *The Bell Curve*, Murray returns with a mammoth solo investigation that is less likely to spur controversy than provoke a simple "so what?" The book attempts to demonstrate, through the use of basic statistical methods such as regression analysis, that Europeans have overwhelmingly dominated accomplishment in the arts and sciences since about 1400. To this end, he has assembled a laundry list of people and events from various reference texts, and generated numerous graphs and rankings of genius figures: is Beethoven "more important" than Bach? Leonardo Da Vinci than Michelangelo? A major problem with this approach—beyond equating "importance" with the number of times an artist or work is referenced in texts—is that the reference texts used as data sources do not themselves seem free of cultural bias or chauvinism: without asking "important to whom," the Western-centric data are a self-fulfilling prophecy. Another problem is that other, less affluent cultures may have had many plundered or lost works, or may not have a tradition of naming writers and other luminaries—or keeping track of and promoting their works through secondary material. Further, plenty of attention is lavished on forms such as painting but comparatively little to architecture or to non-Western forms of music. The book's cursory treatment of Africa (outside of Egypt) also leaves more to be desired. Murray claims to have corrected for these factors, and finds that Western culture still dominates "accomplishment" either way. The chapters describing achievement at the book's beginning are, at many points, well-written and informative, but they end up clouded with the latter part of the book's numerical hubris and grand pronouncements. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Achievements that require mental and spiritual effort are the highest forms of human endeavor, Murray says. He has scanned the most reputable biographical dictionaries and histories of the arts, philosophy, and sciences to find who and what, during 800 B.C.-1950, are mentioned in them. He came up with 4,139 persons and a list of events and ponders 20 persons in each of nine scientific, three philosophic, and nine artistic fields who were most extensively covered in the resources. More than 80 percent are "dead white males," and Murray carefully examines why. The greatest achievements of India, China, Japan, and Islam occurred well before the West took off during the Renaissance, and each of those cultures valued duty, family, and consensus, whereas the West prefers individualism, the sine qua non of scientific debate and discovery. Further, the scientific method was a set of Western "meta-inventions" (Murray's term) that arose, fortunately, simultaneously with

the ratification of Thomism, with its dual emphasis on faith and reason, by the most important cultural force in the West, the Roman Catholic Church. Of overarching importance to great achievements in any culture, Murray argues, are the sense that life has purpose and belief in ideals of beauty, truth, and goodness. This book probably won't get Murray in as much hot water as *The Bell Curve* (1994) did. Then again, with its speculations that the rate of great achievements has slowed since 1800 and that the arts are in a very bad way, maybe it will. Ray Olson Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Murrays overview is engaging, user-friendly...[readers] are sure to enjoy his arguments and elegant presentation. (Kirkus s)