Notes on
The Righetous Mind:
Why Good people are divided by politics and religion
Author of Book: Jonathan Haidt
Author of Notes: William Gasarch
Note: Jonathan Haidt also wrote **The Happiness Hypothesis**.

1 PART I: Intuition comes first, Strategic reasonsing Second

1.1 CHAPTER 1: Where does morality come from

Humans are like elephants with a rider- the elephant is overwhelming (intuition) and the rider (reason) tries to tame it and have it go a different way, but its hard.

We often have a moral sense that something is wrong but would be hard pressed to explain why

Examples

1. A family dog dies and the family decides to eat it. Most people find this to be BAD but can't quite say why.

2. A man has sex with a dead chicken before eating it. Most people find this to be BAD but can't quite say why.

3. A brother and sister decide to have sex (with birth control) Most people find this to be BAD but can't quite say why.

Western Liberals and Libertarians might pause and say that its their right to do these things.

People from other countries and (later in the book) people from the lower classes either

1. Give absurd reasons why these things are WRONG

2. (perhaps more honestly) *if you have to ask why thats wrong, you've got a problem*

Is our Moral sense nature or nuture? This is a False choice:
Plaget: Rationalism: Kids figure it out for themselves.
Kohlberg: He did some experiments that seemed to bear this out. He found that kids go through stages of moral thinking. (Amusing: When they are in the literal-stage they might do the *stop hitting yourself* thing.) One corollary to this is that kids should NOT have parents interfere with their moral dev— so parents should NOT teach kids morality or the 10 commandements. This notion really appealed to the baby boomer generation (I think the book is going to say that this notion of rationalism is wrong, but came at a time when it would be received well.)
Turiel He did different experments and differed some with Kohlbert but they agree that TREATING INDIVIDUALS WELL is part of a childs morality. Its about harm. Later in the book we will see that there are six aspects of moarlity

1. Fairness and Harm
2. Loyality
3. Respect
4. Duty
5. Piety
6. Patriotism
7. Tradition

(Thats seven- not sure if some are the same)
But Kids seem to just get the Fairness one.
The researchers drew a distinction A MORAL RULE applies to all A SOCIAL CONVENTION only applies to the group.
The author then thought that this was too bland and began reading about other cultures (in grad school).
Azande of Sudan believed in Witchcraft and the supernatural. The fear of being called a witch made them behave well. So The Supernatural was used NOT to explain the universe but to order their societies. (So- was it smart for the society to believe in stupid things)

PERSONAL: There was a tribe of Native Americans who allowed scientists to do DNA tests on them to help with health studies but the Native Americans insisted that the info be used ONLY for health studies. This was violated (Americans screwing over Native Americas- I am shocked! :-)) by letting some ethnographers and anthropologists have this info. They studied the DNA and found that the Tribes Origin Myth was FALSE. The Native Americans were furious. Were they better off being ignorant?
The IIongot tribe in the Phillipines cuts off strangers heads (people they have no beef with) as a way to strenghten the ties within their society.
PERSONAL: so, they do not believe in fairness and no harm I suppose.

Other cultures have elaborate purity rituals about food that they consider moral (The ancient Jews also did—as do current orthodox Jews.)

WHY? Note that these rules are not of the no-harm-and-fairness type?

Turiel would say they are just social conventions, which is true, but they DID raise these rules to a high level and talked about them and judged based on them a lot.

ASIDE in the book:

1. Liberals think Conservaites are sex prudes.
2. Conservtives think that liberals are pudes for insisting on oragnic, free-trade, not-genetically-modified stuff.
3. Both are about Purity. PERSONAL- Both are WRONG.

Question: How do kids in those cultures come up with the ideas of PURITY? Unlikely that they discover it for themselves.

All socities must figure out how to order society for mutual benefit (even this is hard to phrase - beneifit greatest good for greatest many? benefit the king?) There are TWO answers (PERSONAL- really? Just two?)

1. Sociocentric: The needs of the group come first.
2. Individualistic: The needs of the individual come first.

Sociocentric dominated until the enlightnemnet—and then in the west Ind dominated.

This EXPLAINS some of the culture clash we see between West and others, and also why reading about older socieites seems so different.

EXAMPLE: The Kosher laws were NOT just for health reasons. They were also to keep the group pure and not intermix with others. My friend Joan once asked if using non-dairy creamer in your coffee after a meat meal is cheating. If you are already eating meals with gentiles then the point has been lost anyway.

Communist and Fascist govs tried to be Sociocentric but their failure and the horror of what they were has made Sociecentrid even more appalling.

The author does say that the generous social saftey nets in Europe are NOT sociecentric since they beneif the INDIVIDUAL.

PERSONAL-There is A LOT more grey area here than the author acknowledges, though I think his BASIC point is correct.

Shweder saw problems with the work of Kohblerg and others. Shweder says (correctly!) they are the product of people FROM individual cultures. In Soci-cultures there is NOT a sep between MORAL and SOCIAL CONV. He did a questionaire with Americans and Indians and found VERY different answers:

1. Indians thought a husband beating his wife for a minor lie was fine Americans did not

2. Indians thought a widow eating fish was wrong Americans thought it was fine.

3. The Widow-thing is because Indians think the Fish makes one more sexually active and for widow to have sex would offend the spirit of the dead husband and make her not get reincarnated to a higher level. So maybe the rule IS about harm after all.

PERSONAL- Doesn't the author see this as STUPID?
PERSONAL- I see NO excuse for the husband-beating-wife being good. But I'm just a culturally insensitive westener.

The Author did a study in Brazil and found a vast diff: The upper class had a CLEAR distinction between Moral and MERE SOCIAL CONVENTION whereas the lower classes had no such distinction.
PERSONAL: The upper classes are RIGHT, the lower classes are WRONG. It is important to distinguish true morality from social conv.

In some of the experiements with interviews the listener would make up victims to justify their moral sense. This was NOT reasoning in search of truth, but it was reasoning in support of their emotional reaction.

David Hume Reason is and should only to be the slave of any passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.
QUESTION: What about Science and Mathematics?
UPSHOT: The simplitic (and later in the book, the Liberal Theory) that Morality is all about harm is NOT true and NOT widely shared. So kids do not learn morals by themselves. Shweder argued for cultural learning. The author will later argue for innate moral intuitions.

1.2 Chapter 2: The Intuitive Dog and its Rational Tail

Rationalist Delution (Plato, Kant, Kohlberg all believed it along with most of modern Western culture and socity) is that morals are rational. So if there is a moral search for how it affects people. The delusion worships reasons and devalues passion.

Hume was AGAINST this.

Thomas Jefferson thougth head and heart go together.

Darwin: Natural selection gives us minds that are preloaded with moral emotions. This is called nativism. He and others wondered how they could.

Nativism fell out of fashion when the Nazi's and other used it for their terrible ends. Also, the radical anti-authoritiy politics of the 1960's mad natistism look bad (this is not logical).

Wilson (not the president) was a professor who did studies showing that people make up after-the-fact rationalizations for their morals. This was seen (incorrectly) as a justification for Fascism, so was not widely though well of.
EXAMPLE: The kosher laws were for health reasons.
Experiment: People can make moral judgements just as well while carying out some other cogniztive task.

To change peoples minds you must talk to the elephant.
PERSONAL AND LATER IN THE BOOK. Andrew Sullivan is a gay conversvative who a long time ago tried to push that Gay Marriage is a CONSERVATIVE viewpoint—allowing more people to enjoy the stability of MARRIAGE. This has not worked as a political tactic but he might be on the right track—talk to the elephant.
PERSONAL: My argument against republicans who want small gov and no handouts is that CORPORTIONS take these handouts also. So I don't say *the poor need help.*
Henry Ford and Dale Carnegie: Try to see things from someone elses point of view and this will help you convince them of stuff.

Intuitionsism: The intuition comes first, and the reasonaing later.

1.3 Chapter 3: Elephants Rule

This chapter was mostly VERIFYING the Intuition (elephant) first and reason (rider) later.

Wundt and Zajonc did experiments that show that brains evaluate instantly and constantly.

Todow showed that Social and Political judgements depend heavily on quick intuitive flashes. (They did some experiements using hypnosis that I am not sure I believe.)

Bad smells and other external stuff can influence our moral judgements. They are severly deficient morally.

1. Psychopaths reason but don't feel. They do not have a morality.
2. Babies feel but don't reason. They have the beginnings of morality.

2 Chapter 4: Vote for Me (Here's Why)

People would rather be SEEN as good then BE good. Good rep more important than being good.

Glacon was **Plato's** Brother. He poses the problem of **Gyges-** a man who has a ring of invisibilyt so he can do whatever he wants. The problem is, if you could get away with anything, you would!

This is a good thought experiemnt

Socrates says NO- the person would feel inner turmoil and guilt.

Plato-Soc-Kohlberg think moral reasoning is used to FIND the truth. This is rationalist.

Glauconian's are people who think that moral reasoning helps us pursue socially strategic goals such as guarding our repuations and convining others of our viewpoint.

Our in-house press sec, like the presidents, jusifies everything even if the arguments and reasoning are crap.

Confirmation bias. Cute example with triples: people who have a conjecture about triples of numbers kept testing it on EXAMPLE OF IT as opposed to COUNTEREXAMPLES

PERSONAL- In my research people DO look for counterexamples. Popperian science.

People are not good at finding arguments for points of view they don't agree with. Even Smart people (by IQ).

The title of this section says it all: We lie, cheat, and justify so well that we honestly believe we are honest. Google will help you find evidence of whateve you want it to

PERSONAL- I don't believe this is always true, but

Flat Earthers: IN USA 16%, In Brazil 7%

Astrology- 29%

COVID- in England 20% think its a hoax.

Another title: We can believe almost anything that supports our team.

The section described political experiments where people would just keep finding reasons to support their candidate.

PERSONAL: I am amused that If MY candiate has an affair its not a big deal If YOUR candidate has an affair, it is a big deal.

The rationalist delusion is not just that human reason guides morals and is really good, its also that smart people should rule. Can get dangerous (eugenics) when only smart people (or X people) should breed.

Studies show that philosophers are NOT more moral than others.

No ethics class will make people better after they step out of the class.

Need to teach the elephant- make being moral in their own self interest.

3 Part II: There is more to Morality than Harm and Fairness

3.1 Chapter 5: Beyond WEIRD Morality

Working class people found even the NEED to justify why it is wrong to have sex with a dead chicken, or other odd examples, as ODD- OF COURSE these thing are WRONG.

College Students generally thought it was rather odd to have sex with a dead chicken, but HEY, if thats what they want to do, its fine.

Most Psyche studies are on WEIRD people Western, Educationed, Industralized, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Deomocratic.

PERSONAL: When I first heard of (probably false) stories of a couple finding a dead rat in their bucket of KFC I asked the question (not this

smoothly) *Okay, that is disgusting, but is it actually bad for your health?* I really wanted to separate the PRAGAMATIC issue from the Intuitive Disgust. This might be very WEIRD, so much so that even my WEIRD friends thought I was nuts and did not even undersatnd my question, or the need to ask it.

WEIRD (and western in genreal- though perhaps not the lower classes) have a sense of people as Independent and Automnotomis that is not shared by other cultures. This will be a KEY difference: What is more important, the individal or a society. This explains some of the odd differences.

Ethic of community.

QUESTION: The size of the community may differ. Family, State, Country, Religion.

Religion is also a factor- people should not have sex with a chicken since it degrades yourself and offends God.

BEGIN PERSONAL

Note the following arguments: Abortion is wrong since God Say so. This argument is almost never used in America.

Abortion is wrong because its killing an automous being. THIS is an American argument.

Gay marriage is wrong since God says so. This argument is sometimes used, but it has to then claim that Ameriac is supposed to be Christian Country. So this is a hard argument to make.

Gay Marriage is wrong since it will undermine socity and cheapen marriage which is bad for society. (This is not true.) This argument is one that Americans can make, though its still odd since it colides with Autonomy.

Being forced to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple undermines MY autonomy. This is the argument currently being used.

END PERSONAL

The author went to India and realized that some of their odd habbits (Women do not speak.) had A reason- to help bind society together. FAMILY is the basic unit, NOT the individual.

OPINION The author finds a beauty to the idea of FAMILY being central but it still just seems WRONG to me. I am reminded of in Russia where they WEAKENED the (alredy weak and unenforced) rules on wife beating since the man being the head of the household is so important. Can't we just say this is WRONG in any Moral System?

Ethic of Autonomny

Ethic of community

Ethic of Divinity

Are ther others? These also subdivide.

Moral Matrix Like the movie, if you are in the Matrix you think that is all there is. Your moral matrix makes it hard or even impossible to imagine another moral system.

Moral plurlisam is a FACT- you can't fight it.

WEIRD cultures have a rather narrow moral domain- fairness, no-harm, and autonomy. Other societies value family and/or community.

4 Chapter Six: Taste Buds of the Rightous Mind

1. **Deontology (Kant)** Follow THE RULES. NEVER lie, cheat, or steal. So RULE focused.

   PRO: well defined.

   CON: The standard one- lying to Nazi's about hiding jews.

   QUESTION: Didn't Kant see this as a problem?

2. **Utilitrianims (Bentham)** Greatest good for the greatest many. So OUTCOME focused.

   PRO: Sounds good

   CON: sacrificing one to save five seems odd. Also, hard to know ahead of time what will happen (killing Baby Hitler?).

3. **Pluralistic Sentimetalist (Hume)** Not sure what this is but the author likes it. Prob some notion of diff strokes for diff folks.

There are many moral axis:

1. Care/Harm
2. Fairness/Cheating
3. Loyalty/Betrayl
4. Authority/Subversion

5. Sanctity/Degradation

6. (I think later he has more)

All of these can be the product of evolution.

The author will later say that evolution and culture co-evolve to cause any of these to take hold.

People may be born with a predispotion to some of these but their env may shape what happens.

QUESTION He claims evolution and culture working together can make changes fast. I thought evolution was very slow.

5 Chapter Seven: The Moral Foundations of Politics

CARE/HARM: Evolution makes us want to care for our children. And others?

Politicians use this with things like SAVE DAFUR. SAVE the unborn! BLM!

FAIRNESS/CHEATING: Evolution makes us generous- but perhaps selectivity generious- what do we get out of it? Is it to a kin?

QUESTION: The problem of how altruism could be evolutionary seems to have been an open question but it seems to now be solved. Not sure.

Poiticians use this: Occupy Wall Street, The Tea Party

QUESTION: The Tea Party was formed by the outrage about homeowners geting money from the gov after the craash of 2008. Why weren't they outraged at the bailouts of companies? This is a genreal Republican problem- being outraged at people getting welfare but not at companies getting welfare. I LOOKED THIS UP- they WERE against the Bailouts. SO- if John McCain had become prez and was pushing a stim package and bailouts would they have opposed it, OR where they already co-opted by Reps?

On the left fairness means equality: BAD that the boss makes 100x what the employees make.

On the right fairness means proportionality: BAD if people on welfare get anything.

QUESTION: I can see someone on the right thinking that 100X is too much more for the boss, but this does not seem to happen, even among blue-color reps.

LOYTALTY/BETRAYL:

Evolution- a team that sticks togeher and has each others back will do well against a team that does not. Might also help for hunting.

We are tribal, but our tribes vary

How big is your clan? (this would be a good title for a book).

Perhaps Bad– Loyalty to one group may also mean hatred of traitors.

People who BETRAY a group are usually seen much more harshly than people in another group. The Koran does not trust Jews but does NOT say to kill them. The Koran DOES say to kill Muslims who have converted.

PERSONAL: FDR was called A Traitor to his Class. David Duke prob thinks Biden is a traitor to his race.

The Left DOES NOT USE THIS ONE, which could be a weakness.

OR the Left's group is too big- Universalism, not just USA.

The Right uses this a lot.

Tarifs are an example of USA first.

America-First is clearly an example.

AUTHORITY/SUBVERSION

Respect of hierarchy and authority.

Since we are WEIRD we tend to think hierarchy is bad, but in chimps (and hopefully humans and dogs) the alpha-dog DOES do stuff for the group AND knows his limits

PERSONAL: The book Weak Strong Man, about Putin, points out that Putin has to balance what he does- he can't go to far in his power or else he will lose it. Some dictators go to far and get a revolt- the Arab Spring.

Also, Authority helps order a society.

At this point the book didn't talk about Dems/Reps but I think later they say that Reps use this one and Dems don't

Not quite right- when a Dem is prez then the reps say the prez DOES NOT have authority.

SANCTITY/DEGRADATION

Evolution- prob to avoid foods that are bad for you.

Current triggers vary ALOT.

Some find outsiders disgusting. (e.g., immigrants are dirty swarthy italians)

If we did not have a notion of degradation we would not have a notion of sacred and can be beneficial to have a notion of sacred. Sacredness binds people together.

PERSONAL- I wonder- the society has to REALLY BELIEVE that X is sacred and not know that its just for the good of society.
LIBERTY/OPPRESION (this one he added in the next chapter)

Evolution: Came later once we were closer together as socety and was a check on authority.

The RIGHT uses this one with regard to sexual activity

The LEFT uses this one with regard to the Env and hatred of capitalism.
KEY FOR POLITICS:

Left uses Care and Fairness

Right uses all five.

PERSONAL- this is a simplfiication but its basically correct.

6 Chapter 8: The Conservative Advantage

Lets look ata ll five:

HARM

DEMS: The poor, the oppressed

REPS: Innocent victims of Dem policies (E.g., Willie Horton's victims)

FAIRNESS

DEMS: The poor, the oppressed have been treated unfairly.

REPS: Taking tax money from hardworking Americans and giving it to welfare queens is unfair.

QUESTION: They SHOULD get outraged by corporate bailouts.

LOAYALTY:
REPS: Patritisom, Military
DEMS: They got nothing here.

AUTHORITY:
REPS: Respect for parents, elders, traditions.
DEMS: They got nothing here.

SANCITY:
REPS: The Christian Right
DEMS: THey got NOTHING here.

LIBERTY: (This is later in chapter)

REPS: Liberty from authority and gov rules- so libertarians

DEMS: Liberty from the wealthy and powerful who rule.

Evidence backs this up.

Even dog choices:

Dems like gentle dogs.

Reps like loyal dogs.

Relgion:

Liberal churchs stress harm and fairness

Cons churchs stress loyalt, authority, sancitiy

But its lopsided in that Cons DO hit all five.

John Stewart Mill: Gov should only use power to prevent harm. Social Contract. (Only Care and Fairness)

Durkheim: Societies emerge organically and find ways to avoid free riders and selfishness. Need Cooperation.

Need ALL FIVE Moral matrices.

E plurbus unum.

From many, one

Dems are the party of Plurbus

Reps are the party of Unum.