

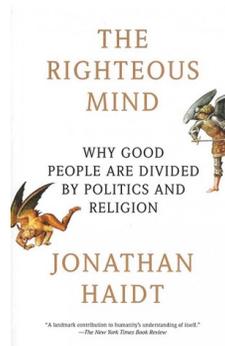


#EconReads



"The Righteous Mind"

By Jonathan Haidt



Part I: Intuitions Come First, Strategic Reasoning Second

Chapter 1- Where Does Morality Come From?

1. Haidt offers the first of many thought experiments on page 5 in asking, "How do children come to know right from wrong?" How did *you* answer this question initially? Are you a nativist or an empiricist? Has your position changed at all during your reading of Haidt?
2. Haidt describes how the early work of Lawrence Kohlberg, which he describes as "careful and honest scientific research, nonetheless came to be politicized. To what extent do you think it's possible to do purely apolitical work in the social sciences?
3. How does Haidt describe David Hume's version of morality? How does it compare to that of Plato?
4. Starting around page 18, Haidt describes his PhD research in which he surveyed people with stories that often elicited reaction of disgust. What main conclusions did he draw, and what most surprised him? What most surprised *you* about Haidt's results?
5. What's the "rationalist delusion." according to Haidt, and how did this concept guide his further studies?
6. How did Charles Darwin account for morality? How did "Social Darwinism" emerge, and why has it fallen out of favor? What about it ought to be resurrected?

7. On page 17, Haidt contrasts *sociocentric* and *individualistic* ways of organizing society. Should society be a servant of the individual, or should individuals be the servants of their societies?

Chapter 2- The Intuitive Dog and its Rational Tail

8. In chapter 2, Haidt introduces a metaphor that will pervade the rest of the book- the rider and the elephant. What does each component represent, and how are we to understand their interaction?

Chapter 3- Elephants Rule

9. What does Haidt mean by intuitions, and how do our intuitions develop?
10. Haidt says, "...part of what it means to be a partisan is that you have acquired the right set of intuitive reactions to hundreds of words and phrases." What does this mean? (Did YOU go to ProjectImplicit.org and take the test? How did it affect you?)

Chapter 4- Vote for Me (Here's Why)

11. Early in Chapter 4, Haidt says, "...reason is not fit to rule; it was designed to seek justification, not truth. How does this describe what's going on with an individual's "rider and elephant?"
12. Haidt cautions us to be leery of individuals' abilities to reason. Why, then is there hope for 'producing' good reason in groups?
13. Why is self-interest a weak predictor of people's policy preferences? (page 100)
14. The 'central metaphor' of Part 2 is, "The Righteous Mind is like a tongue with six taste receptors." What are these six receptors? With which do you most identify, and why?

Part II: There's More to Morality than Harm and Fairness

Chapter 5- Beyond WEIRD Morality

15. What is WEIRD culture? Are *you* a part of it? How does it influence the worldview of its denizens? And what's *wrong* with that?

Chapter 6- Taste Buds for the Righteous Mind

16. What's a 'moral matrix'? How many moral matrices surrounded you while you were growing up? How can this concept help us better understand the moral motivations of others?
17. How does imagination aid in moral judgement?

18. Haidt claims that the minds of intellectuals changed (p. 141) as "Western nations became more educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic." *How* did they change, and *why*? How has this affected the processes or moral judgment today?
19. What is modularity, and what did Haidt hope this concept would contribute to his investigation of moral judgement?

Chapter 7- The Moral Foundations of Politics

20. What's wrong with HOMO ECONOMICUS, and how does he make moral judgments?
21. What does Haidt mean by the following: "Political parties and interest groups strive to make their concerns become current triggers of your moral modules." (p. 156) What moral matrices do liberals rely on, according to Haidt? What about conservatives? How accurate is this description in your experience?
22. In the course of his study, Haidt concluded that there are *two* kinds of fairness people care about, and these differ in people of the Left and Right. What are these two kinds, and why do they have such differential appeal? Why *don't* the other foundations of morality (loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation) appeal to liberals, according to Haidt?
23. What should liberals *do* to regain this advantage? (Haidt seems short on suggestions... What are *yours*?)

Chapter 8- The Conservative Advantage

24. How does Haidt's sixth moral foundation (liberty/oppression) come in to play in moral judgments, and again, how does this differ between liberals and conservatives?
25. Why do conservatives have an advantage over liberals in politics and governance according to Haidt?
26. What does Haidt suggest *really* underlies liberals' egalitarianism? To what extent do you agree with him?
27. Haidt has comparatively little to say about libertarians, but what he does suggest they are closer to the moral foundations of conservatives? Is he right?

Part 3: Morality Binds and Blinds

Chapter 9-Why Are We So Groupish?

28. How can man be *both* selfish AND groupish, according to Haidt?
29. What is "multi-level selection" and how does it explain the development of man's social virtues?
30. How do cultural innovations lead to genetic responses?

31. What does the notion of "shared intentionality" contribute to our understanding of man's moral psychology?

Chapter 10- The Hive Switch

32. What is the "hive switch?" How is it activated? What function does it play in man's moral psychology? How does this function differ across the political spectrum?

33. Haidt describes three ways in which YOU might have experienced "hive switching." (pp. 263-270) Have you experienced any of these? What was your experience like? What are some *other* examples of hive-switching you can describe?

34. Let's take a question posed by Haidt next (p. 281): "Might the world be a better place if we could greatly increase the care people get within their existing groups and nations while slightly decreasing the care they get from strangers in other groups and nations?"

Religion is a Team Sport

35. What does Haidt suggest social scientists get *wrong* in their study of religion (p. 287) How does this hinder our ability to understand the relationship of religion to morality and politics?

36. What does Haidt mean when he says (p. 296), "...the cultural evolution of religion has been driven largely by competition among groups." To what extent do YOU find this plausible? Explain.

37. How did David Sloan Wilson merge the ideas of "the two most important thinkers in the history of the social sciences: Darwin and Durkheim?" (p. 301)

38. Haidt says the religion is a "moral exoskeleton." He then says, "Societies that forego the exoskeleton of religion should reflect carefully on what will happen to them over several generations." What exactly should they be careful of, and why? What is the result of NOT engaging in such reflection?

39. What is Haidt's definition of morality, and why is it functionalist in nature? Is this definition one *you* can accept? Explain.

Chapter 12- Can't We All Disagree More Constructively?

40. What is moral capital, according to Haidt? What role does it play in sustaining community? How is it developed and nurtured?

41. What *can* we do to disagree more constructively?

42. Haidt courageously describes his own political transformation in Chapter 12. Have YOU undergone any sort of political transformation in your life? What prompted it? Where did you end up?

43. What wisdom does Haidt suggest we should (all) take from liberals?
Conservatives? Libertarians?

Bonus Questions:

44. What do you think is the **ESSENTIAL QUESTION** this book is trying to answer?

45. What *most* surprised you in your reading of this book?

46. What is the most important thing *you* will take away from your reading of this book?