**The Righteous Mind:**

**Why Good people are divided by Politics and Religion**

NOTES for week 2:

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Political parties and interest groups strive to make their concerns become current triggers of your moral modules. To get your vote, your money, or your time, they must activate at least one of your moral foundations.

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The Care/ harm foundation evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of caring for vulnerable children. It makes us sensitive to signs of suffering and need; it makes us despise cruelty and want to care for those who are suffering.

The Fairness/ cheating foundation evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of reaping the rewards of cooperation without getting exploited. It makes us sensitive to indications that another person is likely to be a good (or bad) partner for collaboration and reciprocal altruism. It makes us want to shun or punish cheaters.

The Loyalty/ betrayal foundation evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of forming and maintaining coalitions. It makes us sensitive to signs that another person is (or is not) a team player. It makes us trust and reward such people, and it makes us want to hurt, ostracize, or even kill those who betray us or our group.

The Authority/ subversion foundation evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of forging relationships that will benefit us within social hierarchies. It makes us sensitive to signs of rank or status, and to signs that other people are (or are not) behaving properly, given their position.

The Sanctity/ degradation foundation evolved initially in response to the adaptive challenge of the omnivore’s dilemma, and then to the broader challenge of living in a world of pathogens and parasites. It includes the behavioral immune system, which can make us wary of a diverse array of symbolic objects and threats. It makes it possible for people to invest objects with irrational and extreme values—both positive and negative—which are important for binding groups together.

The Liberty/ oppression foundation, I propose, evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of living in small groups with individuals who would, if given the chance, dominate, bully, and constrain others. The original triggers therefore include signs of attempted domination. Anything that suggests the aggressive, controlling behavior of an alpha male (or female) can trigger this form of righteous anger, which is sometimes called reactance. (That’s the feeling you get when an authority tells you that you can’t do something and you then want to do that thing even more).

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The enemy of society to a Liberal is someone who abuses their power (Authority) and still demands, and in some cases forces, others to “respect” them anyway.… A Liberal authority is someone or something that earns society’s respect through making things happen that unify society and suppress its enemy.

It’s not just the accumulation and abuse of political power that activates the anger of the Liberty/ oppression foundation; the current triggers can expand to encompass the accumulation of wealth, which helps to explain the pervasive dislike of capitalism on the far left.

The hatred of oppression is found on both sides of the political spectrum. The difference seems to be that for liberals—who are more universalistic and who rely more heavily upon the Care/ harm foundation—the Liberty/ oppression foundation is employed in the service of underdogs, victims, and powerless groups everywhere. It leads liberals (but not others) to sacralize equality, which is then pursued by fighting for civil rights and human rights. Liberals sometimes go beyond equality of rights to pursue equality of outcomes, which cannot be obtained in a capitalist system. This may be why the left usually favors higher taxes on the rich, high levels of services provided to the poor, and sometimes a guaranteed minimum income for everyone.

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Conservatives, in contrast, are more parochial—concerned about their groups, rather than all of humanity. For them, the Liberty/ oppression foundation and the hatred of tyranny supports many of the tenets of economic conservatism: don’t tread on me (with your liberal nanny state and its high taxes), don’t tread on my business (with your oppressive regulations), and don’t tread on my nation (with your United Nations and your sovereignty-reducing international treaties).

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Everyone—left, right, and center—cares about proportionality; everyone gets angry when people take more than they deserve. But conservatives care more, and they rely on the Fairness foundation more heavily—once fairness is restricted to proportionality. For example, how relevant is it to your morality whether “everyone is pulling their own weight”? Do you agree that “employees who work the hardest should be paid the most”? Liberals don’t reject these items, but they are ambivalent. Conservatives, in contrast, endorse items such as these enthusiastically.

Liberals are often uncomfortable with the negative side of karma – retribution…