

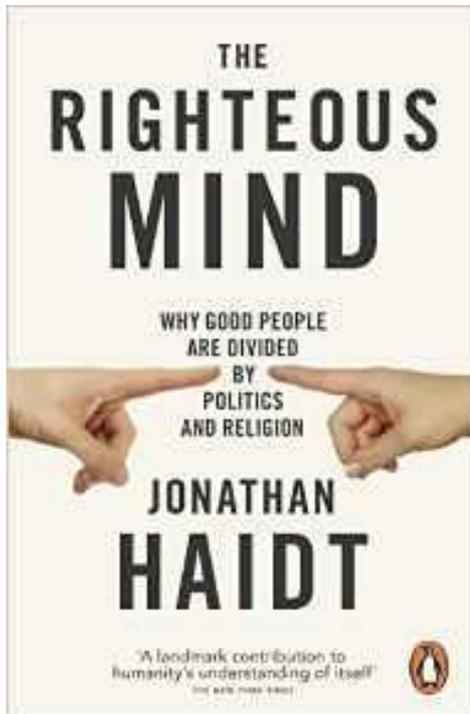
# **“Why can’t we all just get along?” Understanding our Biases.**

**Presenter: Shoshana Boyd Gelfand**

Based on the teaching of: Dr. Jonathan Haidt, New York University

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# Jonathan Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory



[www.yourmorals.org](http://www.yourmorals.org)

[www.civilpolitics.org](http://www.civilpolitics.org)

[www.asteroidsclub.org](http://www.asteroidsclub.org)

# Moral Reasoning

A family's dog was killed by a car in front of their house.

They had heard that dog meat was delicious, so they cut up the dog's body and cooked it and ate it for dinner.

Nobody saw them do this.

**DID THE PEOPLE IN THIS STORY DO ANYTHING MORALLY WRONG?**

# Moral Reasoning

A man goes to the supermarket once a week and buys a chicken. But before cooking the chicken, he has sexual intercourse with it. Then he cooks it and eats it.

**DID HE DO ANYTHING MORALLY WRONG?**

# WEIRD PEOPLE

Western

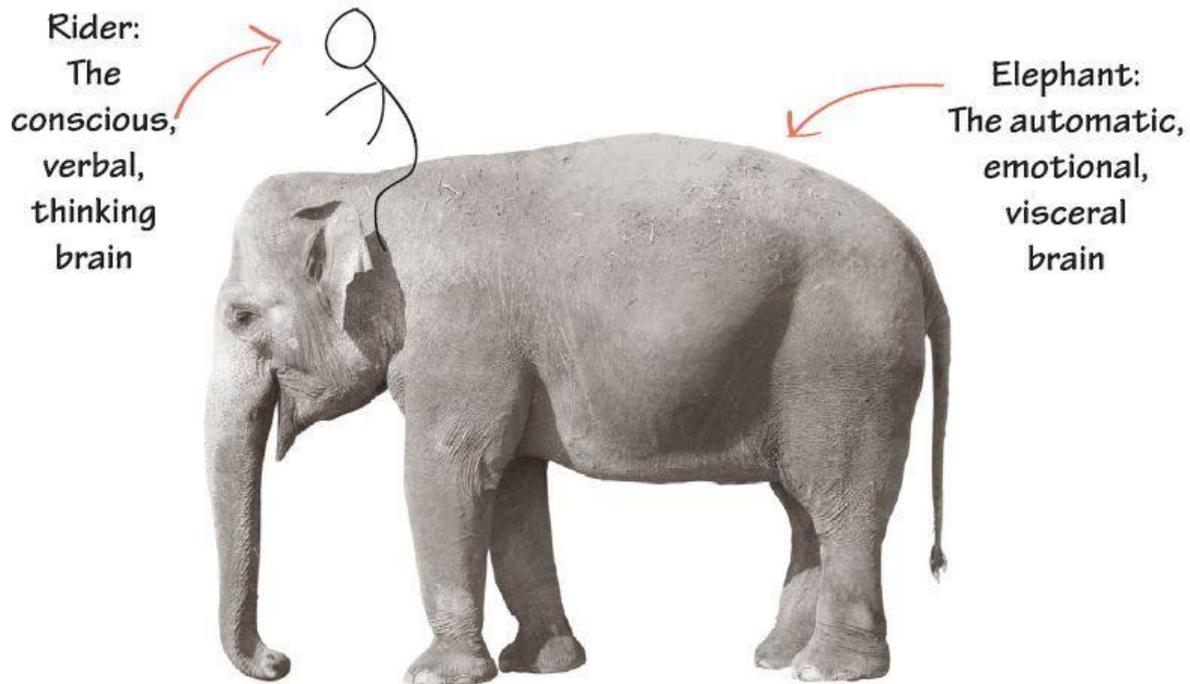
Educated

Industrialized

Rich

Democratic

# The Elephant and the Rider: Moral Intuition vs Moral Reasoning



# Moral Foundations Theory

- Evolutionary Biology - natural selection shaped our brains
- Neuroscience - most of our decisions are left to our unconscious instinctive brain
- Social Psychology - human beings evolved to live in groups
- Moral Philosophy - Western morality tends to focus on individual rights

# Care / Harm Foundation

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.



# Fairness / Cheating Foundation

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.



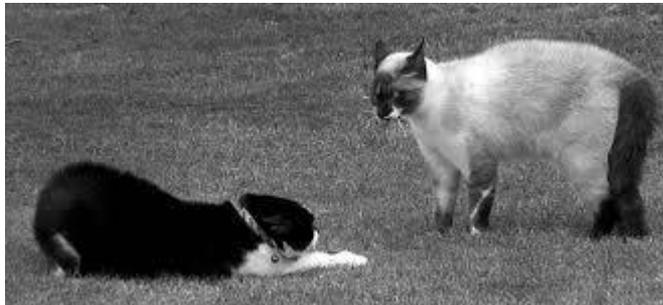
# Loyalty / Betrayal Foundation

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.



# Authority/Subversion Foundation

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.



# Sanctity / Degradation Foundation

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.**



# Five Moral Foundations

from Dr. Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*

- **Care / Harm**
- **Fairness / Cheating**
- **Loyalty / Betrayal**
- **Authority / Subversion**
- **Sanctity / Degradation**

# Liberal / Conservative Differences

from *The Righteous Mind*, p. 187

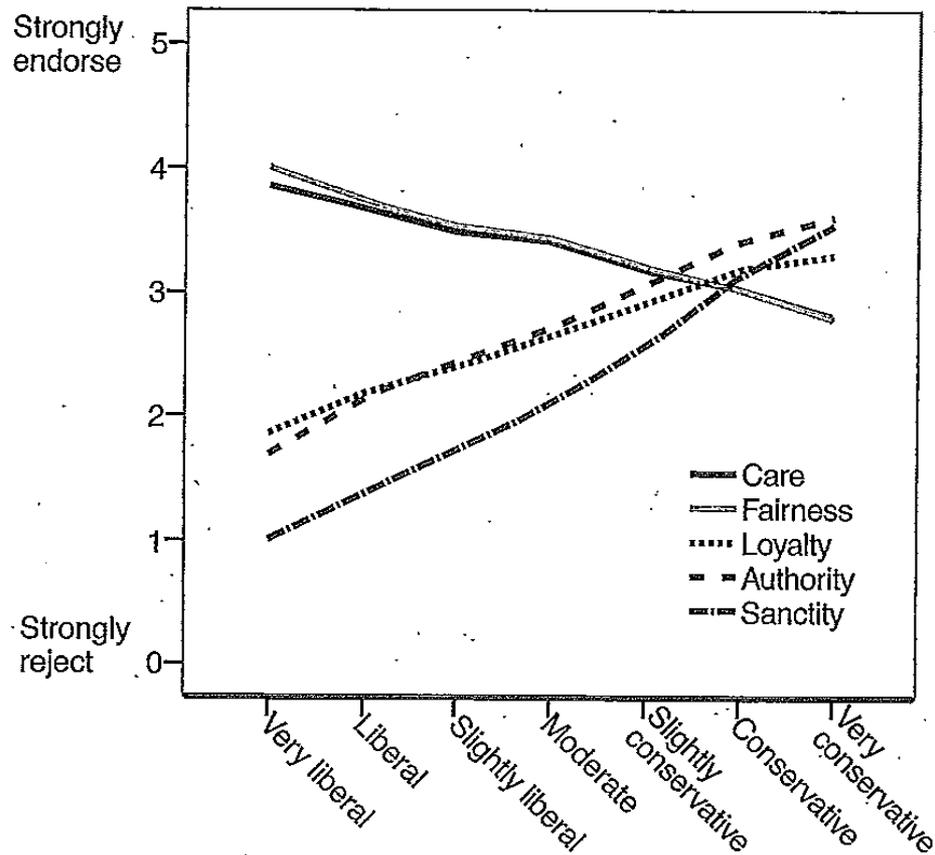


FIGURE 8.2. Scores on the MFQ, from 132,000 subjects, in 2011. Data from YourMorals.org.

# Breakout Discussion

- ▶ Where have you seen people using different moral foundations and completely missing how others are thinking:
  - British society
  - Your family
  - World politics
  - Your organisation

# What to do?

- ▶ Tendency to gravitate to those with whom we agree (especially with social media feeds) – be aware of your elephant instincts and seek out diversity of thinking
- ▶ Consciously engage with those with whom you disagree by asking genuine questions:
  - “Tell me more about how you came to that conclusion”
  - “How is that strategy working for you?”
  - “Was there a time where you felt differently?”
- ▶ View conflict as an opportunity for exploring complexity
- ▶ Practice holding more than one narrative/truth at a time – difficult when you feel your identity is being challenged, but it is a skill that can be learned and practiced and strengthened over time
- ▶ “The opposite of a fact is a falsehood, but the opposite of one profound truth may very well be another profound truth.” – Niels Bohr

# How to Have a Conversation With Your Angry Uncle Over the Holidays

By Karin Tamerius

1. **Ask** open-ended, genuinely curious, nonjudgmental questions.
2. **Listen** to what people you disagree with say and deepen your understanding with follow-up inquiries.
3. **Reflect** back their perspective by summarizing their answers and noting underlying emotions.
4. **Agree** before disagreeing by naming ways in which you agree with their point of view.
5. **Share** your perspective by telling a story about a personal experience.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/18/opinion/thanksgiving-family-argue-chat-bot.html>

# Websites to Explore

- ▶ [www.yourmorals.org](http://www.yourmorals.org)
- ▶ [www.civilpolitics.org](http://www.civilpolitics.org)
- ▶ [www.asteroidsclub.org](http://www.asteroidsclub.org)
- ▶ [www.jonathanhaidt.com](http://www.jonathanhaidt.com)
- ▶ [www.openmindplatform.org](http://www.openmindplatform.org)