

These findings of heterogeneous effects of autonomy, depending on school capacity and other aspects of school governance, must be considered when evaluating the efficacy of policies to devolve more power to schools. For autonomy to have a positive impact, schools must have sufficient financial, intellectual and social capital.

Much of the debate over school autonomy and self-managing schools is misinformed. Although 'autonomy' is the current buzzword in schools policy, Caldwell and Spinks distinguish between autonomous schools and 'self-managing schools,' explaining that in a system of schools, such as the public system, schools are not completely autonomous. They still work within a centralised framework but have greater freedom to manage their resources.

Given that the strongest opposition to school autonomy has come from teachers unions, it is disappointing that *The Self-Transforming School* does not address the role of unions in the policy debate, and how they may be doing their members a disservice. Good teachers have much to gain from school governance arrangements that give them greater professional freedom.

It is difficult to believe that the concept of self-managing schools was then, and is now, controversial. Caldwell and Spinks describe self-managing schools as a 'common-sense approach' to school governance. Others seem to think that giving public schools some relatively modest powers, such as the ability to choose their teachers and control their own budgets, is part of a radical 'privatisation' agenda. These charges have been levelled at the modest but growing numbers of Independent Public Schools in Western Australia and Queensland. Independent Public Schools have also been inaccurately described as charter schools. They are not; charter schools are operated by private organisations, not government.

No modern education policy treatise would be complete without reference to the ubiquitous OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). While Caldwell and Spinks discuss the validity of using PISA performance to guide policy, and while they dismiss the theory that the success of strong PISA performers like Finland and the Asian states is attributable to

non-school factors, they sensibly suggest that England and Canada provide more suitable policy lessons for Australia. Canada shows that a highly dispersed population with several jurisdictions can function effectively without a federal department of education. The 'academies' model in the United Kingdom shows how leaping the ideological divide to create productive partnerships between self-managing public schools and private corporations can work to the benefit of students.

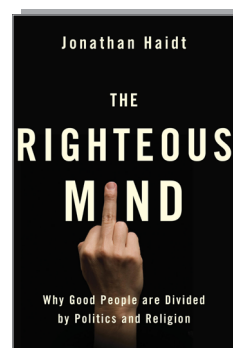
The Self-Transforming School covers a lot of ground, including contentious topics such as funding, curriculum and testing. It is characteristically restrained and politically neutral on all these issues. These features of Caldwell and Spinks' work have contributed to their longevity in the education policy field. Hopefully, they will continue to influence policymakers for many years to come.

Reviewed by Jennifer Buckingham



***The Righteous Mind:
Why Good People
Are Divided by Politics
and Religion***

By Jonathan Haidt
Vintage (reprint edition),
2013
\$21.46, 528 pages
ISBN 9780307455772



Readers are asked to consider the following scenario described in the opening pages of Jonathan Haidt's book *The Righteous Mind*.

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. No one gets hurt.

Is the behavior wrong? Is the man within his rights to do so? Haidt says if you are a liberal (in the American sense) or a classical liberal, you will probably

give a nuanced response that acknowledges the man's right to do what he wants, as long as it does not hurt anyone. If you are not a classical liberal, you probably think such behavior is wrong.

We are now entering the fascinating world of morality.

With morality, most of us like to think of ourselves arriving at moral positions on the basis of reason. It was therefore not without trepidation that I began reading the opening chapters of Haidt's book, which claims we are all slaves to our intuition in the sense that when making judgments we first follow our gut feeling and *then* use our ability to reason to find ways of justifying the (intuitive) decision we made.

The 'we' may come as an affront to some *Policy* readers. Surely Haidt is thinking of less gifted people or those dye-in-the-wool conservatives and (American) liberals. After all, the book is written for an American audience with today's political polarisation in mind. Alas, Haidt seeks to demonstrate this is true of everyone (including classical liberals), only some of us are a little more clever at convincing ourselves otherwise. Moreover, as a psychologist he knows his science and has the knowledge of great thinkers such as Hume on his side. So sceptical readers should put on their thinking caps before picking up this book.

Haidt's arguments about our self-deluding nature were explored in his previous book, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, where he crystalised his findings into the analogy of an elephant (representing our intuition) and its rider (representing our reason), with the rider being more or less at the mercy of the elephant. Though imperfect, the analogy sticks and is typical of Haidt's writing style whereby he tries to make the academic and lofty accessible for a non-specialist audience. If the high-profile academic accolades are anything to go by, he does this without compromising his professional integrity.

In the *The Righteous Mind*, Haidt builds upon the elephant-rider analogy to answer the topical issue of why Americans have become so politically partisan. In a nutshell, our morality is pre-determined and we are less open to reasoning than we perceive (Part 1); morality means different things to different people and we can be categorised into moral groupings (Part 2); and people are primarily

groupish beings, so when circumstances conspire to sharpen political division—as has been in the case in the United States since the 1990s—(American) liberals and conservatives become increasingly antagonistic towards each another (Part 3).

This summary counts as a spoiler, but the book's journey is as important as its destination. Readers can expect to be titillated by quirky scientific findings (washing our hands make us more judgmental), and learn why Hindus perceive it immoral for widows to eat fish. Moreover, Haidt is adept at drawing the red line between his experiences and the developments in various academic fields to relevant questions that we can all relate to. In doing so, Haidt brings academia 'down from the bookshelf' to remind us of the real importance of these fields to our understanding of ourselves.

The book's most interesting discussion covers his research into identifying five traits (or foundations) upon which morality is based: care, fairness, loyalty, authority and sanctity. Using the Internet (yourmorals.org) to test 132,000 people, Haidt and his co-researchers found that for those on the far political left, morality consisted almost entirely (only) of the care and fairness foundations. As one moves to the right of the political spectrum, the loyalty, authority and sanctity foundations feature and weigh increasingly more, the upshot being mutual incomprehension for those on the left and right of each another's morality.

As a self-identified (American) liberal, Haidt contends the left's incomprehension of the right is most severe due to the left's inability to empathise with the right on the three moral foundations they do not share (loyalty, authority and sanctity). Haidt says this gives conservative messages a broader appeal, which he calls 'The Conservative Advantage', with reference to George W. Bush's electoral victories.

Annoyingly, Haidt wrongly identifies Hayek as a conservative, and for the most part lumps classical liberals with conservatives. While the classical liberal voice should not be exaggerated, having himself discussed classical liberalism as an alternative moral matrix, Haidt only cursorily attempts to show how it fits into his overall theory.

Similarly, although the book's chapters read convincingly on a micro basis, Haidt fails to tie the individual parts into a convincing narrative.

For example, in Part 3, he cites Australian research to explain that genes predetermine traits likely to make us of a conservative or liberal disposition; however, given the importance of this claim to Haidt's wider hypothesis, the topic is dealt with in too superficial a manner to overcome the sceptical reader.

Furthermore, if the antecedents of America's current political polarisation lie in Western culture's interaction with human nature, as Haidt argues, it would seem relevant to ask why this has occurred now, and why this extreme polarisation is unique to America. The book's sub-title suggests this is on the cards. Regrettably, Haidt barely addresses the issue, only mentioning the ideological realignment that occurred in the Southern American states in the 1960s, and Newt Gingrich's advice in 1995 to newly elected Republican Congressmen to leave their wives and families in their home states (apparently, it's bad for the nation when Republican congressmen and their families socialise with Democrat congressmen's and their families in Washington D.C. on weekends).

Beyond this rather dubious explanation and a reference to a website, readers are left to their

own devices. Could the same political polarisation occur in culturally similar Australia? Maybe we classical liberals can outbreed the others before it's too late. Perhaps these shortcomings are inevitable given the book's broad scope, although the weighting of the book's focus could have been better. I would have preferred less attention on the admittedly curious topic of how and why people cooperate, and more focus on the implications of Haidt's theories. It would also have been interesting to hear more on how Haidt proposes to break this descent into polarisation.

Notwithstanding the above criticisms the book has many strong points. Haidt's intellectual curiosity is impressive and his enthusiasm infectious. The book is written in an entertaining style while giving the reader a sense of studying some of life's big questions from Plato to today. Even if you, like me, find yourself not entirely convinced at the end of it, then like the chicken story, you certainly will not be worse off.

Reviewed by Joel Malan

