

POL S 334 A - Horowitz

[00:00:11.12] - Hello, and welcome to the Sensibly Speaking Podcast. This is Chris Shelton, the critical thinker at large, coming at you for yet another episode of podcasting glory here on Stitcher, iTunes, Google Play, as well as with video here on YouTube.

[00:00:26.66] So this week, as you can see, I am doing my first live interview ever in my new studio space here. We've only been here for a couple months. And I have Mark Horowitz. He is a sociologist and a professor, and why don't you go ahead and introduce yourself as to your credentials and why anybody should listen to you.

[00:00:47.54] - Oh, absolutely. I'm delighted to be here.

[00:00:49.16] - Yes, thank you.

[00:00:49.58] - Happy to be your first live guest. Yeah, I'm a sociologist at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. I've been focusing over the last several years on basically questions of human morality, human flourishing, and the roots of moral and political polarization.

[00:01:07.28] So in a sense, it was fortunate because I had no idea what was in store in terms of the Trump world we live in, and how sharp we see these lines being drawn now, politically and morally. So what I like to think I'm doing in my work is trying to understand why people not only divide politically, but what's going on underlying it, from a social and psychological perspective. I can go into more detail as we--

[00:01:31.66] - Well, this is exactly the thrust of my entire channel--

[00:01:35.48] - Oh, great.

[00:01:36.56] - --what you just described, which is why I wanted to have you on because we have a mutual friend who told me that you were coming into town. You're going to be doing a talk at the Secular Hub.

[00:01:44.92] - Yes, on Saturday.

[00:01:46.22] - Yeah, and I'm very interested in that talk. And so it struck me as an immediate thing to like, oh, yeah, we got to talk on the podcast, right? I have addressed a lot of issues with psychologists, sociologists. I've had them on talking about coercive persuasion, cognitive dissonance, confirmation bias, motivated reasoning.

[00:02:09.86] I've done whole episodes on these topics because I am fascinated by why people think the way they think, why groups of people think and act the way they do, which is the sociology side, and all of it in a context, for me, of trying to understand extremism and how people get pushed in that direction because it seems to me that there are very few people who are naturally extremists.

[00:02:40.31] But it is so easy to push somebody in that direction through indoctrination, coercive persuasion, social pressures, et cetera. So that's where I'm coming from in talking about this stuff. And I was fascinated by some of the work that you've done on this.

[00:02:58.36] - Oh, wonderful.

[00:02:58.61] - So let's talk about your work here.

[00:03:00.42] - OK, great, yeah. Just a general reaction to what you said, I mean, motivated reasoning, we have a wide array of evidence for that. I think what gets complicated is that people differ in their tendencies and their predispositions. So I agree with you, although many may not be naturally extreme, I think what you have is you have some natural differences in terms of people's likelihoods to be extreme, but then you also have conjunctural factors like, what is their family environment.

[00:03:24.65] Maybe there's a traumatic situation. Maybe there's personal issues going on in their lives that also act as pushers or nudgers into a more extremist situation, right? What I try to do, I don't necessarily deal with extremism per se, but I do deal with how different people ultimately emote differently. And in emoting differently, certain kinds of stimuli in the social world are either more or less congenial to them.

[00:03:49.58] And what happens is, we're not aware, generally, of how we're emoting. People have a tendency to project onto other people how they feel about the world.

[00:03:58.35] - I've never noticed that.

[00:03:59.21] - Yeah, right. Yeah, and then we also gravitate to people who share-- I'm going to use the language of a school of social psychology called moral intuitionism. It comes out of this psychologist named Jonathan Haidt and his colleagues. He teaches at NYU. So he talks about moral intuition.

[00:04:14.87] So we have these moral intuitions, which are essentially emotions that we share with other people, and we gravitate toward other people who share those moral emotions. And it's a natural thing to do. It's consistent with the fact that human beings are, I would argue, a tribal species. We're very groupie. It's very natural to be groupie. Groupiness gives us a sense of belonging, a sense of positive distinctiveness.

[00:04:39.35] So going back to your fundamental question, why are people doing this? Why do people believe only what they want to believe? And I think part of it is, on an individual level, it protects our ego. Human beings want to believe that we're good and right and smart and good people. If we're confronted with information that could dislodge that, we tend to try to keep it at bay in various ways.

[00:04:59.48] But then on a group level, to the extent we have these group instincts, we're going to want to protect our group identity, and also keep at bay ideas that would challenge that.

[00:05:06.32] - Exactly. And that, in fact, has been a point I've made many times, in terms of politics, but it applies fully to religion, sports, I mean, any activity where people get pretty passionate. We're talking about identity, right, and there's this term, identity politics. And that's understood, to a lesser or greater degree, by the general public, me being one of those general public.

[00:05:33.24] I'm not putting myself outside of that. But I definitely agree that, or think that, there seems to be a line of some kind, or a gray area, where you're all in on your group. You're all in on an identity. You're a Boy Scout or you're an Eagles fan or you're evangelical, or whatever your identity is. Is

[00:06:00.68] But what I am working to try to ferret out the truth of, and so we can perhaps do something about it, is this line of extremism, this line where you cross a point where you now are becoming a black and white thinker. You have an us versus them kind of mentality, and really the stress there is versus, because there's us and there's them.

[00:06:30.51] And you can have a very-- just to sort of highlight what I'm talking about-- you can have a beneficent or neutral attitude towards them. It's all good, maybe tolerant, maybe even compassionate. But us versus them, now we're adversaries.

[00:06:51.90] Now you're the bad guy because you don't think the way I do. You don't believe the way I believe. I'm interested in why that happens and the forces that create that. I've talked a great deal about cult leaders because they are a manifestation of that at an extreme level. But we run into it every day, outside of cults.

[00:07:15.24] So there must be something more to it in our nature, and that's what I'm interested in. So what can you tell me about that?

[00:07:21.06] - There's so many different levels you have to attend to, to be able to even approach such a complicated question. I think on an evolutionary, historical level--

[00:07:29.49] - You mean that's just not a simple-- you don't have a real easy answer for me on that?

[00:07:31.84] - It's not a simple--

[00:07:32.13] - What?

[00:07:32.28] - I don't. Sadly, sadly.

[00:07:34.61] - What? Oh, come on.

[00:07:34.76] - It's not a slogan. I guess the first part of it would be recognizing that groupishness, going back to the point earlier, is simply part of human nature, that from an evolutionary point of view, we're a species. We lived for hundreds of thousands of years in

small-scale societies. Those societies tended to feel a strong sense of group unity around symbols they construct as sacred.

[00:07:57.75] There's good arguments--

[00:07:58.66] - Oh, that's a good point, actually, the sacredness of symbols. That's certainly an inherent part of cultic thinking. Sacred symbology, sacred language, sacred belief.

[00:08:07.50] - And there's an argument comes out of Emile Durkheim, but others have elaborated on it as well, that by rendering something sacred, we're tapping into what you call collective effervescence, which is strong feelings of emotion that get released that are larger than ourselves.

[00:08:21.87] Like the energy of you and I talking right now is kinetic. It's larger than you'd be able to experience, I'd be able to experience alone, just talking to ourselves. Right? That's just two people.

[00:08:30.09] - True.

[00:08:30.52] - We know how group behavior is at a soccer game, and we've seen mob behavior in various settings. So it's quite natural for human beings to be able to trigger this kind of unleashing of energy, right? And in the process, this construction of sacredness tends to form strong group bonds.

[00:08:47.19] There's arguments made that-- and this is contentious within the field of anthropology, but-- that there was at least some degree of intergroup conflict and competition over resources in prehistory. And if that is indeed the case, then those groups that fostered moral and emotional feelings of solidarity and unity would outcompete those other groups that were tended to be more selfish. The individuals themselves are selfish.

[00:09:11.31] There's a phrase comes out of evolutionary biology that selfishness beats altruism within groups, but altruistic groups beat selfish groups. So the basic idea is that within any group, if you have a lot of selfish people that weren't really committed to the wellbeing of each other and didn't feel a strong sense of unity, I mean, how much efficacy and solidarity are they going to bring to bear in a battle, say? They might retreat.

[00:09:35.90] If you have a lot of people willing to self sacrifice, feel a strong sense of group unity, well, they're going to outcompete, and their genes, to put it very reductionist, but their genes will pass on to the next generation, if indeed they're more successful, right?

[00:09:45.63] So this groupishness seems to have deep evolutionary roots, on one level, that we all share. Now what I'm trying to do, and especially in the context of political polarization, is try to understand why we see such a division, particularly on the left and right. There's other divisions out there.

[00:10:01.29] - Those are certainly highlighted more in the last couple years, for reasons we don't have to talk about right now.

[00:10:07.08] - Yeah, pretty self-evident.

[00:10:09.61] - But yeah, but it's kind of obvious that we're a nation divided.

[00:10:13.21] - Yeah. So it appears to be the case that people's tendencies, even though we're all groupie, tend to be a little bit different, and that people on the left liberal end of the spectrum are oriented more, and I'm going to use the language now, again, of Jonathan Haidt's moral foundations theory, more oriented to anything that might trigger harm to vulnerable people or animals or groups.

[00:10:35.17] And they tend to have a strong feeling of distrust toward authority figures, and oftentimes, they're anti-authoritarian. Not all of them. We can certainly talk a bit about this emergence of social justice warrior culture that we're seeing around universities, and certainly elaborate on that.

[00:10:50.62] But I think on the whole, people on the left liberal end of the spectrum tend to be animated more by anti-establishment, anti-authority kind of sensibility, coupled with deep feelings of care and concern for the vulnerable. I think the stereotype about the bleeding heart liberal has a large chunk of reality to it.

[00:11:06.45] Just like my brother, who's the opposite politically of me, mocks me. He says, I feel your pain, bro. I feel your pain. Because I am deeply sensitive, and I think it's common on the liberal left to be that way. I'm not waving a flag and saying, it's better. I'm simply pointing out that that tends to be a tendency on the left.

[00:11:21.40] - And what you just said is actually really important because there's plenty of people who will automatically divide on party lines just because you just said you're a liberal.

[00:11:31.73] - And they don't even want to hear me.

[00:11:32.80] - Automatically, yeah. You are a bad person now. And I actually want to stress, having talked to you all day today, that it needs to be acknowledged when somebody recognizes their bias and can compensate for their bias, either professionally-- I mean, I mention it as a sociologist. Some don't.

[00:11:54.07] And we have instances of that. And then others are quite good at it. So those of you out there who might be thinking, OK, now we're going to go anti-Trump for an hour, that's not what this podcast is about at all. And in talking about the divisions of left and right, I think we can do so in an unbiased way.

[00:12:13.82] - And one of the challenges of this-- we touched on it a little briefly, earlier-- one of the challenges is that tribalism feels good. Because we're a tribal species, people in the

audience who, let's say, they're anti-Trump themselves, they would love a little bit of red meat thrown at them. And they can feel part of the group that's morally righteous.

[00:12:30.31] But then if we have pro-Trump supporters, oh, this is just some left wing propaganda. And so what I'm more interested in doing, and increasingly feel as I get older, I'm more interested in trying to understand why we are biased. What is the underlying underpinnings for this kind of intergroup hostility, with an eye to trying to address it, like along the lines of what you'd said earlier.

[00:12:50.62] So with these tendencies on the left to be more oriented around triggers regarding care, and distrust of authority, I think what we see on the political right, it's not that they don't care. They do. Actually, evidence suggests, for example, that conservatives give more to charity. But they'll tend to give it to their church group, where liberals tend to be more universalistic in their mindsets on this, right?

[00:13:12.28] So this isn't a criticism of concern. This is simply an empirical fact, if indeed the moral foundations theory is accurate. And they've done very, very large surveys of tens of thousands of people. And what they find is that other sorts of sensibilities resonate more deeply with conservatives. So I just mentioned intergroup competition for resources in prehistory.

[00:13:29.74] Well, feelings of group loyalty, like we are one, and you need to stand by that, is something that triggers conservatives much, much more than liberals. Doesn't mean liberals have no feelings of group loyalty.

[00:13:41.17] But it's less so, on average. Liberals tend to gravitate more toward like, we're one human family. We're all the same, where conservatives are more attracted to, say in the US context, American exceptionalism.

[00:13:53.32] - Right, and these are not accusations we're sitting here talking about right now. It's a matter of, oh, I don't know, wolves hunt rabbits. They do. It's not an accusation. That's what they do.

[00:14:09.42] - It's a matter of, what do we see as an empirical regularity?

[00:14:11.97] - Right, and so it might be a matter of people are conservative or are liberal. They line up in these lines because this is how they feel about their world outlook.

[00:14:23.89] - Exactly. So the crux of this, none of moral foundation's theory will be accurate or my work will be accurate if, in the end, there's not some kind of predisposition, even as early as birth. It's not that we're born liberal/conservative. But we're certainly not born clay.

[00:14:40.51] So we're born with certain predispositions. We then interact with people who share our moral intuitions, even very early on. And then, through a dialectical process, it crystallizes into our social character. But part of that, going back to your earlier point, depends on what cultural milieu you're in, what particular groups you're surrounded by, to give you the cultural resources to define yourself, politically or ideologically.

[00:15:01.39] - It's fascinating. It's a balance of nurture and nature.

[00:15:04.36] - It is.

[00:15:05.05] - And the arguments really tend to be just how much of a balance is it, more so, I think, than it's the argument, as well. No, it's all nature, or oh, no, it's all nurture. I suppose you could have those extreme ends, but I think--

[00:15:19.29] - Well, I think many people in academia, and certainly in my background as a sociologist, and I'll be open about it, when I was in graduate school, I allied with what is sometimes called, in social science, total constructionism. And this is the idea that any norm or value, we're free to construct, and that we really are born with no predispositions, Right?

[00:15:38.46] So it's like a blank slate view of the world, right, that a baby's just molded by their environment. So I remember believing that, well, if you're liberal, it's because your parents were liberal, and they taught you that. And if you're conservative, you're conservative. One of your parents taught you conservatism.

[00:15:51.45] One of the problems with that is, you always find families with--

[00:15:54.00] - Exactly.

[00:15:54.63] - And there's also another cliché in behavioral genetics. If you're a parent, and you have one child, you're an environmentalist or a constructionist, right? If the parent has two children, well, then they're an aidist, because they're like, how can these children be so different? We're raising them the same.

[00:16:10.14] So it turns out, there's been a move, I think was for good reasons, and Steven Pinker writes really well about this in *The Blank Slate*. There was a move, historically, against racism, against colonialism, and a reaction against how biology arguments were used in the most pernicious ways, linked to eugenics--

[00:16:25.53] - Oh, God, 1920 eugenics and all that. That's right.

[00:16:26.48] - --and Darwinism. Yeah. So what happened was, the stick got bent so far that all of a sudden now, we're blank slates, and we can have no predisposition. And people with left liberal sensibilities gravitated towards those kinds of things because they're tribal, and they feel good about-- I'm not judging them-- but morally superior.

[00:16:44.07] And if someone were to raise a question now, and as we know, some of the more controversial ideas which I deal with in my research, like, could there be biological differences, say, between men and women that are meaningful? Or psychological differences? 99% percent of sociologists will say, sure. I mean, a man has a penis and a woman has a vagina.

[00:17:03.87] But that's where evolution stopped. They're willing to entertain physiological, physical differences, except at the level of the brain, and there's a strong reticence on that--

[00:17:13.54] - Yeah, you've pointed out that that exception exists only for humans and only within this area, but everything else-- oh, yeah, no, there's biological causes and differences, and they cause psychological differences with these animals and these circumstances and this condition. We got mountains of evidence.

[00:17:33.75] - Non-human animals are fine. Humans are fine on the level of their physical, bodies but at the level of the brain, it cannot be meaningful. If it exists, it's trivial. And it can't have any implications for social order or social phenomena. So I don't know if you wanted me to-- let me address the larger question because I hit at the political right.

[00:17:50.46] I mentioned they're more attuned to feelings of hierarchy-- I'm sorry, loyalty, but they're also more attuned to feelings of hierarchy. And they're also more attentive, on average, to stimuli in the environment that could be aversive to them, like threatening stimuli, or disgusting stimuli. So one work that's quite useful is John Hibbing and Associates. They're at University of Nebraska.

[00:18:12.77] They have a book called Predispose, where they cover all the research that they've done. But if you bring a whole bunch of people into the lab that identify as strongly liberal, strongly conservative, and you have them look at a collage of images-- and some of the images are like a rainbow, or neutral images like a door, but then you put some aversive stimuli in there, like one of the images is somebody eating worms, or an open sore.

[00:18:34.71] And what they do is they use this eye tracker technology, and they find that conservatives will home in more quickly on the aversive stimuli. Liberals do home in on it, just not as fast, and then conservatives stay and dwell on it longer. Now obviously, this tiny little piece of information-- like, well, what's the big deal? OK. So they're looking at disgusting images or threatening images more.

[00:18:55.44] If it weren't for lots and lots of other kinds of evidence that we see, on the level of ideology-- so if you look at what's going on, we hinted at Trump before-- build the wall, keep them out, the long tendency among right wing political groupings to support for stand your ground laws. You can shoot someone in your yard.

[00:19:14.46] That's, the hordes are coming. These things speak to a worldview that's anchored in underlying emotions that are more attentive to fear, that are more groupie, more tribal in the sense like we need to be protected from them. And again, I'm not saying this as a criticism.

[00:19:29.79] One of the wonderful things about studying political psychology over the last number of years is coming to see how great people of the opposite end of the spectrum can be on certain dimensions.

[00:19:39.78] In psychology, they study a trait called conscientiousness, which has to do with an inclination to want to be organized, efficient, industrious, have a plan, set your goal, and this is something where conservatives are just simply, on average, far better than liberals. And it fits a certain stereotype too, the disorganized--

[00:20:00.30] There's actually a study by the psychologist Jonathan Jost at NYU, and his colleagues, where they looked at the bedrooms of students in college that identify as liberal and conservative. So hundreds of students. They're looking at them, and they find that-- can you guess?

[00:20:16.70] - I wonder.

[00:20:17.30] - The liberal student's dorm room--

[00:20:18.80] - Gee, I wonder which ones were messier.

[00:20:21.05] - Messier, lots of CDs, basically things that are going to indicate travel, different kind of cultural orientation, and in more conservative dorm rooms, you're going to find things that suggest order. Like you might have a calendar or a hamper for your clothes. They'll put flags on the wall, which will have to do with group identity.

[00:20:42.56] - Right, symbolism.

[00:20:43.75] - Right. Symbolism--

[00:20:44.36] - They put symbols.

[00:20:45.14] - There you go. Again, linking to this kind of we are a tribe because that's the difference. We're all groupie, but people on the liberal left tend to be more universal in their orientation of it.

[00:20:54.59] - It's so interesting. I can't help but relate some of this to my own history, of course, while we're talking, and how my experience with Scientology was very conservative. Very conservative mindset. All the things you just described about the conservative mindset, or tendencies is really what I should say.

[00:21:14.99] I shouldn't say mindset because not all conservatives are going to fit this mindset. We are going to have exceptions and probably even from people watching this show. So that's OK. I just want to make that clear. We're talking in broad terms right now. But I can't help but relate this to my own experience with being taught.

[00:21:37.52] I was naturally not a very clean person or organized person growing up. But I had those values constantly instilled in me by my parents, so I became that way. And then in Scientology, they were just reinforced over and over again, daily cleaning, using a white cloth to check if there was any dust in the space that you had just cleaned, your office or something. And somebody would come around and inspect it.

[00:22:05.78] I jokingly say OCD, right, that level of attention to detail is the epitome of my Scientology experience. Coming out of that, I've had to reintroduce myself to the concept that it's OK to be disordered about some things because to this day, I don't want to use the word conflict-

- that's too strong a term-- but a point of friction between my wife and I is how clean I am versus how disordered she is.

[00:22:38.64] - OK, right.

[00:22:39.32] - Right, because she's always been, her entire life, a very liberal person, and I love her. There's no criticism of her. She's just, we're just different on this point. And I just can't help thinking about that.

[00:22:53.63] - Yeah, and let me just very briefly respond to that by saying that, just stressing really strongly, these are averages, and that's very important. Men are taller on average than women, but there's many, many volleyball-playing women that dwarf over me and you. So the issue is, conscientiousness is associated with conservatism, but there's tremendous numbers of highly conscientious liberals.

[00:23:12.53] And the flip side of it is another psychological trait where liberals tend to predominate, which is a trait called openness to experience. And this is an orientation that I've mentioned before, all the CDs that someone might have in their-- the liberal would have in their dorm room. Just people interested in different kinds of food versus, and it's a stereotype, but versus I'm happy with my meat and potatoes. You know what I mean?

[00:23:32.60] So there's evidence that seems to back up these generalizations, but again, they are averages, and it's important to keep that in mind.

[00:23:39.44] - And I think that's actually where some of us lose the plot because you go onto Twitter or something, which I think is the id of our collective consciousness-- I'm not Freudian, but it's an apt term to use. In other words, it's all the crazy that we have in our heads exposed to the world.

[00:23:59.66] You see a lot of finger pointing and blaming and teeth gnashing over the exact things you're talking about right now.

[00:24:10.16] And I wonder how much of that is just so much wasted frustration on both the left and the right, complaining about things going on with their opposite numbers, so to speak, the people on the other side of the spectrum, because those people aren't that way because they necessarily even choose-- like, it's not a conscientious decision to be this way all the time. We have tendencies.

[00:24:37.94] - Yeah, I mean, we decide, based on our impulses. I mean, I'm going to decide to go to a restaurant to eat because I'm hungry. I didn't choose to be hungry. So we have emoted tendencies that exist in us, and just, you had mentioned wasted frustration, but I put it the other way. I would say, there's things to be gained from the point of view of our tribal nature.

[00:24:55.04] When people put a post on Twitter on left or right, they're really not talking, I would argue. Like someone on the left is not really talking to the right. They're talking to the left. Like, I have a certain moral validation. I care about these things. You guys over there, you're

harming the environment. You're harming vulnerable groups. And so there's a certain moral status that that confers upon somebody who's within that particular group.

[00:25:17.47] And so what I'm trying to do in my work, and it may be a fool's errand, I'm just trying to get us more conscious of this evolved tendency on each side, recognize, and I think Haidt's model, intuitionist model, is the most compelling one, at least thus far-- science will advance-- suggesting that clusters of moral emotions on the left and right differ in the kinds of policies they'll advocate.

[00:25:37.18] It's very, very hard for somebody on the left to appreciate that people on the right that are concerned about immigration might be concerned for reasons that can't be reduced to just racism.

[00:25:47.05] - That's what I'm talking about. That's what I'm talking about, right, because that's what we see. And I think it creates, I think it contributes to, I think it creates this divisiveness. I think there's a lack of understanding. I've had many conversations with liberal friends because I have a lot of liberal friends. Sometimes, they-- why are they so evil?

[00:26:10.24] Why do they want to kill us? Why don't they care about health care?

[00:26:13.68] - And again, notice the word you used, care. I noticed your word, health, and kill. Protecting vulnerable is all this core of the liberal left.

[00:26:23.14] - Whereas the right--

[00:26:23.98] - They have that.

[00:26:25.13] - --right after the election, get over it, you pansies. Quit your crying, you bunch of-

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[00:26:31.56] - Snowflakes. It's the term of the day.

[00:26:33.17] - Why are you snowflakes? That's right. I received those communications myself, right, when I was voicing, venting, my frustration about the election results. There's a harshness to it, even, sometimes, as well as, of course, the grim satisfaction of having won, and they lost, and we had to suffer for the last eight years under your reign, and now it's our turn.

[00:26:56.56] Fine. That's politics as usual. I'm down with that. But the name calling, the vindictiveness, the vitriol.

[00:27:03.97] - I'm going to sound tribal, and I can't avoid it in this setting. I think the evidence suggests it. I welcome those in the audience to believe I'm being biased and investigate it for themselves. This does exist on the left, but I think there's lots of evidence that the punitiveness that we witness is much more pronounced, especially in the far authoritarian right.

[00:27:24.73] - I agree with you.

[00:27:25.49] - Real strong supporters of Trump are deeply authoritarian and punitive in their mindsets. So again--

[00:27:33.55] - Certainly on certain issues. I mean, immigration. It becomes very black and white. I've had those arguments with some of these people. My experience, of course, is only anecdotal, but the conservative media, conservative think tanks, and conservative individuals are all on the same page on this.

[00:27:52.36] - Yeah, and there's a fundamental distinction also between what we need to do politically and how we understand these things scientifically. I think they're related, but they're not the exact same thing.

[00:28:02.62] Politically, some of the ideas on the far right now are so dangerous-- I mean, the fact, the president appearing like maybe a week ago saying that the world's scientists are conspiring for money to deny climate change.

[00:28:14.96] I mean, it's so palpably absurd. I mean the richest companies in the world are oil companies, and you'd make a ton of money. They would be starving to hear a scientist say that global warming is no problem, and we can continue burning fossil fuels.

[00:28:25.48] So it's just, it's palpably irrational. I'm not saying that to say, oh, you idiots. I'm simply saying, what's going on here emotionally about that, and it's very dangerous to deny these things. Now let me double back, and I don't know if you want me to segue to some of my work a little bit?

[00:28:38.98] - No, I actually, I want to get to that.

[00:28:40.52] - OK, because this is related here. I think that most of the science denial that's more consequential occurs on the right. And if people are interested in that, an excellent science journalist, Chris Mooney, wrote a book called *The Republican Brain*. He just does a wonderful job of capturing the wide array of evidence for this. But it turns out, the moral intuitions on the left also lead to biases that lead us to distorted views of the world.

[00:29:07.21] So what my colleagues and I've been doing over the last four or five years, we've been going to major controversies in social science, and it turns out academia is predominantly left liberal, overwhelmingly so, I mean.

[00:29:17.89] - Surprise.

[00:29:18.58] - Right. So anthropology, my field, sociology. The latest survey we just did of sociologists found that only 2% identified as conservative, 2% identified as libertarian. I mean, overwhelming--

[00:29:31.37] - Overwhelmingly.

[00:29:32.06] - --was a liberal. And then a pretty large chunk of radicals also on the left, in sociology.

[00:29:36.85] - And I am concerned about that. I criticize that, not because I am feeling like we need to do away with all those people. I bring it up because, and I think, for similar reasons to what your studies are going to show is, these biases affect results.

[00:29:58.24] - They do.

[00:29:58.66] - Because we're humans. We're not machines. I've made the case many, many times in many, many videos about cognitive mechanisms that we all use. I want to say, suffer from, in some ways. They push us in these biased directions. We can't help it. We are emotional creatures. We go with what feels good or feels right.

[00:30:20.80] - You're hitting the nail on the head. Absolutely right, and that's how I interpret the evidence, the stimuli in the world.

[00:30:24.72] So if you take someone on the right who's more oriented toward a tribal us/them sensibility, and they're more triggered by fear, well, then, you ask-- and I'm going to sound a little bit stereotypical-- but you ask your average Fox viewer what percentage of crimes are committed by undocumented-- I guess they would say illegal aliens, they're going to overestimate it in a wild way, right?

[00:30:44.28] So OK. That's over there. I'm not here to belittle them. I will, in full disclosure, fight against them, politically, because I support progressive policies, but I'm not here to belittle them. I'm here to talk a little bit about my own group or my own tribe.

[00:30:58.56] And it turns out, the left sensibilities of care, this concern for vulnerable groups, and the attraction of a kind of virtue signaling within the group, renders certain kinds of questions taboo within social science.

[00:31:12.63] So what I do is I go to those taboo questions. I did this in the field of anthropology and sociology. I also have a study in Economist, if you're interested in talking about it. But this most recent one's on sociologists, so a number of different controversies there.

[00:31:23.79] The first one was the roots of poverty in the inner city, particularly among the black community, specifically among the black community. Second one was gendered occupational choice. Why do we see a distribution of jobs that aren't equal, women being concentrated in jobs that are less remunerative, for example, and different kinds of jobs than men?

[00:31:41.13] And then finally immigration. Can flows of immigration cause disruption that we need to be concerned about or not? Can they undermine social or cultural cohesion? So these are the questions that we asked in our survey, and the other surveys as well, and other kinds of questions, but in different fields.

[00:31:57.15] We always go to the controversies. And what we find again and again and again is that the best predictor of where a social scientist stands on a particular question is their self-identified political orientation, right?

[00:32:08.04] So we give them a list. We can identify as radical, liberal, moderate, conservative, or libertarian, and of course, there are so few conservative libertarians, they don't even enter into the discussion.

[00:32:19.50] So yeah. So there's radical, liberal, and moderate sociologists, and so, for example, We want to go to gendered occupational choice, a very hot button issue right now.

[00:32:28.06] - In other words, why are there more men in certain occupations than women?

[00:32:31.13] - Yeah, and the ones that men occupy tend to be, on average, paid more. So there's a huge controversy over STEM fields. I don't know if you remember the old Larry Summers event that happened at Harvard, at a gender conference, where he raised this question of whether part of the reason for the disparity, the over-representation of men in STEM, could be biological.

[00:32:51.06] Well, I mean, he would resign, I believe, within a year after that. I'm not saying that was the only reason. There were other problems, but it didn't help. So there's massive public and social reaction. So I don't know if we threw caution to the wind, but we decided to revisit that controversy.

[00:33:07.68] And we asked sociologists whether biology could interact with other explanatory factors. So we're very, very clear. We provide research vignettes to give an overview. We're very clear that there's consensus among sociologists that discrimination, in other words, men in positions of power not enabling women to rise up, plays a role in gender stratification.

[00:33:28.26] And socialization, of course, is deeply important, how young girls come to define themselves as girls and how young boys come to define themselves as boys. But we also ask whether there could be a biological component to this. Massive studies done internationally will show that women, on average-- got to hit the average again-- will tend to want to work with people more than men do.

[00:33:50.25] It's not that men don't want to. And there are many men that do, but on average, women want to work with people more. And men will be more likely to want to work with things than women will.

[00:33:58.59] - More mechanistic.

[00:34:00.36] - Mechanistic. Right. And there's lots and lots of evidence for this. If you look at some of the early testing of boys and girls, you'll find that girls tend to outperform boys on reading and writing and communication, and human-related tasks, facial recognition. Boys will outperform girls in spatial rotation, right, things that make sense from an evolutionary point of view as well.

[00:34:21.21] So you have these testing results. You have interest inventories where-- what do you want to do when you grow up, and what kind of field you'd like to go into. And they continue to point in this direction.

[00:34:30.36] And yet, if you raise this question with sociologists, could there be a biological component, and what we ask them, is it plausible there could be a biological component? Maybe I can share a couple numbers with you really quickly?

[00:34:40.45] - Absolutely.

[00:34:41.06] - Yeah, so just, I don't have the exact question. It's not the exact question, but women in people-oriented professions, partly biological, in like social work and nursing, there could be a biological component for that. And here, I have the numbers broken down, politically.

[00:34:55.26] So radical sociologists, 16% believe that's plausible, not that it's true, but plausible. There could be a biological--

[00:35:02.58] - There could possibly--

[00:35:04.29] - Could possibly--

[00:35:05.07] - It could possibly be the case.

[00:35:06.06] - They said it's plausible. It's a little more than possible, but just 10 more. But not much.

[00:35:10.72] - Maybe. And then 35% of liberal, and then 39% of moderate. So on question after question, we see this stairwell, almost every question, where radicals will take a position, and it might go down. Whatever the direction is, it's going to be linear, depending on the question.

[00:35:28.09] So what's going on? Why is there such resistance to this? None of my studies or in my colleagues in our studies, do we really see it as our objective to take a position. I'm not out there saying, come on, guys and gals. You got to believe this.

[00:35:42.61] It's just exploring the relationships between scholars' political orientations and certain potentially plausible positions. Now in full disclosure, I'm not a total constructionist anymore, and I have come to gain a lot of insight from evolutionary biology.

[00:35:56.18] And it's highly plausible to me that evolution shaped us in more than just our genitalia, and that there could be, on average, psychological differences that shape, in part, in tandem with socialization and sexism. So I am inclined to not just see that as plausible, but to see that as convincing.

[00:36:12.31] But at the end of the day, that's not our goal. Our goal is to simply show sociologists that their emotions and their morality, which is manifested in their political orientations, shapes their receptiveness to certain ideas. And if certain ideas suggest that a

vulnerable group might even, in part, be naturally inclined to choose positions that are less remunerative in this society, it's policed.

[00:36:35.02] It can't be. I had one respondent say, I'm going to out myself right now. Even though social factors are more important, biology matters. I'm going to out myself, like it's some huge moral testimonial.

[00:36:46.39] - Well, it has become that, and that's actually, as an academic, this is what I really wanted to dig into the details of, because there is a lot of literature out there that suggests that since the 1960s, and the countercultural revolution, those people are the ones who then finished their degrees, went on to become teachers, and shaped academia through the '70s, '80s, '90s, and all the way through to today.

[00:37:14.44] And we've had now, one or two, or I guess we're coming up on three generations now, of effect of this. And first, I'm going to ask you, just statistically speaking, or studies speaking, I doubt that this information exists. But does this same data set exist for, say, 1950?

[00:37:35.59] Asking academic professors these kinds of questions. Obviously not these exact questions.

[00:37:41.38] - I don't know the answer. My hunch would be that you're right, that the '60s was a watershed, and that it might have even been more hospitable at that time. I mentioned Jonathan Haidt earlier, but he and his colleagues also traced how the disparity in liberal and conservative representation is growing.

[00:38:00.61] So now it's like conservatives are vanishing, I mean, to the point where the numbers weren't so severe in the 50s. So we would expect more--

[00:38:09.25] - More of a balance.

[00:38:09.92] - More receptivity to this court of argument, right, and this is part of the danger.

[00:38:13.39] - Well, it is because for me, what this communicates, I mean, in terms of critique of-- this isn't a critique of the left. It's a critique of academic institutions which should, I believe, provide a fairly neutral education in terms of ideology.

[00:38:35.18] I mean, in other words, if you're going to teach about religion, well, you better teach about all the religions. You don't just teach Christianity because that'll give kids the idea, before they're up to forming judgment, that this is the right one because this is the only one they taught us about.

[00:38:53.03] And they hear about these other ones and go, well, that can't be right because I learned all about Christianity, and that's how it is. So if you're going to teach religion, well, good. Please do teach religion, but teach all of them.

[00:39:04.67] Talk about Islam. Talk about Confucianism and Buddhism and Hinduism and Christianity and the whole lot. Then you're not favoring any one. You're not inclining a person through the education. It's education. It's not indoctrination.

[00:39:20.87] - Yeah, and--

[00:39:21.40] - Right?

[00:39:21.86] - You're making--

[00:39:22.76] - Same thing with politics. If you're going to teach left, you got to teach right. You got to represent both of these. If there's anywhere we should have equal time fair representation type of policies, it's education, I think more so than even news.

[00:39:39.23] So this tends to indicate that that's not going to be the case when 96% of academia leans liberal. Even if they wanted to, the biases would get in the way of them teaching a fully neutral platform, neutral--

[00:39:58.13] - I'm going to tweak something. Much of what you said, I find compelling. But I'm going to tweak this word neutral for a minute. And just as a point of correction, in sociology at least, it's 13% moderate, 4%-- so let's give 17% that are not left liberal. It's still pretty small.

[00:40:17.12] That's my sample, but my sample echoes prior research done.

[00:40:19.62] - Right. We're still talking about a super majority.

[00:40:21.20] - Overwhelming liberal preponderance.

[00:40:22.49] - Exactly.

[00:40:23.09] - It's not so much I would suggest that you can teach neutrally because no one can. What we need is viewpoint diversity.

[00:40:31.73] - Exactly.

[00:40:32.05] - So what it is, is that because this is part of who we are, we can feign neutrality, but at the end of the day, faculty are going to choose the books that resonate with them.

[00:40:42.53] - That's right.

[00:40:42.92] - So and this is the debate that's a tough one in classrooms. I actually fall on probably the less popular end. I fall in-- or less common. I fall in the open with my students about my political moral sensibilities end of the spectrum.

[00:40:54.74] There's pros and cons to both positions. The danger of being open, which I am with my students, is it can create a climate where they're going to feel they need to conform, and pose as being sympathetic to my more progressive orientation.

[00:41:07.58] But I almost over-emphasize with them that, bend over backwards, that this isn't a hospital environment. If anything, coming from more conservative point of view, I'm going to be extra cautious, right? But that's a legitimate critique.

[00:41:20.48] Others feel they need to conceal it, but the problem with concealing it is that, going back to this idea of neutrality, you're choosing the books. Your intonation is going to reflect your interests. So if anything, by telling them, you're protecting them from me and my biased potential interpretations of evidence.

[00:41:35.42] I think a full disclosure on something like that is important, especially in fields where opinion enters in because social sciences are not a hard science. It's not physics. When you're talking about a particular variable in physics, your opinion does not matter as to what the numbers should be or how the results should come out.

[00:41:58.58] It's science. It's math, right?

[00:42:00.24] - Yeah, it's not triggering underlying emotions that matter to human communities. And people differ on those triggers. They're going to end up interpreting evidence differently. So going back to the key point of viewpoint diversity, there's an organization called Heterodox Academy. It was founded by Jonathan Haidt, the psychologist I mentioned earlier.

[00:42:16.94] And it's just advocating to bring in more conservative voices to ensure that there's not this policing of ideas. It's not just policing. Here's a few quotes of some of the sociologists. And again, I should stress, I can't speak to generalizability. I gave comment boxes throughout the survey. People chose to comment or not.

[00:42:36.33] So I'm not suggesting most-- my hunch is that only about maybe a quarter of the field has this level of moralization. Others are sympathetic to it, but they wouldn't be this vocal. The biology argument sounds similar to early attempts to pinpoint biological differences between blacks and whites that are not laughable.

[00:42:54.98] This is absurd. Shame on you, researchers, for creating a controversial issue that's not, in fact, controversial. So on this issue of gendered occupational choice, maybe there's a biological factor, on average, that's interacting with discrimination and socialization to create the gender distribution of work roles.

[00:43:13.79] Strong reaction among a subset of sociologists, I would say more on the radical end, more on the intersectional end, in terms of the concept of intersectionality and social science. It's very popular today. Here's the word shame, itself. They will react very emotively. Similar when it came to inner city poverty.

[00:43:34.03] We revisited the old culture of poverty argument. What are the reasons for the perpetuation of such entrenched poverty, and social problems, like violence, and out-of-wedlock birth in the inner city? And the dominant position among social scientists is institutional discrimination, with deep roots in racism.

[00:43:56.11] Entrenched poverty itself, which tends to perpetuate itself, poor schools, discrimination among political and other elites that do not allow these groups to succeed.

[00:44:05.44] - So many factors.

[00:44:06.19] - Which are all real.

[00:44:07.09] - Yeah. It's a heavily complicated issue, which is my biggest problem with the oversimplification of this stuff. It's this. It's that. Dude, how about, it's all of it.

[00:44:17.65] - But once we understand that part of the arguments that you hear in the Twitter sphere-- is that a word?

[00:44:23.11] - Yeah.

[00:44:23.80] - OK. --has more to do with the audience that the person is getting moral credibility with, right, then really trying to--

[00:44:30.73] - Well, social media is all about give me the feels. You know what I mean? It's give me the likes. Give me the hearts. Give me the positive retweets. I don't want to get-- what's the word? Anyway, whatever.

[00:44:44.82] - Exiled?

[00:44:45.75] - Yeah. You don't want to--

[00:44:47.16] - Ostracized.

[00:44:48.76] - Yeah.

[00:44:49.12] - Yeah, no, the question we posed them was, is it possible that although these structural factors and historical factors are more important, is it possible that there could be a cultural component? Like certain cultural practices make a bad situation worse in the inner city.

[00:45:03.82] And can you predict where radicals, liberals, and moderates would stand on that? Like if you asked, is it plausible, which group would be more receptive to the idea that, yeah, maybe culture does matter. Well, it turns out to be the moderates much, much more than the radicals. So what's going on?

[00:45:20.14] Well, this care concern for vulnerable groups, that in the context where you don't have the viewpoint diversity, reinforces in a-- we call it an emotive community. It's like an echo chamber. And people who raise it, what are you saying? Their culture is to blame? Right?

[00:45:36.97] - They immediately shifted onto some logical fallacy that's not what you're saying.

[00:45:42.35] - Yeah, it's just that if we want to understand what's really going on in the world, then we need to entertain these hypotheses. It's hard to do when they choke against our moral intuitions.

[00:45:52.06] But my dream, and I don't know how optimistic I am about it, but my dream is that by becoming aware of it, more and more and more, like encouraging an awareness of ourselves as moral agents, oriented to try to figure out the world, we can then put it aside.

[00:46:08.21] I have an N of one. I've done it, to a large extent. My political views are as far to the left as they were when I was in graduate school. I'm deeply committed to social justice, social equality, ecological sustainability. I haven't changed that at all.

[00:46:20.08] But by reflecting deeply on our evolved nature, our human nature, I've come to appreciate that the differences on the opposite end of the spectrum, first of all, are natural. They emote differently. And I even learned ways in which, like we talked about earlier, conscientiousness in the political right. They have a strong sense of group loyalty. You know what I mean?

[00:46:39.77] - Yeah. If you take the valuation out of the picture, then you can decide-- if you stop thinking that science is all about making moral statements--

[00:46:49.51] - Oh, really well put. Absolutely right. And people confuse the two. Like going back to this issue of gendered occupational choice. I mean, I proudly identify as feminist. I enjoy identifying as feminist. But you got to separate that from your empirical analysis of why you believe the world is the way it is.

[00:47:08.83] Because there's this hypersensitivity to vulnerable groups, any indicator of inequality becomes tantamount to, well, there must be discrimination at the root of it. And I'm not saying there's not. Of course there is. We are emerging out of a long history of patriarchy, and men still dominate most of the positions of power in this society.

[00:47:26.05] We still live, I think, in a patriarchy. But that doesn't mean that's the magic explanatory key of this phenomenon. And we need to be open to hypotheses that might choke against our sensibilities.

[00:47:37.51] - And that's the hard part because it requires intellectual honesty, a moral fiber towards truth being more important than your own views of things.

[00:47:48.21] - Yeah. Truth over tribe, I like to say because it's alliterative.

[00:47:50.75] - Exactly. I guess I'm thinking right now, relating this to my own experience and things I've talked about on this channel here, that there's a phenomena you find in coming out of a destructive cult and talking about it, that there is a great number of people who will say, stupid Mormons.

[00:48:12.65] You got to be an idiot to fall for that. What kind of fool, right? Now of course, that's just fundamental evolution there at work. That's also blame the victim. There's all kinds of things you could call that. But what it really comes down to is a belief, a sort of faith, really, because this isn't backed up by any evidence at all, that intelligence is some kind of shield from bias.

[00:48:40.61] - No, you're absolutely right.

[00:48:41.24] - And from our emotions. And intelligence is no shield. I have made this point over and over again, and my audience pretty much gets it now because I've demonstrated in my own behavior and in the behavior of other ex-cult members that intelligence wasn't the thing that got us in.

[00:49:01.46] It wasn't the thing that got us out. And it was in no way, shape, or form a shield from our emotional longing and yearning and push in these various directions to join a cult.

[00:49:16.04] I bring this up because academia are intelligentsia. Our smartest people are the ones who are drawn to that, who stick with it. It's a commitment. It's an expensive commitment, for most.

[00:49:32.43] - Not highly remunerative, mostly.

[00:49:33.98] - That's right.

[00:49:34.60] - Lot of education with little pay.

[00:49:34.92] - There's a lot of sacrifice, right. Very, very intelligent people. Most of them motivated, I'm sure, I think I feel safe in blanket saying, most of them motivated by wanting to do good in the world. We're not talking about a bunch of Nazis.

[00:49:52.17] - And what's funny about that is that the Nazis themselves believed they were doing good in the world.

[00:49:56.42] - Exactly.

[00:49:56.88] - So it gets extremely complicated.

[00:49:58.31] - That's where this is going.

[00:49:59.04] - We're all righteous.

[00:50:00.17] - That's right. That's where this is going, is, it's intelligence. You can look at somebody like Ben Carson, and you can go, dude, brilliant brain surgeon, revolutionary brain surgeon, right? Saves people's lives. Dumber than a doorknob when it comes to talking about history or thinking the pyramids, for example, were--

[00:50:23.58] - I remember that.

[00:50:23.93] - --grain storage units. Right. You're just like, what are you talking about?

[00:50:29.15] - Well, I guess in his defense, we could say ignorant.

[00:50:31.17] - Well, fair enough.

[00:50:32.40] - He's not dumb.

[00:50:32.98] - That's actually true.

[00:50:33.88] - Ignorant to history.

[00:50:34.61] - Anyway, that is a better word. My point being that these are a bunch of very smart people we're serving, we're talking about. That doesn't mean that they're so smart that they outsmart their emotional biases.

[00:50:49.55] - Well, you reminded me of that example of a point that Chris Mooney makes in his book, Republican Brain. He shows some data that, the more educated a conservative is, the less likely they will believe in human-influenced climate change.

[00:51:07.86] So it's a direct opposite correlation. Like more information, more knowledge, more denial.

[00:51:12.35] - That is so funny because that's exactly parallel to the cult thinking. The more intelligent a person is, the easier it is to get them in, the harder it is to get them out, and the harder they fall for it because all of their intelligence is utilized--

[00:51:28.40] - It's like commandeered for--

[00:51:30.02] - To rationalize the commitments.

[00:51:31.38] - Rationalize it, yeah. And that's why, that after reading this for so long, and I think both of us are a kindred spirit in understanding this, it's not people will say on the left, how do you deny that the world's scientists-- why can't you see this? We're looking at these weather patterns.

[00:51:43.67] Well, because it's about their team. When they're saying it's not happening, it's about their team affirming that you're one of us. And keep in mind, also the kinds of social and political policies that would be involved to really take on climate change are so intrusive.

[00:51:59.75] I'm not here to suggest an easy answer. You know what I mean? It's going to raise questions about how we organize the economy. So those that do have a more developed political ideology would be opposing that grounds as well. So it's a very complicated thing. It's anchored on so different levels.

[00:52:12.70] Remember the first comment, all the levels, the evolved level, the biological level, social psychological level. There'd be all these social forces. Part of what's going on politically right now is that structural changes over the past at least 50 years are exacerbating this human tendency.

[00:52:28.40] You go back a generation or so, you're going to have people who have different politics. But they didn't have the ability to just watch Fox and MSNBC. They didn't have social media to get in their own little bubble. They had to sit down in the bar with their neighbor, who they didn't-- oh, Joe, he's crazy, but I love him. That sort of thing.

[00:52:45.95] Going back to this point about human cooperation, we can connect on other levels besides our moral intuitions, but we're losing that. And then when we only put ourselves in these tiny little spheres, and we viscerally know we're right because our moral values tell us we're right on each side, it's a very, very dangerous cocktail.

[00:53:02.12] - Exactly. And this is where social media is not the cause of a thing. It is a magnifying glass for these tendencies.

[00:53:13.67] - Yeah, I think it exacerbates-- I think on balance, I'm not opposed to social media, and I think internet, on balance, is a fabulous technology, bringing human beings together. But like anything else, it's not black and white. There's going to be trade offs. And there's other factors, too, involved in this. I mean, a lot of the political science literature just points to shifting political changes.

[00:53:34.02] When there was a realignment with the Democratic Party after civil rights, so there was a shift in the south to the Republican Party, we're seeing more and more self sorting. So liberals and conservatives are literally moving to different locations. More conservatives are moving to rural areas. So you have a self-sorting process.

[00:53:49.26] You have political elites themselves-- I'll be discussing this in the talk at the Secular Hub-- political elites themselves that are actually consciously exploiting these differences that go beyond moral intuitions to people's lifestyles, like what food you eat, what car you drive. That's being increasingly politicized too.

[00:54:04.80] So it's a complicated, multifaceted problem.

[00:54:07.39] - Well, yeah, we've always known that the-- this is so stereotypical. I feel horrible to say shit like this. But 'Murika. I got my Ford truck in the driveway, and the gun rack and the Confederate flag.

[00:54:25.59] - What they're doing is they're--

[00:54:26.31] - Symbolism.

[00:54:26.79] - --literally playing on a sense of group identity. And then you're not going to think. It's just going to be, well, this is my family. He might be-- what's the old expression? He's a-- I hate the word asshole, but my asshole. It's like he's my jerk so he's going to be part of my group.

[00:54:42.21] So when you're constantly nurturing or instigating group identity, you're leading people to not want to think through these issues for their consequences. Critical thinking might be boring, but we need it more than ever.

[00:54:55.20] - And that kind of activity on the part of leadership is where we eventually get to cult status. And that's where, as far as I'm concerned, from a group identity, not a group identity, from a group point of view, looking at our nation, for example, if we reinforce that, if we keep pushing ourselves in that direction, allowing leaders to lead us around by the nose and not being independent critical thinkers, all the ingredients of cult membership are inherent in us.

[00:55:33.81] If there's one statement I could make that would summarize every single video I've ever made, that's it--

[00:55:42.15] - Oh, it's a great point.

[00:55:43.08] - --because I came out of Scientology thinking there was something unusual and different about cult members. And what I've learned over the last four and a half years is, they're just like everybody else. There is no difference. The only thing with them is they've turned the dial up to 11 on their extremism.

[00:56:02.07] And that's where all of this goes. And that's why I am so concerned about it because when I see large swaths of the population falling into these kind of thinking patterns--

[00:56:13.72] - And again, correlated with, they're interacting with people in the same geography. They're going to the same restaurants. They're getting political leaders that play on those cultural differences as ways to reinforce the underlying moral and political differences.

[00:56:24.99] All of these, and the social media sites, the cable news, they're listening to, all of these things feed into more and more tribalism and less and less common ground that can be built between people.

[00:56:33.93] And going back to your initial point about leadership too, you're 100% right. I mean, at the end of the day, if the culture changes, leaders won't be successful that are tribal. It's because we are so tribal and we're so divided.

[00:56:44.68] I mean, again, I'll sound partisan here, but Trump did not have any coherent political philosophy. His only philosophy is, our team's going to win. You'll be bored by how much we win. It was literally a distillation of pure tribalism. That's all it was. It had no actual policy underpinning.

[00:57:00.72] And if you polled the people who supported him, I don't mean it as an insult, but they're not going to know these policy questions quite a bit. There was some data on that about Fox News viewers. Again, not saying that in a partisan spirit. There's ignorance all over the place.

[00:57:13.56] - Right. But it's simply the data. Right? And this isn't even a thing of like the data-- I've heard this stupid expression. It really just annoys me to no end. The truth has a liberal bias. Liberals say that about their news sources and stuff, right? I just go, come on, guys. I mean, could you be any more biased?

[00:57:34.41] - No, it's a very tribal thing to say, but that's interesting. I'm going to have to reflect on that. There's an interpretation that could make some sense, in the sense that I had made a point earlier, that some of the most consequential questions, like I mentioned climate change, think about evolutionary theory writ large.

[00:57:50.67] You're going to find more science now on the right than-

[00:57:53.67] - I agree with that.

[00:57:54.24] - I'm going to areas where progressives are biased. I don't mean to pushback-- we're probably getting close to the end here. But if indeed it's the case that we somehow could come up with an unbiased study, who knows? It would probably find-- I mean, Mooney's work suggests this, Chris Mooney.

[00:58:10.05] There's much, much more science now on the right, then that phrase could make some sense, in the sense that-- do you see what I mean by that?

[00:58:14.35] - And I get that. No, no. I do.

[00:58:15.53] - That's what's the reality of liberal bias. Liberals see more of reality, even though they're biased in their own ways.

[00:58:20.58] - I know.

[00:58:21.00] - That may not resonate with you.

[00:58:22.32] - And saying that is just, I just go (roar).

[00:58:25.05] - All it does is peak and create tribal--

[00:58:26.49] - Because all it does is feed a tribal narrative.

[00:58:29.10] - It does. But if it is true--

[00:58:30.39] - But if there's a grain of truth there--

[00:58:32.77] - Hold on. Let me push back. If it is true though, if true, we have to put truth over tribe.

[00:58:37.17] - Fair enough.

[00:58:37.57] - We can't allow our own tribal--

[00:58:38.80] - Fair enough.

[00:58:39.34] - --our sensitivity to tribalism trump--

[00:58:41.92] - That's a very good point. Probably the best rejoinder. I'm thinking on that one.

[00:58:46.06] - Fair enough.

[00:58:46.69] - All right. Well, and again, all good points. I wanted to talk about this stuff because I want to stimulate you guys out there to find out more about this stuff. I'm going to put some links to a couple of papers you've put out.

[00:59:00.19] - Sure. I'm happy to send them. Do you want me to suggest a few sources?

[00:59:04.03] - Go right ahead.

[00:59:04.78] - Not my own. I mean, the links to my papers I do, but I certainly recommend Jonathan Haidt's Righteous Mind. I had mentioned Chris Mooney's Republican Brain.

[00:59:12.13] - Righteous Mind is right there. One of my books here.

[00:59:15.79] - One of the books back here. Hibbing, I had mentioned Hibbing and colleagues' work, Predisposed. There's an excellent book on political polarization by Lilliana Mason called Uncivil Agreement. And any of the psychological work I think done by Jonathan Jost is also really helpful.

[00:59:31.04] - Good. Good. OK. So there are some sources for you, folks, out there that you can check out more on this. And we are going to wrap up now. Were there any other points that you wanted to make that we didn't get a chance to because of the way our discourse went?

[00:59:46.40] - I don't think so. I mean, I would just, I guess, reiterate again, I'm not tremendously optimistic. But I think the only hope we have, given all of these forces conspiring against unity, is to begin to understand how we've evolved, why we are this way, why we're tribal, and try to--

[01:00:03.61] In my own life experience, my brother has the opposite political sensibilities that I do. We haven't had a fight in years since I started engaging this stuff because it doesn't make sense to fight. We're just different people. Am I going to get mad at you because you're shorter or taller than me?

[01:00:15.40] No. Then why should I get mad at you if you emote differently and it leads you to different political conclusions than me?

[01:00:19.42] - Exactly.

[01:00:19.90] - So we have to see each other and begrudgingly understand that people are different, and hope that lays the groundwork for more consensus.

[01:00:26.17] - Exactly. And for those of you out there who are right now typing comments on this saying, but they do this, but they do that. I know. We know. We do know this. OK. And we still would preach a message of unity and understanding because if you think-- I mean, come on, guys.

[01:00:46.48] If you think that continuing this fractured divisiveness is working, and somehow we're defeating them, come on. Rethink the strategy here. OK. If nothing else, just rethink the strategy. You can feel as passionate, and they're just the enemy, and they must be destroyed.

[01:01:07.06] But there's a saying that I just read yesterday. I can't name the source of this quote, but it was that hatred destroys the container that it's stored in. We can do better. We can be better.

[01:01:28.21] - Exactly.

[01:01:29.08] - And that's what I would like to-- without in any way compromising our moral principles or our values. It's a matter of how do we manifest those moral principles in the real world, not just in our heads, but how do we actually bring them to fruition? We work together. If we continue being divided, we know where this goes. We know where it goes, historically.

[01:01:55.94] We have many, many, many, many, many examples. That always leads to death and destruction. And then we always wonder afterwards, why? Why did this have to happen? Well, right now, we have the opportunity to do something about that before that sort of thing comes about.

[01:02:15.49] And yeah, I'm talking about bloody revolution and civil war, and all that. I'm not saying that all that's imminent. I'm saying it's possible. And if we don't make a change in how we're doing things and how we're approaching each other, then that is a fairly inevitable conclusion because we are emotionally driven creatures.

[01:02:32.92] And we have tendencies toward violence. And we have not even come close to evolving beyond any of that yet. OK. Thank you very much for--

[01:02:41.32] - Eloquently stated.

[01:02:42.52] - Thank you.

[01:02:42.97] - It's been a wonderful experience. Thank you so much for inviting me. I really appreciate it.

[01:02:46.36] - Absolutely. Thank you. OK, guys, any questions, comments, or feedback, leave them in the comments section here below, on YouTube, or at sensiblyspeaking.com. Thank you again for being on my podcast.

[01:02:57.01] - I was delighted.

[01:02:57.74] - Awesome, and see you guys next week. Bye bye.