

Moral Choices XV

Limiting ones ability to see the whole picture lies in having a limited moral foundation..

[Reflections based on J Haidt The Righteous Mind]

Last week we saw that what Haidt calls “Weird” contemporary Americans: that is “Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic” are only functioning on two moral foundations, “Care/harm and fairness” in order to make their moral choices. Thus most educated Americans are stunted in their moral life. When we confine ourselves to one taste, we limit our ability to see and understand the world around us. Such a strategy stunts our ability to make good moral choices, because the moral foundations not only bind us together as our moral “elephants” lean in the same direction, but they also blind us. If we do not look with eyes that can see the value of loyalty, say to the flag as to the nation, and sanctity, which would place our faith tradition at least on an even part with “care/harm and fairness” we are ignoring our history and our moral tradition as Catholics and Americans. This is why we can’t “just get along with each other” and why we are so suspicious of people who make different moral choices – especially in religion and politics. Haidt surprised himself because he began his study to explain the “rightness” of “weird” morality; and as his research unfolded he found that there was a whole rich world of reality in making moral choices that could not be taken into account by the care/harm and fairness model of morality. But he also found that people who had inadvertently subscribed to this stunted morality were unable to see the larger picture. This was not in any way his goal in research as he discovered that he and his fellow University educators had been programmed to ignore the larger part making moral choices.

IHM Pray for us.

Fr. Jerry