

I'm suggesting the subject of tribalism, and the psychology of liberals and conservatives, as discussion topics for the June 20 Chaos and Complex Systems group meeting.

Some possible discussion points or questions are below, along with a few optional references you might wish to glance at (point 6 in particular), and I have a bit of introductory material relevant to each . Please bring to the meeting any related material that you have found interesting and would like to share. I'm attaching a PDF file that has some summary points.

Regards,

Deric

Discussion points:

1 - Where do tribes come from? Evolutionary origins

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2014/12/eo-wilson-and-meaning-of-human-existence.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2011/03/beginning-and-middle-of-human-history.html>

2 - What is essential human nature? Where do religion and morality come from? How do religious and non-religious people differ?

<http://www.moralfoundations.org/>

http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2007/02/human-nature-redux_20.html

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2007/10/moral-universals.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2014/08/origins-of-good-and-evil-in-human-babies.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2015/09/birth-of-moralizing-gods.htm>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2016/02/moralistic-gods-enhance-sociality.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2008/10/evolution-of-religious-prosociality.html>
<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2014/09/morality-how-theists-and-non-theists.html>

3 - What dynamics regulate in-group and out-group interactions and conflicts?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/09/opinion/sunday/the-roots-of-implicit-bias.html>
<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2014/11/a-mechanism-underlying-intractable.html>
<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2012/05/blog-post.html> brain correlates of whether we help someone suffering
<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2014/09/norm-enforcement-is-biased-from-its.html>

4 - What kinds of political tribes do people belong to today?

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2017/01/how-our-evolutionary-psychology-elected.html>
<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2016/07/the-myth-of-cosmopolitanism.html>
<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2011/02/bias-within-politics-of-professoriat.html>
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/10/opinion/sunday/the-dangers-of-echo-chambers-on-campus.html>
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/democrats-need-to-focus-on-the-gut-not-the-head/2016/12/01/dfbe7782-b803-11e6-a677-b608fbb3aaf6_story.html
<http://www.alternet.org/print/election-2016/rural-america-understanding-isnt-problem>
https://www.amazon.com/Strangers-Their-Own-Land-Mourning/dp/1620972255/ref=as_li_ss_tl
<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2016/01/our-strongest-prejudice-partisan.html>

5 - What distinguishes liberals and conservatives?

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2009/12/more-on-psychology-of-liberals-and.html>
<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2008/10/political-attitudes-vary->

with.html

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2009/06/liberals-and-conservatives-feel.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2015/12/negative-evaluation-of.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2013/02/red-brain-blue-brain.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2008/06/why-are-conservatives-happier-than.html>

6 - How do people sustain their tribal identities, what psychological shortcuts or errors help?

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2017/03/evolutionary-psychology-explains-why.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2017/06/the-heart-trumps-head-desirability-bias.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2017/04/lying-is-feature-not-bug-of-trumps.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2017/06/youre-less-likely-to-check-facts-in.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2010/08/metacognitive-deficits-in-public.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2016/04/a-succinct-list-of-some-of-our-common.html>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-travis-bradberry/13-cognitive-biases-that_b_13355298.html

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2008/06/seeing-ourselves-seeing-others-built-in.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2015/02/the-neuroscience-of-motivated-cognition.html>

7 - How can tribal animosities and conflicts be ameliorated?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/10/opinion/sunday/im-prejudiced-he-said-then-we-kept-talking.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2016/06/confronting-prejudiced-brain.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2016/11/how-to-get-beyond-our-tribal-politics.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2010/04/internet-enhancing-not-diminishing.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2016/05/the-key-to-political-persuasion.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2013/05/the-limits-of-empathy.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2016/04/how-to-change-prejudicefor-real-this.html>

<http://mindblog.dericbownds.net/2016/01/how-learning-shapes-empathic-brain.html>

Chaos and Complexity 6/20/17
Tribalism, and the psychology
of liberals and conservatives

- 1 - Where do tribes come from? Evolutionary origins**
- 2 - What is essential human nature? Where do religion and morality come from?**
- 3 - How do religious and non-religious people differ?**
- 4 - What distinguishes liberals and conservatives?**
- 5 - What dynamics regulate in-group and out-group interactions and conflicts?**
- 6 - What kinds of tribes do people belong to today?**
- 7 - How do people sustain their tribal identities? What psychological shortcuts or errors help?**
- 8 - How can tribal animosities and conflicts be ameliorated?**

Where do tribes come from? Evolutionary origins

... during the habiline period (~1.5-2 million years ago), a conflict ensued between individual-level selection, with individuals competing with other individuals in the same group, on the one side, and group-level selection, with competition among groups, on the other. The latter force promoted altruism and cooperation among all the group members. It led to innate group-wide morality and a sense of conscience and honor. The competition between the two forces can be succinctly expressed as follows: Within groups selfish individuals beat altruistic individuals, but groups of altruists beat groups of selfish individuals. Or, risking oversimplification, individual selection promoted sin, while group selection promoted virtue.

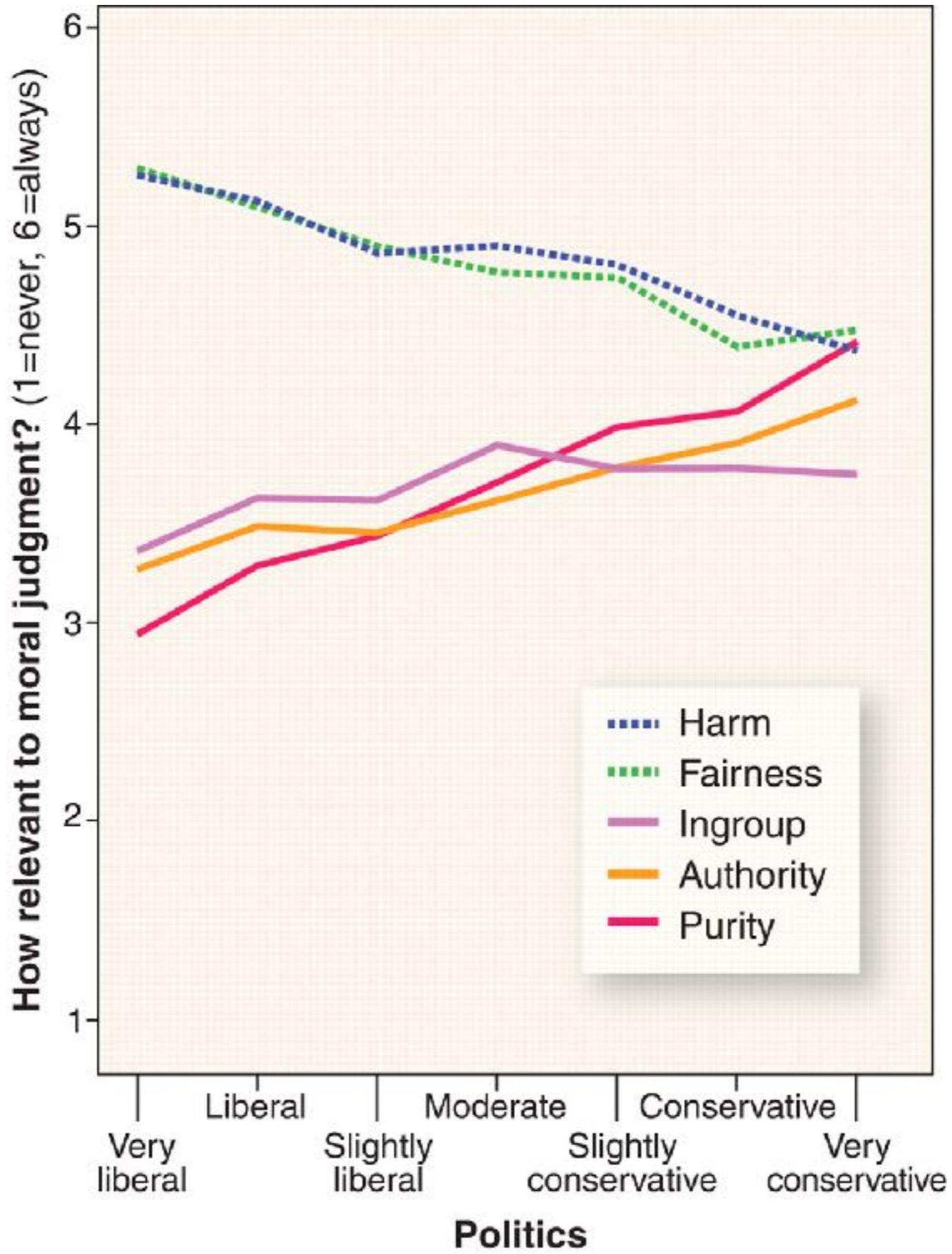
So it came to pass that humans are forever conflicted by their prehistory of multilevel selection. We are suspended between the two extreme forces that created us. To give in completely to the instinctual urgings born from individual selection would be to dissolve society. At the opposite extreme, to surrender to the urgings from group selection would turn us into angelic robots— the outsized equivalents of ants.

Fukayama in “The End of History” (1992): In the transition from tribes to states, which started in China 1000 years earlier than in Europe, only Denmark and England, almost by accident developed the 3 essential institutions of a strong state, the rule of law, strong central authority, and mechanisms to hold the ruler accountable. These spread to other modern nations.

Can a modern society be run through a top-down bureaucratic system with no solution to the bad emperor problem (China), or will liberal capitalist democracy prevail? Is the increase in tribalism enabled by the internet breaking down these 3 essentials of a strong state?

Human Nature:

- 1. Harm/care: Evolved mammalian attachment systems mean we can feel the pain of others, giving rise to the virtues of kindness, gentleness and nurturance.**
- 2. Fairness/reciprocity: Evolved reciprocal altruism generates a sense of justice.**
- 3. Ingroup/loyalty: Evolved in-group tribalism leads to patriotism.**
- 4. Authority/respect: Evolved hierarchical social structures translate to respect for authority and tradition.**
- 5. Purity/sanctity: Evolved emotion of disgust related to disease and contamination underlies our sense of bodily purity.**



Psychological errors or shortcuts that help sustain tribal identities - I

Confirmation bias, “myside bias,” or motivated reasoning - giving too much weight to information that supports our existing beliefs and discounting that which does not.

Conformity - People are influenced by those around them (and by the mass media) in everything from fashion tastes to political views; but, they generally deny that and see themselves as alone in a crowd of sheep.

Desirability bias - polarization can emerge because of peoples’ conflicting desires, not their conflicting beliefs per se.

Blue lies - falsehoods, told on behalf of a group, can actually strengthen the bonds among the members of that group

The sunk cost fallacy - hanging on to a decision, or an investment, in an unconscious desire to justify it.

Loss aversion - reacting more strongly to loss of a resource (time, goods, or money) than to a similar gain.

Overconfidence - overrating our abilities, knowledge, and skill (two thirds of investors rate their financial sophistication as advanced, but barely pass a financial literacy exam.)

Optimism bias - which seems to be hard-wired into our brains because it has evolutionarily useful, driving humans to strive in the face of long odds.

Positive illusions - People tend to have inflated views of themselves and their futures. For example, they think that they are more likely to become wealthy, and less likely to contract contagious diseases, than those around them. This unrealistic optimism partially stems from people's attentional focus on their own (but not others') internal desires and intentions .

Hindsight bias - rewriting history to make ourselves look good, as in misremembering our forecasts in a way that makes us look smarter.

Attribution bias - attributing good outcomes to our own skills, but bad outcomes to causes over which we had no control.

Psychological errors or shortcuts that help sustain tribal identities - II

1. **The decoy effect.** This occurs when someone believes they have two options, but you present a third option to make the second one feel more palatable.
2. **Affect heuristic.** Affect heuristic is the human tendency to base our decisions on our emotions. Example: judging a disease that kills 1,200 out of 10,000 as more dangerous than one that is 24% fatal. Emotional image of dying more powerful than a percentage.
3. **Fundamental attribution error.** This is the tendency to attribute situational behavior to a person's fixed personality rather than other possible explanations.
4. **The ideometer effect.** Thoughts used to generate emotions.
5. **Confirmation bias.** Seeking out information that confirms existing beliefs.
6. **Conservatism bias.** Pre-existing information takes precedence over new information.
7. **The ostrich effect.** Hiding from impending problems.
8. **Reactance.** Tendency to react to rules and regulations by exercising our freedom.
9. **The halo effect.** The halo effect occurs when someone creates a strong first impression and that impression sticks.
10. **The horn effect.** Opposite of the halo effect. When you perform poorly at first, you can easily get pegged as a low-performer even if you work hard enough to disprove that notion.
11. **Planning fallacy.** Planning fallacy is the tendency to think that we can do things more quickly than we actually can. For procrastinators, this leads to incomplete work, and this makes type-As over promise and under deliver.
12. **The bandwagon effect.** The bandwagon effect is the tendency to do what everyone else is doing.
13. **Bias blind spot.** If you begin to feel that you've mastered your biases, keep in mind that you're most likely experiencing the bias blind spot. This is the tendency to see biases in other people but not in yourself.

How can tribal animosities and conflicts be ameliorated?

-The contact effect...Increasing exposure to out-group members will improve attitudes toward that group and decrease prejudice and stereotyping. Costly help from out group members boosts empathy for that group.

-Appeal to values “same-sex couples are proud and patriotic Americans” who “contribute to the American economy and society.” gets to conservatives more than fairness based messages.

-Empathy a good thing, but has limits. important to distinguish emotional and cognitive empathy (baby in well versus thousands dying in Sudan)

-Does the internet reinforce bubbles? Does it diminish or enhance the public square?

-Changing bodies changes minds studies showing that inducing illusory ownership over the body of a different race, age, or gender person changes implicit social biases, indicating that multi-sensory experience of our bodies underpins higher-level social attitudes.

-Analogic perspective taking By inviting someone to discuss an experience in which that person was perceived as different and treated unfairly, a canvasser tries to generate sympathy for the suffering of another group—such as gay or transgender people.

-Do not stereotype out group members (separate your feelings about Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton from your feelings about their supporters)

-Avoid combat mode (that goes with motivated reasoning, defensiveness, hypocrisy), admit log in you own eye.