

I wrote these five pairs of actions so that the B column would give you an intuitive flash from each foundation, like putting a grain of salt or sugar on your tongue. The five rows illustrate violations of Care (hurting a child), Fairness (profiting from someone else's undeserved loss), Loyalty (criticizing your nation to outsiders), Authority (disrespecting your father), and Sanctity (acting in a degrading or disgusting way).

In the rest of this chapter I'll describe these foundations and how they became part of human nature. I'll show that these foundations are used differently, and to different degrees, to support moral matrices on the political left and right.

A NOTE ON INNATENESS

It used to be risky for a scientist to assert that anything about human behavior was innate. To back up such claims, you had to show that the trait was hardwired, unchangeable by experience, and found in all cultures. With that definition, not much is innate, aside from a few infant reflexes such as that cute thing they do when you put one finger into their little hands. If you proposed that anything more complex than that was innate—particularly a sex difference—you'd be told that there was a tribe somewhere on Earth that didn't show the trait, so therefore it's not innate.

We've advanced a lot since the 1970s in our understanding of the brain, and now we know that traits can be innate without being either hardwired or universal. As the neuroscientist Gary Marcus explains, "Nature bestows upon the newborn a considerably complex brain, but one that is best seen as *prewired*—flexible and subject to change—rather than *hardwired*, fixed, and immutable."²

To replace wiring diagrams, Marcus suggests a better analogy: The brain is like a book, the first draft of which is writ-

ten by the genes during fetal development. No chapters are complete at birth, and some are just rough outlines waiting to be filled in during childhood. But not a single chapter—be it on sexuality, language, food preferences, or morality—consists of blank pages on which a society can inscribe any conceivable set of words. Marcus's analogy leads to the best definition of innateness I have ever seen:

Nature provides a first draft, which experience then revises. . . . "Built-in" does not mean unalleable; it means "*organized in advance of experience*."³

The list of five moral foundations was my first attempt to specify how the righteous mind was "organized in advance of experience." But Moral Foundations Theory also tries to explain how that first draft gets revised during childhood to produce the diversity of moralities that we find across cultures—and across the political spectrum.

1. THE CARE/HARM FOUNDATION

Reptiles get a bad rap for being cold—not just cold-blooded but coldhearted. Some reptile mothers do hang around after their babies hatch, to provide some protection, but in many species they don't. So when the first mammals began suckling their young, they raised the cost of motherhood. No longer would females turn out dozens of babies and bet that a few would survive on their own.

Mammals make fewer bets and invest a lot more in each one, so mammals face the challenge of caring for and nurturing their children for a long time. Primate moms place even fewer bets and invest still more in each one. And human babies, whose brains are so enormous that a child must be