

The Empathy Gap: Building Bridges to the Good Life and the Good Society, 2009, 306 pages, J. D. Trout, 0670020443, 9780670020447, Penguin, 2009

A road map to a better society linking the cognitive psychology of individual and social decision making Drawing on his sweeping and innovative research, philosopher and cognitive scientist J. D. Trout recruits the latest findings in psychology, behavioral economics, and neuroscience to answer the question: How can we make better personal decisions and design social policies that improve the lives of everyone? Empathy prompts us to roll up our sleeves. Empathy for the risk and suffering of our fellow citizens can lead to moral outrage, more decent laws, and fairer policies. But new research on judgment and decision making has revealed that the human mind makes decisions that undermine the best interests of the individual and society alike. Empathy is an admirable impulse, but alone it is unreliable. It needs to be balanced by rationality if we are to develop a responsible social approach to decent and democratic policy making. With penetrating insight into our cognitive and empathic limitations, Trout offers pragmatic political solutions to vault these crippling psychological barriers and outlines the best way to use our brains and our policies to improve society and the life of every individual.

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