Understanding left and Right: An Illustrated Guide to the Political Divide

By Alan E. Singer

DESCRIPTION

This book about the complicated meaning of Left and Right in politics carries the optimistic message that rational truth seeking *can* lead people towards the center and away from extreme positions. There is of course a major argument to the contrary, which is that political activities are very substantially determined by narrow interests, vague intuitions and strong emotions. Although rationality has indeed been diluted in contemporary politics, it is likely that much remains below the surface. Accordingly, there still might be time for therapeutic interventions aimed at nudging millions of minds towards a balanced political center.

The book intervenes in a disarming and calming way. Throughout the 32 short chapters a wide variety of politically-loaded thoughts are attributed to a pair of cartoon dogs. Left-dog and Right-dog are duly introduced in the first chapter, where readers will immediately see that they are friendly and not fighting. Indeed, there is no such thing as dog-eat-dog in the community of truth-seekers. There are a few diagrams in each chapter that readers (or their students or children) are invited to color-in to represent the two political sides. Each chapter sets out some distinctive divide-bridging insights into basic issues such as truth, ethics, passions, hopes, intentions, genders, orientations, abortions, boundaries, identities, language, leaders, inequalities and ecologies to mention just a few.

Any one of the 32 chapters can be contemplated in private, discussed in the family or taught as a stand-alone exercise. Prudently selected chapters would fit with ease into just about *every* course in business schools, but also in college level courses across the entire spectrum of the social sciences, including philosophy. This might seem like a ludicrously-hyped marketing claim for any serious book, but readers are urged to try it out for themselves and their relatives or colleagues or students…and see what happens.