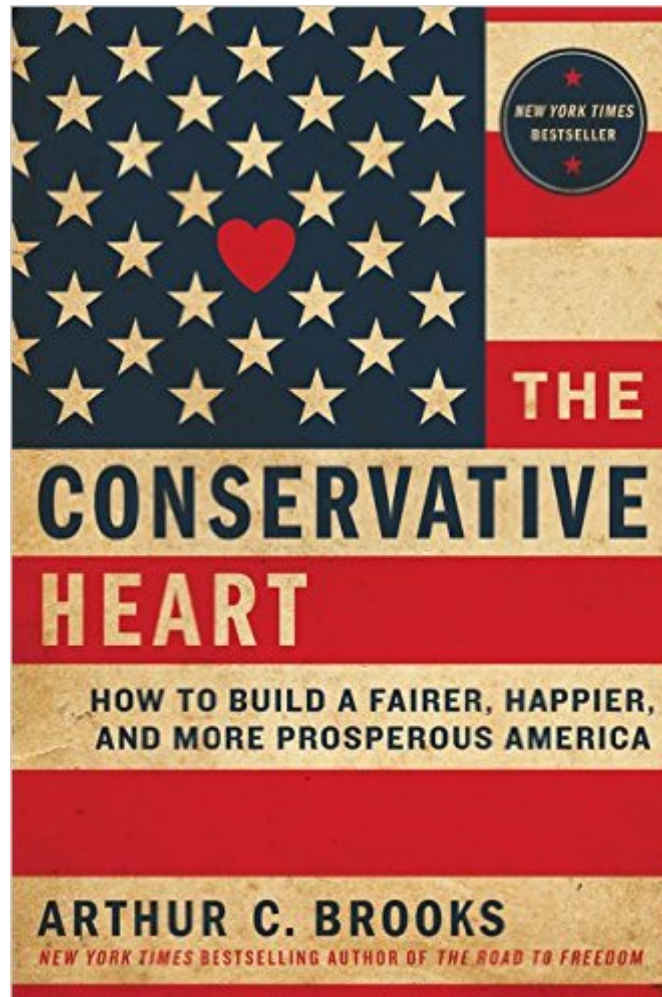


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The Conservative Heart: How To Build A Fairer, Happier, And More Prosperous America



Synopsis

The prominent economist and president of the American Enterprise Institute—the leading intellectual think tank on the right—offers a bold new vision for conservatism as a movement for social and economic justice. In *The Conservative Heart*, Arthur C. Brooks contends that after years of focusing on economic growth and traditional social values, it is time for a new kind of conservatism—one that helps the vulnerable without mortgaging our children's future. In Brooks's daring vision, this conservative movement fights poverty, promotes equal opportunity, celebrates earned success, and values spiritual enlightenment. It is an inclusive movement with a positive agenda to help people lead happier, more hopeful, and more satisfied lives. One of the country's leading scholars and policy thinkers, Brooks has considered these issues for decades. Drawing on years of research on the sources of happiness, he asserts that what people most need are four institutions of meaning—faith, family, community, and meaningful work. These are not only the foundations of personal wellbeing, but also the necessary means for building a better nation. Combining reporting, original research, and case studies, and free of vituperative politics, *The Conservative Heart* is an intelligent and compelling manifesto for renewal. Clear, well-reasoned, and accessible, it is a welcome new strategy for disconsolate conservatives looking for fresh, actionable ideas to address the serious problems confronting us today and to reclaim our future, and for politically independent citizens who believe that neither political party addresses their needs or concerns.

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Customer Reviews

If conservative leaders had read a book like this 30 years ago and communicated according to its principles, America would have a very different political conscience today - not to mention a very different government. Brooks does not try to resist liberal cries for empathy and equality by suggesting that liberal ideas are impossible or irrational. Rather, he begins with a righteous sense of social justice and rigorously demonstrates that conservatism is the only real path to prosperity and peace, especially for society's less fortunate. In politics, people only want to trust leaders who genuinely share their values. However, for more than 50 years, conservatives have been conceding the economic debate to liberals by trying to counter "moral" pangs for socialism with empty pragmatic arguments. This has been a fateful mistake. Many on the Left have not honestly considered the intellectual merits of conservatism due to the mis-perception that conservatives "don't care about others" in the way that liberals do. It's time for conservatives to re-frame the debate. No one who believes that "healthcare is a right" is going to flunk Obamacare because "the White House is incompetent and its website doesn't work." People who are hurt by the fact that poor children don't get a good education are not going to take kindly to a sophisticated private equity mogul shouting about why the budget must be balanced. Because today's mainstream conservatism is rooted in tired bromides more than heartfelt beliefs, even self-proclaimed conservatives have abandoned their views under the strains of leadership. (To wit George W. Bush: "I had to abandon free market principles in order to save the free market system").

I wondered if this book might be another dull diatribe by an academic Conservative advocating for capitalism as a way to riches for even the most down-at-heels people --- if they will only get off their lazy rear ends, stop shooting themselves up with booze and dope, and get to work. It turned out to be totally opposite of that. Author Arthur Brooks has lived a life like the most interesting man in the world. He's toured the world with a small band of renowned classical musicians. He's chatted with Indian spiritualists and Tibet's Dalai Lama. He says he was liberal in those days, as most young people pursuing the arts are. Then he decided, in his late 20's to become a free market economist. Now he heads the American Enterprise Institute. He's developed a philosophy centered on our right to pursue happiness as the Declaration of Independence says we should. His view is that capitalism enables us to live life the right way on a happiness portfolio • by having faith in yourself, your colleagues, and your community; and by elevating yourself with earned success.=====First, we should concentrate each day on the happiness portfolio: faith, family, community, and earned success through work. Teach it to those around you, and fight

against the barriers to these things. To pursue these things is to pursue happiness. President Franklin Roosevelt had it right: "Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort." • The secret to happiness is earned success through honest work.=====Brooks says that Conservatives need to get beyond defending capitalism merely as an economic system.

First, in the interest of full disclosure. I am a "liberal." • But as I have "grown up" • I have also become wise enough to understand that the idea that half the country is always right and the other half is always wrong, is a stupid idea, but it is the core of the mindset of many many liberals and "surprise!" just as many conservatives. Especially conservatives, as they believe in moral absolutes whilst liberals seem OK being morally relativistic, even if the definition of that is "fuzzy" (which is in keeping with their relativism). Having said this, my first objection to this book is its core argument: conservatives are always right and liberals are always wrong. But beyond that: I agree with the author that an unintended consequence of welfare is a state of dependency, a really unfortunate consequence. But has he not noticed that the number of jobs (especially the kinds of jobs that can be filled by those most likely to need welfare) has been shrinking for some 30-40 years, due to computers, automation, AI, robotics and really really cheap off-shore labor? Maybe liberals and conservatives need to sit down together to figure out what to do about this problem. The author chooses the poor but energetic Dharavi over the better-off but dying Marienthal, and I agree with him, in the abstract. But once again, he is living in fantasy land. How many Americans with jobs are working below their skill level? And that number is increasing, for the same underlying reason as above. What is sadder than a man trained to be a rocket scientist, literally, working as check-out at his friendly Walmart? Same thing: it is not that young people have gone soft, it is that so many jobs have disappeared.

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