

The Great Divide: Why Liberals and Conservatives Will Never, Ever Agree

William Gairdner

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The theme of *The Great Divide* is that the populations of the democratic world, from Boston to Berlin,
Vancouver to Venice, are becoming increasingly divided from within, due to a growing ideological
incompatibility between modern liberalism and conservatism. This is partly due to a complex mutation in the
concept of liberal democracy itself, and the resulting divide is now so wide that those holding to either
philosophy on a whole range of topics: on democracy, on reason, on abortion, on human nature, on
homosexuality and gay marriage, on freedom, on the role of courts ... and much more, can barely speak with
each other without outrage (the favorite emotional response from all sides). Clearly, civil conversation at the
surface has been failing -- and that could mean democracy is failing.

This book is an effort to deepen the conversation. It is written for the non-specialist, and aims to reveal the less obvious underlying ideological forces and misconceptions that cause the conflict and outrage at the surface -- not with any expectation the clash of values will evaporate, but rather that a deeper understanding will generate a more intelligent and civil conversation.

As an aid to understanding, the book contains a handful of Tables directly comparing modern liberal and conservative views across a range of fundamental moral and political "issues" so that curious readers can answer the book's main question: "Where Do You Stand?" An interesting result in testing this exercise has been the number of people who find they "think" one way, but "live" another.



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