



## **The Conservative Heart: How to Build a Fairer, Happier, and More Prosperous America**

*Arthur C. Brooks*

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For too long, conservatism has been a movement of the head and not the heart. Now *New York Times* bestselling author Arthur C. Brooks offers a bold new vision for conservatism as a movement for happiness, unity, and social justice—a movement of the head and heart that boldly challenges the liberal monopoly on "fairness" and "compassion."

Many Americans today see two dispiriting political choices: ineffective compassion on one side and heartless pragmatism on the other. Progressives have always presented themselves as champions of the poor and vulnerable. But they have not succeeded—more and more people are hopeless and dependent on government. Meanwhile, conservatives possess the best solutions to the problems of poverty and declining mobility. Yet because they don't speak in a way that reflects their concern and compassion, many Americans don't trust them. Americans know that outmoded redistribution yields poor results and does little for the pursuit of happiness. But there seems to be no conservative alternative that looks out for those struggling to get by.

Arthur Brooks, one of the country's leading policy experts and the president of the American Enterprise Institute, has considered these issues for decades. Drawing on years of research on the sources of happiness and the conditions of human flourishing, Brooks presents a social justice agenda for a New Right. Proposing a set of practical policies firmly grounded in the four "institutions of meaning"—family, faith, community, and meaningful work—Brooks describes a government safety net that actually lifts people up, and offers a vision of true hope through earned success.

Brooks argues that it is time for a new kind of conservatism, one that fights poverty, promotes equal opportunity, and extols spiritual enlightenment. It is an inclusive, optimistic movement with a positive agenda to help people lead happier and more fulfilling lives.

Clear, well-reasoned, accessible, and free of vituperative politics, *The Conservative Heart* is a welcome new strategy for conservatives looking for fresh, actionable ideas—and for politically independent citizens who believe that neither side is adequately addressing their needs or concerns.

## **The Conservative Heart: How to Build a Fairer, Happier, and More Prosperous America Details**

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## From Reader Review The Conservative Heart: How to Build a Fairer, Happier, and More Prosperous America for online ebook

Trish says

It could have been I first ran into Arthur C. Brooks in the *NYT* where he is apparently a regular columnist. Something he said about the Dalai Lama intrigued me; I wondered how he was connected to *NYT* conservative columnist David Brooks and went looking online. A couple of years ago the two men spoke together in Aspen and the difference between the two was immediately apparent.

This book sketches Arthur Brooks' growth from college dropout and musician to head of the conservative think tank American Enterprise Institute whose attendant scholars have included Dinesh D'Sousa, Irving Kristol, Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Antonin Scalia. We learn what Brooks perceives as influences on his thinking as he moved from liberal to conservative.

“I believe that poverty and opportunity are moral issues and must be addressed as such.”

and

“We know that human dignity has deeper roots than the financial resources someone commands. We may wear the rhetorical uniform of materialists, but conservatives at heart are moralists.”

These are troubling statements from Brooks. One wonders what he meant. It was my understanding that conservatives are always belittling liberals for being bleeding hearts and politically correct. Liberals are particularly keen on the morality of fairness. In wages and opportunity. Could we actually be closer in [unexamined] attitudes than we think?

Brooks focuses on the dignity of work, welfare reform, poverty in his comments, and goes after Barak Obama pretty hard, all the while never acknowledging race when talking about poverty.

“Welfare spending also massively increased under the Obama administration...More important than anything else, though, the administration was turning its attention away from poverty per se and instead toward the old progressive bogeyman of income inequality.”

Brooks felt the president was attacking “wealthy people and conservative Americans.” He'd explained earlier that conservatives give more to charity than do liberals. Brooks and fellow conservatives “were indignant at the president's ad hominem attacks.” But Brooks and his fellow conservatives saw *themselves* in the president's remarks. Obama did not point them out specifically.

I think I see where the problem might lie: conservatives, patting themselves on the back for being generous, are willing to give back via charity whatever money they collect in an unequal system that may give a little too much to business owners and high-level managers and may give too little to the people actually working the business. Of course, these generous wealthy donors decide which charities they will support, and so steer society. So those that have...perpetuate their havingness and the rest of us don't really have much say. Does this sound healthy to you?

Brooks claims to be an economist. He must be being disingenuous then when he crows,

“...inequality actually *increased* over the course of the Obama administration...Consider the facts. The top half of the economy has, in fact, recovered from the Great Recession in fine style...a whopping 95 percent of the real income growth from the economic recovery flowed directly to the much-regretted ‘1-percent.’...And how about the bottom 20 percent of U.S. households? That group of earners was hit the hardest during the recovery. Their real incomes fell by 7 percent on average from 2009 to 2013, the largest percentage decline of any group.”

Yes, Obama tried to save the global economy from tanking as a result of conservative economic policies. I think Brooks and I can probably agree that if Obama weren’t blocked in Congress, he would have done more to fix the inequality that came as a result of repairing the mess Republicans left him. Maybe Obama should have let the ship sink instead? Brooks is getting no buy-in from me for dishonest arguments like these.

Chapter Three has a subtitle: “How Honest Work Ennobles and Elevates Us.” Finally, Brooks and I can agree on something. We agree that work can be a source of happiness, wealth, and meaning. But Brooks is being disingenuous again, talking about putting a broom in the hands of the homeless and enlivening them with the dignity of work. It infuriates me that he can trivialize the discussion of the enormous national problems we have with inequality in our society. If he put a broom in the hands of every homeless person in the country we would still have a serious problem with our economy.

Let’s be frank. When work is not acknowledged by all parties to be worthwhile enough to pay a decent living wage, we run into problems. Either the work is important for a company or it is not. Don’t tell me companies will look after the concerns of their workers because it is in their best interests. No. They won’t. We have centuries of evidence that corporations hold workers over a barrel and maximize profits *at the expense of workers*. Human labor is expensive. It should be expensive.

I should be honest about my own prejudices. I distrust charity because I distrust the organizations handing it out. I don’t want Brooks to feel good “lifting people up.” I just want what I earned in a system that is fair. I expect many women and people of color in America today would say the same. Kind white men dispensing charity but who have also been part of a system structured to offer unfair wages to the majority of “workers” would do well to take note. Just give me what I deserve, what’s fair (hint: you may need to listen to someone besides yourself and your peer group), and then we’ll talk about who gets charity. It may be me, giving to you. Think how happy it will make me, to give you uplift.

To be fair, when Brooks discusses social justice, he says liberal efforts to attain this include redistributive taxation (oh yes) and social welfare spending. To conservatives, a social justice agenda ...means improving education (for everyone, or just those who can afford to pay for K-12?), expanding the opportunity to work (no objection there...if only resumes from black-sounding names weren’t weeded out at the start of the process), and increasing access to entrepreneurship (don’t even get me started on who gets loans and at what rates). Of course, Brooks adds “true conservative justice must also fight cronyism that favors powerful interests and keeps the little guy down. (Tell me more about that please.)

A few pages later, Brooks is comparing parents experiencing poverty to children:

“...moral intervention must accompany economic intervention for the latter to be truly effective...I’ve never met a parent who believes that their kids have to receive their allowance before it is fair to ask them to behave decently. It’s the other way around! So why are these values good enough for our children, but not good enough for our brothers and sisters in need? When we fail to share our values with the poor, we effectively discriminate against them. And

that hidden bigotry robs them of the tools they need to live lives of dignity and self-reliance."

Brooks undoubtedly means well, but it sounds to me like he will withhold assistance unless we go along with his beliefs and values. Would be that we all had the same opportunities he did/does. I am all for behaving well and being socialized to be better people. But where is the open-handed generosity Brooks was talking about earlier, when he led by example instead of by punishment? What do our Christian teachings say? Wait until someone is behaving well to help or to wash the feet of prostitutes and criminals?

Anyway, the problems of poverty are very difficult to resolve and we need people who think, hope, and try, like Brooks. All these years and we haven't resolved them yet. But my guess is treating everyone with dignity and paying them well for their contribution to society, maybe even at the expense of one's own take-home pay, may move the ball down a field a little faster. I mean, if you've got all the values and stuff, you can show us how it is done when you start with nothing.

This book is an attempt to show liberals how conservatives have areas of overlap with them and really do have compassion they claimed in the label Compassionate Conservatives...until that was thrown under the bus in the last election. It is a feel-good attempt to show crossover values. And I am picking apart about the 'other side's' notion of social justice. Let's face it: We need all the social justice we can get. And we do not need to convince anyone to begin using it ourselves right now. Give me what you've got in terms of social justice. I'll work with that.

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### **John Musser says**

Always on the lookout for something insightful from the conservative perspective. Sadly, "The Conservative Heart" doesn't qualify (full disclosure, I only got about 30 pages into this book before I got disgusted with its partisan tone).

Brooks first makes the argument that conservatives are more compassionate than liberals based upon IRS charitable donation data. Its actually really difficult to draw any reliable conclusions from that data given that a significant chunk of donations go to the arts and religious institutions which fund activities that have nothing to do with compassion.

Brooks then wants to give credit entirely to the right for the dramatic reduction of 2nd/3rd world poverty over the last 25 years when that was the result of first world economic policies that were supported across the political spectrum.

It looked like Brooks was going to spend much of the book just pushing the idea that conservatives need better public relations to improve their image. I'll concede that!

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### **Glenn O'Bannon says**

Outstanding recitation of conservatism!

If you want to know what conservatism is and what motivates conservatives, this is the book you should start with.

All candidates for office should be STUDYING this book. It's a recipe for American success, while making sure that none get left behind. It represents the spirit of America and the principles upon which it was founded.

It points the way to solving so many of the ills that currently plague us. These include the so-called "entitlements." We need to have the safety net but we need to be smarter about how we implement it. We will save those programs and reduce spending if we do it right. Because people want to work and work is one of the pillars of happiness. Brooks illustrates that with many examples and backs it up academic studies.

It was an eye-opener for me because it showed me that I need to quickly articulate my positions in terms that people connect with and can understand. It showed me that, instead of mocking and ridiculing the Social Justice Warriors (SWJs), that I should BE one! I now realize what true social justice means instead of the meaning that has been twisted and perverted by too many in America today.

It's about head and spirit and yes, HEART. The Conservative Heart. And it's really a big part of my personal makeup. If you want to be a better conservative, or just want to understand conservatives, please read this book.

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### **John Mosman says**

I picked this up in an attempt to understand the conservative agenda. I nearly made it to the end but could not finish it. Brooks' ideas about caring for the unfortunate poor are interesting. I have to agree that having work is important for self-esteem, worth and income. Through work we will lessen the need for government largess and for people's dependence on "hand-outs".

Yet he does not discuss situations such as Wal-Mart workers who still need government assistance. He does not discuss how to create the jobs for all the people that need them. Work is great and important when jobs exist that pay a living wage. That did not seem in Brooks' radar.

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### **Janet says**

An oxymoron?

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### **Jill S. Mongold says**

This book articulated beliefs I've held for years. In addition, it includes an action plan.

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### **Jake Goretzki says**

(Read as part of the 'Understanding Them" series).

Interesting.

Some entirely fair and covetable points. Namely that dear old free trade has improved the livelihood of more millions of people than any god awful -ism or statist venture. I also love its cleaving to the Declaration of Independence, which is a bracing, wonderful text. I also love a bit of Reagan (no fan of his ethics, but anyone who runs the USSR into the ground is on the side of the angels). And that glorious, 'fuck you' truth that conservatives give more time and more money to charity and the needy than 'liberals'. (I'm a good example of the latter; we look upon a lot of charity as this overbearing thing that the state should be doing and I forgot my wallet at home, mate. Cheers!). The people I have known in my life who have given most time to others and busybodied for the old and the neglected were mostly conservatives.

Much of it feels eminently sensible and sober, really - until you chance upon the casuistic objection to Obamacare (something about making it harder for the needy or some such faux-outrage), and that protest-too-much quarrel with minimum wage. We heard that one in the UK before the NMW came in - it's generally bollocks.

And much as I appreciate that community, work and family are linchpins of progress, what am I to do about that conservative pillar called 'faith' when I don't believe in fairies? I don't know. Maybe it's about finding a half decent sports team.

And finally, those tips for Tea Party mainstreaming. Absolutely right - and some good lessons for the current set of placard-waggling ghouls running the UK Labour Party too, really. That Tea Party didn't seem to listen in 2016, and the GOP selected a conservative with all the 'heart' of a gold toilet seat. A materialistic, non-moralistic, numbers-not-hearts, Horatio Alger-channeling piece of gristle - not a heart.

Maybe next time, eh. The ideas are certainly here.

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### **Matt Morgan says**

Great book for all conservatives and liberals. Liberals definitely need to understand this side (what is argued to be the 'real' conservative heart, not the one you see portrayed on TV and in the news by MSNBC or even FOX News). Which is why conservatives also really need to read this book - as I'm sure a lot of ultra-conservatives would be surprised by much of Brook's ideas.

The quick summary is that he thinks conservatives have all the answers, the left is just much better at coming across compassionate to the poor (and the masses) - so people are drawn towards their liberal ideals. Whereas, really it is conservative fiscal policy and capitalism that has drastically improved poverty in the world over the past 60 years, and we need an opportunity to make that impact on American poverty (hasn't improved at all in 30 years). However, outside of talking a little about the safety net and 'the system being rigged' - he doesn't really state what the answers are, just that the conservatives have them. He does talk about the welfare state we have created actually puts emphasis on materialism. Give a job and an opportunity to succeed, not food stamps to more ppl.

This book is meant to be about solving the poverty crisis in the United States, not politics. With that focus, I really liked it. We all need to work together with a bi-partisan approach to solve the poverty in the

U.S. - conservatives, nor liberals, can do it alone. And the main point of the book, is that this is really both of our main goals.

Notes from Reading:

Arthur Brooks (now President of The American Enterprise Institute), as a musician on the road in his twenties observing the world he was traveling. As he traveled, read, met more people, the more he believed everyone - poor, rich, minority, immigrant, everyone - should be able to earn their success. "I realized that free enterprise could build a better, more humane, world on a mass scale, so long as the United States had the moral confidence to live its own values and share them with the world.

-If all that made me a conservative, so be it!"

(from the start, Brooks is saying that the core difference between conservatives and liberals is in the conservative approach to give everyone an opportunity to 'earn' success - which is apparently not a liberal mindset).

- Brooks went on to study/ teach economics for the rest of his life. Specifically basing years of research on 1. Charity and 2. Happiness:

- Conservatives give more than liberals (even after correcting for income differences). A lot associated with the fact that conservatives are more religious.

- "The defenders of free enterprise have done a terrible job of telling people how much good the system has done around the world. According to a 2013 study survey, 84 percent of Americans are unaware that worldwide deprivation has fallen as dramatically as it has over the past three decades. Indeed, more than two-thirds actually think global hunger has gotten worse, in direct contradiction of all the facts. Capitalism has saved a couple of billion people and we (conservatives) have treated this miracle like a state secret.....Millions of Americans don't see the benefits of democratic capitalism extending to them, their families, and the poor....Millions of Americans see conservatives as oblivious to these conservatives (saving the poor)."

- "Conservatives are in possession of the best solutions to the problems of poverty and economic mobility. Yet, because we don't speak in a way that reflects our hearts, many Americans simply don't trust us and are unwilling to give us the chance to implement those solutions.....And so the poor might not starve, but they are staying poor. That is simply unacceptable."

- "Moral hope, not lust for wealth, is the reason conservatives delight in entrepreneurial and classic American success stories.....(bashes Obama in the middle)....It is conservatives who stand for true hope, a hope that returns power and agency back into the hands of ordinary people. We extol free enterprise, self-reliance, and ethical living - the foundations of a good life, no matter how much money someone makes."

- "Contrary to what we often hear, the vast majority of conservatives agree with ...Friedrich Hayek and President Reagan that the social safety net for the truly indigent people is a great achievement of modern civilization.....conservatives know that only a return to fiscal conservatism can guarantee the solvency of the safety net."

- "Only a culture of opportunity, fueled with a policy agenda of education reform, private job creation, and entrepreneurship, can truly set people up to flourish."

- "We have seen how the number of Americans on federal nutritional assistance (food stamps) has skyrocketed in recent years. Some look at those figures and see great success. They say "Hey, look! We helped all these people! Isn't that fantastic?" But conservatives in touch with their hearts will reply with incredulity: " We have sixty-some percent more people on foodstamps five years after the end of a recession than we had at the beginning? That isn't success. It is a failure."

\*the main point Brooks tries to make in this book is the different messaging conservatives have been using. The above is a great example. Liberals = we are excited to help the poor! Conservatives = you're doing it all wrong...stat, stat, GDP figure.....you're wrong.....stat."

- Welfare helps immediate material needs. Telling people that it is the materialism that makes you happy. Through work, we are helping them earn success - the key to a fulfilling and dignified life. Earned success is what people actually want.

- "A love for work helps lead to a love for life."

- "..after those pressures (paying rent, getting enough to eat) are relieved, the happiness gains that more money buys levels off." - Focusing on the money brings misery. It is about the hope and love for life that work, earning your success, brings you.

- few things produce greater unhappiness than materialism (story of fisherman napping in Mexico)

- there is nothing wrong with money. The problem in life is the attachment to money.

- "Since the first day that all the major policy pillars of the Great Society were in place, the poverty rate has dropped only by .2%. Instead of boosting poor Americans into the workforce and on a trajectory toward the middle class, government programs have only helped them subsist in poverty by attending to a few physical needs."

1. Human Dignity is not a function of wealth
2. All honest work is a sanctified pursuit
3. It's not where you start out that defines you. It's where you are going

- " When it is harder to become a hair braider than a real estate agent in America's capital city, the system is officially rigged against people at the bottom.

- "Instead of cutting the safety net, conservatives should be the guardians who protect it, limit it to the truly indigent, and infuse it with work."

- "Here is what really bugs conservatives about President Obama: He acts like he has utter contempt for us and the values we hold dear."

\*\*If you get sick, you're on your own. If you can't afford college, you're on your own. If you don't like that some corporation is polluting your air or the air that your child breathes, then you're on your own." - Obama

- ordinary Americans believe conservatives don't care about them
- too often conservatives talk about Americans being lazy and preferring not to work
- "I am certainly no fan of the Obama administration, but we should not be totally mystified that anyone might possibly disagree with us in good faith. Some on the right are convinced that progressive policies are actually intended to hold people back, so that poor people will become more reliant on social assistance and stay Democrat voters forever. Truth is that most liberals do want to help the poor - they just have the wrong ideas about how to do it."

Brook's made these recommendations for changing conservatives approach:

1. be a moralist (start with why)
2. fight for people, not against things (form a majority), (stop talking so much about a deficit and taxes, and more ab out people!)
3. get happy (forget negativity)
4. steal all the best arguments
5. go where you're not welcome
6. say it in thirty seconds
7. break your bad habits

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### **Raymon says**

Working in a profession where all of my efforts are focused on assisting an underserved population I always struggled to explain why I still believed that conservative principles and policies actually help poor people despite popular rhetoric. This book explains this perfectly. The first 20 pages had me literally yelling YES out loud repeatedly. I deeply believe conservatives care deeply about helping others rise out of poverty. The principles Brooks outlines resound deeply in my soul.

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### **Andrew Obrigewitsch says**

This is a very decent book, I do agree with some of the principals laid out here, such as teaching homeless people a useful skill so they can find gainful employment.

However what I find annoying with politics and economics in general, is that these people act like their data is based on science, yet seem to have never studied hard science and the scientific method and thus have no clue how to actually analyze data and conduct experiments where variables are minimized.

For example the author cites the economic prosperity in the 50's as being caused by lower taxes to the rich. He neglects to mention the fact that taxes to the rich at that time were somewhere around 80%, which was probably a bit too high. However when taxes to the rich are at 15% and then you try to lower them thinking, it worked in the 50s, so it's going to work now. You won't get the expected result.

It's akin to rising the speed limit on the highways from 30 MPH to 60 MPH and then noticing an increase in production and some economic growth. Then saying, "Well increasing the speed limit helped, so therefore we must do it again." So you raise it to 120 MPH. However instead of the same amount of growth and prosperity, you find the freeways are now full of ruined vehicles and nearly every car accident is fatal. So what do you do? You blame the DMV for not teaching people how to drive properly and for being an inefficient government organization.

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### **Jeff Siegmund says**

Valid points backed by nice data. Well formulated plan and lays out a nice agenda for us to move forward with. Offers some very interesting solutions to major issues our country faces.

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### **Adrienne Davis says**

#### **Thought Provoking Book Every Liberal Should Read**

I am a liberal quite frustrated with what has become of the left. I picked this book up when Amazon recommended it but I was not sure what I expected from the book. What I found was that I kept nodding along in agreement with his much of his analysis and quite a lot of his prescription.

Two things really surprised me. The first is that I had been trying to really grasp why some conservatives hated Obama so much and until I read Brooks' take on it, I had not heard how dismissive it was. That said, some of that is that I believed those things about conservatives myself--at least in the modern incarnation that currently drives the GOP. The second is that his description of what is wrong with the Democratic party has quite a lot to recommend it.

I am a quintessential Democratic voter. Middle aged, black, lesbian, work in tech as a software engineer, married to another woman, live in a big city, come from an academic family. Yet, I find myself disturbed by the level at which the current left social justice paradigm emphasizes hopelessness or hyperbole, neither of which I think helps. Brooks really does zero in on how the American left has given up on the idea of work as dignity.

I wish he had spent more time on our worship of wealth over work although he does excoriate it a few times in the book so I can't say he does not touch on it. He gets that honoring wealth over work is equally pernicious.

If you are a conservative I highly recommend this book. You will learn a lot. If you are a liberal, I \*also\* highly recommend this book but for a different reason and it is this' eventually someone in the Republican Party is going to read this book and start passing it through the circuit. This IS AEI after all! If the GOP ever adopts these ideas and, quite honestly, tells the neo-Confederates they aren't going to court their vote at the

risk of alienating other voters, then the Democratic Party is going to be in trouble.

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## Tim says

If, like me, you're a liberal trying to understand where conservatives are coming from, this book is a good place to start. His focus on the pursuit of happiness, as opposed to just high incomes and wealth, is refreshing. His message is that happiness is built on faith, family, community and meaningful work. So far, so good; I can't argue with that.

He also takes his fellow conservatives to task for focusing narrowly on economic measures - GDP growth, unemployment, etc. - as the measures of our success as a society. Again, no argument from me.

He extols the benefits of work and "earned success" as drivers of happiness. I think the overwhelming majority of people would agree - we would all rather earn our livings through our own efforts. I've been through two long bouts of unemployment. The loss of income was painful, but just as much was the feeling of being unproductive, of staying home while my kids went to school. There is a lot of wisdom in his description of the toll that idleness takes.

He loses me on a couple of scores. His emphasis on the joy of meaningful work is fine as far as it goes. However, he neglects to mention the "rightsizing" by profitable companies that so often throws people out of work. In a free enterprise system, this is of course the companies' right. However, it's surely worth mentioning that, for most people, a break from working was not their idea. It was forced on them by business managers, even if they were adding value to their employers and their employers were making profits. Full disclosure: I was the victim of one such corporate cutback 17 years ago, and I freely admit my bias against such actions.

In the last chapter, he succumbs to the temptation to complain about how President Obama has spoken of conservatives. "Here is what really bugs conservatives about the president: He acts like he has utter contempt for us and the values we hold dear." He goes on to cite two quotes, one of which is the ill-advised "cling to guns or religion" remark from the 2008 campaign.

Really, Mr. Brooks? Contempt for the values you hold dear? Because this president said in his State of the Union speech three months ago that America's work ethic is one of the things that makes us unique. He also said, "America is about giving everybody willing to work a chance, a hand up." Doesn't sound to me like he holds the value of work in contempt. Nor does he have contempt for the value of family - even his most ardent detractors have to concede the man's devotion to his wife and daughters. Does the president who sang "Amazing Grace" last summer after Charleston hold faith in contempt? Does a former community organizer hold community in contempt? I don't think so.

Moreover, Mr. Brooks overlooks the vitriol that this president has faced since even before he took the oath. No mention of Rush Limbaugh publicly hoping the president would fail; nothing about a self-important Southern congressman shouting "You lie!" while the president addressed the Congress about health care in 2009; zero about Sen. McConnell's infamous declaration that Republicans' highest priority was to make Obama a one-term president (not to create new jobs, not to improve health care, not to reduce taxes - nope, their top priority was to win in 2012); and silence about the incessant accusations of him being a closet socialist/Kenyan/Muslim. If there has been contempt, it has indeed gone both ways.

Worse, Mr. Brooks clearly supports the odious Tea Party movement, which has twice brought this country to the brink of defaulting on its debt payments. He appears to think their particular brand of uncompromising, vanquish-the-enemy politics is a good thing. In fact, all they have given us is a credit downgrade and Sen. Ted Cruz. Not much to brag about there, I'm afraid.

And he takes the obligatory shots at the Affordable Care Act, which he claims is "hurting people." Huh. 20 million more people have health insurance today than had it before the law was enacted, and health care cost inflation has slowed down. The law is far from perfect, but I think those 20 million people might disagree that it has hurt them.

However, Mr. Brooks has written an earnest and reasonable defense of conservatism. His message that conservatism should present a more optimistic, happier face is one I absolutely agree with. Anger can only go so far to bring people to your side; optimism can do the rest. Look no farther than Ronald Reagan carrying 49 states in 1984.

And his message that both sides should stop looking down on the other is so important. In this, both the left and the right are guilty. I've read reports of polls saying that large numbers of Americans would object to their children marrying members of the opposite party. How sad is that?

After reading this book, I feel like I better understand the beliefs and motivations of conservatives. I think Mr. Brooks would be a very interesting person to have a conversation with over a beer, and I'm sorry I never met him during his years in Syracuse when he probably lived no more than 15 miles from me. While he and I may never agree on some issues, I think he would give me a respectful listen, and I would like to think I'd give him the same.

This is a book well worth reading, regardless of which end of the political spectrum you hail from.

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### **Kris says**

Clear, useful, and constructive points about conservatism. Full of arguments about strengthening conservative ideals in American politics.

At first I wasn't crazy about this book -- in the opening chapters his ideas felt too broad, his claims too generalized (conservatives are more compassionate?). He was painting with broad strokes, and it didn't sit right with me. I was agreeing on principle, not practically, down to the nitty-gritty.

But eventually he used real-life examples to demonstrate his points, so I appreciated him for that. And it ended on a good note for me. When he finally gets into the politics of it, Brooks has some really insightful things to say.

He makes some great points about perceptions of conservatives in American society, how they really do care about prosperity for the American poor, and how they need to change their rhetoric to accomplish their goals. Definitely recommended for all (obviously), but it would be most effective and relevant for conservatives looking to put things in perspective, and reclaim some of the lost legitimacy of the Republican Party.

Side note -- Really, the title should be more specific. Most of the book is about helping the severely poor, not about all traditional conservative views or values. It should be "The Compassionate Conservative Heart for

the Poor" or something of the like.

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### **Gabriella Hoffman says**

Just finished reading this. As expected, Arthur Brooks delivers another great read on making conservative values more appealing without diluting our message. Do yourself a favor and read this!

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