



# The Empathy Gap: Building Bridges to the Good Life and the Good Society

*J. D. Trout*

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## **The Empathy Gap: Building Bridges to the Good Life and the Good Society** J. D. Trout

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?

We are touched when faced with the hardships of others, whether caused by unemployment, poor schools, crime, poverty, poor health, or the financial insecurity of credit and mortgage debt. Some people are strapped because they chose poorly. But millions of ordinary citizens, the author explains, have only bad options in the first place or are ambushed by unconscious cognitive bias. We may want society to insulate people from the damages of bad fortune and yet we don't act. Our empathic wiring evolved to care for our families and close neighbors, less for strangers with unfamiliar customs or for future selves we can only dimly imagine. And so we are left with an empathy gap between people separated by culture, personality, current mood, geography, and time.

Trout travels the leading edge of scientific research on empathy, free will, and decision making, to show how the same science of judgment that improves our decision making can create concrete, realistic, and often money-saving policies to improve human well-being. Decent people can vault the empathy gap, reinforcing cherished American ideals like equality, access to health care, decent education for all, and effective opportunity. Individuals and governments alike can learn to practice this intelligent and responsible empathy.

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