

Social Sciences and the System: Challenging or Upholding the Status Quo?

It is widely acknowledged that neoliberal capitalism has led to rampant socioeconomic inequalities, wars, and ecological crises. However, many still believe that little should change. This paradox raises critical questions about the role of social scientists: Should they objectively analyze social phenomena (Marx) to lay the groundwork for social change (Lenin), or simply contribute to maintaining the status quo? Can, and *should*, social scientists remain neutral? In this symposium, four speakers will explore how systemic forces shape both social phenomena and the social sciences themselves, with a focus on social psychology, political science, and philosophy.

Speakers:

- 1) Vukašin Gligorić, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 2) Marija B. Petrović, University of Belgrade, Serbia
- 3) Dr. Enzo Rossi, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 4) Prof. John T. Jost, New York University, US

Date: 18th February at 12:00 - 14:00 (please arrive 10 minutes before the start)

Location: Singel 425 (University Library), Amsterdam, Room: Doelenzaal (C0.07)

Format: speaker presentations; discussion (led by John Jost); followed by discussion with the audience

Registration: Space is limited to 80 attendees. Please register using the [form](#). If the number of attendees exceeds the available spots, priority will be given to ASPO members and to those who have registered.

Abstracts are given below

For any questions, please contact Vukašin at v.gligoric@uva.nl

Talk abstracts:

Vukašin Gligorić, University of Amsterdam

Calls To Decolonize Social Psychology: Macroeconomic Conditions and National Stereotypes in 45 non-Western Countries

Does the majority of the world population engage in national outgroup favoritism? Western (primarily the US and Western Europe) socio-political domination has had profound psychological effects on people who suffered from it. Many theorists from the humanities perspective (e.g., Franz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Steven Biko) noted that numerous non-Westerner citizens feel inferior and guilty, rejecting their national, ethnic, and group identity. National inferiority complex (also called internalized oppression, self-hatred, colonial mentality, etc.), I believe, persists today: large proportions of non-Western populations think their country and their compatriots are corrupt, poor, backward, and inferior. Following the calls to “decolonize” psychology and turn away from the WEIRD countries (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) findings, I will present the results of a large-scale study ($N=12,339$) involving 45 non-Western countries that explored ingroup stereotypes and outgroup stereotypes of high-status and low-status (Western Europeans and Western Africans) and their relation to macroeconomic factors. I discuss these findings in the context of decolonial and systemic social psychology.

Marija B. Petrović, University of Belgrade

What's left of left-wing authoritarianism? Reexamining left-wing authoritarianism in a post-communist society

While research on authoritarianism has predominantly focused on right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), its left-wing counterpart has only recently regained popularity in the field. This resurgence of left-wing authoritarianism (LWA) as a psychological concept, which has previously been abandoned due to a lack of empirical support, has happened within the confines of Western, liberal political psychology. Not only has this led to a very WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) conceptualization of LWA, but it has also tacked on the LWA label to a very specific set of political beliefs which might not be relevant outside WEIRD countries. For example, societies with a legacy of left wing regimes might have a specific constellation of authoritarian views that are not easily reconciled with findings from WEIRD samples. In this talk, we will first briefly share the results of an attempt to broaden the concept of LWA and test it in the post-communist setting of Serbia. Next, we will discuss how the findings point to the fact that the “authoritarian” part of the LWA label is largely unjustified and finally examine how such labeling creates a false equivalence between radical left and right-wing beliefs both within the field and beyond.

Dr. Enzo Rossi, University of Amsterdam

Epistemic ideology critique: A radical realist approach

Can we use social-scientific findings to ground normative judgments about the social world? In this talk I will give an overview of my research programme, which seeks to answer that question affirmatively. The rough idea is this. When we believe in the legitimacy of a power structure as a result of the workings of that very power structure, epistemically flawed ideologies become prevalent, and this is normatively suboptimal insofar as it impairs our capacity to make good political decisions. I illustrate the mechanism of ideological distortions via established results in social psychology, with particular reference to motivated reasoning and system-justifying beliefs. The upshot is an empirically grounded, non-moralised form of ideology critique. I will conclude by canvassing some future lines of research, with a particular focus on empirical operationalisation of this approach, and on its implications for theories of power.

Prof. John T. Jost, New York University

Prof. John Jost will lead the discussion, focusing on how the presented studies connect to both historical and contemporary research on political ideology and system justification. A leading expert in political psychology, Prof. Jost is best known for his work on the system justification motive, which explains why individuals often support systems that may conflict with their own interests.