

White, Christopher Michael

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Human nature and globalization's discontents: What the antecedents of ideology tells us about the obstacles to greater global interconnectedness

Christopher Michael White

Bjorknes University College, Lovisenberggata 13, 0456 Oslo, Norway

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I show how a particular understanding of agency, focussed on psychological and physiological mechanisms, has the potential to provide an alternative appreciation of globalization, particularly the sources of its discontent. The argument draws on recent findings in political psychology, specifically research that explores the antecedents of ideology and the attitudinal pathways that form left and right sympathies. I show how the particular traits and mechanisms that correlate with ideological outcomes, for example negativity biases, also shed light on the globalization process, allowing for an improved appreciation of the variety of ways subjects experience accelerated levels of interconnectedness. The assumption that discontent is necessarily a by-product of the social inequities associated with the process is challenged, and the existence of a sceptical disposition, at least amongst some, posited. Given the basis of this scepticism, I point out that the validity of judging globalization is as a result, also rendered more complex; precisely because the 'legitimacy' of one's stance becomes, according to this conceptualisation, a dependent variable, determined –in part- by immutable characteristics. Almost inadvertently, I suggest, the antecedent literature identifies a major barrier to greater global interconnectedness. This draws attention to a final substantive insight derived from the antecedent literature, that in light of the new political geography, 'ineffectiveness' is the norm: meaning the 'the ensemble of needs, traits, and motives' that underlie political stances, no longer 'fit' with the existing discursive (ideological) structures. This I suggest, represents a fundamental source of discontent, because the existing ideologies of left and right, in ignoring the importance of human nature, neglect the significance of 'fit' as they try to make sense of globalization.

1. Introduction

This paper attempts to offer a fuller account of all the potential sources of globalization's discontents, and in this sense, it is a contribution to a growing literature that explores some of the challenges that interconnectedness generates. The argument rests on the assumption that existing critiques of globalization have too often neglected the significance of human nature when examining its consequences, favouring instead contextual concerns. This, I suggest, is unfortunate. We can associate globalization with a novel array of encounters, and any attempt to make sense of these encounters necessarily involves physiological and psychological mechanisms: we are not simply 'passive' in the face of these events. Our nature(s) matters; by which I here mean the various ensemble of traits and mechanisms that are the traditional concern of psychology and other branches of the so-called sciences of human nature. As such, an account that recognises the various 'forces from within' is necessary, just as context and outlook also have a role

to play in aiding our understanding of how globalization is experienced. Put differently, there is a clear need for a revised understanding of agency.

There are doubtless many ways a more informed and nuanced understanding of human nature might be applied to the complex task of explaining globalization. The argument proffered here, is not simply that human nature matters, but additionally, amongst some, the evidence points to a possibility that certain forces from within might contribute to explanations of discontent.

To give credence to this position, I begin with a discussion of the idea that "[t]he formation of political preferences is not psychologically arbitrary" (Federico & Malka, 2018, p.33). I concentrate on a particular sub-field in the literature concerned with the antecedents of ideology. This literature shows how personality traits, emotional valences and cognitive styles closely correlate with left and right ideological preferences. This is significant because it reverses the understanding that context necessarily explains attitudes in favour of a

E-mail address: Christopher.white@bhioslo.no

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stance that emphasizes the ways that political sympathies *follow* from various psychological and somatic features, and it is suggestive of *how* particular traits and mechanisms function to shape attitudes. It is therefore an idea with consequences that extend well beyond the study of ideology.

I then examine how these ideas are relevant to the way we think about globalization. I suggest that existing theoretical formulations of globalization have in effect assumed passivity, and in so doing have in effect overemphasized the centrality of social determinants when explaining how people encounter the process. I question the validity of this assumption, along with the idea that context alone ultimately motivates behaviour, before turning, if only briefly, to discuss several specific mechanisms and traits: the potential significance of negativity valences and the existential and epistemic needs that appear to motivate social cognition. I suggest these features imply, amongst other things, a predisposition to scepticism amongst some, that when recognised raise quite profound questions concerning the validity of such concerns: complicating judgement calls around the legitimacy of discontent.

In the final section I develop my argument one stage further, and suggest these mechanisms are also particularly significant in the circumstances produced by interconnectedness, as the 'Euclidean' assumptions of existing ideologies -formulated within a bounded political space- no longer appear 'fit' for purpose. The idea of 'fit' derives from the antecedent literature and speaks to the idea that ideologies need to convince *and* appeal if they are to remain relevant. Based on the insight that ideology is a 'two-way process', I suggest the need to ensure a match, between the internal existential and epistemic needs ideologies perform and the external rationalising and intellectual guidance they provide, is vital, if in the context of globalization existing ideologies of the left and right are to remain 'fit' for purpose. Should this match not materialise, I conclude further global interconnectedness is unlikely.

In summary, the argument that follows will show how understanding discontent, something that is neither inevitable nor necessarily desirable, is complicated by the fact that human nature matters.

2. The antecedents of ideology

"[c]ertain sentiments consort only with certain ideas and not with others" (Trilling, 1950)

According to Feldman & Johnston, 2014, "[s]ome of the most interesting recent developments in our understanding of political ideology have concerned its biological and psychological underpinnings" (p.337). Speculation on the significance of these underpinnings has produced a range of associated theoretical work, each in its way seeking a simple answer to a straightforward question: "[d]oes political temperament vary from person to person because the physiology and psychology constituting human nature also varies from person to person?" (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.297; see Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1998). For Hibbing et al., the answer is yes, and a key aspect of these underpinning relates to a 'negativity valence'. Others stress epistemic, existential and relational psychological needs for order, certainty and security (Jost et al., 2003; Jost, 2017), and others have sought to understand this link by looking at some variant of our personality, usually derived within the so-called 'big five' framework (Fatke, 2017; Gerber et al., 2010). Though there are differences, a significant consensus nonetheless obtains, chiefly around a belief that existing approaches have not paid sufficient attention to what goes on 'within', and that variations in temperament do indeed matter. This is at odds with a view that assumes politics is "conditioned exclusively by environmental situations and cultural contexts" (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.298; Gerber et al., 2010).

Though controversial, the idea that "politics might not be in our souls, but it probably is in our DNA" is backed by a considerable

amount of evidence (Hibbing, et al., 2014, p.298). It is not a new idea. Emerson, notes that parties of order or reform "have a correspondent depth of seat in the human condition". (Quoted in Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.297; McCarty et al., 2006). The idea simply recognises that politics is in some ways "a 'natural' part of our psychological functioning" (Jost, 2006, p. 667) The question is in what ways?

To answer, it is first necessary that we recognise that "embodied predispositions constitute inertial psychological and physiological set-points that serve as baselines for behaviours and attitudes" (Hibbing et al., 2014a p.299). Crucially, "individual-level variation" affects these "predisposed response patterns", with the evidence showing this "goes some distance toward defining who we are as people, including the nature of our political orientation" (Ibid.). As such, the common belief that left and right originate in the peculiar circumstances of the French Revolution is undermined in favour of a view that emphasizes 'mind-set' (Bobbio, 1996; Giddens, 1994; Tomkins, 1963). A conservative 'mind-set' exists that values tradition and stability (Wilson, 1973). Likewise, 'mindset' also impacts upon the sympathies of those we currently label 'left', 'progressive' and 'liberal', and who are more favourably inclined to novelty, innovation and reform (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.297; Haidt, 2012). All of which points to the importance in time of internal mechanisms in the political process (Laponce, 1981).

Whether this antagonism is ultimately accounted for in terms of mindset alone is likely to remain a point of contention (see Carney et al., 2008. p.807; Gerring, 1997; sceptics see Baker, 2005; Bishop, 2005; Converse, 1964, 2000). Nevertheless, there are implications, if as seems clear, dispositional factors at least partly exert influence, "over time and across different situations", not least for how we think about globalization (ibid., p.3). Relevant here, is the credibility of the challenge it represents to approaches that assume that the 'usual demographics' are sufficient to explain our ideological preferences, factors that include "family, social background, political elites, and the media" (Verhulst et al., 2012; Converse, 1964, 2000. I begin with a look at some of the research that examines the antecedent literature and elaborate on what it tells us about the relevance of human nature in the political process.

2.1. The correlates of left and right

The core claim of this approach, is straightforward enough:

"[s]ome may reject the assertion that deep physiological and psychological differences distinguish liberals and conservatives because they believe that higher level decision-making, such as that involving politics, is the product of rational, conscious responses to the objective world and therefore not influenced by forces outside of conscious awareness. This flattering view of human decision-making in the area of politics is most likely unwarranted" (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.299)

A wealth of research backs this claim. Schnell et al. (2008), for example, show how a messy and malodorous space correlates to a more judgemental attitude and 'conservative' stance (see also Inbar et al., 2009, Inbar et al., 2012). Ackerman et al. (2010), identifies how an uncomfortable sitting surface correlates with a greater degree of inflexibility in discussion. Prompt thoughts of cleanliness and you generate a greater propensity for sterner, less 'liberal' judgements (Helzer, & Pizarro, 2011). Haidt & Graham (2007), show how conservatives moralise differently, affected by concerns that draw on purity, disgust, authority and in/out-group status. In the realm of ethics, 'mortality prompts' incline people in a more rightward direction (Burke, Kosloff, & Landau, 2013; Jost et al., 2009; Landau et al., 2004; Castano challenges this view, see Castano et al., 2011). Research by Berger et al. (2008), shows that churches, when doubling as polling stations, have the discernible consequence of advantaging "right-of-centre candidates" (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.299; Rutchick, 2010). These examples -and there are many more- suggest the wellspring of politics at

a minimum, link to features that are by no means obviously ‘political’, at least not in a conventional sense. But if not political, then what?

The fact that certain ‘non-political’ traits connect to our downstream commitments, inevitably draws attention to the importance of *physiology*. For example, certain liberal-conservative differences in brain structure and function have been observed, specifically related to the amygdala and anterior cingulate cortex (Jost, 2017, p.170; Amodio et al., 2007; Kanai, Fielden, Firth & Rees, 2011; Mooney, 2012; Oxley et al., 2008; Schreiber et al., 2013). Kanai et al. (2011) provide evidence that shows self-identified liberals tend to have more grey matter in the ACC [anterior cingulate cortex], whereas self-identified conservatives differ in the increased volume in the right amygdala (See Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.302). Along with apparent physiological differences in neural structure, there are also significant empirically observable differences linking the nervous system with political preference. Dawson et al. (2007) identify a link between heightened electrodermal activity in response to negatively valenced visual stimulation and conservative views (see Oxley et al., 2008). Hibbing et al. (2014c) also allude to research in the area of facial electromyography, where physiological response manifests as greater muscular activity: with a greater furrowing of the brow correlating with those scoring higher on right-wing authoritarianism (p.302; see Fodor et al., 2008).

The endocrine level also appears to be important, as findings demonstrate a number of links: “blood serotonin levels correlate with leadership and assertiveness in group situations” (Madsen, 1985); testosterone and cortisol levels link to attitudes to political leaders during the election cycle (Stanton et al., 2009; McDermott et al., 2007); and oxytocin levels correlate with increased trust towards in-groups (but not out-groups) (Kosfeld et al., 2005). Not quite the ‘love drug’ one hoped for, evidence also suggests oxytocin in fact produces greater levels of *animosity* towards out-groups (De Dreu et al., 2011), a finding not without consequence when discussing the novel forms of group attachment produced by increased density of interconnectedness, about which more will be said in section two (See Sapolsky, 2017, pp.107–116).

Alongside the physiological and preconscious levels, personality traits also predict, and therefore perhaps affect political leanings (Fatke, 2017; Gerber, Huber, Doherty & Dowling, 2011). To date, two of the most robust findings link conscientiousness with rightward leanings, and openness to experience with left self-identification. The first, that conservatives are more conscientious, suggest this trait shapes one’s attitudes toward “security and conformity”. As Fatke notes, “[w]ith regard to ideology, conscientiousness suggests a preference for tradition” and an aversion to change (ibid., p.4; Cooper et al., 2013, p.71; Barbaranelli et al., 2007) Of the links between ‘openness to experience’ and leftist sensibilities, “liberals tend to value self-expression and stimulation” (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.300; Schwartz et al., 2010; for an overview see Feldman, 2013). In the case of openness, Fatke suggests this translates into a receptiveness to things that are new, be they novel ideas, approaches, experiences or alternative lifestyles; all obvious elements we might associate with the novel spectrum of experiences brought on by greater globalization. By way of contrast, those low on this trait, are instead more cautious and risk averse (Fatke, p.4, 2017; Van Hiel et al., 2010; Chirumbolo & Leone, 2010; Cooper et al., 2013a, 2013b; Gerber et al., 2011; Alford, & Hibbing, 2007; Carney et al., 2008).

Finally, crucial asymmetries exist at the cognitive level. Conservatives, for example, display a preference for “cognitive closure” (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.301; on US foreign policy see Kimmelman, 2007); appear more resistant to the exercise of “cognitive effort” (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.301; see Sargent, 2004), and show a greater preference for avoiding ambiguity (Rock & Janoff-Bulman, 2010). Variations in “word usage” (Lakoff, 2002) have been observed, and according to Young (2009), corresponding differences between “hard-categorizers” and “soft-categorizers” identified. According to

(Tullet, Hart, Feinberg, Fetterman, & Gottlieb, 2016), liberals, when confronted by ‘scientific’ questions, more actively seek out empirical data, and there is tentative evidence to suggest “self-identified liberals score higher on measures of scientific literacy” (Jost, 2017, p.175; see Carl, Cofnas, & Woodley, 2016; Talhelm, Haidt, Osihi, et al., 2015). Jost, not without controversy, concludes conservatives are more likely to engage in heuristic, automatic, intuitive, and stereotypical ‘system 1’ thinking, whereas liberals are more likely than conservatives to engage in more systematic, controlled, effortful, deliberative (i.e. ‘system 2’) thinking” (Jost, 2017, p.175; Kahneman, 2011; Jost & Krochik, 2014; Jost et al., 2013; Lodge and Taber, 2005, 2013; see also Wojcik et al., 2015).

I draw several conclusions from what is admittedly a brief and select sample. Firstly, at a minimum, the collective significance of these finding qualifies the argument that the ‘usual demographics’ are sufficient when accounting for political attitudes. Thus problematized, it could be that McCrae (1996) is correct when he suggests “the distinction between liberalism and conservatism... is ultimately not political, sociological or economic, but psychological” (p.325; quoted in Fatke, 2017; see also Haidt, 2012). Secondly, in its attempt to disentangle “which attitudinal precursors are primarily a function of environmental contexts and which factors are predominantly a function of internal predispositions”, the impact of human nature is disclosed, and a more ‘realistic’ stance proffered (Verhulst et al., 2012, p.375). This supplants a metaphysically oriented understanding; it also rejects neutrality (no significance). In its place, the disentangling allows for ‘scientific’ questions to be posed, and concrete observations validated (or negated). In short, a more ‘realistic’ view surfaces, the very idea of which is potentially at odds with more interpretative and postmodern approaches to the subject (see Stevenson & Haberman, 2009).

Thirdly, though the importance of the ‘inner’ dimension now appears incontrovertible, gauging the full significance of a specific trait and/or mechanism remains a challenge, as nature and nurture are recognised as being utterly entwined. A more ‘realistic’ account of human nature *does not* amount to a position akin to biological determinism, or a biologically essentialist stance that reduces mind to matter (Johnson, 2015; see also Bell, 2006; Pinker, 2013). There is no ‘ultimate’ cause. Instead, the antecedent literature reorients the balance and indeed the relation of the social and ‘non-social’ elements, and in this sense is simply representative of a broader shift, the implications of which mean we can no longer divide “matter from mind, the material from the spiritual, the physical from the mental, biology from culture, nature from society, and the sciences from the social sciences” (Pinker, 2002, pp.31–32; 2013; Rose, 2013). It simply accords due recognition to the complex interaction of the biological *and* social, which, in the words of Sapolsky (2017) are ‘utterly entwined’. In sum, in wrestling with the complex sources that inform ideological outlook, the antecedent literature reminds us of the relevance of human nature. Specifically, it countenances a tendency to ignore this facet (Crawford, 2009).

I now develop the argument in relation to our understanding of globalization, recognising that the varied processes produce an accelerating number of novel encounters and challenges to existing relations, that in themselves amount to a radical reconfiguration of the social plane. As is the case in understanding the antecedent factors that shape political outlook, so in the context of understanding globalization we must recognise that these encounters, are “indisputably physiological and psychological because the systems employed to sense, process, formulate, and execute a response to stimuli are psychological and physiological” (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.299) This inescapable truth, as Jost surmises, means:

“[w]e are not merely passive vessels of whatever beliefs and opinions we happen to have been exposed to, although some social scientists have supposed that we are. As human beings, we are drawn to those beliefs and ideologies that match or resonate with our needs

and interests, and we are repelled by those that violate them” (Jost, 2017, Presidential Address, p.168).

Thus, though focussed on the correlates of left and right sympathies, this research has obvious applications that extend well beyond the realm of ideology and its antecedents. The fact that we are not passive vessels, that our beliefs and preferences are more than disembodied abstractions, is extraordinarily important. To fully understand our beliefs, preferences, and actions -at least partly- requires an appreciation of *what*, not just *who*, we are, drawing attention to a final crucial conclusion; the fact that variation matters, as “[e]ven if a stimulus is identical, one individual will sense, process, and respond to it differently than another” (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.299). I will now argue that a non-passive stance, sensitive to variation at the individual level, qualifies existing theories that to date explain globalization’s discontent in terms of the usual contextual accounts of the past.

3. Globalization and human nature: The idea that discontent lies within

If predispositions affect our political sympathies, then why not our attitudes to globalization? Logically, there are two ways this might happen: through the influence they exert on our ideological sympathies, which then shape our attitude and behaviour in a more organised ‘packaged’ form, or in a more generic potentially amorphous though immediate sense. Both matter, though for the most part here I reflect on the latter. But before charting this influence, a brief consideration of the other side of the equation is necessary, namely a reflection on the nature of globalization itself, a complex and contested term.

What is globalization? In one sense, it is a process and an outcome, dissolving, and reconfiguring social arrangements, such that “the traditional distinction between domestic and international affairs is no longer very meaningful” (McGrew, 2011, p.16). Economic forces are particularly relevant, but so too are the changes in technology and communications that drive the process; all of which function to unify the world under the umbrella of a single social and economic space. Globalization is therefore more than a synonym for “the integration of the world-economy” (Gilpin, 2001, p364; Ohmae, 1990). For this reason, Giddens (1990) definition is here considered preferable. According to this idea, globalization denotes an “intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (ibid., p.21). The merit of this view is that it recognises the *spatial* component -he speaks of ‘distanciation’ in this respect. Other leading theorists agree, including Harvey, who talks of ‘time-space compression’, and Scholte, who emphasizes the centrality of ‘de-territorialization’ (Harvey, 1989; Scholte, p., 200046). Each share the sense of reconfiguration currently underway, thus in its most fundamental sense, globalization relates to the important changes ‘in the spatial scale of human social organization’.

Along with this Euclidean dimension, also crucial, and absent somewhat from those who define the process in strictly spatial terms, is Robertson’s observation that globalization links to a growing *consciousness* or awareness of the world as a single place: a condition of ‘globality’ (Robertson, 2001). This connotes an existential dimension, one that draws attention to the fact that the process is ‘experienced’. Though ‘global’, it does not imply a shared - meaning similar- experience: there is, as Castells (2000) suggests, a ‘variable geometry’ at work. Nonetheless, as we all are impacted, most, at a minimum, are also dimly aware of this change for better or worse, forcing, in effect, a response, that reflects a change at the level of consciousness. In sum, though the process links to “the cumulative scale, scope, velocity, and depth of contemporary interconnectedness... dissolving the significance of the borders and boundaries that separate the world into its many constituent states or national economic and political spaces”,

it is more than that alone (McGrew, p18, 2011; Rosenau, 1997). It also has its existential, subjective dimension: which is to say that the encounters -stimuli- are necessarily experienced at an individual level.

3.1. ‘Passivity’ and the overemphasis of social determinants

Surprisingly, recognizing this existential and consciousness dimension has not lead thinkers in the direction of political psychology, which remains largely absent when formulating an understanding of globalization (an exception to this see Reese et al., 2015). There are, for example, no references to any contribution emanating from the political psychology literature in Lechner and Boli (2008), Talhelm et al. (2015) classic introduction to the subject, or the Held and McGrew (2003). What’s more, recognition of the related disciplines that inform the antecedent literature and broader human nature studies are also absent: for example, the potential relevance of evolutionary psychology, the cognitive sciences or brain sciences etc. Those texts accorded ‘classic’ status, whether focussed on individuation and reflexivity (Beck and Giddens, 1994), religion and global consciousness (Robertson, 1992), culture (Appadurai, 1996), or political globalization, even concerning ideologies of left and right (Giddens, 1998), in effect adopt a stance that implies -in the sense adopted by Jost- ‘passivity’ on the part of the actor. This also extends to work explicitly concerned with the sources of discontent (Stiglitz, 2002).

The assumption, nonetheless, that discontent *qua* response, is simply a by-product of the situation, and generated by forces that are exogenous to the self, is problematic, after all, different individuals, depending on identifiable variations in temperament, are likely to differ in the way they subjectively process experiences, including the multiple encounters associated with globalization. Why exactly, is open to debate, but one possible reason is that hitherto, there has been an overemphasis of social determinants. Evident in the case of economic critiques of the process, we see this shortcoming when discontent is presented as a by-product of the neo-liberal nature of the process itself, and linked to inequitable economic outcomes that galvanise the various strains of an anti-globalization movement. Though doubtless important, conceptually it leads to the view that the source of discontent is essentially and exclusively economic, and exogenous to the self (Eschle & Maignushca, 2005).

This same conceptual bias is also evident in the cultural sphere, where those who decry globalization due to its unwelcome homogenizing tendencies, ‘Macdonalization’ or ‘Coca-Colonization’ for example, source this discontent in the intrinsic value of existing cultural formations in need of protection (Pieterse, 2009). Again, discontent is simply a ‘reacting against’. In both realms, critique is a function of the interaction of context with viewpoint, but the latter is still derivative, a product of circumstance. To fully understand how the inevitable, complex, novel, and sometimes disorienting encounters that link to globalization are ‘experienced’, whether they are experienced as positive or ‘threatening’ for example, requires an additional appreciation of the interpretative role of the biasing features ‘within’. For example, in the cultural realm, it could well be that the *novelty* of the cultural artefact, not the artefact itself, produces a negative assessment.

This undue focus may indeed obscure what is really going on when some resist, or express disquiet in the face of the process. It might be the case, for example, that underlying motivations are determined by certain existential and epistemic needs for certainty and order, features that have little to do with the usual social factors examined in the literature. Such needs do not map onto class, or education, as they are more to do with one’s ‘nature’: it is not enough to know if the actor is rich or poor, urban or rural, old or young, educated or uneducated etc. And given the cross-national nature of these needs, geography is also effectively qualified as a key source explaining disquiet.

The antecedent account is therefore important. It countenances against an overemphasis of social determinants, recognising the very

real “ensemble of needs, traits, and motives” that predispose and propel actors (Federico & Malka, 2018, p.9). To fully appreciate the reasons for resistance, or scepticism, or concern, requires an additional appreciation of a person’s inner nature, that in conjunction with circumstance offers a more rounded account. For purposes of illustration, two approaches are briefly touched on here: research that stresses the importance of ‘orientation to negatively valenced events and stimuli’ and secondly, findings that show how social cognition is in fact motivated; both of which I show are highly relevant in the context of considering the sources of globalization’s discontents.

3.2. Negativity valence and the legitimacy of a predisposed bias to globalization

One way to show how globalization and human nature interact is through the work done by Hibbing and his colleagues. Our negativity biases, they suggest, are the key to understand people’s political predispositions, particularly the fact that this orientation “varies... from individual to individual” (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.303; Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Baumeister et al., 2001; Norris et al., 2011; Morgan & Wisneski, 2017). Essentially: “conservative orientations display elevated physiological response to negative stimuli, devote more attention to negative stimuli, [and] possess distinct self-reported psychological patterns when asked to imagine negative stimuli (i.e., give evidence of high disgust and high threat sensitivity)” (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.303).

This valence influences more than narrow political sympathies. Research demonstrates how elevated negativity correlates with a more ‘tragic’ as opposed to ‘utopian’ outlook, links to a preference for order, stability and tradition, and correlates with a heightened value placed on security and a generalised suspicion of change (see also Hibbing et al. (2014b), Hibbing et al. (2014c)). Where evident, this orientation is shown to be a pervasive social feature of life, affecting attitudes to social equality, change, moral foundations, values and even “perceptions of nature and [the] perfectibility of the human condition” (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.303; Graham et al., 2009; Pinker, 2002, ch.16; Schwartz et al., 2010). Unlike positive stimuli and events, Rozin & Royzman (2001) suggest negative stimuli draw our attention, whether we are talking about faces, words or social information; all of which suggests a generalised disposition affecting attitudes, including presumably those that relate to the threats and opportunities attached to the globalization process itself. The question is less a question of whether these features are relevant, and more a matter of figuring out how they make a difference when we think about globalisation.

Does it imply the existence of a clear ideological division in the face of the process, with a conservative position, rooted in this valence, naturally sceptical and a liberal stance less opposed? It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully address this important question, though any straightforward answer in the affirmative would appear problematic. On the one hand, globalization is far too complex a process to be able to reduce its consequences to a few manifestations that divide conservative from liberal. This point I will return to in the final section. What’s more, research on intolerance and threats, done by Brandt, Wetherell, & Reyna (2014), conclude similarities amongst liberals and conservatives are in fact often the norm, “when confronting threatening groups, situations, and information” (See also Mercier & Sperber, 2011; Proulx et al., 2012; Eagly, 2014).

Nevertheless, the fact remains that some are particularly “attuned to potential threats, more sensitive to sources of contagion, and more desirous of in-group protections” (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.303; Schaller & Neuberg, 2008) and these features are often associated with a cultural conservative stance. It could be that some conservatives, possibly those drawn to the cultural as opposed to economic wing, are indeed sceptical. Interestingly, the argument might also shed light on why there has also been an increasing divide opening within the left – with some put off by a stance that celebrates openness, differ-

ence, and cosmopolitanism (Van Hiel and Mervielde, 2004). Though there may not be a straightforward relation of negativity valence explaining conservative outlook leading to a scepticism *tout court* of all things related to globalization, at a minimum, a negativity bias can be theorised as a potential obstacle to feelings of positivity and non-threat in the face of increasing interconnectedness. Thus, a greater attachment and loyalty to a version of the status quo, and a heightened concern for existing in-groups is also likely to be a mitigating factor that colours one’s subjective stance.

What about the legitimacy of this stance? To the extent that a negativity valence is a feature of one’s nature, it is neither chosen, nor ‘rational’ in any conventional sense of the word. Yet if, as seems likely, it plays an interpretive (biasing) role, there are practical implications, as the responses it produces amongst the population are not neutral; after all, in Jost’s terms, it also ‘propels’, meaning it shapes behaviour, and as a result is potentially implicated in constructing our social reality. In this interpretive sense, the experience of globalization is effectively ‘distorted’ by this valence, calling into question the basis of any subsequent judgement ironically a classic topic in the field of ideology studies (Thompson, 1990). The fact that this feature originates in an ancestral past quite different to today only complicates matters (Figueredo et al., 2009).

There is also a second ramification concerning the legitimacy of any stance that acknowledges a role for this valence, what might be considered an ‘incommensurability problem’. Is this obstacle -to feelings of positivity in the face of increasing interconnectedness- a cause for concern? Should this trait be seen in a beneficial light? On the one hand, arguably, rather than an *arbitrary* obstacle in the way of interconnectedness, one could ascribe a positive quality to this valence, in the belief that it affords a more ‘realistic’ appraisal, more attuned to potential sources of insecurity (threat), and that others -‘less attuned’- do not ‘see’. From this perspective, those who display this trait have an advantage, if the purpose is to spot threats, however they are defined. This implies that a certain section of the population should be valued for their input, in this case providing valuable insights regarding the multiple challenges generated by contemporary change. Of course, the exact opposite conclusion might be drawn. At this stage, these thoughts are entirely speculative. The point here is simply to call attention to the additional complexities of legitimizing one’s stance once internal features are recognised as relevant.

At a minimum, recognising a role for negativity bias, means that future judgement will entail a more self-reflexive appreciation of the underlying features that determine viewpoint, that in turn call forth the need to form of *delegitimizing* argument that targets the mechanisms themselves, including, presumably, those who have them. This deviates from the traditional more depersonalised forms of evaluation that places interests within a matrix of just or unjust power differentials. It also suggests the need for a rethink of the challenges we face if we are to seek consensus around the validity of the criticisms that attach to globalization and what must be done to further facilitate interconnectedness; if indeed, that is what is wished for.

3.3. Motivated social cognition and the idea of congruence: Are existing ideologies ‘fit’ for purpose?

The existence of a negativity valence offers one interesting take that links human nature studies to globalization. Another is a related observation in the antecedent literature that suggests social cognition is *motivated* (See Carney et al., 2008; Jost, 2006; Jost & Amodio, 2012; Burke et al., 2013; Onraet and Van Hiel, 2013; Van Hiel et al., 2010). Jost, for example, shows how, at the root of ideology, there is the “sense of identity, belongingness, and shared reality” it fulfils (Jost, 2017, p.168; Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; 2013; see also Feldman & Johnston, 2014). In developing this view, he identifies crucial *asymmetries*, for example “with respect to dogmatism, cognitive/perceptual rigidity, personal needs for order/structure/closure, integrative com-

plexity, tolerance of ambiguity/uncertainty, need for cognition, cognitive reflection, self-deception, and subjective perceptions of threat” (Jost, 2017, abstract, p.167). Based on *meta*-studies, along with a number of colleagues, he also identifies discernible variations, depending on one’s political stance, in needs for “certainty, predictability, and control; a sense of safety, security, and reassurance” (Jost, 2017, p.168; Jost, Federico & Napier, 2009). This again has the potential to show that for some, the obstacles to a more positive attitude to the changes associated with globalization likely emanate ‘within’ and are many and varied.

These variations are in fact classified, according to the “epistemic, existential, and relational needs (or motives)” they serve, linking their rationale to underlying and often hidden impulses, that are remarkable in their ability to predict our system justifying attitudes (that ultimately account for why we are drawn to conservative or progressive positions) (Jost, 2017, p. 168, Hennes et al., 2012). In the case of *epistemic* motives: Jost outlines factors that include ‘avoidance of uncertainty’ and certain personal needs for order, structure and closure. The evidence consistently demonstrates these traits are “positively associated with the endorsement of conservative or rightist points of view” (Jost, 2017, p. 169; see also Tetlock and Mitchell, 1993). In the case of *existential* motives, for example operationalised as ‘death anxiety’, ‘perceptions of a dangerous world’ or ‘system-level threats’, the evidence also points to a positive association with a position on the right (Duckitt & Fisher, 2003); more specifically concerning cultural conservatism. Differences - ‘asymmetries’- extend to “attitudes toward equality and traditionalism” and “exert at least some degree of influence or constraint over the individual’s other thoughts, feelings, and behaviours” (Jost, 2006, p. 667). Marcus et al. (1995) notes this likely explains why our ideological predispositions remain “relatively stable in time” (Hibbing et al., 2014a, p.299; Cohen & Hamrick, 2003; de Weerth & van Geert, 2002; Lykken, 1999), despite fashions that attempt to redefine and modernise ‘left’ or ‘right’ in light of the changes that globalization brings about, a point I will return to.

There are multiple ways these insights might inform approaches that seek to understand attitudes and responses to globalization. It is not just that some interpret threats where others do not. The list of asymmetries, offer interesting avenues of research relating to the challenges of interconnectedness, that draw on the significance of the existential and epistemic needs identified in the literature; for example, the link that is made between *belonging* and ideology (and belief system). At a minimum, the fact that some people are *inter alia*, attuned to system-level threat, disdain ambiguity and are more likely to see the world as a dangerous -possibly tragic- place, means they are also likely to express serious reservations regarding the benefits of new configurations, spatially speaking, particularly when they are felt as a threat to belonging. As touched on in the previous section, such concerns are not confined to those ‘on the right’, at least not in a conventional sense. And, to the extent that they are felt as an identity threat, such reticence is not straightforwardly misplaced.

This leads to a final notable feature identified in the antecedent literature and relevant to the discussion on globalization’s discontents: the importance of ‘congruence’ or ‘fit’ that follows from the idea of *motivated* social cognition, or “how well different political positions ‘fit’ with people’s underlying psychological needs” (Federico & Malka, 2018, p. 5). To fully appreciate the relevance of this concept is to recognise the reality of a two-way, non-arbitrary process at work when it comes to making sense of ideology; as political belief, it is suggested, must *match* underlying needs and interests for security, order or certainty for example (Thorisdottir et al., 2007). The question is what happens when there is a lack of match; what gives, belief or underlying needs and interests?

Though still largely undertheorized in the literature, the idea of congruence (alternative synonyms include resonance, fit and alignment), offer a potentially interesting take on the nature of the challenge that globalization represents, this time to existing political

parties whose origins, constituencies and ideas, reflect the circumstances in which they were originally formed. Put simply, it could be that in radically altering the political context, globalization’s discontents are produced in part by the decoupling of the existing ‘match’ that hitherto bridged the underlying needs and interests of sections of the populace -both on the left and right- with a set of political beliefs; after all, the existing ‘discursive structures’ assumed a shared bounded ‘Euclidean’ space, within which a sense of ‘we-ness’ existed or could at least be manufactured. If, as here is suggested, globalization means anything, it is that these conditions no longer hold true, that the economy, society -the *demos*- and the culture, no longer map onto a single, bounded space.

Reflection on the motivated nature of cognition, in this context, is therefore valuable because of the potentially novel insights afforded about the dangers faced as we enter into an ‘interregnum’ phase, where the underlying differences that previously propelled individuals in a particular political direction, no longer necessarily find expression in existing ideological forms. It draws attention to a particular kind of anomie, where ‘ineffectiveness’ is the norm: meaning ‘the ensemble of needs, traits, and motives’ no longer ‘fit’ with existing discursive structures. If so, then the various iterations of those who aspire to diagnose this phase may be unsatisfactory, whether best formulated as a divide between ‘somewheres’ and ‘anywheres’ (Goodhart, 2017), between a Brahmin Left and Merchant Right (Piketty, 2018), or between the ‘hobbits’, ‘hooligans’ and ‘vulcans’, (Brennan, 2016). Though able to speak to the idea of flux, disjunction, and the idea that left and right are no longer ‘fit for purpose’, they fail to recognise the importance of inner motivations, or some deeper reality about our nature. The strength of the antecedent literature, by way of contrast, is to show how these manifestations of discontent may be about more than circumstance alone, that part of the problem -utilising the idea of congruence- rests in the fact that existing beliefs are problematical as they are no longer ‘fit’ for purpose.

4. Conclusion

Could it be that human nature and globalization are in some way often antithetical? Maybe. I have argued here, that if we are to understand why “globalization –a force that has produced so much good-[has] become so controversial”, we must at least consider what goes on within (Stiglitz, 2002, p.4). Just as our ideological preferences link to our nature -though admittedly in complicated ways- so our nature also has a role in how we experience and think about globalization. This novel reorienting, that draws on the contribution of political psychology, includes how we think about potential sources of discontent. We should rethink how the process unfolds and impacts upon individuals. Individuals should not be understood solely in terms of social markers, a class, occupational group, or educational marker etc. Though important, also of consequence is that they display certain traits, have a particular personality type and so on.

In their combination obstacles surface, that as-yet, have not been fully appreciated. The point here has not been to assess the most important source of discontent. Rather, I have argued that the ability to predict the nature, form and significance of the responses that accompany the process, moving forward, will in part require a much better understanding of human nature: individuals should no longer be presented as ‘passive agents’, and their predispositions ignored. Conceptually, to recognise that a complex combinative power is at work, linking a ‘discursive superstructure’ with what Jost identifies as a ‘motivational substructure’, offers a new and complementary approach to the valid work already undertaken in this area, and generates new puzzles in the field (Federico & Malka, 2018, p. 33; Jost et al., 2009).

What should be clear is that globalization’s discontents are about more than social and economic conditions. It is perhaps the great mis-

take of many mainstream politicians of both left and right, to think of globalization in such terms and in so doing, to neglect the deeper needs resting in the pre-conscious realm. In short, the merit of an analysis attuned to the internal forces that motivate political sympathies, rests in the potential to explain the recent failures of the political class, particularly those on the traditional 'left', but also the economic 'right'. I am led to conclude that political parties need to rethink how they provide the necessary congruence currently lacking, so that felt needs can be realised in an ideological package. Reckoning with these pre-conscious biases is not merely a question of altering our approach conceptually speaking. More will need to be done if populations are to be convinced of the net benefits of greater interconnectedness. In short, we must do a better job when reflecting on how the 'forces from above' –globalization– reckon with the 'forces from below' (including within). Fundamentally, this approach begins on the basis, as Sapolsky (2017) suggests, that "it actually makes no sense to distinguish between aspects of a behaviour that are 'biological' and those that would be described as, say, 'psychological' or 'cultural'. Utterly intertwined" (p.4).

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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