



Seminar

GIAN VITTORIO CAPRARA

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Personalizing Politics

Tuesday, 11 March, 11:00 a.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala
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ABOUT GIAN VITTORIO CAPRARA

Gian Vittorio Caprara is Professor of Psychology at the Sapienza University of Rome, where he has served as Chair of the Psychology Department, Dean of the Faculty of Psychology, and President of the Federate University of Humanities, Economics and Law. At present, he is Director of the Interuniversity Center for Research on the Origins of Prosocial and Antisocial Motivations and a member of the faculty of the School for Advanced Studies (SAS), Sapienza University of Rome.

He has been Visiting Professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA); University of California, Irvine (UCI); and Stanford University.

Caprara's research has addressed issues in personality psychology, social psychology, and political psychology. He is the author and co-author of over 450 scientific publications and several volumes, including *Personality: Determinants, Dynamics and Potentials* (with Daniel Cervone, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Caprara is Past President of the European Association of Personality Psychology (EAPP) and a member of Academia Europaea. He held a Golestan Fellowship at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) at Wassenaar in 1996-1997 and was a Fellow at SCAS in 2000-2001 and in the spring of 2013.

During his current stay in Uppsala, Caprara will work on the completion of a book, on "Personalizing Politics", for Oxford University Press, arguing that the growth of democracy and personality are reciprocal and conditional.

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, there have been many changes in the political landscape of major democracies with regard to consensus formation, the selection of elites, and citizens' political engagement. Among the most evident changes are shifts in focus from group affiliations to individual choices and from issue-centred politics to more person-centred politics. As citizens bring their needs and aspirations for personal and social well-being to the political arena, their personalities influence the agenda of politics no less than the behaviour of politicians. Most recent debates, however, have also been somewhat one-sided in that they have focused on personality characteristics that may support political success and on the personal images of leaders that are most likely to attract citizens' consent.

The term *personalization* has led to a focus on the personality of the leaders and ultimately on their personal qualities that may attract and seduce their followers. This appeal to personality has been instrumental in the crafting and marketing of an image best able to secure and to strengthen the authority and attractiveness of politicians.

With the term *personalizing*, I intend to put the person at the center of politics and to convey the idea that is a better politics the one that is able to grant the full expression of people's personalities. Thus, using personalizing should lead to our valuing the personality of the many rather than that of the few, to a better understanding of the mental processes underlying political behaviour, and ultimately to being able to assess the extent to which democracy may represent the form of government most congenial to the betterment of human condition.

On these premises I will review previous and current directions of research aimed to elucidate the contributions of a Science of Personality to understand political preference and engagement. Data from several countries in four continents will be presented. This with the aim to uphold my idea that the development of citizens' personality and the development of Democracy are reciprocally dependent one upon the other.