

June 22, 2010, 6.30pm - 8pm

INFORM event: Paths to Extremism

Wolfson Theatre, New Academic Building, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London School of Economics

This free event is jointly organised with the Forum for European Philosophy

Sara Savage, Senior Researcher at the Psychology and Religion Research Group, Cambridge University

Amanda van Eck Duymaer van Twist, Sociologist and Deputy Director of Inform, LSE

Nicholas Royle, Professor of English, University of Sussex

Chair: Simon Glendinning, Director of the Forum for European Philosophy

By 2011 the British Government plans to spend £3.5 billion a year on what it calls "counterterrorism and security measures". The stated reason for such high levels of public spending is the concern that Britain is facing a real and growing threat from "violent extremism" which results from "the process of radicalisation". The measures included in the Government's planning are not, however, all of the same kind. As well as engaging in security activities aiming to minimise the chance of attacks, the Government aims to develop a "new and deeper understanding of how individuals become radicalised". Aware of concerns that the security response may be disproportionate, the Government also wants to "put respect for human rights at the centre of our response". (Source: Home Office) The language of "extremism", "radicalisation" and "terrorism" that dominates the Government's policy-planning is, today, ubiquitous in contemporary politics and media coverage. Yet, there is clearly an awareness that this language might also bear closer analysis, and the effort to develop a deeper understanding of the situation is not over. Do those who become involved in what are identified as "extreme" groups regard themselves as extremists? And what are the paths that lead individuals to join such groups in the first place? What is radicalisation? Sociologists might be inclined to seek explanations in terms of alienation and other societal pushes and pulls. Psychologists might look at distinctive cognitive frameworks. Lawyers might ask whether the respect for human rights really is at the centre of Governmental responses today. Literature scholars may also wonder whether a "new and deeper understanding" of "radicalisation" and "violent extremism" is likely to be achieved through the disciplines of the so-called human or social sciences alone. Where should we turn to understand what is clearly one of the major questions of contemporary politics and society? In this special event the Forum for European Philosophy, in collaboration with Inform, will bring together thinkers and scholars from across different disciplines to renew and deepen our discussions of "paths to extremism".

Admittance to the event will be on a first come first served basis. To register your name in advance, please contact Jane Cooper, Inform Administration Officer, 020 7955 7654, inform@lse.ac.uk

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