



Technische
Universität
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IPMB
METHODENLEHRE
BIOPSYCHOLOGIE

Gastvortrag

What is X ?

Prof Dr. Gabriel Abend
Universität Luzern

- Donnerstag, 4. April 2019
- 18:00 bis 19:30 Uhr
- SN 19.2 (Altgebäude der TU BS)
- Keynote im Rahmen des Workshops „Leaving the Cargo Cult?“



Many social science literatures are rife with disagreements about what their main object of inquiry is and isn't. Think of research about, e.g., empathy, intelligence, happiness, intention, culture, capitalism, populism, religion, or revolution. In fact, the social sciences have always been rife with such disagreements. Why is that? What, if anything, can be done about it?

Socrates believed you could establish what X really is. Can you? Humpty Dumpty believed you were free to define "X" however you wished. Are you? Some people believe there are three distinct issues here: what X is, how X is best (or correctly) conceptualized, and how "X" is best (or correctly) defined. Are there? Some people believe social scientists shouldn't get bogged down by this kind of stuff: you can do your empirical research without ever considering it. Can you? These are old questions in philosophy and the logic and methods of social science. But I don't think we're fully clear on them. If two labs disagree about what X is, or how to conceptualize X, or what "counts" as X, there's no agreement on how to adjudicate their disagreement. There's no agreement either on whether their disagreement can and should be adjudicated. Can there be one?

Gabriel Abend studied political science and history at the Universidad de la República (Uruguay), and obtained his PhD in sociology at Northwestern University ("America"). Seeing as capitalism wasn't going to go away any time soon, he decided to sell his labor-power to New York University, where he was an Assistant Professor of Sociology and later an Associate Professor of Sociology. He then joined Universität Luzern as Professor of Sociology. Abend is the recipient of the 2017 Lewis A. Coser Award for "Theoretical" Agenda Setting. His book, *The Moral Background: An Inquiry into the History of Business Ethics*, came out with Princeton University Press in 2014. It's a real page-turner—satisfaction guaranteed or your money back. For comments or complaints: [abend\[at\]nyu\[dot\]edu](mailto:abend[at]nyu[dot]edu)