

Review of: "How WEIRD is the US and why does this matter for the rest of the world?"

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This is an interesting critique to Henrich's voluminous, and certainly controversial, work. As he himself has admitted, one of the most contentious aspects of it lays in its very title, according to which the West has become '*Particularly Prosperous*'. How can the 'prosperity' of the West be pinned down to something that happened 1000 years ago, such as the Family and Marriage Programme of the Church? That blatantly disregards more than 200 years of expropriation and exploitation of the popular classes of this very same West and more than 500 years of colonial exploitation of the rest of the world. Certainly, both processes can be attributed to the peculiarities of WEIRD 'psychology', but it all goes well beyond the rosy picture that Henrich portrays. Furthermore, and Van Pinxteren rightly points out, this notoriously biased account of world history goes hand in hand with an oddly psycho-biologistic explanation of the alleged cultural particularisms of the West, in such a way that what starts as strictly cultural process, such as the Family and Marriage Programme, ends up so deeply embedded in Western psychology that may even be inherited in a gene-like fashion, almost like a 'racial' character. Hence, despite Henrich's explicit disclaimers, his proposal becomes dangerously (or suspiciously) close to the old and infamous white supremacist ideologies. I think this is the real problem with Henrich's conception of culture, rather than the 'individualism' that Van Pinxteren emphasises. I am not sure, on the other hand, whether Van Pinxteren's point that the West is not 'WEIRD' enough makes justice to the rightful criticism that could and should be raised against Henrich's work. Maybe he should argue more explicitly that by showing that the West is less 'WEIRD' one can draw the conclusion that its alleged prosperity has been caused by other factors different from its hypothetical WEIRD psychology.