

Comparison is a capacity that allows us to assess the values of objects and ideas that we encounter every day. We compare various things because we want the best value and quality for our money and efforts. Comparison is also operative in the social world. In a particular form of comparison, called “social comparison,” we compare ourselves with others. Social comparison involves references to models of behavior and status represented by our family, our social circles, and also society at large. Gauging our work performance, we ask: Am I as good at what I do as my colleagues? Reviewing the grades of our children we often compare them with the results of their peers. Determining our moral standing, we compare our actions with the actions of others.

My project, entitled “The Moral Psychology of Social Comparison” (*MPSC*), seeks to understand philosophically what social comparison is, why we engage in it, and whether social comparison is good or bad for us, or perhaps neutral. The preliminary thesis of this project is that social comparison is, in fact, harmful for us. This first systematic philosophical treatment of social comparison is motivated by a growing body of literature in psychological and sociological studies that largely demonstrates that social comparison contributes to decreased wellbeing and physical health, but it also discourages us from helping others and excelling at work.

*MPSC* investigates the moral psychology at work in social comparison. This means that my project seeks to understand what happens when we compare ourselves with others and what motivates us to engage in social comparison. I address these concerns in the first of the two parts of *MPSC* tapping to philosophically underexplored resources in three modern thinkers, namely David Hume, Adam Smith, and Søren Kierkegaard. While there is virtually no work dedicated to social comparison in contemporary philosophy, these classical modern thinkers offer important theoretical insights about the kinds of sentiments that make us more susceptible to social comparison, but also the types of emotions that social comparison produces in us, such as jealousy, anger, but also a decreased sense of vitality and agency.

In the second part of this project, I focus on determining whether and in what sense social comparison is good or bad for us. To achieve that goal, I engage the philosophical concepts of virtues and vices derived from the ethical theory of virtues to establish if social comparison is a vice. Virtue represents a human habitual disposition to act in accordance with principles fundamental to a good life. Its opposite, vice, is a negative tendency that produces harmful behaviors, such as cowardice, anger, greed, and laziness. Rather than judging social comparison simply based on what it does to us, or what sort of obligations it entails, *MPSC* focuses on evaluating the types of attitudes and characterological tendencies we express and habituate when we compare ourselves others.

*MPSC* draws on my previous study of Kierkegaard conducted at Harvard University, KU Leuven, the University of Copenhagen, and the Australian Catholic University. *MPSC* will produce 4 journal articles in prestigious journals, two popular contributions, and one podcast episode. I will deliver 9 presentations in Poland and abroad (including the opening and the concluding presentations of the project at the Host Institution). As part of *MPSC*, I will organize an international workshop on the philosophical perspectives on social comparison. The results of this project will be disseminated to general public via 2 popular publications, 2 popular talks, a podcast, a Twitter account, and a website.

The results of the *MPSC* will enrich the philosophical discipline of moral psychology by offering a systematic and sustained account of an important aspect of our human existence in relation to the ethical theory of virtues. Dialoguing with research on social comparison in psychology and sociology, but also in business and management, I will contribute a more comprehensive knowledge of the mechanisms of this ubiquitous human phenomenon, but also to an understanding of the reasons for which, and the extent to which social comparison is morally harmful to us.

Polonez Bis fellowship provides me with an indisputable opportunity of working alongside my mentor, Dr Hab. Tomasz Żuradzki, a renowned specialist in the field of practical ethics, and a team of emerging and established scholars at the *Interdisciplinary Centre for Ethics* at the *Jagiellonian University (INCET)*, and distinguished researchers at the Jagiellonian University at large. Conducting my research as a Polonez Bis fellow at *INCET* is a great opportunity for me to return to Poland after conducting research on three continents (Australia, Europe, and North America) in the last 12 years. It is also an opportunity to share my knowledge, skills, and networking with my future colleagues. These assets will be beneficial to my associates at *INCET*, and philosophers and other scholars in Poland, and they will contribute to the growth of the Polish academia.