

This Week's Citation Classic

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Rokeach M. *The open and closed mind: investigations into the nature of belief systems and personality systems*. New York: Basic Books, 1960. 447 p.

A structural theory about the organization of belief systems, and about the general properties of authoritarianism and intolerance, regardless of political, religious, or scientific content is presented. Measures of general authoritarianism (dogmatism scale) and intolerance (opinionation scale) are derived and employed in various investigations carried out by the author and many collaborators that were designed to test construct validity and to shed further light on the organization and processes of belief and thought. [The *Science Citation Index*[®] (SCI[®]) and the *Social Sciences Citation Index*[™] (SSCI[™]) indicate that this book has been cited over 1,295 times since 1961.]

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"Speaking personally, *The Open and Closed Mind* grew out of my need to better understand and thus to better resist continuing pressures during my earlier years on my intellectual independence, on the one side from orthodox religion and on the other side from orthodox Marxism-Leninism. Speaking scientifically, the work was first conceived during my graduate days in Berkeley where I had the good fortune to come into close contact with several of the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality*—Eke Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford.¹ My approach differed, however, from theirs, in being more cognitive, more experimental, and by emphasizing structure rather than content. It reflected a convergence of several theoretical orientations to which I had been exposed —psychoanalysis, Maslow's theory

of motivation, and the cognitive Gestalt orientations of Levin, Asch, Krech, and Crutchfield.

"I can think of several possible reasons why my book has made the 'most cited' list. First, it generated a good deal of research concerning the controversial issue as to whether it is similarity of belief rather than race or ethnicity that is the main psychological determinant of social discrimination. Second, my dogmatism scale has been widely employed as a measure of individual differences in closed-mindedness. The SSCI[™] shows that different kinds of journals in psychology, sociology, education, political science, religion, and communication have published papers employing this scale. And possibly third, the book may have succeeded (as I had hoped) in being socially as well as theoretically relevant.

"Building on this work I attempted in later works²³ to concentrate on the role that attitudes and values play within belief systems, their relation to social action, their antecedents, and long-term cognitive and behavioral consequences. As a result, I am now persuaded that values are the most important components of belief systems, relevant at all levels of social analysis, and thus of central concern across all the social sciences. I believe that social scientists should therefore devote more of their efforts than they presently do to the further development of theory and research on individual and supra individual values.

"My long-lasting interest in the antecedents and consequents of organization and change in belief systems has provided me with a framework broad enough to pursue many other theoretical and applied interests, some of which go against the mainstream of contemporary social psychology. Most gratifying, though, are the frequent citations to my work across several social science disciplines, suggesting that I have succeeded to some extent in realizing my ambition to become interdisciplinary in my thinking and research."

1. Adorno T W, Frenkel-Brunswick E, Levinson D J & Sanford R. *The authoritarian personality*. New York: Harper, 1960. 990 p.
2. Rokeach M. *Beliefs, attitudes, and values*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1968. 214 p.
3. Rokeach M. *The nature of human values*. New York: Free Press, 1973. 438 p.