

**PLURIDIMENSIONAL MAN**  
**for an economics of the mind**

*L'HOMME PLURIDIMENSIONNEL*  
*pour une économie de l'esprit*

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The human being is one but it is also a complex of various ways of existing. The main theories that aim at explaining and understanding it each considers one of these ways only. This has permitted important advances, but at the cost of various kinds of shortcomings which strongly impair the benefits that can be derived from these analyses. As brief examples, economics used to be a psychological desert; the imprecision of psychoanalysis fettered both its testability and its use of rational analysis; advanced buddhist psychology was little applied to the problems of the moderns world; and so on. Since the various theories have developed one aspect the human existence and of its understanding, the shortcomings of a theory are often and naturally the aspects particularly developed by others. Hence, the research program of bringing together these various understandings and analyses, for palliating the shortcomings of one by the strong points of others, seemed a priori a promising enterprise. Indeed, this turns out to be fruitful beyond all expectations.

This program is developed, and its results applied, in a series of studies. A sub-program is the application of the kind of formalization used and developed by economics to various types of psychological questions and, in particular, theories. A part of this volume does this for two psychological theories: psychoanalysis (Freud's theory to begin with), and the psychology developed by the buddhist advanced theory of the mind (see the volume *Happiness-Freedom*). A first advantage lies in the field of precision: the exercise requires sufficiently precise specification of concepts, of their scope, and of the relations between them. The models so built can use deductive reasoning and obtain meaningful relational results and new concepts. The precision and these results permit important applications of the theories for understanding a number of facts. Among these applications are in particular notable ones in the fields for which these "economic" concepts have initially been built.

In particular, the meeting between choice theory and psychoanalysis turns out to be specially rewarding. At first sight, the "economic man" and the "psychoanalytic man" seem to be very different and even opposed species, one outward oriented and rational, the other with a complex inward life full of contradictions. Yet, the adequacy and fruitfulness of the economic

modelling of psychoanalysis is in fact not surprising, given Freud's desire (but not achievement) of precision, his claim that psychoanalysis is the "economics of the mind" and that "all [he] had done was to introduce economics in psychology," and his interest for what existed of economics at his time (he was the translator of one volume of John Stuart Mill's work).

The outcome is *psychoanalytic choice theory*, or *rational psychoanalysis*.<sup>1</sup> Freud's "pleasure principle," his basic model of a pleasure-seeking person confronted with the constraints of the "reality principle" is just basic classical economics. The rest can be seen as deep enrichments of this starting conception, and modelled accordingly. It includes the two kinds of pleasure, from excitement and from the appeasement of tensions ("eros" and "thanatos," the principles of life and of death or "nirvana"); the threefold division of the mind into the id, the superego, and the ego that reconciles them within themselves, between themselves, and with the external constraints of the "reality principle"; choice as the allocation of mental energy whose level in each item also determines whether this item is conscious, unconscious or pre-conscious; the ego mastering and organizing the untidy and contradictory impulses of the id into a preference ordering; the superego as moral or normative desired values or imperative; the birth of the energy (libido) in the id and its transmission to the other items; and so on. This structure and its dynamics are described with preferences and maximand functions; constraints; a multiple self with selves that differ as concerns their structure, function, relations, capacities, and origin; information with different degrees of awareness; "proto-games" between selves; equilibrating and disequilibrating dynamics; and so on.

The mathematical dual represents the field of the mental tensions. The Lagrange multipliers relating the constraints of external "reality" and of the allocation of mental energy, and the maximands of the ego-controlled id and of the superego (which is also sometimes a constraint) provide the basis of the theory of the various mental tensions, their relations, and their dynamics. Each is an index of psychosis-neurosis, with an effect which divides into a psychosis smoothening the conflict in imagining impossible situations and a neurotic frustration. The relative multiplier of the constraints of energy and of "reality" is an index of apathy. And the "free libido" when the energy constraint is not reached is the source and measure of anguish.

Moreover, Freud's concept and analysis of the collective (cultural) superego, common to almost all members of a society and including the norms about the relations and justice among the persons, provides an important way to the solution of the problem of social choice. The

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<sup>1</sup> See *Psychanalyse et Théorie des Choix*, 5th Congress of Economic Psychology, Paris, 1980, proceedings, and *Social Science Information*, 1980.

explicitation of these shared social norms of justice has indeed permitted to essentially solve the problem.

Buddhist theory also presents itself as a psychotherapy. It is emphatically a maximizing theory with the unique objective of minimizing suffering and insatisfaction (*dukkha*). It has developed, for this purpose, the most elaborate theory of the mind that exists, by far. This theory starts with a refined classification of the various types of mental items, with their characteristics, relations, and the resulting dynamics. Consciousness is particularly emphasized. The dynamics is elaborated into the theory of how the mind passes from one state to the other (involving mostly unconscious stages). Various uses of the faculty of attention permits wilful effects on this dynamics, on the structure of preferences and the resulting desires, and on the resulting insatisfaction. A model of this process explains how one can strike the right balance between controlling one's desires and satisfying them, and shows the relations among the various determinants of this "middle way".

The deep philosophies of the various cultures (often imbedded in religions), and their general principles, are somehow manifested in the general *ethos* of the population or parts of it – worldview, general attitude towards life and aspiration, capacities for change, type of social relations, and so on. This is an important cause of the achievements of this population, notably in the domain of the economy. This ancient and classical remark can now be applied in an elaborate analysis to the major non-European cultures, notably Asian ones. This can provides explanations of a number of important features of their economic development.