

Chapter 1 : Dr Matt's Views on Rational Choice Theory

Furthermore, the assumption of rationality requires that consumers can process all of the necessary information in order to maximize utility without cost (monetary or cognitive).

Send Email Cancel Religion is irrational. The religious adhere, after all, to unprovable theories that often stem from a fictional, outdated book. And yet those who scorn the religious are often oblivious to the literature that they themselves adhere to, often with an even more dogmatic reverence. Both books offer explanations for human behavior. In admittedly oversimplified terms, one argues that human behavior stems from an inherent need to survive, while one implies that scientific explanation does not dictate human behavior. Yet adherents to the Bible see this explanation as acceptably incomplete. They acknowledge, and appreciate, that human nature is not fully explicable: The Bible does not offer, nor does it claim to offer, all of the answers for the physical or mental behavior of humans. Many modern Darwinists, however, believe his words to be the ultimate, objective truth on the nature of humans. Interestingly, it is often these very Darwinist adherents who scorn the religious for over-dogmatic beliefs. When any theory religious or scientific is believed as objective truth, it is worth questioning what detrimental conclusions may arise. At college we point out the problems of our hypocritically poisonous eco-friendly light bulbs and our immensely overpriced education. We sit in our level seminars, studying the plight of Chinese sweatshop workers, until it suddenly seems that we must all drop out of college and send our tuition money to a charity across the globe. We slowly reach the height of our utopian brainstorming frenzy, projecting a system of global monetary redistribution and imaging country-wide organic farms. And then a senior philosophy student writing his senior thesis on Hobbes, no doubt raises his hand and reminds us that in truth, we are all acting selfishly. We are merely attempting to alleviate our elite-intellectual guilt by saving a few orphans. A collective sigh arises, purportedly from resigned acceptance, though perhaps stemming more from relief than we would like to admit. Passivity in the face of injustice, we have reaffirmed, is not immoral but rational. The detriment of this theory lies in our skewed conclusions, rather than in its original content. Theories, after all, can be dismissed or accepted; the very word implies a proposed idea, rather than an objective truth. This belief in inherent selfishness ultimately affects our social and political policies on a global scale. This scenario, based on the assumption that everyone naturally seeks the best position for themselves, has brought us such lovely results as World War I and the Cold War. These consequences are inevitable, since we are, after all, selfishly seeking survival. Many argue for the banishment of the United Nations on these grounds, arguing that limits and treaties are powerless in the face of national self-interest. We have become a generation of Nietzsche-quoting cynics, refusing to strive toward goodness because our theories tell us this is a false goal. At Oberlin College today, self-identified liberals often shun progressive ideas as utopian dreams, unachievable because they are motivated by a false sense of selflessness that will crumble in the face of inherent human selfishness. Students cynically dismiss G20 protesters and organic farmers as mere attempts at self-aggrandizement that stem from selfish motives. This criticism ultimately explains more effectively why the critics themselves sit passively than it explains why these idealists will inevitably fail. The cynics believe it is natural to act selfishly, and foolish to pretend otherwise. Incapacity, as Marilynne Robinson pointed out in her visit to Oberlin, is a tranquilizer. We have now gained our right to sit back, sedated, and ignore the injustice around us. We find comfort in the realization that we are powerless in the face of our instincts, because powerlessness entails no obligation. If we believed that humans have the capacity to strive for more than selfish goals, the enormity of our task would be daunting. Instead, we choose to self-medicate with the seductive sedative of inherent selfishness, justifying our passivity by elevating a theory to the level of objective, all-encompassing truth. Perhaps the intensity with which we cling to this legitimization of immobility ultimately speaks to the level of cowardice and accustomed laziness that our society has reached. An immobile state may be comfortable, but this does not imply that it is natural.

Chapter 2 : Rational choice theory - Wikipedia

Rational action entails using reason to move towards the completion of a goal. If the goal is graduate school, then taking the GRE would be a rational action. If one assumes that states, and a number of non-state actors, are rational, then understanding their actions is about understanding their goals.

This orthodox conception defines economic rationality by maximization of exclusively materialist objectives, namely profit by producers and utility by consumers. The rational choice approach then explicitly applies this conception to all rational and human behavior that is thus construed as ipso facto economic rationality. The paper argues that the rational behavior of human agents is far from being invariably utility- and profit-optimizing, and thus cannot be automatically reduced to economic rationality. The main argument is that behavior can be rational not only on economic grounds but also on non-economic ones. Hence human behavior can be non-rational in economic and yet rational in extra-economic terms, i. Introduction The purpose of this paper is to critically reexamine the prevalent notion of rational behavior within mainstream economics and rational choice sociology for a recent general critique of rational choice theory, see Archer and Tritter The paper tries to demonstrate that this conception is both theoretically and empirically inadequate. The paper proposes an alternative conception that transcends or greatly relaxes the instrumentalist, especially economic, notion of rational behavior, and thus contributes to a more satisfactory framework for approaching this matter. Such an association characterizes subjective, constrained or bounded rational behavior Simon to the extent that the association is perceived by the actor as logical, instrumental or functional to attaining the ends sought whatever these may be. In other words, a given course of action would generally represent rational behavior insofar as agents have good reasons or rationale for such actions Boudon On the other hand, the means-end association also leads to objective rational behavior insofar the alters or observers, alongside the ego, regard the association as logical or functional i. This implies a proximate but essential equivalence in the ex ante or ex post teleological specification of action between the actor and the social environment, which does not rule out various dis-junctures between actions that are subjectively rational by their good reasons and objectively rational or, as Weber puts it, correct by their demonstrated or externally imputed purposes. In short, rational behavior as perceived or experienced by the actor is not necessarily what is observed or attributed by the other actors, and vice versa Boudon ; Simon Hence, social behavior devoid of such properties, viz. However, what is at stake at this juncture is not the question of the incidence and pertinence of rational behavior in social life or of the possibility for constructing a sociological theory of rationality as well as non-rationality Boudon Instead, the problem to be addressed pertains to building a proper conception of rational behavior as such, viz. For the sake of accomplishing this, the paper has the following outline. Section I identifies a teleological fallacy of purpose determination in current economic or hard-core conceptions of rational behavior and proposes a corrective. In section II the claims that the economic or rational choice approach is the only and best unified model of human behavior are scrutinized and alternative non-rational models intimated. Also reconsidered in section III are the claims that rational choice really represents a unified model by pointing to the underlying tension between parsimony and realism. Section IV classifies alternative strategies for substantive theory construction in sociology based on the assumed importance of rational behavior. Section V re-examines the possibility that soft or thick conceptions of rational behavior are more satisfactory than their hard-core or thin counterparts. The paper concludes with summing up the comparative properties of the prevalent conception of rational behavior and its alternative. Ex Ante Teleological Determination: Are All Human Purposes Instrumental? The above preliminary definition of rational action implies no specification of the ends or means of it. They can be both economic and noneconomic, instrumental and noninstrumental, egoistic and altruistic, private and social, and so on. The conception of rational action does not prejudge or prescribe the underlying teleology, namely the character of the purposes or goals pursued. This contrasts to the curious tendency of rational action theory to define these purposes as a priori economic, instrumental, egoistic and private, such as utility, profit, or wealth optimization, rent-seeking, cost minimization, cost-benefit calculation, and the like, and thus to restrict all of

them to a single class. The underlying assumption of this procedure is that only such goals and the corresponding actions, means, and choices are rational, and others nonrational or even irrational. Reminiscent of the old utilitarianism, modern rational choice theory in sociology and economics defines rational behavior as ipso facto rational in instrumental terms, as economic rationality or utilitarian calculation. Subsuming all the ends, reasons, and motives of action to instrumental, egoistic or hedonistic ones, i. Thereby, a particular form of rationality, viz. First and foremost, it commits the fallacy of sociological reductionism by dissolving all types of social action, including rational conduct, into a single type of instrumental behavior exemplified in utility maximizing Alexander ; Barber Hence, I make an argument for going beyond optimizing utility Slote , thus transcending the instrumentalist conception of rational behavior Gerard , to a more powerful and broader notion of rational behavior than maximization Bonham and even satisficing with respect to utility or bounded-rationality theory. Hence, in this approach rational social action is a rich and complex category transcending instrumental or economic rationality as just one of its elements. It is so untenable to dissolve the former into the latter as done by current rational choice theory, with its overemphasis on the rigid and narrow Boudon conception of rational behavior borrowed from neoclassical economics and then indiscriminately extended. The procedure of dissolution commits what can be termed the fallacy of misplaced abstractness or generality, because it illegitimately equates the particularity of a component, namely instrumental rationality, with the universality of the whole, rational behavior. All this involves various simplifications, conflation, reductions, and confusions in regard to the categories involved, particularly instrumental and other types of rational behavior, as well as formal and substantive rationality, objective and subjective rationality, immediate and long-term rationality, and so on. The principal differences between conventional rational choice theory and a more plausible alternative are outlined as follows. While the former assumes that rational choice is or should be only a narrow instrumental or economic choice--utility, profit or wealth maximization-- the latter argues that choice can also be a non-instrumental choice, the pursuit of well-defined objective functions or goals, such as power, prestige, justice, religious happiness, ethical perfection, ethnical identity, ideological purity or aesthetical pleasure. A broader theory posits that the second type of rational behavior is not reducible to the first, rejecting thus the typical reductionism of a narrow rational choice theory that dissolves everything into utility and egoism. No wonder, the utility function has become almost meaningless, covering everything and so nothing specifically, as a result of which rational choice theory becomes a putative theory of everything Hodgson Even some rational choice theorists are unhappy with this situation, complaining that no empirical content has remained in the utility function ostensibly maximized by the economic man. The utility function has become a convenient device, especially a mathematical trick, by virtue of treating rational behavior as optimizing or satisficing with respect to utility Admittedly, it is highly implausible to define rational social action as maximizing some utility function Margolis The basic assumption of the economic approach to human behavior or instrumental rational choice theory that actors are rational utility maximizers in their economic as well as social behavior--i. For more often than not it is virtually impossible to demonstrate its empirical adequacy Lea For instance, as to the observance of social norms, narrow rational choice theory assumes that this process is grounded on consistent cost-benefit calculations by rational egoists Hechter On the contrary, the broader version postulates a definite set of various factors or possibilities in this regard, of which the instrumental is just one. Purely disinterested respect for social norms can often be the principal motivation for normative conformity, in conjunction with prestige that it breeds, irrespective of the direct profit Bourdieu Actors do not always follow social norms because of instrumental or economic considerations, but also because of non-instrumental ones, expressed in the internalization of norms as an autonomous process not contingent on profit-loss computations. Such instrumental considerations are of secondary importance, since no utility or other extrinsic reinforcements are maximized by the non-rational non-instrumental decisions involving consideration of internalized rules and values Marini In general, social action can be treated as guided by economic rationality as well as by normative considerations rather than either by the former, as assumed by rational choice theory--and, for that matter, by vulgar dialectical materialism--or by the latter, as posited by culturalist conceptions. The common point of both narrow and broader versions of rational choice theory is the postulate of universality of rational behavior in human

society. But the differentia specifica or comparative advantage of instrumental rational choice theory, contrary to the assertions of its exponents, is not that it alone, unlike other sociological theories such as functionalism, assumes and allows rational behavior in social life. Rather it is solely in that such a rational choice theory reduces this choice to its narrow instrumental variant. To argue that rational behavior is universal in society is not equivalent to saying, as rational choice theory does, that this choice is necessarily of such a limited character. And if one assumes, by applying the charity principle of rational behavior Elster Furthermore, instrumental rational behavior, viz. This is because, given the existence of the social and historical factors of value formation, in a sociological analysis values cannot plausibly be regarded as ordered utilities Willer The usual public-choice reduction of political action to economic action--for instance, power to wealth, democracy to market competition, electoral processes to business cycles, and the like--is equally inadmissible. Because by involving coercion or conflict, in contrast to economic relationships in a market economy as presumably voluntary ones, power and other political relations pertain to the level of action within the province of a distinct social theory, and are so not reducible to the rational choice theory level Munch Even some rational choice theorists concede that market power or wealth is distinct from political power, albeit this latter can be achieved inter alia by the former Coleman This is precisely what most contemporary economists and rational choice theorists are prone to do, by dissolving all social actions, values, and goals to mere instrumental categories. This approach is exemplified by the typical rational choice reduction of altruism and so value-rational action to an inverted form of egoism and instrumentally-rational action. No wonder, such a reduction has been rejected by some moderate rational choice theorists Boudon ; Elster On this account, one may even suggest that an adequate rational choice theory in sociology can be built only by transcending the stringency of the assumptions of the economic approach Willer Thus, the narrow instrumental conception of rational behavior based on such assumptions is to be substituted by a broader one allowing instrumental and non-instrumental, instrumental and non-instrumental, including axiological and cognitive rationality 7 Boudon

Admittedly, social life is hardly ever fully utilitarian, and people do not actually optimize utility through consistent and precise cost-benefit calculations Homans It is a fundamental fallacy of modern rational choice theory to subsume all these ends of action to just one type the economic , through tortuous reasoning that makes the latter ostensibly universal but theoretically meaningless and empirically useless Knoke In doing so, it grossly overlooks the fact that not only material but also ideal interests may constitute the basis of rational social action, including even economic action, as classically demonstrated by Weber. This holds true of the distinction between value-rational action and instrumentally-rational social action seen in turn as motivated by material interests. Therefore, these interests by no means exhaust the motive factors of rational social action, including its economic modes. Rather instrumental or economic choice is just a subcategory of rational behavior that can be also non-instrumental or non-economic one. Not all rational social actions can be reduced to economic actions or principles, as Weber has classically argued. This reduction has been viewed with suspicion not only by anti-utilitarian classical sociologists, except, say, Spencer, but also by many neo classical and contemporary economists, from Mill and Jevons and Walras to Pareto and Marshall to Schumpeter and Keynes. Notwithstanding, this reduction is typically performed by the economic or rational choice approach to human behavior. The preceding discussion indicates the reality and salience of a plurality of rationalities in human social behavior in light of the teleological or purpose multiplicity, not a monolithic economic-instrumental--and, for that matter any other--rational behavior predicated upon a single purpose like utility, as assumed by rational choice theory. Table 1 summarizes these plural modes of rational behavior in relation to such a teleological multiplicity in social life. Unified Non-Rationalist Models of Social Action Rational choice theorists typically make suggestions and claims for a single, unified model rather than many different models of human behavior. In particular, the claim is made that one cannot have two or more different models of the same actor and therefore of the identical human behavior, but rather oneâ€”and this is the model of rational choice. However, the question arises as to whether rational choice is really the only or at least the best unified model or general theory of social action. Alternatively, the question can be rephrased to the effect of whether theories of non-rational behavior can also represent a unified and perhaps more adequate model of social action than their rational counterparts. This question is addressed next by reconsidering the

arguments for and the types of non-rational unified models of social action. The argument for unified non-rational models of social action, i. In terms of epistemological legitimacy, there is no. Non-rational unified models of social action are not necessarily less methodologically legitimate than rational ones. For instance, a unified model of non-rational social action in terms of habits and institutions Hodgson is admittedly Arrow as methodologically legitimate as one of strictly rational conduct, viz. Perhaps more importantly, non-rational unified models of social action are not invariably less ontologically legitimate or empirically sound than rational ones. Having established their epistemological and ontological legitimacy, unified non-rational models of human behavior can generally be classified in the following groups. One group includes unified models of value-laden behavior. Included in still another group of unified non-rational models are those of emotional and expressive behavior. The Weberian conception of power, domination and authority is an example of--or at least is conducive to building--such unified non-rational models. A distinct class of unified non-rational models of human behavior involves those premised on the quest for social status or group approval Frank Also, unified institutional-historical models of human behavior can be deemed a distinct class in the above sense. The preceding suggests that, contrary to the claims by rational choice theorists, there are no valid epistemological or methodological and ontological or empirical reasons why a unified model of human behavior should be of a rational type only. Rather, non-rational and even irrational unified models do exist or can be built in the same right as their rational equivalents. In epistemological terms, both types of unified models are equally legitimate to constructâ€”no sensible methodological argument can be invoked for rational-only models and against non-rational ones. In short, to claim that rational choice is the only available, possible or the best unified model of human behavior is methodologically implausible.

Chapter 3 : Contemporary Theories of Knowledge - John L. Pollock, Joseph Cruz - Google Books

Behavioural Economics and the Rationality Assumption in Economics Inspired by The Price Is Too Damn High, Canadian Edition and Frances' post on behavioural economics. There is a temptation for non-economists to answer any question that puzzles economists by simply declaring "people are irrational!"

Exploring The Human Conversation. The nomothetic creature called "rational choice theory" exists in a world of ink and paper, and the reality to which various linguistic accounts correspond are mostly idiomatic mental conceptions held by hoards of social scientists, economists, and philosophers. Basic assumptions associated with rational choice theories reside within four fundamental issues: The way we characterize the answers to these questions shapes our views of rational choice. While there may be broad consensus on what rational choice theory is, exactly who is consenting with whom is as much a manifestation of power and politics as it is a coherent claim to knowledge. Hence there is no single rational choice theory, but many versions given from a plethora of perspectives. Following consensus views of the majority is often a solid grounding point; nevertheless, the masses have been wrong before. This calls to mind the words of Jacques Derrida: To accept any subject matter unquestioningly is to be non-rational, and to simply assume that the authors of said subject matter must have got it right. Because of the nature of nomothetic assertions in representing an ideographic world Freeman, Intellectual answers must necessarily be tentative, for with the passage of time these same "answers" will inevitably change! This points to the important priority of formulating the right questions in pursuit of answers. A wrong question can never result in a right answer. If the issues people pursue are not right and relevant, then the adjoining answers are as chaff in the wind; but when issues are important and purposeful, those issues will stand through time as a beacon of light illuminating the pathways leading to wisdom and truth Riddle, The fact that I reason and conclude as I will, independent of others, just as they can also reason and conclude independent of me " and diversely different views can still be make sense to each individual author " points to the nature of human beings as creative, volitional agents. The very fact that I can pose alternative points of view, is evidence that I am chooser. Harvard psychologist, William James , maintained that "man is a creative agent capable of weighing and evaluating situations and then choosing his course. Ultimately, who is to say what is right or wrong, reasonable or irrational, fair or unjust? Is there an absolute grounding point from which rationality can be anchored, or is mankind destined to swim in a vast sea of relativism? The answer is yes to both questions. Rationality, relative or absolute, is ultimately a matter of individual will and choice. In the end, The W. Thomas Axiom pragmatically dictates the only reality an individual will know and act on: Life Realities are obdurate: What is Truth , and how can we lay hold to reasonable and reliable Claims to Truth. Theories of Man as a Rational Chooser. Although rational choice theory is interdisciplinary " to include political science, sociology, philosophy, and psychology " some of its most fundamental concepts come from economics where value is attached to objects and actions like price tags on commercial products. According this perspective, the perceived value is assumed to guide self maximizing motives. While the economic paradigm appears to offer a calculated accuracy about how choices can or will be made; nevertheless, sociology deals with diverse behavior that is constantly and creatively on the move, and there is seldom a convenient way to attach value, price, or profit to the elements of everyday experience. Yet a useful proposition adopted from an economic model states: Scarcity of resources is another central factor in the rational choice equation. A hedonistic model of man is the fundamental assumption of most rational choice theories. The roots of the hedonist perspective extend back hundreds of years in history. This raise the question, does the agent guide his tastes and preference, or does this dispositional taste or preference guide the agent. They reason that when individuals choose situations that are compatible with their disposition " meaning they generally affiliate with similar others " those individuals set in motion processes of dyadic interaction that will tend to sustain their intra-personal systems. The results of their study concludes that association with similar others "promotes consistency in the intra-individual organization of personality attributes" across time and circumstance. Both theoretical views explain human action in terms of maintaining equilibrium. For the individual, the assumption is that the external behavior will strive to be

congruent with an internal disposition. But exactly what is this thing called disposition, to which we measure our so called states of consistency? William Glasser suggests that the notion of anger would be better served in the form of a verb: Rather than thinking that we possess a thing called anger--or even worse, that this entity called anger possesses us. The notion of angering linguistically describes this emotion-filled activity as something we are doing. It follows that since we are doing it, we must have chosen it. Such words tend to ontologize the world in a deterministic fashion. If we change these words from nouns to verbs "valuing, desiring, and tasting" and reconstruct the realities they describe as activities we are engaged in, how might the notion of dispositional cause be re-conceptualized? The same reasoning and re-conceptualizing can be applied to the so called dispositions of tastes, desires, and needs; by changing the words to verbs and the represented realities to action "activities of tasting, desiring, and needing" are more meaningfully, and more accurately described. The notion of a universal logos is reinforced by the linguistic descriptions of values, needs, desires, and tastes as nouns--as entities that dictate universal patterns of behavior. The very survival of Sociology and Psychology as sciences hinge upon the existence of these universals. Such a stance must be taken to preserve predictive science-dom. Without such deterministic assumptions about human beings, the foundation from which to generalize begins to crumble. If there were such a reality as a universal rationality, then there should be empirical evidence of it cross culturally. Some rational choice theorists are heavily grounded in the assumptions of behaviorism, a school of thought that avoids the black box called the human mind, and deals directly with overt responses that result from observable stimuli. This is a dividing point for many rational choice theorists: Is rationality universal or relative? The assumptions of hedonism--that people are motivated towards maximizing of personal pleasure and the avoidance of pain--superficially seems to be a good general rule of thumb for predicting patterns of behavior. But what of the masochists whose pleasure is pain; and what of those who embrace the philosophy of utility, where the greatest good is that which bring the greatest possible sum of pleasure for the greatest number of people; or what of the perspective of Christianity, the self centered soul will lose his life while seeking to find it Matthew Ch. One in five people in the world identify themselves as Christians; another twenty percent of the worlds population adhere to an islamic rationale that bear little resemblance to the notions of hedonism Toronto, In sociology, rational choice theory is underlying perspective that buttresses exchange theory where people choose to participate in an exchange after they have examined the costs and the rewards of alternative courses, and have chosen the most attractive. What is rational criteria for establishing what is most attractive? Are people universally drawn to logical choices based upon rewards of money, prestige, power, property? Or are people rationally attracted to the gratifying feelings of love through acts of altruism and morality? Again, my answer is that rewards and attractions will be what people choose according to their situated rationality. Motivation to act emerges from the chosen valuing and desiring activities. Reconsidering the Norms of Social Science. In the writings of Dostoyevsky It knows only what it has had time to learn. Therefore the diverse rationalities manifest by the human race deserve more understanding from sociology and psychology, instead of the traditional emphasis on prediction. The current norms of science-making tend to push understanding aside, and proclaim predictability and generalizability as its most fundamental articles of faith. Given the faulty foundations of assuming a deterministic and universal logos, this means prediction and generalization should be secondary to the goal of understanding the particular uniqueness of human interactivity "a uniqueness that is regularly reduced, thematized, and generalized by the nomothetic machinations of western social sciences. Charles Horton Cooley , who formulated the concept of "the looking glass self," asserts that people often express themselves in terms of "standardized acts" and thereby those acts can be the focus of behavioristic-quantitative analysis. On the other hand, he insists, there is a "creative, willful, and idiomatic" part of self that is "suffused with meaning. Cooley further asserts that using the epistemological assumptions and methods of the physical sciences to study the social world is not the most fruitful approach. Without conceding this particular point to Cooley, consider the perspective of Max Weber. At the center of his methodology is this critical concept, "human phenomena does not speak for itself; it must be interpreted" Weber, In most scientific research, a project begins with theory and hypothesis and proceeds to collect and analyze data in support them. Eventually, every research endeavor be it qualitative or quantitative "is met

with the task of "interpreting the data. As Weber puts it, the data will not speak for itself" it must be interpreted! Whether or not one advocates the analysis of social phenomenon in the quantitative model of physical science, the process of data interpretation is always an art! This points up the question of the overarching goals of social science. Hence, human rationality is better conceptualized and understood through in depth contextual analysis" yielding particular patterns applicable to people who share common corporate rules, norms, and expectations. In other words, rationality is regionally understood. Again, shifting from a perspective of universality to one of regionality, again, it becomes clear that the maximizing self-interested capitalist of the western world, is a universal assumption that will not translate well to the regional mind-sets of the far east and middle east. Islam is not a thing, rather it continues through time as a relationship between the servant and master Denny: Such a rationale is a far cry from self serving maximizing motives of rational choice theory. This again points to the diversity of rationality in the social world. Any formulation of theory must ultimately correspond to the real world for legitimacy and validation. Cook emphasized this point by asserting: This assertion is made as to normative ideology; the actual practices of daily doings evidence that people often profess certain values, and live contrary to them. Thus the world has its share of jack-mormons, jack-hindus Shagle, , jack-buddhas, and jack-catholics. The next two sections of this paper will attempt to lay a theoretical foundation that can make sense of what appears to be a relativity of rationality within this human world. This section explores two important and interconnected realities: The discussion begins with issues related to choice. In that section, the idea that truth resides in a realm of accurate metaphysical representations is rejected; and instead, truth is conceptualized as existing in the realm of ethical human relationships. One of the most fundamental issues about the nature of human existence is the question of free-will versus determinism. The basic issue is this: Is human action steered by mechanical causal antecedents, or is it guided by the independent will of man" a will that can thoughtfully choose purposive action from among alternatives. To protect their investment in maintaining their science-dom, contemporary sociology and psychology find the stance of determinism necessary. In other words, in order for the human sciences to model their assumptions and methods after the pattern of physical science, a perspective of the social world as causally determined is essential for that type of science"making to proceed. If metaphysical necessity is assumed" things are what they must be and cannot be something else" then choosing and rationality are impossible, and so is reciprocal and responsive dialogue with others.

Chapter 4 : Reconsidering rationality // The Observer

Reconsidering the Relationship Between Cognitive Removing the Rationality Assumption from Law and Economics, 88 CAL. L. REV. , ().

Daniel Kahneman Both the assumptions and the behavioral predictions of rational choice theory have sparked criticism from various camps. As mentioned above, some economists have developed models of bounded rationality , which hope to be more psychologically plausible without completely abandoning the idea that reason underlies decision-making processes. Other economists have developed more theories of human decision-making that allow for the roles of uncertainty , institutions , and determination of individual tastes by their socioeconomic environment cf. Martin Hollis and Edward J. Nell. Further they outlined an alternative vision to neo-classicism based on a rationalist theory of knowledge. Within neo-classicism, the authors addressed consumer behaviour in the form of indifference curves and simple versions of revealed preference theory and marginalist producer behaviour in both product and factor markets. Both are based on rational optimizing behaviour. They consider imperfect as well as perfect markets since neo-classical thinking embraces many market varieties and disposes of a whole system for their classification. However, the authors believe that the issues arising from basic maximizing models have extensive implications for econometric methodology Hollis and Nell, , p. In particular it is this class of models "rational behavior as maximizing behaviour" which provide support for specification and identification. And this, they argue, is where the flaw is to be found. Hollis and Nell argued that positivism broadly conceived has provided neo-classicism with important support, which they then show to be unfounded. They base their critique of neo-classicism not only on their critique of positivism but also on the alternative they propose, rationalism. Demands are made of it that it cannot fulfill. Green and Ian Shapiro argue that the empirical outputs of rational choice theory have been limited. They contend that much of the applicable literature, at least in political science, was done with weak statistical methods and that when corrected many of the empirical outcomes no longer hold. When taken in this perspective, rational choice theory has provided very little to the overall understanding of political interaction - and is an amount certainly disproportionately weak relative to its appearance in the literature. Yet, they concede that cutting edge research, by scholars well-versed in the general scholarship of their fields such as work on the U. As the specific claims of robust neoclassicism fade into the history of economic thought, an orientation toward situating explanations of economic phenomena in relation to rationality has increasingly become the touchstone by which mainstream economists identify themselves and recognize each other. This is not so much a question of adherence to any particular conception of rationality, but of taking rationality of individual behavior as the unquestioned starting point of economic analysis. The well-known limitations of rational-actor theory, its static quality, its logical antinomies, its vulnerability to arguments of infinite regress , its failure to develop a progressive concrete research program, can all be traced to this starting-point. Schram and Caterino contains a fundamental methodological criticism of rational choice theory for promoting the view that the natural science model is the only appropriate methodology in social science and that political science should follow this model, with its emphasis on quantification and mathematization. Schram and Caterino argue instead for methodological pluralism. The same argument is made by William E. Connolly , who in his work *Neuropolitics* shows that advances in neuroscience further illuminate some of the problematic practices of rational choice theory. More recently Edward J. Nell and Karim Errouaki , Ch. The DNA of neoclassical economics is defective. Neither the induction problem nor the problems of methodological individualism can be solved within the framework of neoclassical assumptions. The neoclassical approach is to call on rational economic man to solve both. To make rational calculations projectible, the agents may be assumed to have idealized abilities, especially foresight; but then the induction problem is out of reach because the agents of the world do not resemble those of the model. The agents of the model can be abstract, but they cannot be endowed with powers actual agents could not have. Furthermore, Pierre Bourdieu fiercely opposed rational choice theory as grounded in a misunderstanding of how social agents operate. Bourdieu argued that social agents do not continuously calculate according to explicit rational and economic criteria.

According to Bourdieu, social agents operate according to an implicit practical logic—a practical sense—and bodily dispositions. Social agents act according to their "feel for the game" the "feel" being, roughly, habitus, and the "game" being the field. The argument they make is that by treating everything as a kind of "economy" they make a particular vision of the way an economy works seem more natural. Thus, they suggest, rational choice is as much ideological as it is scientific, which does not in and of itself negate its scientific utility. Thus, when living at subsistence level where a reduction of resources may have meant death it may have been rational to place a greater value on losses than on gains. Proponents argue it may also explain differences between groups. Economic decision making then becomes a problem of maximizing this utility function, subject to constraints e . This has many advantages. Furthermore, optimization theory is a well-developed field of mathematics. These two factors make rational choice models tractable compared to other approaches to choice. Most importantly, this approach is strikingly general. It has been used to analyze not only personal and household choices about traditional economic matters like consumption and savings, but also choices about education, marriage, child-bearing, migration, crime and so on, as well as business decisions about output, investment, hiring, entry, exit, etc. Despite the empirical shortcomings of rational choice theory, the flexibility and tractability of rational choice models and the lack of equally powerful alternatives lead to them still being widely used.

The rationality assumption is the expectation that individuals will select from a series of choices the one that will maximize utility; this utility is subject to definition and can be based on pure economic profit, social benefit, and a host of other factors.

Within international relations, realism rests on several basic assumptions. The primary actors in the international system are states whose most fundamental concern is survival. States are thought to be cohesive in their policy making and rational. Often states must defend themselves and pursue their own self-interest if they are to endure. Most of this is not terribly controversial. What causes much disagreement and is the subject of ongoing debates in academia, D. What does it mean to be a rational state? Are all states truly rational? Many people find it odd to talk of Iran, North Korea or Russia as rational. If we move beyond states and consider other actors in the international system, such as Hamas or the Islamic State, talk of rationality often raises an eyebrow or two. Despite what one may think, these states, to which I add a number of non-state actors, are rational. Declaring them irrational does little besides signal an inability to understand their motivations and goals. Rational action entails using reason to move towards the completion of a goal. If the goal is graduate school, then taking the GRE would be a rational action. If one assumes that states, and a number of non-state actors, are rational, then understanding their actions is about understanding their goals. What goal could a given action, such as firing rockets at Israeli cities despite a massive military imbalance, help to achieve? What is a given actor seeking to gain? In international politics, the goals are not always obvious, nor are the thought processes behind a given policy. It can be difficult to tease out why a state is behaving the way it is, prompting many to simply label the actions irrational. If you have been having difficulty understanding the actions of Russia in Ukraine or Hamas in the Gaza Strip, then you are not alone. Egypt pushed ahead, however, and the Yom Kippur War resulted in a massive military loss for Egypt. The American conception of rationality at the time did not allow for this possibility to be seriously considered. The military loss was not the only result, however. The war drastically altered the political landscape and eventually resulted in the United States brokering a deal in which the Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt. Off the battlefield, a seemingly irrational war later resulted in a change in politics and the accomplishment of major Egyptian goals. Hamas, labelled a terrorist organization by many governments, has governed the Gaza Strip since after a violent break with the Palestinian Authority, the governing body of the West Bank. While the Palestinian Authority pursues more peaceful methods of seeking statehood, Hamas frequently employs violence, including firing rockets into Israel and suicide bombings. Israel will always win any military confrontation, however. The recent round of violence in the Gaza Strip resulted in massive losses for Hamas. Israel dominated the battlefield and again, the actions of Hamas seem illogical and irrational at first glance. The fall of the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt, disagreements with Hezbollah and Iran regarding the Syrian Civil War, and an economically crippling blockade of the Gaza Strip have all slowly forced Hamas into a corner. It has been rapidly running out of options. To paraphrase German military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, war is politics by other means, and Hamas needed a political change to survive. When Israel began rounding up Hamas activists following the murder of three Israeli teenagers in June, Hamas was forced to make a decision, and, seeking survival, rockets began flying. Hamas may have suffered a tactical loss but won a strategic victory. It gained international sympathy for the broader Palestinian cause while further isolating Israel, brought the Egyptian government in as a mediator, and continues to govern the Gaza Strip. While it remains to be seen if Hamas will genuinely benefit in the long run, its motivations for seeking a change in the political environment make its initiation of conflict less surprising. States, and many non-state actors, are rational actors. It is only a matter of considering what goals they seek to achieve and how a given policy choice relates to that goal. As is often the case with international politics, this is easier said than done. The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer. He is a political science major and international development studies minor.

Chapter 6 : Human Rational Behavior and Economic Rationality

The assumption of Rationality means that we assume that a person is rational in nature. A rational person will always take decisions that result in optimization and provide them with the greatest benefit.

Chapter 7 : The Pull of Passivity: Reconsidering the Rationality of Religion – The Oberlin Review

The concept of diversity has come a long way in U.S. higher education, and its impact has been far reaching. Over the last three and a half decades, diversity and its related interventions have evolved to encompass a broad set of purposes, issues, and initiatives on college campuses.