

The Need to Build the Paradigm of Unity in Social Sciences

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1. Introduction

Thomas S. Kuhn (1962), a prominent authority in the field of philosophical science, introduced the concept of paradigm when analyzing the development of this science, in order to describe its major scientific milestones. He described these milestones as scientific revolutions, and identified the Copernican Revolution as the most prominent example of a revolution in natural sciences.

Social sciences, including pedagogy, sociology, psychology, management sciences and political science, have not yet elaborated a paradigm in the sense described by Kuhn.

A review of available social sciences literature shows that the main focus of research is to analyse social, economic and political phenomena and processes, where disintegration prevails over integration, pathology prevails over sustainable development, individual ambitions prevail over the search for the common good and finally where the interests of individuals or elitist groups who do not care for the good of others, prevail over the need to learn how to cooperate and educate oneself towards altruism.

A good example of such a tendency is found in literature regarding collective behaviour, where since the very first publication of Le Bon (1895) on the so-called crowd psychology, theories were developed and behaviour analyses were carried out regarding destructive behaviour related to crowd situations. However, research on so called agoral gatherings shows that persons who participate in such gatherings experience an enrichment of their personality, and their process of social integration gains momentum and incites positive changes on a macro social scale (Biela 1989). In 1989 I introduced the category of “agoral gathering” as opposed to crowd psychology. I showed its apex in the experience of unity lived by different persons: unity of thought, of affection, of aspirations and aims. Contemporary examples of large-scale gatherings which have caused positive social changes are the following:

- the first visit of John Paul II to Poland in 1979;
- the “Solidarność” movement in Poland in 1980-1981;
- the so called “Velvet Revolution” in the Czech Republic and Slovakia;
- the peace movements in East Germany (mainly in Berlin) which caused the Fall of the Berlin Wall;
- the defence of the radio station in Vilnius (Lithuania);
- the so called “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine.

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The force of the energy gained during these agoral gatherings caused the bloodless fall of the totalitarian system in Europe. Without such phenomena there would be no such integration in Europe and no European Union as we know it today.

The analysis of human behaviour in agoral gatherings clearly shows the need to build an interdisciplinary paradigm of unity as a methodological model in building theoretical models in empirical analyses and applicative schemes.

Suggestions for the growth of such a paradigm, inspired by the various activities of the Focolare movement, were presented at the Catholic University of Lublin on the occasion of the conferment of a Degree *Honoris Causa* in social sciences to Chiara Lubich by the Catholic University of Lublin (Biela 1996). Vera Araújo has earlier spoken on this theme in a proficient and methodological manner.

In this talk I will indicate the basic reasons for working on the paradigm of unity. Beside the knowledge of the truth regarding human beings and society, there is also a teleological reason, which is to stimulate social and civil development towards a way to reach consensus, mutual understanding, sharing of goods and social integration.

The methodological reflections in this paper are limited only to a study regarding the methodology of two disciplines belonging to social sciences: economics and psychology. Our discussion will touch on the subject of research, the methods and the goals of these disciplines in order to promote them and at the same time to pursue methodological integration based on a vision of the charism of unity.

2. The Paradigm of unity in Economics

Economics is a discipline which belongs both to social sciences and to behavioural sciences. The object of economics as a behavioural science is the economic behaviour of participants to economic life. We can talk about two types of goals in economic sciences:

1) the descriptive aims - i.e. a description of the subjects in various economic situations;

2) the normative aims - i.e. pointing out which of the possible behaviour is the optimal one in specific decision making situations. The methods of economic analyses allow one to determine which economic behaviour is the optimal behaviour, in a given set of criteria of rationality (e.g. the criterion of maximisation of desired profits, the criterion of minimisation of losses, the alpha criterion, La Place's criterion).

However, the essential social and moral problem is to state who, what and at whose expense one will maximise one's benefit from a particular economic activity which is a risk taking activity by nature.

When applied to economics, the paradigm of unity implies methodological soliciting which takes into consideration a multi-dimensional system of economics in research and analysis, instead of restricting the objective of such analysis to a particular sector of participants to an economic activity. It is essential from the point of view of this paradigm to make a systematisation of economic behaviour and to assign it to specific subjects: parents, unemployed persons, local communities, government employees and those employed with private firms, retired persons, invalid persons, religious communities, non-governmental organisations, private firms and multinational firms. Only such a systematising perspective enables us to completely embrace the whole spectrum of economic behaviour. Up to now the majority of these behaviour groups are outside the scope of economic interest.

One of the aspects of economic analysis is decision analysis, which deals with the economic consequences of making a choice among possible strategies. Formally, such analysis seeks to point out which actions would be optimal in a defined criterion of rationality. When applied to economics the paradigm of unity requires an extension of the goals of this analysis. This means that not only are economic activities utilised to the maximum and that costs are thereby minimised, but that at the same time this effect is obtained for the highest possible number of persons and families and that persons who have limited access to economic resources are not marginalised.

If we were to consider the same scheme of game theory, a change in mentality of the participants in economic activity is necessary when this is applied to the paradigm of unity. Typical game behaviour – usually competitiveness (a game of x persons to the sum of zero) would be substituted by co-operative behaviour.

One of the most essential aspects of the paradigm of the unity is the ability to share profits resulting from an economic activity with persons who are unable to engage in productive initiatives on their own. Examples of the accomplishment of such a paradigm are those firms operating within the project of the Economy of Communion. The novelty of this project lies precisely in the way these firms define the optimal criterion of profit distribution. Profits obtained for persons outside the company (e.g. persons in need who live in the vicinity of the firm, families and people who would like to be self sufficient by starting up their own economic activity, the so called small business) are considered to be profit of the firm itself. This optimisation is considered to be beneficial for both the firm sharing its profits as well for the other subjects outside the company. In this second dimension of optimality, the intention is not to satisfy the consumption needs of individuals but to make them interested in investing in resources in order to start their own economic activity. This would enable them to link their own work with the financial aid received, and hence participate in the market economy as a new distinct subject. The Brazilian economist Josué de Castro thus defined the principle of offering aid to the poor

who live in the Southern hemisphere: “Do not give people fish, but teach them how to fish”. One may moreover add to this principle the inspiration which derives from the paradigm of unity: “Do not just teach fishing, but also teach people to share with others the fish they catch.” The application of the paradigm of unity in firms operating according to the principles of the Economy of Communion is illustrated in Figure 1. This application could be defined as a *micro-economy*.

Figure 1.

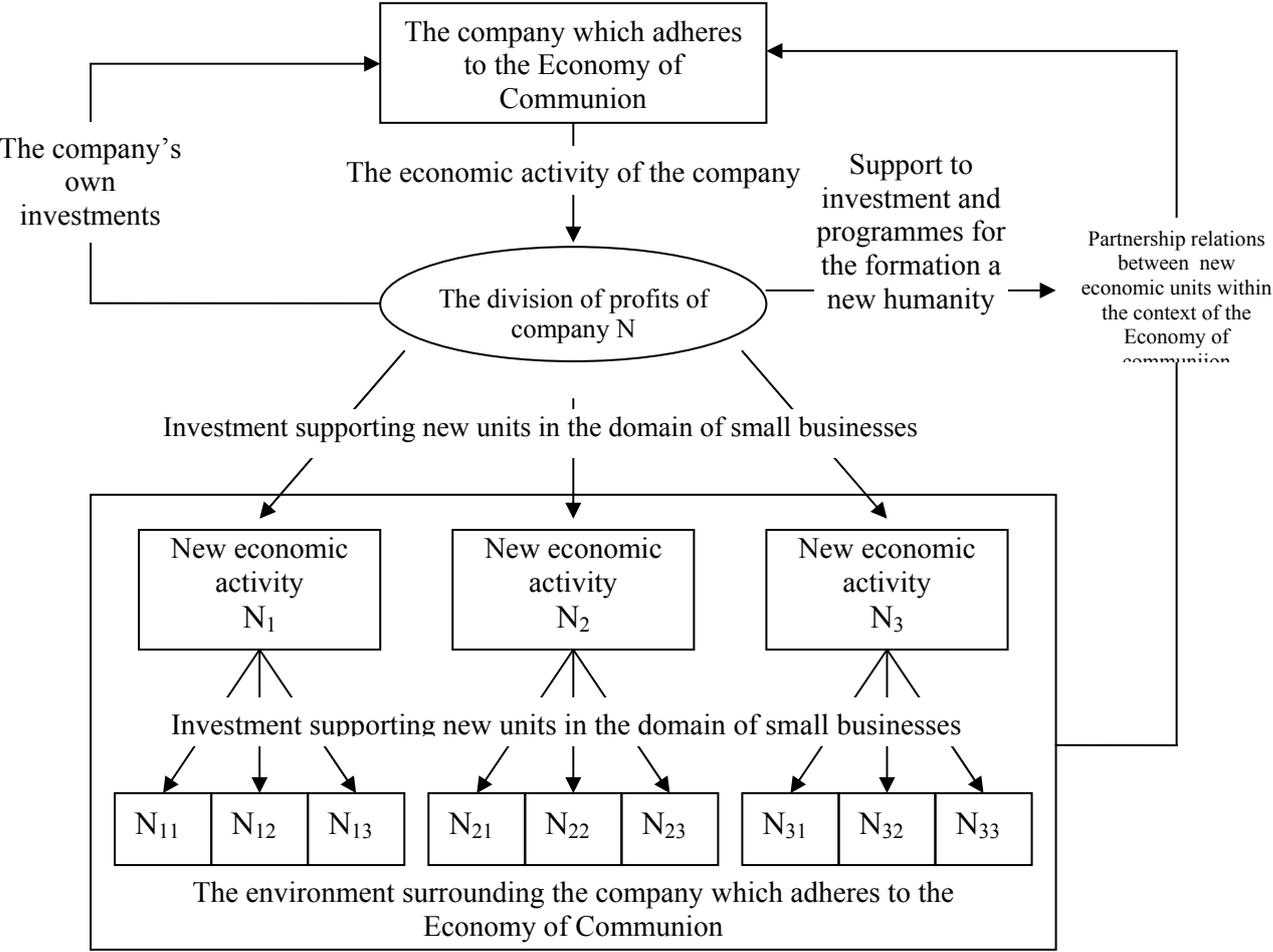


Fig. 1. A diagram illustrating the application of the paradigm of unity to a company (N) which puts into practice the principles of the Economy of Communion in sharing the profits resulting from its economic activity while operating within a market economy.

The diagram presented in Figure 1 may be interpreted as building an organisational culture and an environment for sharing profits resulting from the economic activity of company N. It shows that besides allocating funds towards investment and to support institutions and programs which help build a new humanity, the company allocates some of its profit to support the investment of persons who have the intention of starting their own small business. The funding of investment should however be accompanied by educational training and advice on how to develop the business activity. It must also be accompanied by the commitment to share future profits of these economic activities (i.e. by N1, N2, N3) with persons who can receive such help (i.e. N11, N12, N13, N21, N22, N23, N31, N 32, N33) in the same way as aid to investment received by companies N1, N2, N3 from company N.

Another interpretation of the diagram presented in Figure 1 is the building of a model of public relations by company N, which in time gives rise to an environment surrounding the company which is based on partnership relationships among production or service businesses.

On the basis of this model of business relationships, it is then possible to propose a new model of economic analysis, where the calculation of the actual costs and budgeted costs of economic activities are based on the paradigm of unity. Such accounting would completely express the possibility of having common profits for co-operating economic subjects. On the basis of this analysis, one can also speak of a more just sharing of costs linked to an economic activity.

Another expression of the paradigm of unity in economics is the collection of small shares in order to carry out socially accepted projects. Examples of this would be collection of funds for charity, humanitarian aid for victims of natural disasters, surgical operations for persons who are not able to pay the costs on their own and scholarships for children and youth coming from poor families.

2. The Paradigm of Unity in Psychology

The methodological constitution of psychology is much more complex than that of economics. Psychology belongs not only to social sciences and behavioural sciences, but also to the humanities as well as natural science.

A review of psychological literature shows that psychological researches are dominated by difficulties related to psychopathology, clinical psychology, disintegration, self-centred reasoning, rivalry and aggressiveness.

As far as the subject of psychology is concerned, the paradigm of unity proposes the analysis of that behaviour, those needs, motivation and emotional attitudes the purpose of which is:

- to achieve better understanding among persons

- to experience a communion of experiences, of motivation, values, goals and activities
- to share goods with others and offer aid to others
- to forgive oneself and others
- empathy, affiliation, friendship, goodwill and belonging
- pro-social thinking
- an altruistic attitude (sacrificing oneself for others, a willingness to serve others, the ability to make heroic deeds for others)

Psychology as a science deals with both cognitive goals (the knowledge of truth on human beings, on one's behaviour in everyday life as well in extreme situations) as well as applied goals (offering psychological help to persons to enable them to act in a more effective way in their social roles, to achieve their goals in life, and to utilise their psychological and intellectual capabilities).

The paradigm of unity, as far as the cognitive goal is concerned, helps to grasp the truth about the human being in a more integrated and holistic way. Such a perspective allows psychology to arrive at an understanding of a mature personality, whose goal is to reach and maintain an integrated interiority, personal identity and unity with oneself and then with others who are in relation to the person as a family, at work, in the neighbourhood and others and, finally, in unity with God.

Those relationships which constitute the unity of one's personality, of a person and among persons, unity with nature and with the transcendental reality (i.e. unity with the divine persons) are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

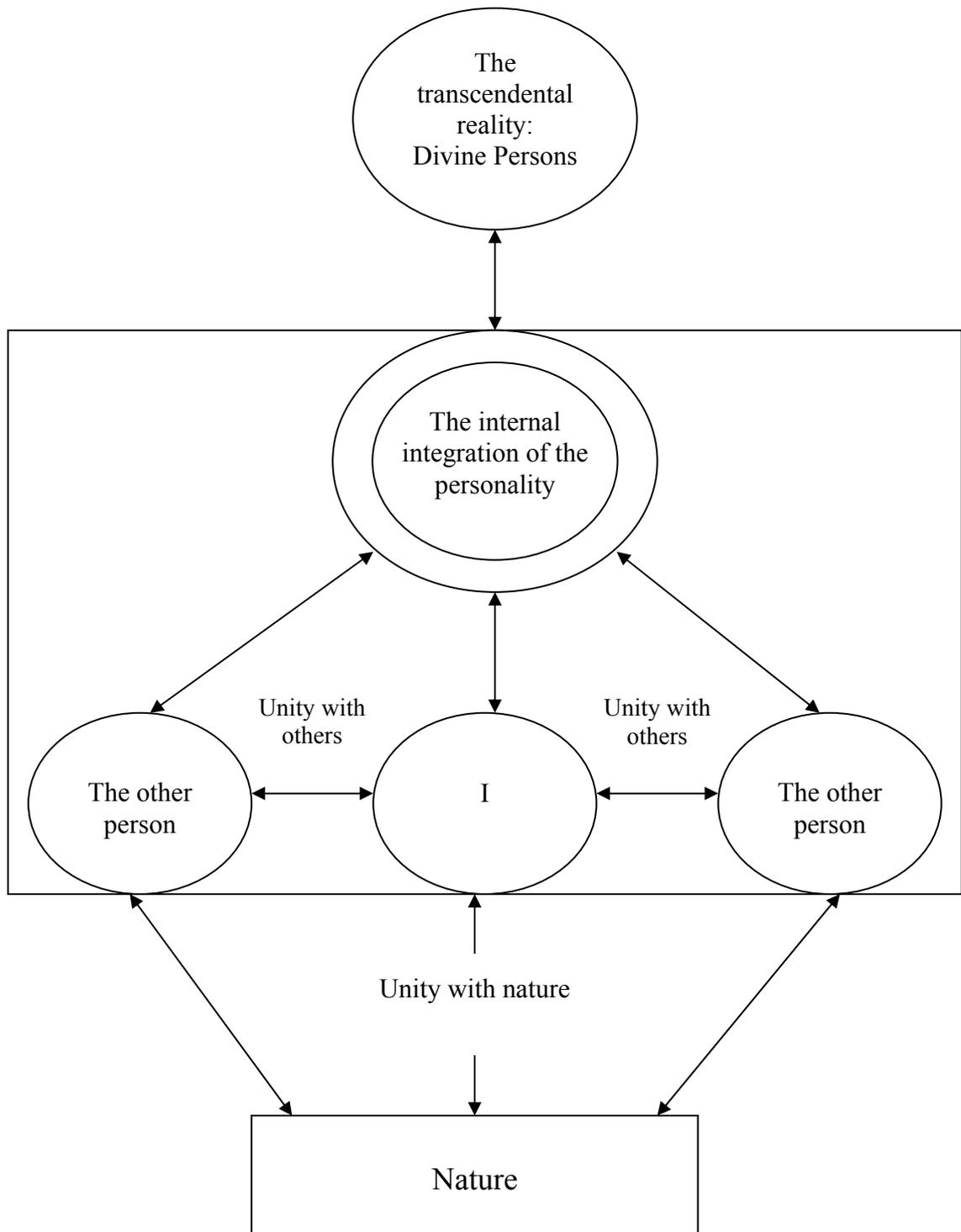


Figure 2. A diagram of the application of the paradigm of unity to the study and application of psychology

In the context of the application goals of psychology, the paradigm of unity suggests that, in offering psychological help, one needs to seek to develop the ability to become one with the mental and emotional state of the other person (others). This means that one needs to develop empathy, which is based on an analogy of experiences, expectations, attitudes, goals, values and motivation.

The result is that in seeking to look at everything from the perspective of the other person one manages to overcome one's own difficulties in reaching integration with oneself.

The diagram presented in Figure 2 can be also treated as a general model in giving psychological help, consisting of the ability of a person suffering from psychological difficulty to build empathic ties with another person. The result is that in looking at things from the other person's point of view enables one to better integrate one's own personality, to use one's intellectual capabilities more, and to operate in a more creative and committed way from an emotional point of view in social situations and in taking up professional roles.

Where there are particularly difficult psychological problems, e.g. when offering marriage and family counselling, school counselling, vocational counselling, pastoral counselling and others, one must adapt the application of the paradigm of unity to the existing relationships of that person with the other persons involved in a given situation.

3. Concluding Remarks

The study presented in this paper on the paradigm of unity in the sciences of economics and psychology shows that when this paradigm is adopted in the methodological bases of these disciplines, the following cognitive and application goals are achieved:

1. a more holistic understanding of the behaviour of individuals in everyday life situations as well as in extreme situations;
2. attention is given to the positive aspects of human behaviour, which is important in achieving a complete social analysis;
3. new light is shed on economic and psychological problems in the context of relating to other persons (social context);
4. a new methodology for the systematisation of economic and psychological phenomena and processes;
5. more efficient methods for economic analysis and psychological counselling are achieved.

Similar methodological analysis dealing with the paradigm of unity can also be proposed in other disciplines belonging to social sciences: sociology, pedagogy, management sciences and political sciences. I hope that such analyses will soon be taken up at the Catholic University of Lublin and at other academic centres as well.

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