

Indirect determinism

“Looking at the cognitive attitude of parsimony, culturally inculcated by operating on cognition with Occam’s razor, there are visible only the direct effects of a cause, or at most those of other collateral causes. The indirect effects of an explicit cause are, however, neglected.”

The paradigm of the organism, whose pliancy on the knowledge model for complexity is much easier to understand, reveals surprising contents in determinism.

Together with other social sciences, psychology and anthropology most of all, Economics has proceeded to applying step by step the theory of determinism in order to expose the chain of causes which would be able to justify as many of the effects as possible. Causal linking has generally become a sort of cognitive reflex, a formula to spontaneously be called upon by the common knowledge when faced with complex situations.

The explanations which Economics traditionally provides for its problems stem from this: the effect is the product of a cause or a series of causes which must be identified in order to lay the foundation for a rational behaviour. Macroeconomics came to the forefront and had an impact on the economic strategies of any nature due to its preoccupation with describing the inter-causality.

The causal mediations have turned out to be the proving grounds for the cognitive performance of Economics.

It all became absolutely problematic when, in certain periods or in special contexts which were usually defined as crises, there was an agglomeration of unexpected effects, perceived as unintentional results with distant, even unknown causes. The cognitive pattern of the linked causes has been caught off-guard. What seemed to be a formula of success to the progress of knowledge in Economics, the explanation for a cause which has its own cause and the explanation for the circular pattern of cause and effect, turned out to have exhausted its virtues when faced with today’s crisis.

Of course, it's not all about an infirmation per se of the method. Somewhat unexpectedly the method needs a change of perspective in its usage and a change in the philosophy which sustains it, because the complexity cannot be understood through causal linearity, be it shorter or longer. The causal hypostatization had to untie what could be called nodes of causes – non-linearly arranged, overlaid, under-stretched, transversal, with crisscrossed spatial conditionings, weaving a web of influences which are not exclusively direct. Meaning, simply put, that it had to become apt at describing indirect causes, with determinism having been inevitably proven multiple and the inter-conditioning no longer being explicit.

The explicative model of the causal linearity used to make the immediate goal accessible, with punctual dimensions, while also being efficient marking the guidelines of the short term and at reaching the individually centred goals. The founding of the explanation through the model of the indirect determinism reveals the macroeconomic size of the projects built on the algorithm-based long term, of the trans-sectorial strategies, of the plurivalent goals, the economic goals, the social and inter-generational goals, in functional contexts of a global type.

But what is truly provocative to the cognitive model of indirect determinism is something different: the clarification of the indirect effects of an explicit cause. The impact studies usually catalogue the effects – for instance, the effects of a policy of political economics according to the principle of proportional correlation. Looking at the cognitive attitude of parsimony, culturally inculcated by operating on cognition with Occam's razor, there are visible only the direct effects of a cause, or at most those of other collateral causes. The indirect effects of an explicit cause are, however, neglected.

It would be fair to say that in fact the perception of the problem does not exist. Only the agglomeration of the unexpected consequences in light of the crisis has awakened the interest for seeking the answers beyond the traditional formula of linear causality. The phenomenology of the consequences of the crisis belongs essentially to a radically different course in the manifestation of the causal relationship, a course configured at the intersection between the conceptualization of the discreet and the probable within the space of uncertainty. The specific expression has been passed around in the recent literature as metaphor of the *black swan*.

The univocal link between cause and effect is barely evident, or discernible. The reality of the consequences emerges mostly through non-linear causal paths, with the unfamiliar but contingent sense of determinist chaos and of fractal geometry linkage.

The determinism of unexpected effects paints a logic of rational filters which are inadequate to the traditional practice of truth validation. The explosive content of this logic holds a purpose due to the recognition of the inadequacy of the methods of practical action to the solving of complex problems. Both the multitude of unknown correlations between variables, and – especially – the indirect self-propagating influences will usually be kept away from being employed as operators into strategies. The incompleteness of the conceptualization of complex processes is a truth which is cognitively disconcerting and which makes any actional system anonymous.

The model of knowledge has stayed within the same inferential parameters employed by Euclidean geometry and by classical logic. Any cause has, in the complex 1/1 scale reality, a multitude of direct and indirect effects, which can be intermediated or not, instantaneous or delayed, positive and negative, incremental and recessive etc. The crises themselves can be defined as an agglomeration of unexpected effects, indirect, intermediated, with a recessive substantiation which is perverse by its persistency, negative through its delay, de-synchronization and propagation.

The indirect effects of a theory, philosophy, strategy or economic policy matter more than the direct, visible effects. The calculations usually reflect only the direct, measurable effects, when in reality their dimension could be dwarfed several times over by the volume of the indirect effects, of contrary movement.

As such, the model of knowledge must be loaded with the acquisitions of situational logic, which is sensitive to the dynamics of multi-conditionings within the self-learning complex systems. Their feedback manifestations which are trans-, supra- and infra-relational – themselves with differentiated courses – highlight causal nodes, not simple univocal causes. But they also highlight the unexpected effects, with a critical mass in the planes or segments of reality which are extremely different from the ones directly influenced by a causal node.

Marin Dinu

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