

ARTICLES | September 01, 1970

## The Conflict of Buridan's Ass or Some Dilemmas of Affluence: The Theory of Attractive Stimulus Overload

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Article

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### Abstract

The author outlines a motivational theory of human behavior that takes into account the effects on the individual of certain ubiquitous features of affluent societies, which provide an overabundance of attractive stimuli and alternatives related to material and symbolic values. Such an overabundance leads to intrapsychic conflict between incompatible approach tendencies, exemplified by the parable of Buridan's ass. Conflicts of this type have widespread effects on human behavior and on mental health. A need for revision of current psychodynamic theory of intrapsychic conflict is pointed out, and the practical implications of the proposed theory for psychiatric intervention are emphasized.

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mental health ; intrapsychic conflict

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