The Commensurability of the Islamic, Liberal, and Neo-Marxist Modes of Explanation

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ince time immemorial, man has sought to find meaning in his existence by relating himself to his environment and by revering deities. In the process, he has spun a web of beliefs which render more comprehensible the world around him. These beliefs, in turn, serve to justify and govern his behavior in a setting otherwise devoid of meaning.

As man did not live alone, these beliefs, or knowledge, formed part of his culture. But just as cultures were varied, so was knowledge, as its character depended on the distinct experiences of man and the tools available to him to pursue it. In other words, knowledge, in whatever form and in however manner it was achieved, was bound to reflect culture. Thus, insofar as knowledge was culture-bound, it was partial and could not claim to universality unless it transcended its parochial origin.

The task of investigating the nature and origin of knowledge was assumed by the discipline of the sociology of knowledge not only to demonstrate that knowledge is not merely concerned with substance or that which lends meaning to reality, but also with method or the manner in which knowledge was pursued. It further demonstrates that knowledge and method condition each other as when the European Enlightenment propounded the idea that knowledge was autonomous from experience – an idea which gave birth to positivist science. The positivists, as the proponents of this idea came to be known, believed that society

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was based on a regularized pattern of behavior, or "laws," which could be observed or verified through an "objective" method.[1] This method entailed the formulation of hypotheses, derived either inductively or deductively, in establishing the causal relations among empirical facts. The knowledge that ensued was then regarded as cumulative in that it was thought to improve upon any previous knowledge. Not surprisingly, history itself was perceived in a similar fashion, i.e., as a progression from a primitive to a modern stage.

During most of the twentieth century, the techniques of the positivists were inherited by various scholars who, within the shelter of the academe, left a considerable mark upon the development of the social sciences. Among them are the founders of the "Chicago School," the functionalist group of writers at Harvard and Columbia universities, and a distinct group of logical positivists led by Karl Popper.[2] The common theme discernible in their works is this: *an explanation of a social event is valid only if it is logical and if it presupposes certain generalizations which give rise to a conclusion that expresses the event being explained.* Because of the persuasive appeal of this argument, it subsequently became accepted as the "normal science" and established as the foundation of what we now refer to as *behavioralism.*

However, in the early 1960s, a bold new look at the growth of knowledge came to the fore with the publication of Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.*[3] Perhaps the most significant contribution of this work is the view that a scientific discovery is a revolutionary event which entails "the breaking down [of] the icons of... or 'paradigms'."[4] Paradigms, Kuhn explains, represent "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners."[5] These achievements form the core around which a consensus is built by a body of practitioners

who share the same methods and agree on the definition and type of problems to be resolved. In other words, paradigms are a series of scientific communities each adhering to certain basic presuppositions about a problem, its solution, and the means of pursuing it.

Kuhn contends further that the growth of knowledge lies precisely in the nature of relationships among paradigms. As scientific communities, they compete for dominance over each other by accounting for a problem that others can not explain. But while much of the strength of their argument rests on its logical coherence, their use of scientific means is not a denial of the existence of values which are recognized as a source of legitimation of facts or events. Thus, the scientific community that possesses the most convincing explanation to a problem and whose values are shared by a significant number of practitioners stands a greater chance of prevailing over other communities or paradigms.

In the Kuhnian scheme, the knowledge that results from the competition among paradigms does not come about in an orderly and cumulative fashion. Rather, it comes about as a result of a revolutionary transformation in which a dominant paradigm, due to its inability to handle an "anomaly" in a problem-solving situation, is rendered obsolescent by another paradigm whose solution is better able to explain an otherwise anomalous situation.

Furthermore, as implied earlier, the Kuhnian scheme recognizes that a meaningful observation (which may be popularly referred to as "bias" or "prejudice") could not be separated from theory, or vice versa. In other words, it believes that a value-free science, as believed in and practiced by positivists, is a contradiction in terms because science itself springs from a value, i.e., a desire to discover through a predetermined method a truth for a particular purpose.

The paradigms of explanation under consideration -- the Islamic, the Liberal, and the Neo-Marxist -- may all be said to be embodiments of definite assumptions about the world. Arising as we know from various cultural settings and intellectual traditions, each of these paradigms defines a problem and suggests its own solution. It follows that each also has its own group of practitioners who, through their textbooks and pronouncements, assert the validity of their paradigm's solution over that of others. In the process, each claims universality of its explanation and seeks to convince others that it is so.

Numerous problems have preoccupied these paradigms, but one problem, in particular, has been of intense concern to all three. This concerns what appears to them as the definition, description, and attainment of that group, organization,

or community where human beings become attached or identified with. In Islam, this has been called the *Ummah* (or Islamic community); among scholars of the liberal tradition, the term "nation" or "ethnicity" easily comes to mind; and in neo-Marxist literature, the term "class" is prevalent.

This essay attempts to examine the way each of these paradigms elaborate on their definition of this particular phenomenon and the manner in which it (i.e. this phenomenon) evolves. The papers then tackles the matter of commensurability or incommensurability. By 'commensurability' we mean the agreement of the paradigms in the definition of and solution to a problem, assuming that the categories they use (in their respective definition and solution) are the same or comparable. On the other hand, the term incommensurability will be used to refer to the opposite condition, i.e., the absence of the same or comparable categories used by the paradigms.[6]

THE ISLAMIC PARADIGM OF EXPLANATION

It is a common belief that religion and science belong to different realms. Religion, it is said, is essentially intuitive while science is essentially empirical. The examples, however, of the great religious traditions have amply demonstrated that this is not necessarily so. In fact, they have shown that religion is an attitude towards reality both in its empirical and essential manifestations -- an attitude which has engendered a sense of awe and reverence among many as reality has unfolded to them in its ultimate form.

Knowledge and Method in Islam

In Islam, the attitude towards knowledge centers on the belief that God is the knower of all things and the cause of all events. As such, God represents the unity of the universe composed of various particularities. Thus, knowledge of God means knowledge of the ultimate reality; all other knowledge that concerns the finite deals only with particularities and is, therefore, incomplete.

The idea in Islam that God represents the wholeness of the universe gave birth to the cosmological perspective that it is based on the principle of *Tawhid* (unity). This perspective became the basis of a science devoted to the understanding of the origin and composition of the universe and man's place in it. This science, just like Western science many centuries later, accepts as valid the use of qualitative as well as quantitative methods of arriving at knowledge. Through these methods, it was explained, the infinitude of God is revealed with the aid of

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concepts representing multiple aspects of a single unity. These aspects, including social life, are particularized truths bearing their own traits and characteristics.

Among the concepts utilized by early Muslim scientists as basis of their investigations are space, art, and geometric forms. The possibility of the Absolute was signified by space within which six basic directions were conceived including the zenith, representing an ontological progression, and the nadir, symbolizing degeneration. The medium of art was used to express the unity of the universe; this is perhaps best illustrated by the "arabesque" which shows a continuous flow of line that leaves no trace of either the beginning or the end. Finally, the geometric set of symbols was used in the light of the Koranic cosmology. The spherical figure, for instance, was regarded as the most perfect figure characterized by lightness and mobility; thus, it was associated with the spirit. In another instance, the cube was regarded as the most rigid symbol, symbolizing the stability of matter.

The discovery of these and other symbols coincided with the crystallization of the Islamic spirit into different schools of thought. These schools mother the growth of the Islamic arts and sciences in the third century A.H. (tenth century A.D.) culminating in their greatest flowering in the fourth and fifth centuries A.H. (eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D.). Within this period, different schools of law were formed such as those of the Sunni and the Shi'ite sects, and the arts and sciences witnessed the rise to prominence of such luminaries as Abu Nasr Al-Farabi, Umar Khayyam, Ibn Rushd, and al-Ghazali.

These "seekers after knowledge of God" recognized the essential unity of the various levels of experience, i.e., matter, life, mind, or consciousness. This recognition encompassed a recognition of the role of the disciplines of physics, biology, and psychology. It further implied a view of nature as transcending the

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Religious Experience in the formation of the Ummah[7]

The formation of the *Ummah* may be better understood in the context of Islam's postulates with respect to the nature of man, state, and society. In Islamic cosmology, man, the state, and society form part of a hierarchy which culminates in the divine supremacy of God. This is expressed in the *Shahadah* or formula which goes: "La ilaha ill' Allah." Although this is popularly translated as " There is no God but Allah," in its metaphysical sense it means that "there is no power, agent, or reality if it is not The Power, The Agent, The Reality."[8] It follows from here that man, along with the rest of nature, is that part of God's creation to whom the faculty of reason has been conferred. With this faculty, an opportunity is given him to realize an inner spiritual perfection which corresponds to the perfection of his Creator. His striving for perfection, which takes place in time, characterizes mankind's history when envisaged as a movement from an imperfect to a perfect state of existence.

Having given man a prominent role over nature, worshipping or believing God, in Islam, did not mean for man to live and pray alone. This is suggested by Islam's preference for congregational worship over asceticism or mystical quietism. Furthermore, Islam enjoins its adherents to externalize God's kingdom in their organized social life.

That man is regarded as a social being and, thus, is enjoined to partake in his community's affairs is a belief that logically leads to the instrument with which to actualize the Islamic values -- the state. Numerous passages in the *Koran* make reference to the state when it states: " Let there arise out of you a body of people... prescribing what is right and proscribing what is wrong" (3:104). However, no detailed political system is prescribed either in the *Koran* or in the *Sunnah* (i.e., the Prophet Muhammad's traditions). This matter is evidently left to the discretion of particular Muslim communities in recognition of their disparate historical experiences and ethnic backgrounds.

Regardless of the form an Islamic state may take, it is expected to administer God's law. Through the *Koran* and the *Sunnah*, both forming the *Shariah*, the Law is believed to guide believer's inner personal lives as well as their outward social conduct. Insofar as they adhere to this law, regardless of their racial, ethnic, or social origin, they are one Community (*Ummah*, or Community of Believers) and equal in the eyes of God.

The *Ummah*, thus, is a nation which in itself is based on the fundamental Islamic postulate of mankind's oneness. The *Koran* affirms this on numerous occasions. One *surah* (verse), for instance, states: "O men, revere your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and made out of it a pair, and thereupon brought forth multitudes of men and women" (4:1). It is indicated that while affirming this oneness, the *Koran* does not deny the multiplicity of nations and tribes. Nor does it assert that the *Ummah* exists in a vacuum. In actuality, it exists amidst infidels and hostile adversaries.

It was the recognition of this that Islamic scholars have elaborated a theory of international relations (*siyar*) which has governed, and continues to govern, the *Ummah's* relation with the outside world. Prominent of these scholars was al-Shaybani who codified this theory perhaps more ably than any of his fellow Islamic scholars. In his *siyar*, he distinguishes the *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam) from the *dar al-harb* (territory of war).[9] In the former can be found the *Ummah* where *Pax Islamica* prevails while in the latter live unbelievers who are the object of proselytization. Theoretically, the relationship between these territories is one of war until the former wins over the latter through *jihad* (holy war). In practice, however, this is not possible and later Islamic scholars have modified the dominant theory as to accommodate a condition of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims.[10]

THE LIBERAL PARADIGM OF EXPLANATION

The tradition of liberalism is rooted in the European Enlightenment when the concept of universal ecclesiastical (i.e., Christian) order, characterized by the dominant influence of Christianity upon the lives of many, was being eroded by the process of secularization in virtually all aspects of life. The advent of the Age of Reason, as some refer to the period of Enlightenment to distinguish it from the previous Age of Faith, brought with it the belief in man's capacity to organize society independent of any "divine inspiration." Concomitant to this belief was a shift in intellectual attitudes toward a "scientific" study of society and away from the speculative nature of intellectual inquiry prevalent during the previous age. August Comte articulated this shift perhaps better than any of his contemporaries when he suggested that "human society in all its aspects can and should be studied in exactly the same spirit and by substantially the same methods as used by the natural scientists in their studies of natural phenomena."[11]

Following a period of gestation -- a period which saw the birth of the materialist mode of thought which later broke away in open rebellion from the liberal intellectual tradition -- the essence of liberalism came to be expressed in the establishment of a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." The state, utilizing the government as its instrument, was to enforce adherence to established laws and institutions upon its citizens whose activities would then be made rational and predictable.

Knowledge and Method in Liberalism

The expectation of a rational and predictable human behavior instilled a belief that liberalism epitomized the zenith of human progress.[12] This belief has had a noticeable impact upon scholarship in the social sciences in the West, particularly in the United States. In the explanation of social phenomena, structural functionalism (henceforth, functionalism) emerged to become a dominant body of thought. Emerging from the evolutionist conception of development, which was first elaborated in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology, functionalism postulated that society is like a living organism possessed with functionally interdependent parts. This interdependence makes for the persistence of the whole body so that the individual parts assume meaning and significance through their contribution to the whole. In social life, the whole is represented by the state, the maintenance of which is the object of "political development" or "nation building."

That the functionalist outlook has been pervasive in social science scholarship especially immediately after the Second World War is a fact attributable in part to the notion of objectivity. This notion, understood as the acquisition of social knowledge through value-free methods adopted from the physical sciences, exhibited an inherent bias in favor of the status quo. By claiming to be unbiased, i.e., consciously remaining aloof from the competition of ideologies, the scholars imbued with this notion implicitly accepted and/or tolerated existing social realities. Advocacy to change was deemed biased and, therefore, unobjective. Consequently, researches centered

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on the status quo, preoccupies with questions concerning the persistence or equilibrium of the "system." Wittingly or unwittingly, these studies became justifications for the state and the elements in the society whose interests were served by the survival of this state. The weaker elements, e.g., minority groups, attracted attention only insofar as they effected the stability of the state. But even then, they were viewed more as "problematics" or "nuisances" subject to the coercive instruments of the state to enforce conformity, or otherwise relegated as unimportant in the back of the scholar's mind.

Cultural Attributes in the Formation of Nationality

The persistence and resurgence of cultural minority groups or ethnic communities compelled social scientists to reconsider their assumptions about the centrality of the state and the dominant elements in the society.[13] In this context, the idea of cultural pluralism was admitted -- particularistic groups were allowed to exist with the expectation that the existence of one did not interfere with that of the others, the state, or the nation as a whole. Correspondingly, research emphasis shifted to the "interest group" and the "public" as social collectivities. "Classes" were deemed irrelevant and, hence, dismissed for their inability to, among others, explain social mobilization. Instead, social "roles" were given prominent attention.[14] But within the society, homogeneity was assumed as indicated by the preponderance of the terms "assimilation" and "acculturation," for instance, into dominant Anglo-Saxon norms.

These terms led logically to the belief in a "melting pot," a belief which was vigorously asserted in the US perhaps more than in any other liberal democratic country. Based on the assumption that groups of different ethnic, racial, and national origins would eventually "melt" their distinct traits and characteristics into a common culture, this belief was expected to ease potential conflict among these groups. Beyond this anticipated advantage, however, was a problem growing out of the consequent obliviousness to social inequalities which the belief itself engendered. This is no less signified by the faith on the inevitability of the "American Dream."

These assumptions, known collectively as the "liberal expectancy," became encrusted in the laws of the US and gained a formal-legal expression. Thus, the liberal expectancy has come to mean "equal treatment by the law, integration, the raising of the competitive resources of blacks [and other minority groups] by the corrective means of government aid programs and the opening up of white institutions to all, regardless of race, who could now or later qualify by meeting universalistic standards..."[15] It was, in other terms, a call to conscience upon the

dominant Anglo-Saxon populace to display greater sensitivity to the problems of prejudice and discrimination on account of race, sex, religion, or national origin.

The optimism nurtured by the liberal expectancy was, however, short-lived as ethnic and racial relations in the 1960s and 1970s worsened. What is more, throughout the 1980s, backlash against affirmative action programs heightened as calls for the repeal of the "quota system" and criticisms against supposed "reverse discrimination" reverberated throughout the US. This was preceded by the overwhelming passage of Proposition 13 in the state of California, in which the predominantly white middle class voted to repeal certain state taxes which, in turn, curtailed basic social services designed to benefit minorities. Finally, racial and ethnic groups, with increasing religious and political overtones, proliferated in a manner that tended to defy the rational-scientific assumptions of earlier periods. Exemplifying this was the emergence of the religious right as well as a sanitized version of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) -- the former being represented by the Moral Majority led by the Rev. Jerry Falwell and the latter being represented by David Duke, a former Grand Wizard of the KKK, who ran, albeit unsuccessfully, for the governorship of the state of Alabama, in 1991.

These developments have inevitably caused a re-evaluation of the assumptions underlying the liberal expectancy. This re-evaluation began, understandably so, with the critical look at how the term "ethnicity" is defined. This effort is significant in that it signals a heightened awareness and recognition of the phenomenon represented by the term. Scholars admit that the term and the reality it represents have received scant attention in the past, but they recognize it as a subjective condition in which a group within a larger society claims "real or putative ancestry, memories of shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood."[16] Thus defined, an ethnic group is distinguished from race and class in that the latter are, respectively, genetically and materially determined.

Furthermore, liberal scholars have grown sensitive to the formation of ethnic nationality. A representative study, for instance, identifies two distinct stages, namely: ethnic category and ethnic community. The former term is defined as "any group of people dissimilar from other peoples in terms of objective cultural criteria and that contains within its membership... the elements of a complete division of labor and for production," while the latter is defined as consisting of ethnic groups "objectively distinct from their neighbors, subjectively self-conscious of their distinctness, and laying claim to status and recognition either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups."[17] The

transition from the former to the latter, it is explained, involves the formation of a group identity based on similarities of language, cultural traditions, or common loyalty to a particular leader. It involves the universalization of certain meanings that make themselves acceptable to other objectively distinct groups.

Other liberal scholars have also focused their attention to the phenomenon of conflict. It may be recalled that earlier conflict was precluded due to the assumptions that (a.) the process of homogenization would "melt" away cultural differences, and (b.) only the state had the monopoly of the use of legitimate force. These scholars, in modifying these assumptions, have recognized that minority groups may, in fact, have a desire for self-expression and that their interests may not be identical with those of the society as a whole. These scholars concede a modicum of autonomy to these groups short of

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allowing the fragmentation of the rest of society. Additionally, they argue that an amount of conflict may, in fact, be healthy as it lends vitality to the society, points out its areas of strength and weaknesses, and helps make it more adaptable to adverse conditions.[18]

THE NEO-MARXIST PARADIGM OF EXPLANATION

For some time now, there has been an evident increase of interest in the study of Marxism as a body of thought by scholars from various disciplines.[19] This development occurs in the context of what has been perceived as the inadequacy of conventional (i.e., liberal) ways of viewing and explaining social events. Marxist scholars in particular have been apt in regarding these 'standard' views as mere rationalizations which fail to recognize the real 'motor' of social processes. In upholding Marxism amidst liberal critiques against its rigid economic determinism, these scholars deny that Marxism depends on "the point of view of totality" as when it suggests a critical look at not only the internal arrangements in a society but also the international millieu in which this society is but a part of.[20] Furthermore, they retort that, on the contrary, liberal

democratic explanations have overplayed the role of the 'religious,' 'cultural,' or other aspects of reality in accounting for social events.

That Marxist scholars believe in the superiority of their explanation over other explanations is not, however, a guarantee that Marxism itself has not been without flaws. For instance, it has been unable to account convincingly for the different stages that lead to a classless society nor has it satisfactorily explained the rise and demise of imperialism. This failure would have relegated Marxism to the dustbin of history were it not for the salvaging effort of a group of vigorous young intellectuals who, following the Second World War, emerged to be known collectively as neo-Marxists.

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Knowledge and Method in Neo-Marxism

Marxism (i.e., classical Marxism) and neo-Marxism both postulate the eventual victory of the working class over the bourgeoisie. However, while Marxism views the transition to socialism as a function of the creation of a working class in an industrial society, it failed to explain why some peasant societies in the Third World turn socialist anyway. This failure is generally attributed to Marxism's rigid view concerning the relationship between socialism, as the collective ownership of the means of production, and capitalism, as a system of private ownership of the means of production. As a consequence of this rigidity, it regarded both capitalism and socialism not as alternative models of social organization but, rather, as historical stages in which capitalism preceded socialism in a deterministic fashion.

Neo-Marxism, on the other hand, discards the requisite of industrialization *qua* capitalism and points to the possibility of a transition to socialism from feudalism. While it does not regard capitalism and socialism as alternative models of society, neo-Marxism denies the Marxist oversimplification that the

phenomenon of imperialism is "an economic relationship under private capitalism, motivated by the needs for an expanding markets,"[21] and that the downfall of imperialism follows from the elimination of the conditions for economic imperialism. Instead, neo-Marxism regards imperialism not just as an economic relationship but also as a "general structural relationship between two collectivities."[22] On the one hand, we have the industrialized metropolitan countries analytically labeled as the 'Center' and, on the other, we have the un- or less-developed countries referred to as the 'Periphery.' It is contended that both of these collectivities are characterized by a basic disharmony of interests, the former serving as a source of capital and of finished materials and the latter as the supply of cheap labor and dumping ground for finished products.

Material Factors in the Formation of Class.

Marxism and neo-Marxism differ in yet another area. This concerns the issue of ethnicity variously referred to as *primordialism*, tribalism, and the "nationality question" in both Liberal and Marxist literature. The dispute between Marxism and neo-Marxism arises from the former's inability to explain the nationalist phenomenon as an expression of the people's consciousness apart from class consciousness. As Nicos Poulantzas, a noted neo-Marxist theoretician, lamented: "One must accept the evidence: There is no Marxist theory of the nation."[23]

As premature as this may appear to others, neo-Marxists have generally launched a project in search for clues as to how the fathers of the socialist movement might have regarded the question. One of these clues is found in the *Communist Manifesto*, cited in an article on the dialectics of the "nation" and the "state."[24] The manifesto reads, in part: "Communists are reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationalities. The workingmen have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not."[25] It goes on to say that inasmuch as the proletariat must rise against the bourgeoisie as a matter of course, it (i.e., the proletariat) must then become the dominant class by seizing political power. The instrument with which to accomplish this would be, in contemporary terminology, a movement for 'national liberation' in which the proletariat would become aware of its oppressed condition and rise up to alter this condition. This movement, by its revolutionary character, would necessarily be a component of the general class struggle.

With these thoughts, it is argued that, despite Marxism's lack of emphasis on the matter of nationality, it is not totally barren with references to the question. It is pointed out that these references, in fact, are filled with the following themes:

(a.) that the nation -- in the sense that it may based ethnically, linguistically, culturally, or territorially -- exists; (b.) that it is a political reality and could not, therefore, be ignored; (c.) that each dominant class builds itself into a national class in the manner that Russia -- being the dominant nation -- attempted to 'Russify' the rest of what was then the Soviet Union; (d.) that this class identifies its interests as those of the nation as a whole; (e.) that the bourgeoisie in capitalist or semi-feudal societies have done this time and again and that the proletariat is obligated to do the same; and, (f.) that the nation assumes meaning only in accordance with the wishes of the dominant class.[26]

Neo-Marxist scholars recognize the centrality of these themes in their researches. The material category, which has been the life-blood of the materialist analysis since Marx, is in no way displaced by the rising prominence of the ethnic or national dimension in recent academic discourses. It is, in fact, explained in a new light as the focus of the analysis shifts to the interplay between social actors in terms of ethnic or national categories.

One such analysis takes off with a new look at what Liberal scholars have always referred to as clientelism in their analysis of power relationships among so-called primordial groups, e.g., ethnic or tribal communities.[27] It may be recalled that Liberal scholars have advanced the clientilist model as a means of denying the validity of class analysis; class analysis, they argued, was irrelevant where clientelist ties dictated mass mobilization.[28] Neo-Marxists, on the other hand, responded by pointing out that clientelist ties have an inescapable material basis in which the patron representing the dominant class, serves to satisfy particularistic desires of his client, representing the non-dominant class, in exchange for his (i.e., the client's) loyalty and support. With this relationship, neo-Marxists argue that the pattern of mobilization that emerges seems naturally 'pillarized' which gives the impression of an alliance and consensus of values between the patron and the client. But in fact, as pointed out, their values, goals, and interests, are different if not divergent and inevitably reflected a stratified, rather than pillarized, relationship.

This is shown by another study with respect to the manner in which ethnic or tribal sentiments are exploited by the leading elements in different ethnic or tribal communities in launching a 'nationalist' movement. In Africa, where it has been said that tribalism is a barrier to national unity, "it is less frequently recognized that tribal movements may be created and instigated to action by the new men of power in furtherance of their own special interests which are, time and again, the constitutive interests of emerging social classes. Tribalism then

becomes a mask for class privilege."[29] This observation is held true as well in the case of industrialized societies of the West where the role of primordial sentiments has been rather subdued in comparison. In any case, it is explained that ethnic and racial relations in these societies are objectively linked to the relations between social classes. This link is manifested in the manner in which the social, political, and economic spheres are monopolized by bourgeois class interests. It is manifested further in the manner in which this monopoly is systematically translated into forms of racism, chauvinism, and discrimination -- weapons that serve to promote reactionary nationalism vis-a-vis revolutionary nationalism. Thus, it is concluded that "[i]n analyzing the class essence of new forms of racism in industrial countries... we must... trace its roots in the material production sphere."[30]

Conclusion

Before proceeding to tackle the question of commensurability, it is appropriate at this juncture to respond to some doubts raised as to the intellectual profitability of the present enterprise. These doubts are rooted in the conviction that the paradigms of explanation under consideration could not be objectively evaluated in view of the presumption that they do not lend themselves to a quantitative measurement. But if quantification is the only means of determining commensurability and if this presumption is accepted without question, then one may well conclude that the paradigms are incommensurable.

This attitude, however, smacks of the kind of arrogance which has characterized the behavioral movement at its height, and has been a significant contributory factor to the condition wherein individuals and peoples often "talk past one another" without really understanding and appreciating each other's background and position.[31] Beside trying to establish a ground for understanding, this enterprise may be undertaken for what has been described as "an interesting test of the skill of the critic to pursue the detailed kind of comparison necessary in order to evaluate the relative promise of each [paradigm] as a frame of reference" for social analysis.[32]

The underlying assumption of this essay has been that common areas can be found to determine whether or not the paradigms are commensurable.[33] To do this, a list of these areas is established for the purpose of determining the effectiveness of the paradigms in stating their respective cases. The result would hopefully give a clue as to the possibility of agreement among them either in fundamental or non-fundamental issues.

In Table I, the paradigms' postulates on knowledge and method are summarized. Concerning knowledge, Islam's emphasis is on the comprehension of God's will and man's relation to Him; it affirms the cosmological hierarchy which assigns a definite place for men, along with state and society, in the universe. Man's knowledge of himself and the universe brings to him knowledge of the ultimate -- God. Liberalism, on the other hand, postulates that knowledge is comprehension and , by implication, consummation of individual autonomy. This is a legacy of the Enlightenment in which the individual replaced God as the 'center' of the universe. Furthermore, Liberalism shifted attention to appearance and, consequently, gave second importance to the essence of things. Hence, its insistence on observable and verifiable facts. Finally, neo-Marxism views knowledge as a product of material (i.e., more than just economic) conditions and is, therefore, socially conditioned. Its task, then, is to discover how this knowledge (i.e., consciousness) is produced through existing modes of production and social relations. With respect to methods, Islam combines intuition and reason in the discovery of the interrelations of facts; liberalism employs positivist mode of reasoning to bear on causality; and neo-Marxism postulates inherent conflict in the relations of facts and, accordingly, utilizes dialectical materialism to ascertain the processes involved in this conflict.

Table I

	Islamic	Liberal	Neo-Marxist
Knowledge	Comprehension of God's will and man's relation to him	Comprehension of individual will, causality	Comprehension of history's "motor," modes of production
Method	Rational (Positivist)	Intuitive/rational	Dialectical Materialism (Positivist)

These postulates on knowledge and method have corresponding implications on the solution to the problem of human organization. As shown in Table II, the integral components of this organization are broken down into man, state, and society. In Islamic thought, the ideal society is *Ummah* in which the state serves in the administration of God's law. Man is viewed as God's creature, with the consequence that both are mutually responsible for each other. Part of man's responsibility is his role as God's viceregent on earth, a responsibility translated into the organization of society, with the aid of state instrumentalities, in accordance with God's will. In Liberal thought, society is conceived as a

composite of heterogeneous groups, including the state, sharing common values, say, of liberal democracy. The state, along with other institutions like churches and schools, serves as guardian of these values and utilizes, if need be, coercive means to secure conformity. Many of these values, among which are the values of individual freedom and private ownership, are crystallized into positive laws which the state is duty-bound to preserve. Man is deemed autonomous from any transcendental power and is regarded as responsible for his actions. Lastly, in neo-Marxism society is viewed as composed of contending classes, i.e., the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, in view of the contradictions inherent in the existing modes of production. Under this condition, the state is viewed as an instrument of the bourgeoisie to perpetuate its dominance over the proletariat, or working class. Furthermore, man as an individual is regarded not as the responsibility of himself or of any transcendent being but, rather, as a product of his material and social environment. In other words, he is bound to and by social institutions established to preserve existing modes of production and social relations; his freedom and autonomy would come only by tearing down these institutions and radically altering his relations with his environment.

Table II

	Islamic	Liberal	Neo-Marxist
Man	God's creature, viceregent on earth	Autonomous; self-responsible	Socially determined
Society	Administrator of God's laws	Administrator of positive law	Committee of exploiters
Society	Consists of the Ummah; non-believers	Consists of the "whole" and dependent parts with common values	Consists of bourgeoisie and proletariat with opposing values

No further discussion is necessary to convince the reader that the Islamic, the Liberal, and the neo-Marxist paradigms or modes of explanation are, at the fundamental level, incommensurable. The proceeding survey leads to a conclusion that their differences are profound with respect to their basic presuppositions on, among others, knowledge, the method of attaining it, and the formation of human collectivity which the individual person may give loyalty to or be identified with.

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An implication of this is their inability to arrive at an agreement on fundamental grounds. Thus, in interpreting history, each paradigm would be looking at aspects or categories which would be different from those that the other paradigms would look for. Logically, their conclusions would also differ.

Having stated so, nothing is implied that, on non-fundamental issues, agreement is precluded. One may expect, then, that these paradigms would continue to exist until one or the other loses either its internal consistency or its ability to account for and interpret changes in the empirical realm. It may be recalled that the strength and vitality of each has always rested on its ability to innovate from within -- including the ability to contain insurgent paradigms from within that may arise to challenge the 'normal' assumptions -- in order to solve an otherwise anomalous situation. Within

> "[O]ne may anticipate further tension if not outright conflict until one community, until one view of reality, prevails over the other.
> But then when this time comes, one may wonder whether the prevailing view has all the explanations or whether this may lead to the kind of orthodoxy which, already in this century, has brought misery and destruction to untold millions."

Islam, the innovations brought about by the different schools, e.g., *Ash'arite, Peripatetic*, and *Sufi*, have allowed this great religious tradition to survive many centuries and adapt to adverse conditions including the onslaught of Western secularism. As for the liberal tradition, its persistence is due in part to the New Pluralist, the neo-evolutionists, and the conflict theorists. In similar manner, neo-Marxism, even though itself an outgrowth of orthodox Marxism, continues to be vitalized by such movements as the Frankfurt School and the dependency school.[34]

In the end, however, the apparent coexistence of these paradigms of explanation at the ontological level may be rendered meaningful only by the extent in which the adherents of these paradigms see, at the practical and political level, this coexistence as relevant to their day-to-day realities. Depending in part on their perception

and disposition at given times and on the adequacy with which these paradigms account for reality, these adherents may not be so receptive to the idea of coexistence. Their adherence to a paradigm may be such that they would accept no less than a complete political victory for their community. In this case, one may anticipate further tension if not outright conflict until one community, until one view of reality, prevails over the other. But then when this time comes, one may wonder whether the prevailing view has all the explanations or whether this may lead to the kind of orthodoxy which, already in this century, has brought misery and destruction to untold millions.

ENDNOTES

[1]Perhaps the best known positivist of nineteenth century Europe is Auguste Comte who wrote, among others, *System of Positive Polity* (London: Longmans, Green, 1877). In this and in his other writings, he designed a secular religion, complete with saints and festivals, intended to condition citizens to adopt modes of conduct which the administrators wished them to follow. He also conceived of history as one in which a society passes three main epochs, namely: 1.) a theological and military epoch in which superstition dominates the culture, and military conquest is a major goal; 2.) the metaphysical and juridical epoch which is transitional between the first and the third; and 3.) the scientific and industrial epoch in which positivism displaces religion and economic production replaces war-making as a dominant social goal.

Comte's ideas have inspired both admiration and criticism from later scholars. A trenchant critique may be found in Chapter VI, "The Apocalypse of Man," in Eric Voeglin, *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, edited by John H. Hallowell (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1975), pp. 136-159.

[2]The "Chicago School" is premised on the assumed applicability of the techniques of the natural sciences to the study of social life and, hence, advocates a "unified science." A representative of this school is Charles E. Merriam, *New Aspects of Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970). The "functionalist school," on the other hand, emphasizes the organic and evolutionary nature of society. Much of its techniques are oriented towards the discovery of the technological functions of social events. A leader in the field is Talcott Parsons who wrote, among many others, *The Social System* (New York: The Free Press, 1951). Karl R. Popper, with his *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959), represents the logical positivists who discard as "non-knowledge" anything that does not meet the criteria of a "value-free science."

[3]This was originally published in 1962. A new edition came out in 1970, published by the University of Chicago, in which Kuhn responds to some of the criticisms to the earlier edition. More notable of these critiques is Dudley Shapere, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions," *Philosophical Review*, 73 (1964)): pp. 383-394.

[4]Arthur S. Wilke and Raj P. Mohan, "Units of Analysis and Paradigms in Contemporary Sociological Theory," *Social Sciences*, 54 (Spring 1979): p. 29.

[5]Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. viii.

[6]For elaboration on these definitions, see James B. Noble, "Theoretical Commensurability and the Problem of Mannheim's Paradox," a paper delivered at the 1977 Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., September 1977.

[7]This theme is further elaborated in "Religious Experience in the Formation of the Ummah in the Philippines," in *Proceedings of the Third International Symposium on Asian Studies* (Hong Kong: Asian Research Service, 1981), pp. 461-475.

[8]Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Studies: Essays on Law, Society, the Sciences and the Philosophy of Sufism* (Beirut: Libraire du Liban, 1967), p. 48.

[9]See Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani, *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybani's Siyar*, translated and edited by Majid Khadduri (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966).

[10]For instance, al-Mawardi's work on the "Ordinances of Government" (Ahkam as-Sultaniyah) interpreted in Chapter 9, "Al-Mawardi's Theory of the Caliphate," in Hamilton A.R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1962), pp. 151-165.

[11]Voegelin, *From Enlightenment and Revolution*.

[12]This belief was the core of social Darwinism, a set of beliefs which validated the assumption of the "White Man's Burden" or the "Manifest Destiny" on the part of the North Americans or West Europeans in their quest for colonial possessions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See for instance, Benjamin Kidd, *The Control of the Tropics* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1898).

[13]This awareness is evidenced in the collection of essays found in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975).

[14]Nelson W. Polsby, "How to Study Community Power: The Pluralist Alternative," *Journal of Politics*, 22 (August 1960): 474-484.

[15]Milton M. Gordon, "Toward a General Theory of Racial and Ethnic Group Relations," in Glazer and Moynihan, eds. *op. cit.* p. 12.

[16]Richard A. Schermerhorn, Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 12.

[17]Paul R. Brass, "Ethnicity and Nationality formation," *Ethnicity*, 3 (September 1976): p. 226.

[18]These soldiers are known to their colleagues in the social sciences as "conflict theorists" for their effort to account for and accommodate the phenomenon of conflict into their research agenda. Prominent of whom are: Kenneth E. Boulding, *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory* (New York: Harper, 1962); Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Glencoe, Ill. The Free Press, 1956); and, Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in an Industrial Society* (Stanford, Ca. Stanford University Press, 1959).

[19]Much of this interest is directed towards a critical evaluation of the Marxist ideology and its variants especially in the context of the dramatic events within the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. For example, see Kenneth E. Bauzon, "Neo-Marxism: End of a Career or Start of a New One?," *Kasarinlan*, Vol.6 No.4 and Vol. 7 No.1(Second and Third Quarters 1991) pp. 113-126.

[20]Georg Lukacs, "The Marxism of Rosa Luxemburg," in *History and Class Consciousness* (London: Merlin Press, 1968), p.27.

[21]Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research*, 8 (1971) p.81.

[22]*Ibid.*

[23]As quoted in Pierre Vilar, "On Nations and Nationalism," *Marxist Perspectives*, 2 (Spring 1979) p. 21.

[24]Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, edited by Samuel H. Beer (Northbrook, Ill.: AHM Publishing Corp., 1955), p. 29. For further elaboration see Vilar, "On Nations and Nationalism." The article referred to is John S. Saul, "The Dialectic of Class and Tribe," *Race and Class*, XX (Spring 1979) pp. 247-272.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 29.

[26]Vilar, *op. cit.* p. 22.

[27]See Peter Flynn, "Class, Clientelism and Coercion: Some Mechanism of Internal Dependency and Control," *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 12 (July 1974) pp. 133-156.

[28]This argument is typified in such works as James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," *American Political Science Review*, 66 (March 1972)) pp. 91-113; and more recently, Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet, *Everyday Politics in the Philippines; Class and Status Relations in a Central Luzon Village* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1990). Kerkvliet's book, although purporting to innovate over conventional analyses of politics, which at the core, emphasize formal and institutional forces and relations, in fact, extends, advocates, and validates the clientelist model in the analysis of "everyday life rather than only in the exceptional situations," i.e., not just where authoritative decisions of government are affected but, more importantly, wherever "resources are at issue, controlled, or disbursed; ... wherever people congregate."

[29]Richard Sklar, "Political Science and National Integration -- A Radical Approach," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 5 (1967).

[30]"The Class Roots and Nature of Racism" (A Symposium), *World Marxist Review*, 20 (August 1977): p. 92.

[31]The credo of behavioralism is contained and discussed in Robert A. Dahl, "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest," *American Political Science Review*, 60 (December 1961) pp. 763-772.

[32]David Easton, *Varieties of Political Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p.10.

[33]Further criteria, including theoretical problems involved, are explored and discussed in the following: Noble, "Theoretical Commensurability and the Problem of Mannheim's Paradox;" and Harold T. Parker, "The Comparability of Paradigms of Historical Explanation," a paper delivered at a forum sponsored by the Trinity College Historical Society, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, February 1980.

[34]Publications of the Frankfurt School include the journals *Telos* and *The New German Critique*. As for the growth and development, including the assumptions of the dependency school, see Kenneth E. Bauzon and Charles Frederick Abel, "Dependency: History, Theory, and Reappraisal," in Mary Ann Tetreault and Charles Frederick Abel, eds., *Dependency Theory and the Return of High Politics* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 43-69.