

Contemporary Social Theory: *Tawhīdī* Projections

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Introduction

Contemporary social theory is conventionally addressed from within the dominant tradition of inquiry. Rarely is it subject to a critical reflection from beyond its own ken. This is a pity, for the subject matter and scope of social theory go beyond the confines of any exclusive tradition, while its reach and influence in the global context of our times merely reinforce its extended compass. Given the fact that the ambitious claims made by social theorists about the universality of their project are hardly borne out by the reality, any pretensions at exclusivism or hegemony would be as anachronistic as they are morally reprehensible. The gap between the legitimate ambitions for a universally relevant social theory and the reality of a field grounded in its historical constraints and cultural prejudices can be filled only by a critical and constructive initiative taken from within the profession to constitute a candid, open, and reflexive self-encounter. The opportuneness for such an initiative is enhanced by its urgency: the discrepancies that follow on the ineptitude of our social knowledge can only raise doubts about the relevance of our science to our social condition.

In deploring the resulting ineptitude and irrelevance, it is possible to do so in the voice of a generalized subject, the universal "I," for surely this is one of the areas of convergence where scholars from different traditions could agree. The measure of this agreement can only be gauged by remembering that "a science for the study of society" originally went beyond its grounding in scientific reason to its justification in a moral reasoning. And here, regardless of the grounding of that morality, we find another significant area of convergence for scholars working in different

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traditions: whether we come to the field from an Islamic perspective that we strive to recover and reconstruct, or from a diffuse western perspective with its overlapping currents, the need is admittedly for a framework of inquiry and for new directions, and above all for a more salubrious ethos to inform our social knowledge.

The test of the new science of society would lie in its ability to accommodate the universality of a realm of human experience, demonstrated in the range and versatility of social phenomena and social activity, and the specificity that accrues to such experience, as indeed it must in consonance with the principle of temporality and inherent diversity. It would also be found in the possibility of the new science recovering, or, more aptly, renewing its moral mandate to be exercised as a profession with a conscience and experienced as knowledge with a vocation. For various reasons, some of which are addressed in this essay, the recovery of social theory cannot come from within the prevailing traditions of inquiry, which, at the very least, call for a radical restructuring. The elements for this recovery will have to be sought from "without," although clearly one of the structuring premises in the reorientation of social theory will have to call into question the autonomy and boundaries of "traditions" in question.

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The present essay constitutes a step in this general direction of rethinking some of the characteristic strains of contemporary social theory and it is taken as a prelude to the quest for a new synthesis.¹ For our point of departure and implicit frame of reference, we take a paradigm of contrasting epistemics in the conviction that such a paradigm offers a more promising venue both for the reconstruction of social theory proper and for the opportunity it provides for promoting an intra/intercultural discourse as a premise and a field for this reconstruction.² Ultimately, it

¹This is a revised version of a presentation originally submitted at the annual convention of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists in 1990. It resumes the discussion of the possibility and prospects of inquiry into society and across cultures along the lines suggested by a *tawhīdī* paradigm conceived within the framework of a contrasting episteme. See *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (March 1990): 15-38 and 8, no. 1 (March 1991): 15-44.

²For some relevant literature broaching social theory with cultural perspectives in view, Ernest Gellner's work in general provides a good example. *Culture, Identity, and Politics* (1987), Gellner's polemics, reflects on a complex of culture, identity, and politics in two different communities: one evolving in the context of the western intellectual tradition and the other in that of a Shi'i Muslim cultural tradition. The final essay on "Tractus Sociologico-Philosophicus" is a subtle reflection of this thrust. In his *Plough, Sword and Book: The Structure of Human History* (Chicago: 1988), the historical dynamic of patterns and interrelationships between the determinants of history, politics (coercion)

is only such an intellectually open and culturally sensitive field that can constitute a realistic plane for a genuine interaction in a global age. Given that the social aggregate, whatever its level, constitutes the primary unit of social inquiry, a better understanding of its various dimensions is essential. These dimensions include the much touted categories of subjectivity and contextuality, as well as those even more pervasive and encompassing, if more ambivalent and more complex categories of intrasubjectivity and intercontextuality, which animate and structure the civilizational encounter among world communities through time and particularly at this elusive point in time, qualified as "modernity."

Social theory takes this complex field for its scope of inquiry, although it assumes its mandate more in terms of a juxtapository anthropology of "self" and "other" and is predicated on a semantics of causality and explanation rather than a hermeneutics of understanding. A more humane global order postulates an appropriation of discursive categories that transcend exclusionary and hegemonous practices and that lay the ground for an alternative anthropology and moral economy. At present, this order is more of a realizable postulate than an established actuality. It is against the contours of a paradigm that enhances the prospects of this realizability that our reflection on social theory is conducted, and it is towards a crystallization of such a paradigm that we hope to be contributing. Even though our preliminary summation concedes initially to a semantics of identity and dichotomy, it does so, within the framework of a contrasting epistemics, by redefining its points of reference and taking commonality for its shaping ground. "Beyond Cultural Parodies and Parodizing Cultures" suggested how this process of resituating and restructuring the sociocultural encounter affects its premises and its promise. For the benefit of the present inquiry, a brief recapitulation on this conceptual strategy may be in order.

One part of the dialogic in a multilateral and openended discourse is constituted around the *tawhīdī* episteme, and the other around a naturalistic humanist counterpart identified with the dominant discourse. Historically, the *tawhīdī* episteme constitutes the submerged nexus in the dominant discourse, and the challenge and priority go to elucidating its premises and presuppositions. The need for such articulation is prompted by the promise that it holds for providing a corrective to the dominant discourse, where the self-destructing elements have come to outweigh the

and culture (cognition/knowledge) are contoured from a sociological division of labor perspective. The interest of Gellner's works partly derive from the range and comparative perspectives he deploys, particularly with regard to his awareness and familiarity with aspects of the Islamic tradition, like Clifford Geertz, author of *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), who has written more strictly as a cultural anthropologist.

constructive elements of which it was comprised initially in the earlier stages of its emergence, which coincided with the birth of the modern project for which it set the pace.³

For analytical purposes, the core features in each of the epistemes in view, the *tawhīdī* and the secular, or the immanentist-cum-humanist, are profiled against two corresponding culture types that are projected in their affinate historical proximations. These constructs are respectively designated as a "median culture type" and an "oscillating culture type." The conceptual constructs are conceived of by way of a discursive strategy in order to overcome the conventional stereotyping, which emphasizes the cleavage between the classical-Biblical West as "self" (Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian) and the Muslim Orient as "other."

In the shaping discourse that is proposed, whatever formal affinities that might arise between the historical West and the oscillating culture are taken for concurrences of contingency more than necessity. In other words, whatever the convergences between the oscillating culture type and the culture identified with the modern West, these convergences may be genealogical but not congenital: they fall within the realm of the presently congenial—a "conjuncture"—but not the culturally genetic. Conversely, Muslim societies, which historically fall within the range of the median culture type, do so by virtue of a founding set of assumptions that, in their generality, are potentially accessible and realizable for other societies as well. If the affinity is temporal in the one case, that of the oscillating culture type and the modern West, it is constitutive in the other, as in the case of the Muslim historical community. As such, the convergence with the median culture type in this historical community maintains its dynamic efficacy only as long as its constitutional affinity remains intact. By the same token, to the extent that they are distanced

³For the reconstruction of the discursive genealogy of modernity, see Hans Blumenberg's epic "The Legitimacy of the Modern Age," in *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought*, trans. Robert Wallace (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983 [1966]). For a useful discussion of his work, see the special issue on Hans Blumenberg in *History of the Human Sciences* 6, no. 4 (November 1993). With the assault on the metaphysical foundations of the western tradition conducted by influential postmodern currents, the debate on modernity has intensified over the past decade. Among the interesting initiatives are those taken not so much to salvage the modern project, but to distance it from the metaphysical sources of the tradition together with an attempt to reconcile the contradictions in the latter. Patrick Madigan's interpretative essays in this area, which deserve to be better known, provide an accessible example of this tendency. See *The Modern Project to Rigor: From Descartes to Nietzsche* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986); *Christian Revelation and the Completion of the Aristotelian Revolution* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), and *Aristotle and His Modern Critics: The Use of Tragedy on the Non-Tragic Vision* (Scranton, PA: University Press of Scranton and Associated University Presses, 1992). This theoretical trope is authoritatively dissected, with an optimistic pithy humor, in an internal debate by John Nelson, "Destroying Political Theory in Order to Save: Or John Gunnell Turns on the Western Tradition," in *Tradition, Interpretation and Science: Political Theory in the American Academy*, ed. J. Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986).

from their constitutively structuring matrix, median-proximate societies become equally vulnerable to the currents of the oscillating variant. In all cases, however, assuming the intrinsic universality of both these culture types and their conditioned/conditioning historicity, their differential implications for their relevant histories/communities may be relative, but they are by no means morally equivalent.

The effects of a civilizational dynamic drawing on the median culture type are, in principle, more likely to be consistent with the well-being of the societal aggregate. We take this to be the case in view of a grounded referentiality, securing the multidimensionality and the proportion that characterize the cognitive and valuational sources of that culture type. To explain this, we need to touch briefly on the idea of the *bearings of a culture*, a compass that assures it meaning, coherence, and directionality, or purpose. We distinguish between a horizontal and a vertical bearing. These bearings are defined initially in relation to the centrality or the marginality of the cosmic axis and its nature. A culture in which the concept of revealed guidance from beyond a human source is central is qualified primarily by its vertical bearings, whereas a culture in which this concept is peripheral to its constitution, incidental, or arbitrarily composed, is qualified preeminently by its horizontal bearings. Given its transcendental axis, the median culture type is assured a "verticality" that cuts through the various common categories (nominal, cognitive, substantial, formal, spatial, temporal) in a manner that is not available to a counter culture type (the oscillating culture), which is defined primarily by its "horizontal bearings." As a consequence of this horizontality, the boundaries of social knowledge (values, cognition, meaning) in the oscillating culture type will stop short in the here-and-now, the world of immanence, whence history comes to an end. In the other case, these boundaries extend to include both this world and "the hereafter," the beginning and the beyond as well as the immediate and the immanently tangible that unfolds in time, in the in-between.

In the same way, while the limits of human responsibility and morality stop short at the boundaries of this life-world for all in the horizontally pitched culture type, in the median culture type the circuit of consciousness and the span of human moral accountability go beyond the here-and-now only to redound reflexively upon it and to "calibrate" immediate human conduct and worldly attitudes or to qualify history. In short, where the end of history is imminent in the oscillating culture type, in the median culture type no such end is foreseeable in the life-world, not because history is perceived to be cyclical *ad infinitum* as opposed to a punctuated linearity, nor because of a myth of the eternal return, but because with the vertical bearings of that culture type, the line does not come to an abrupt and arbitrary end on the horizontal plane of mortality.

The meaning, relevance, and efficacy of the paradigms of social inquiry are a function of the dimensions they comprise as much as of the way they might be used in specific contexts. Invoking such dimensions as "interiority and exteriority," the immanent and the transcendent, the here-and-now and the hereafter, as much as consciousness and society, can thus hardly be taken for a metaphysical diversion. The levels of experiential reality and the multidimensionality of the human experience have a direct bearing on the field of social theory, a fact that is not easy to grasp in the absence of a viable source for an integrated vision.⁴ This is especially the case if we recall that, in addition to the categories suggested above (subjectivity, contextuality, etc.), the staples of conventional social theory include rationality and legitimacy,⁵ which cannot be separated from an ontology and a praxiology and which are all central to human agency and social order.

Where the paradigm of inquiry fails to comprehend critical dimensions of human cognition and valuation, or where it fails to relate these adequately to being or to the "life-world," it comes to operate against inherent constraints that reflect inevitably on the quality and practical

⁴It is interesting to note that the modern German debate on reforming the university, which is taken to be the condition for a renascent community (cf. Islamization of Knowledge goals) focuses on the centrality of philosophy in structuring and guiding the academy, i.e., the modern empirical disciplines of scientific inquiry, since it is taken to orient research and to impart a unified and unifying potential to knowledge in society. See J. Habermas, *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historian's Debate*, ed. and trans. Shierry W. Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), chapter 4, where the theme "The Idea of the University" is taken from Karl Jasper's original thesis in *Die Idee der Universität* (Heidelberg: 1961). It is the elusiveness of this search for an integrating principle that provides the animus for a paradigm-seeking/refuting debate in contemporary western thought verging on contingency (Rorty) and ambivalence (Bauman). See Thomas Fleming, "The Part and the Whole" in *The Politics of Human Nature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1988); Thomas Pangle, *Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989); Geoffrey Hawthorne, *Enlightenment and Despair: The History of Social Theory* (Cambridge: 1987); Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, and Agnes Heller, "From Hermeneutics in the Social Sciences to the Hermeneutics of the Social Sciences," *Theory and Society*, no. 18 (1989): 291-322.

⁵For the discourse on rationality and legitimacy, the Weberian academy continues to deconstruct and unravel the uniquely occidental dimensions of the central sociological concepts he developed. W. Schluchter, *The Rise of Western Rationalism: Max Weber's Developmental History* (University of California, 1985 [1981]), trans. w. introduction by Guenther Roth; and Richard Munch, *Understanding Modernity: Toward a New Perspective Going beyond Durkheim and Weber* (London: Routledge, 1988); Thomas Burger, *Max Weber's Concept of Theory Formation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), esp. "Postscript," 181-230. Susan Hekman, *Weber, the Ideal Type and Contemporary Social Theory* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) is more concerned with the problems of objectivity in comparative cultural contexts and the possibility of a post-positivist social theory; Franco Ferraroti, *Max Weber and the Crisis of Western Civilization* (New York and London: Associated Faculty Press, 1987), esp. chapters 4 and 5, which retains the focus on the historicist dimension of these concepts. A less conventional line of inquiry updating the founding father with frontier ideology was opened up by Alan Sica, *Weber, Irrationality and the Social Order* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988).

consequences of social theory. One such area of "scientific lag" recurs persistently in the study of Muslim societies in general, and particularly in addressing sociocultural dynamics in the predominantly Muslim Middle East.⁶ The frustrations experienced frequently by westerners in understanding events in that part of the world are hardly due to their being beyond the pale of rationality and resistant to acculturation to standards of legitimacy. But rather, assuming the good faith belying intent, it is because the "monochromic" paradigm,⁷ within which they continue to reconstruct their worlds, operates within the stunted and partial confines of an arbitrary and biased definition of both rationality and legitimacy.

At present, the dominant tradition that structures the discourse within and beyond social theory is shaped against the oscillating culture type. It thrives on patterns of cognition and a scale of values that promote a delusory sense of abundance and variability when, in fact, it replicates a welter of monochromes. Introducing a mode of discourse drawing on the sources and assumptions of the median culture type would be a means of illuminating and extrapolating on some of these propositions and

⁶There is something to suggest that there is a parallelism between the scientific world-view of the modern age and its power-political practices along the lines developed in Edward Said's thesis on "Orientalism" and Abdul Wahab Messiri's concept of an "Imperialist Epistemology," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 11, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 404-16, although one would want to qualify Zygmunt Bauman's cryptic cynicism when he observes that "the practice of science is in its innermost structure no different from that of state politics; both aim at a monopoly over a dominant territory, and both reach their aims through the device of inclusion/exclusion ..." *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 8 fn. Linking social theory to a perceived mode of civilization (i.e., capitalism) and to the sociocultural encounter (i.e., Third World) may be seen to implicitly constitute Giddens' project as in *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) and explicitly prompts such critical overviews of the field as with Timothy Luke, *Social Theory and Modernity* (Sage Publications, 1990), esp. chapter 8.

⁷But it is changing—even in theology. From its origins in the history and philosophy of the natural sciences in the sixties, the paradigm debate caught on in the social sciences and, toward the end of the eighties, had reached theology, where it triggered fresh theoretical insights, especially in the domain of relating values to history and social change. See the proceedings of an international symposium jointly sponsored by the Institute for Advanced Studies of Religion at the University of Chicago and the Divinity School for Ecumenical Research at Tübingen in *Paradigm Change in Theology*, ed. David Tracy and Hans Kung (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1989). The renowned Catholic theologian's recent writings on globalism presume this paradigmatic shift, which reflects a converging culture in certain social science and theology circles. For its discussion in the context of developmental studies, see *The Center Cannot Hold*. For an overview on comparable trends in Protestant theological circles, with a special focus on social theory, see Paul Marshall and Rober Vandervennen, ed., *Social Science in Christian Perspective* (Lanham, MD and London: University Press of America, 1988). Cf. analogous periodic convergences within social science itself, as between Freudians and Marxists (Fromm, Marcuse, and the "critical school") or between Marxians and Weberians (cf. William Roff, ed. *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning*, [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987]), which provide the oscillating culture type with its moments of reprieve, veritable spaces of incubation, in anticipation of new currents and directions.

exploring the possibility for a more salutary moral economy.⁸ In the process, the parameters of social inquiry would also be expanded and reinvigorated.

In the perspective of a contrasting episteme, theory and episteme are means for identifying as much as for construing or representing social reality at any given moment. Thence it is logical and empirically consistent to expect a degree of correspondence between culture types and the prototypical vehicles for reproducing, disseminating, and controlling knowledge, values, and power in society. Central to the episteme and the culture alike is the worldview that marks the divide between two possible worlds and opens up a range of alternatives and options for conducting social theory. Since it is the oscillating culture type that currently prevails and defines the norms for the practice of contemporary social theory, it qualifies as an apt subject of inquiry. While conceding it a "procedural preference," we will set the vantage point for our critical reflection against its obverse in the median culture type.

Adopting contrasting culture types as a strategic access and a heuristic device is, moreover, an exercise that is ultimately justified to the extent that it provides those analytical insights and synthesizing perspectives that are needed to critique and reconstruct contemporary social theory. In what way would a social theory conceived and practiced in the median culture differ from its current practice and conception? To answer this question, we need to identify the premises and founding assumptions or formative currents and practices that inform current social theory as it is practiced in the advanced outposts of the academy, and then see how they are replicated at different levels of inquiry and how they come to affect the various areas of intellectual and academic activity concerned with the study of human and social phenomena. This, however, is a project that will only be broached indirectly in this essay. In doing so, we

⁸Indeed, it must not be forgotten that the origin of social theory, as it developed in the nineteenth century, lay in the quest for a new moral basis for society following the collapse of traditional authority and the pervasive "breakdown in connections." cf. Bruce Mazlish, *A New Science: The Breakdown in Connections and the New Sociology* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). Whether in the continental tradition of positivist sociology (i.e., Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*) or in the more empirical tradition of political economy (i.e., Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*), the founding fathers have all left their contributions in this area. For a relevant inquiry into the place of religion and moral values in the founding traditions of western social science, see Cormie LeRoy, "Religion in the Social Sciences and the Modern World" (Ph.D. diss., Chicago University, 1977). The general tenor remains very much as Robert Nisbet put it in his introduction to his compact classic *The Sociological Tradition* (London: Heinemann, 1966), in which he pointed out that the "major ideas in social sciences invariably have roots in moral aspirations." For present trends, see Norma Haan et al., *Interpretive Social Science as Moral Inquiry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); cf. Mona Abul-Fadl, "The New Sociology: Gender and the Moral Economy" in *Proceedings of the 21st Annual AMSS Conference* (Herndon, VA: AMSS and IIIT, 1993), 242-58.

assume that central to these conceptions is a worldview that permeates the understanding of society at a given moment and serves to structure and shape the disciplines in its light.⁹ While clearly the shape and pursuit of social theory may not be conditioned solely by the prevailing worldview, and while the underlying assumptions constitute a part of that worldview as much as its product, yet the theory and the episteme together should be seen in the context of that interdependence.¹⁰

Taking our cue from a holistic perception, it will thus be possible first to outline the underlying characteristics of the dominant paradigm and then to consider its operational implications. This will be done by selecting areas/moments at the interface of the civilizational encounter to highlight the nature and significance of a transition where "self and other" crossed.¹¹ Eventually, this is the crossing and transition that must be

⁹The current debate on modernity has cast doubt on the merits and viability of this worldview as much as it has thrown its features into relief. Coming from the pen of a partisan, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 1992), who attempts to salvage what was left of a radical critique that set the pace for much of the present debate. See also Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1993 [1969]). For one of the enduring anatomies of "the mind of the Enlightenment," as the soul of the modern worldview, see Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979 [1951]), 3-36. Cf. "The Concept of Enlightenment" in Horkheimer and Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 3-42. In *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Dorothy Ross reviews the imported and adapted models of political science, sociology, and political economy specifically in this context of a differentiated "discovery of modernity" on both sides of the Atlantic.

¹⁰Cf. ". . . 'the polar night of icy darkness and harshness' that Weber saw as the inevitable accompaniment of a modern rationalized and routinized society does not merely require social scientific explanation . . . a routinized and regularized lifeworld is itself a requirement for a positivistically conceived science of society," in view of which a critique of the concepts and categories of such a social science is necessarily also "a critique of the covertly manipulative precepts and practice of the society in which we are living and of the instrumentally rational worldview which tends to legitimize it." Terence Ball, "The Ontological Presuppositions and the Political Consequences of a Social Science," in *Changing Social Science: Critical Theory and Other Critical Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Sabia, Jr. and J. Wallulis (Albany: SUNY, 1983). It is this web of dialectic and interrelatedness that sums up the premise and purpose of our point of departure in the direction of a critical reconstruction of both social theory and the 'umrānī context that constitutes its setting as much as its object.

¹¹The attempt to relate a sociological perspective to a civilizational one, or to evolve the latter from the former, is not typical of mainstream (American) sociology, although it is at the root of the Khaldūnīan scholarly tradition of inquiry into the phenomenon of al 'umrān al basharī. Recent trends in western sociological scholarship on urbanization may constitute a revival of this tradition, especially as it can also draw on significant internal sources of varying subtraditions, whether we think of work by Mumford, Wallerstein, Braudel, or others. Janet Abu Lughod's bold and challenging synthesis, exemplary for its originality, methodology, range (and bibliography)—*Before European Hegemony: The World System 1250-1350 A.D.* (Oxford University Press, 1989)—is in this tradition. The earlier work of Pitrim A. Sorokin in the area of cultural/sociological symbiosis is of special interest to a tawhīdī sociological view. Cf. *Social and Cultural Dynamics* (New

revisited, examined, confronted, and reappropriated in a transcendent trajectory that is aimed at more than a "fusion of horizons."¹²

2

The integrality of a culture field and its internal coherence might best be indicated by tracing the philosophical antecedents of the social sciences. The aim is to demonstrate how social theory, far from being an isolate in a complex of isolates, constitutes an integral part of an epistemic field to which it contributes and from which it derives its own coherence.¹³ This "organic" affinity provides a useful diagnostic/analytical category for ascertaining some of the traits of theory that are not exclusive to it, but are germane to knowledge produced in that culture frame. At the same time, identifying these traits within their "family cluster," in itself perhaps constitutes the single most plausible argument as to why a perspective coming from the median culture is needed. It serves to show that the particular points of emphasis that lend contemporary social theory its style and that structure its modes of thought and research are not "given," as hitherto assumed by an objectivist social science, but rather are self-imposed elements more aptly acknowledged as elements in a socially/historically constructed universe.¹⁴ It would be

York: American Book Co., 1937), *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (New York: Harper and Row, 1928), and *Sociological Theories of Today* (Harper and Row, 1966).

¹²See H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, tr. Sheed and Ward (New York: Crossroads, 1975), 270-2. Although a dialogic conceived in the framework of a *tawhidi* episteme has its distinctive points of departure and ends, there is much in the Gadamerian hermeneutics that could provide a fertile ground of exchange. So too with some of the current initiatives coming from feminist theory. Cf. Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), who takes up this theme—a "fusion of horizons"—in proposing a dialogic model of inquiry. See pages 200-201 and chapter 7.

¹³The notion of an organizing concept running throughout a knowledge field and lending a certain consistency to its various departments may have gained currency in the metatheoretical debate following on the Kuhnian revelations in his classic, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. But original insights at the inception of social theorizing were not wanting, as the opening remarks to the classical paradigm in political sociology would suggest. See Andrew Janos, *Politics and Paradigms: Changing Theories of Change in Social Science* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), 7. This same underlying continuity in the spirit of an epoch, so noticeable in the heyday of positivism, is currently evidenced in the "discursive" climate of a postmodern academy of fluidity and "transitionality." Cf. Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1990), chapters 1 and 6.

¹⁴For a pithy and spirited debate of this theme, see the special section "Constructing the Social," *History of the Human Sciences* 7, no. 1 (February 1994): 81-123, which brings refreshing perspectives and mines the insights developed nearly three decades earlier in the pioneering work by Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction*

misleading to defer to them passively as simply the predilection of the times, a kind of irrepressible manifestation of the universal *Zeitgeist*, just as it would be misleading to impute them to the creation of alienated or troubled geniuses in society. Rather, whatever the specific or changing traits of contemporary social theory,¹⁵ they are embedded in the structure of an episteme and discourse that have defined the character of the modern West and that can be inferred from any point of entry or access to it.¹⁶ In the following, I will attempt a simplified condensation of the shaping culture of science in the direction of an all-inclusive empiricism that, for specifically American reasons,¹⁷ reached its apogee in American social science.

Philosophical Antecedents of Contemporary Social Science

The empirical or "logical positivist" character of the social sciences can best be understood in light of major philosophical trends in modern philosophy and natural science.¹⁸ The outcome was the establishment of

of Reality (New York: Doubleday, 1966). Writing on modes of thought about culture and variants of relativism, Stephen Turner ("Constructing the Social," pp. 109-15) refers to James Bryant Conant's idea that "the science of a particular period served as a kind of reception device which received and accepted only those ideas for which it was ready, so that a scientific idea born out of its time would need to wait until the discipline had changed enough for new ideas to be received," which may well be a tribute to a spiritual mentor as well as a suggestive insight for contemporary Muslim thinkers puzzling over some aspects of their own intellectual legacy (Kuhn was assistant professor to Conant).

¹⁵With a few notable exceptions, the preoccupation with the metatheoretical level of inquiry continues to echo a Continental mystique (*malaise, lust, or a schadenfreud*), notably cultivated in critical and post-Marxist strains as Anthony Giddens and Jonathan Turner point out in surveying the proliferation of approaches in a succinct overview to the state-of-the-art in the field, in *Social Theory Today* (Cambridge and Oxford, UK: Basil and Blackwell, Polity Press, 1987), introduction. Jeffrey Alexander's (*ibid.*, pp. 11-57) discussion of the field from the perspective of the enduring "Centrality of the Classics" for both empiricists and postpositivists is itself suggestive of the degree of obfuscation and ambivalence at the roots of contemporary social science.

¹⁶Of which a philosophy of science perspective provides the most encompassing, as illustrated, for example, in the multifaceted approaches to the subject in the writings of Stephen Toulmin over the last two decades and culminating in his recent original contribution to rethinking the strains of modernity: *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: The Free Press, 1990); cf. "Rediscovering History," *Encounter* 36, no. 1 (1971).

¹⁷Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*.

¹⁸The literature on positivism in the social sciences is immense and varied and cuts across generations: from the latter twenties with the formation of the "Vienna Circle" to the present polemics. Cf. Otto Neurath, *Foundations of the Social Sciences: International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944); Anthony Giddens, "Positivism and Its Critics," in *A History of Sociological Analysis*, eds.

an ideal model of knowledge, which thereby excluded all forms that did not meet its strict criteria. Each discipline was thus left with the option of adopting this epistemological model or perishing. The "ideal" model, of course, was the scientific/empirical one. The immense success of science in the modern period propelled this paradigm of knowledge to a position of preeminence amongst all other forms of knowledge and soon rendered them obsolete, vestiges of a prescientific age. Hence, humanity's inquiry into the nature of its social world was forced to adopt this empirical model as its epistemological basis.

However, it was not just the success of the scientific enterprise that cleared the way for the empirical model, but rather the self-criticism that philosophy underwent also contributed to this hegemony. One must recall that the social sciences were at one time not "sciences" but were areas of philosophy. If philosophy can be shown to be an illegitimate practice, or at least can be restricted in its scope, then all fields relating to the investigation of the social world must find a new home.

The seeds of philosophy's demise are to be found in British empiricism, which reached its climax with David Hume. Beginning with the Greeks, the heart of philosophy has identified with metaphysics and with its baggage of metaphysical concepts. Essentially, British empiricism destroyed the validity of metaphysical knowledge by its claim that experience is the origin of all of our knowledge. Locke denied the notion of innate ideas by holding that all knowledge comes from our senses and is "built up" into more complex ideas. Locke said that "secondary qualities" (i.e., color, warmth, smell) were not actually in the objects themselves but instead existed in our subjectivity. However, he held that the "primary qualities" (i.e., extension, mass) were inherent in objects and therefore retained the metaphysical notion of substance (i.e., something existing independently from us). Nonetheless, he was not a through and through empiricist, as he maintained that intuitive knowledge (i.e., such as our existence and the principle that all men are born equal) is valid. Berkeley extended the scope of this argument by claiming that the primary qualities were also subjective in nature, thus denying independent

(New York: 1978); Russell Keat, "The Critique of Positivism," in *The Politics of Social Theory: Habermas, Freud and the Critique of Positivism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). A classic and concise statement is A. J. Ayer's "Introduction" in *Logical Positivism*, ed. A. J. Ayer (New York: Free Press, 1959), which condenses his fame-making book in the English-speaking world, *Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Gollanz, 1936). Another one is Herbert Feigl, "The Origin and Spirit of Logical Positivism," in *The Legacy of Logical Positivism*, ed. Peter Achinstein and Stephen Barker (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1969), 3-24. Bringing a less conventional civilizational, sociocultural, and theological dimension to the fore is Eric Voegelin in "Positivism and Its Antecedents," in *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, ed. John Hallowel (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1975), 74-109.

existence to things (i.e., substance). With the exception of ourselves and God, all knowledge is knowledge of sense perceptions.

This "purging" of nonempirical elements was continued by Hume (1711–76), who brought empiricism to its extreme. Like Berkeley, Hume denied a reality "behind" sense impressions. He claimed that all we can know are "bundles" of sense impressions. Furthermore, we have no knowledge of ourselves or God, for sense impressions do not grant us these notions. Similarly, notions of necessity and causation are equally bogus. Hume said: "Where is the necessary connection?" Certainly not in experience, where all we find is a series of sense impressions. According to Hume, we take frequent associations of some of these impressions and form "psychological habits." For instance, it is simply a habit of mind to think the sun will rise tomorrow; there is no necessity involved here. This extreme empiricism led to skepticism, whereby all "matter of fact knowledge" (i.e., empirical knowledge) is reduced to associations and probabilities. Math and logic alone survive Hume's devastating critique, for they deal not with "matters of fact" but with logical relations between facts. Thus comes his famous statement regarding metaphysics, moral science theology, and even the natural sciences, namely, that we throw all such works on these subjects "into the flames for they contain nothing but superstition."

Yet, the undeniable results of science cast doubts on the extent of Hume's critique. Thus Kant, after presupposing that we do in fact have scientific knowledge, strove to show how we can have this knowledge (i.e., a priori and synthetic, knowledge that is both certain, like math and logic, but also says something about the world, unlike the analytical truths of math and logic). The consequence of this salvaging of science, however, placed limits on the human mind, namely, our knowledge extends only to our experience and not beyond. Concepts such as substance, cause, and unity apply to experience, and any further application is unwarranted. Hence reason knows no metaphysical truths, and the realm of moral knowledge is reduced to "practical knowledge" or faith. Thus, while Kant saved scientific knowledge from skepticism, he also reconfirmed Hume's skeptical position with regard to metaphysical speculation.

A final blow was given to the notion of nonempirical truths by J. S. Mill. Mill maintained that logic was not deductive in nature but rather was inductive. More specifically, the syllogism is not a case of inferring via deduction from one premise to another. The premise, according to Mill, is originally an inductive (empirical) truth such as: 1. All men are mortal. 2. Socrates is a man. 3. Therefore, Socrates is mortal. We reason inductively from men being mortal to the specific case of this particular man (Socrates) being mortal. Logic is no more than a helpful tool for organizing our inductions. Mill also concluded the same about mathemat-

ics. Hence, all knowledge is from experience, even the relations between "matters of fact."

The preceding paragraphs trace the steps involved in the decline of speculative (metaphysical) philosophy. What remains are empirical facts, by which we can form generalizations by way of induction. Most importantly, these facts must be observable sense data, in other words, verifiable through experience. Logical positivism was the epitome of this empirical/scientific trend in modern philosophy. For logical positivism, philosophy is metaphysics and metaphysics is superstition; thus, only science (empiricism) is valid knowledge. But while present-day methodology of the social sciences is most definitely empirical, it should not simply be equated with logical positivism, for from the beginning the latter was riddled by contradictions and was actually antagonistic to the actual practice of the natural sciences insofar as the hypothetical/deductive model of the natural sciences were, in principle, ruled out by a strict empiricism. There always remains an element of rationalism in any empiricism. Theory, which is so essential for the natural sciences, is a necessary rational element that cannot be ignored without an inevitable anarchy of unrelated bare facts arising.

As the social sciences were expelled out of the dying body of speculative philosophy, they sought refuge in the epistemological canons of the natural sciences. The demise of metaphysics went hand in hand with the ascension of science. Thus, it could be plausibly argued that the social sciences did not borrow a model from another "discipline" in the sense of an analogy. For instance, the evolutionary model that the social sciences borrowed from biology was not the same as the adoption of a certain type of epistemological methodology. Issues of methodology must be kept separate from issues of theories or models. Yet, there was a connection between the transformation of the social sciences into empirical sciences and the application of the evolutionary model to political and social theory. The reductionism that was a consequence of a radical empiricism made these disciplines receptive to a biological model. Ultimately, the "unity of science" proponents desired a complete reduction of all sciences to physics, so in the end, social phenomenon would be explained in terms of physical laws.

There was thus a certain element of ruthlessness about the epistemological project that came to define the terrain of social knowledge and to make it an integral part of an emerging pattern of inquiry and subject it to its ubiquitous underlying presuppositions. The general autonomy of a cultural tradition would seem to be assured by the pervasiveness of its logic. This thesis has two implications for assessing contemporary social theory. The one would suggest that radical restructuring calls for going beyond the closed circle of positivism and its internal countercultures and justifies a recourse to alternative epistemic

modes drawn from beyond that circle, such as that proposed in the median culture type.¹⁹ The other implication calls for a holistic framework for investigating social theory, which would make it possible to engage it as part of a more encompassing and inclusive epistemic discourse. With this provision in view, the question is whether or not it is possible to identify the elements of a more pervasive worldview in the western cultural sphere that transcends social theory and that may have its roots in a heritage antedating the modern era. Clearly, this pushes back the boundaries of inquiry in ways hardly conceivable if social theory were technically confined to a closed, self-contained spectrum, beginning and ending with itself.

Eros and Thanatos, Or, the Cult of Conflict

The dominant worldview sees in conflict and antagonism the stuff of the social order.²⁰ Indeed psychoanalysis, which remains largely dominated by its Freudian origins, candidly sums up the life-principle as one of perpetual struggle whether at a primary level for survival, or at a secondary level (the libidinal) for fulfillment.²¹ This struggle, which animates the individual psyche, is externalized and projected on temporal society in all its sectors to constitute its civilizational life-force. Inherent to this semantic field is a whole gamut of concepts and symbols suggestive of the struggle: conflict, control, manipulation, confrontation, domination, repression. Psychoanalysis is a gateway to social theory. The other grand portal is that of economics, which, even before the breakthroughs in psychoanalysis, has been the arena defined by scarcity. It too was targeted for a competitive and conflictual mode from the outset, with

¹⁹I have addressed this issue in *Paradigms in Political Science Revisited*, which was published as a separate supplement to *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (September 1989) and in "Beyond Cultural Parodies," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (March 1991): 15-44.

²⁰R. Collins, *Conflict Sociology* (New York: Academic Press, 1975); L. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1956); Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959); A. Giddens, "The Nation-State and Violence," in *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, vol. 2 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987).

²¹James Strachey, trans., *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 1961), for all its compactness, provides an exemplary and graphic illustration of this conflictual and antagonistic essence that is integral to the natural world and that carries over to guilt-ridden man and his cultural artifices. In *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon, 1966), Herbert Marcuse attempts to synthesize Marx and Freud as he negotiates his way through the same tradition, notwithstanding his disillusionment and soul-searching for a way out in a resuscitated Dionysian aesthetic. Habermas takes up the cue in "Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity" in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard Bernstein (Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, Polity Press, 1985).

its own paraphernalia of suggestive concepts and with an emphasis on a power political dimension. The notoriety achieved in one field or the other should by no means rob other more autochthonous disciplines (i.e., sociology and anthropology) of their share of originality in this field. Here again, the key to the conception and growth of the disciplines from the outset lay in the conflictual and power-centric animus. The literature is infected with this virus, regardless of the field and the ideological assumptions of its observer. Studies are given to exploring and projecting the ways and means to contain this conflict or to articulating it and exposing it in anticipation of its manipulation and control. Depending on the ideological perspective, the need is to ensure the maximum freedoms for conflicting interests without having the system founder and, perhaps, to seek means of mediating the conflicts that emerge. Elsewhere, research is busy anticipating, gauging, precipitating, or investing in the conflicts and antagonisms that serve to discredit the system and prove the inevitability of its destruction—presumably to make way for a consistently superior order.

This element of what might be properly construed as a social Darwinism may have reached its apogee in the Marxian formulation of social theory.²² There, the class struggle is the agent of a dialectical historical materialism and, as such, it comes to be apotheosized into the catalyst of social transformation and the benefactor of an alienated humanity. In giving the priority to the dialectics of the forces of material production over those of biological reproduction, it retains the essence of the conflictual and repressive dynamic inherent in the ongoing battle between Eros and Thanatos for the soul of civilization. The prize remains that of domination and mastery rather than sheer primitive survival or "enlightened progress." This ethical code permeates the mainstream and becomes the mainstay of social theory as the cult of domination comes to be eulogized under various norms and guises and is practiced and legitimated

²²Interestingly, a recent prospectus on Marxism in the nineties is conducted against a Darwinian perspective; see Alan Carling, "Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will": A Reconstructed Marxist Theory for the 1990's?, *History of the Human Sciences* 6, no. 2 (May 1993): 115-20. Marx's own "orientalism" and defence of imperialism reflect and anticipate the culture that favored the success of Darwinism. An even more congenial trans-Atlantic culture hastened its appeal and spread at the turn of the century, to coincide with the institutionalization of sociology and anthropology. See R. Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1955) and John Greene, "Darwin and the Social Sciences" in *Darwin and the Modern World View* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1961). Through his unconventional work, Bowler has established his authority in the field: *Darwinism* (1993); *The Non-Darwinian Revolution* (1988); *The Eclipse of Darwinism: Anti-Darwinian Evolution Theories in the Decades around 1900*. Elsewhere, he applies his eclectic interests as a natural scientist and historian to reconstruct the identity and self-imag(in)ing in Victorian England through an imagined past that would justify them in their turn of the century empire. *The Invention of Progress* (Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1989).

accordingly. The art of civilization excels in deceit. As social theory itself becomes its subtle exponent, the spade is no longer called a spade. Instead, so many names are devised for the cult as to smother its reality.

Whether in its cruder or more sophisticated forms, this Darwinian assumption is a fundamental bone of contention between the two culture types and epistemes. This is hardly because the median culture is more idealistic, while its counterconstruct is more realistic, nor is it because one deals in empirical realities and the other might indulge in utopias. Rather, the difference is due to the different normative premises and the conceptual framework of the median culture type, as historically it has been formulated in workable structures and institutions. Such premises will admit the possibility of another version of social reality that may be just as practical and realizable without being necessarily destructive, self-transcending, or self-refuting. This alternative is feasible, for it is predicated on a unitary conception of social reality that admits an integral complexity and diversity within a framework of consonance. It renders it radically at odds with the present reductionist and exclusivist conflictual model.

The *evolutionary code* is a good example of a pivotal access to the modern mind that has spawned, spanned, and punctuated its activity, whether its domain was that of the life sciences or that of the social sciences.²³ Its animus is one of conflict, struggle, and domination in a race for survival. It is this conception that has structured much of contemporary social theory, and the question is whether this influence was due to a predilection in the scope and subject of the field of social relations that made it more susceptible to a Darwinian interpretation of reality, or whether, beyond social theory as a specialized inquiry, there was something in this code that appealed to a more basic sensibility in the pervasive perceptions in the later nineteenth century. Both possibilities are real, and the case of the growth and consolidation of a trend have been made validly in the different and complementary accounts of an era. Obversely then, the question is one of accounting for the success of the Darwinian mode of thought in the European cultural context of its times.

Contrary to prevailing orthodoxy, Darwin's thought did not launch the evolutionary epoch, but, more consistent with the evidence at hand, it was merely a formalization and a consummation of a trend already well underway. By providing the empirical evidence it needed from the natural sciences, the Darwinian discovery provided already existing currents of intellectual thought the legitimation needed to consolidate a trend and

²³Peter Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California, 1989); cf. Michael Schmid and Franz Wuketits, eds., *The Evolutionary Theory in Social Science* (Holland: Dordrecht, 1987) for recent debates in the field.

lend it the currency it came to command.²⁴ More disconcertingly, the roots of this conflictual animus can be found much deeper in the recesses of the historical western tradition,²⁵ whether the latter is seen in its affinities with a liberal humanist ethos or in terms of a specific theological humanism. If decoding an episteme may take its cue from struggle and confrontation as an underlying and persistent theme in much of social inquiry, plumbing the depths will likely lead beyond social inquiry.

One of the first lessons the reflexive social scientist will need to learn as he/she taps the psycho-genesis of his/her field concerns the traumatic involvement with the conflictual mode that conditions the dominant paradigm. Challenge, defiance, and rebellion are found to be rooted in the mythological wellsprings of a classical antiquity replete with conflicting and conflictual models that plunge it in ambiguity.²⁶ There Prometheus, the culture hero, steals the fire from the pagan gods, and the struggle is perpetuated among these petty deities themselves in a vision that is spuriously ennobled by a nostalgic appeal to the "essential humanism" of the Greeks and to their basic "naturalism." So compelling was this theme in the early Roman empire that it conditioned the reception and mediation of Christianity there. Instead of shaping indelibly a culture from the start, the response to divine revelation itself in the Roman West was conceived in terms of the dominant Hellenistic context of its times.²⁷

²⁴See "The Social Sciences" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macropaedia*; also Robert Hutchinson and R. Doran, eds., *The Social Sciences Today*. The periodic academic and intellectual reviews of the field are suggestive of general trends as well as evaluations of the past. Recently, a number of prominent professionals in the field were invited to reflect on the state of the art; see *Social Science and Modern Society* 30, no. 1 (November/December 1992): Special Thirtieth Anniversary Issue.

²⁵With an ironic nod at the Social Darwinists, Crane Brinton, in *A History of Western Morals* (New York: Paragon House, 1990 [1957]), takes *agon*, the Greek root of "agony" and signifier of strife and struggle, for a starting point in tracing a western moral ideal on the assumption that "conflict" is a good and necessary word underlying much that is valuable in western character and richer in its connotations than mere "competition," which is at the root of democracy. Originally, the Greek *agon* was the name given the former religiously ritualized assembly of the Greeks to witness their games. See page 27.

²⁶An original and insightful exploration of the sociocultural relevance and the restorative value of classical mythology (and the specific form it assumed) for the western psyche especially during epochal transitions where bearings are sought is provided by Charles Segal, "Greek Tragedy and Society: A Structuralist Perspective," in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, ed. J. Peter Euben. Sophocles' trilogy provides a key to illuminating more than a psyche of a generation, the foundation of a civilization—the "curse of civilization." See Charles Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), and Leonard Wessell, Jr., "Mythos and Logos" and taken as a key metaphor, "The Myth of Prometheus," in *Prometheus Bound: The Mythic Structure of Karl Marx's Scientific Thinking* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984).

²⁷Cf. Arthur Weigall, *The Paganization of Christianity*.

A comparison of the respective accounts of Adam's fall in the biblical and Qur'anic versions illustrates the point. In the Qur'anic record, the event is attributed to forgetfulness, to a dawning curiosity and a weakness of resolve before temptation. It is followed by Adam's repentance and God's forgiveness and promise of continued guidance to his progeny. The same event is rendered in the extant biblical account as an act of humanity's blatant rebellion that is followed by God's own remorse at having created such a spirited monster that could not be restrained. So great is the heavenly agitation that damnation becomes the lot of humanity, much along the lines of Zeus's revenge upon a Prometheus chained to the rock and doomed to have his liver pecked out by the vulture for eternity.²⁸ In the biblical version, however, atonement is in view—in His loving compassion God, so that version goes, takes it upon Himself to redeem a fallen humanity through the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

In the event, the drama of Greek mythology that was played out in the temples of yore and gave the world the tragedy as a unique form of art also provided the setting and format for much in the "modern paganism."²⁹ It gave the modern (western) mind the specific modes, mores, and concepts that molded a consciousness and furnished it with the means for its self-expression and articulation—and to which we can react today as social theorists reflecting critically on a tradition. In the age of science and scientific rationalism, the reenactment of the Act of Creation finds its metamorphosis in the Drama of Evolution: the catharsis of the ancients becomes the "revolution" of the moderns and comes to be seen as that creative act that, at a given moment, releases the load of tensions in a society teeming with contradictions and frustrations so as to "transform" that society and carry it one step forward in the spiral of progress. In the process, the Delphic oracle gives way to the predictions of the pollsters and the experts from their new Olympian heights of rational objectivity and data computations. Surely for a political scientist of a reflective disposition, the search for the roots and constituents in the western tradition as they are projected in his/her field will unravel a labyrinth that is as fascinating to the imagination as it is stimulating to the intellect. It can

²⁸The cunning of Odysseus (Adorno, "Odysseus: Or Myth and Enlightenment" in Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) may have spared him such ignominy. Whether the "culture of mass deception" (Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception") is itself a cause or a consequence of the abortion of modernity remains an open question. Cf. Michael Hollis, *The Cunning of Reason*; Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes and Travels in Hyperreality*; Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Bluff*.

²⁹See review essay on Peter Gay's *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation - The Rise of Modern Paganism*, no. 1 (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1967) in Mona Abul-Fadl, "The Enlightenment Revisited," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 7, no. 3 (December 1990): 417-35.

almost certainly contribute to an enlightened and enlightening paradigm for the study of a tradition in mutation and continuity.

Identifying the Darwinian code (which is the evolutionary code informed by the conflictual ethic) as a valid and fruitful point of access to the modern epistemic discourse that has structured social theory is one thing. Locating the sources of this code and its possible variations beyond contemporary social theory is quite another. It goes to show the inbuilt constraints in the oscillating culture medium, which limit the prospects of rectifying the imbalances it generates and which are simply reinforced, multiplied, and perpetuated in the practice of social theory.

This is what we mean by suggesting that the oscillating culture necessarily points beyond itself and that a radical critique of contemporary social theory is likely to reinforce a sensibility for options and dimensions that are acquired and developed within the median culture. The vocationist (as opposed to the professional social scientist) will be more sensitive than others to the opportunities lying in that alternative culture mode and will be more capable, if he/she desires, of proceeding on a track of reforming contemporary social theory from within on the basis of insights gained in the course of exposure to the view from without. To cultivate this conviction, namely, to assure the belief in the benefits and the possibilities of breaking out of a self-imposed closure, he/she will need to see how the ingrained habits of a mind formed in the process of centuries of the great conversation have acted on its perceptions of reality and have continued to do so in ways which have not always been productive. In this sense too, it will be necessary to realize the price this kind of monochromatics has exacted, if only as an argument for fostering the virtues of opening to alternatives.

The Matrix of an Inquiry: Reductionism and Excess

Just as social theory develops in the context of an epistemic field of cognition that reinforces its characteristics in one direction or another, so its conflictual underpinnings tend to be reinforced by other elements in its operative paradigm. It is the presence of a certain matrix of inquiry that adds to the encumbrances of devising a social theory that might be more responsive to the needs of global societies in transition, whether in the western world itself or, more particularly, in the much larger and more challenging societies that constitute the Third World.

With conflict presumed to be a foundational premise of the social order and, more generally, of history, a self-destructive core belief is imposed arbitrarily and generalized upon contemporary social theory. This is reinforced by a matrix of inquiry that is similarly afflicted, as it constrains arbitrarily the range of inquiry and misleads by the modes it