Social Capital, Civil Society, and the Question of Values

Mazen Hashem, Ph.D.
hashem@usc.edu

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Abstract

The rising interest in the idea of civil society in the last decade highlights the problematic place of values in social sciences. Social sciences, seeking scientificity through mostly empirical verification and positivistic methods, presented themselves as the neutral guarantor rational and free society. Epistemological and metatheoretical discussions gradually retreated from social sciences, for those dimensions do not represent real research and they may bring back the shadow of religion and the less-than-relative. On the other hand, social experience continuously provides compelling evidence on the solidity and viability of the "natural social order" in which values are central. The concept of civil society and social capital were reincarnated only to face the perennial question of values. The inevitability of thinking in terms of values, where do they come from, and how they govern modern societies was asserted again.

This paper is two-fold. First, it provides a brief critical review of the concepts of civil society and social capital, highlighting their sidelining of values. Second, the paper argues that re-incorporating values into social sciences can be achieved through reclaiming meta-values that: (1) attune to moral, and not just utilitarian concerns, (2) assume historical validity, and (3) are conceptualized simultaneously at the individual and the collective levels. Thinking in terms of meta-values, this paper asserts, has the promise for a renewed vision of a just social order.

The notions of civil society, social capital, and communitarianism are now widely discussed in social sciences. Such concepts are sometimes treated as "discoveries" or new findings and fresh perspectives. For those who favor more holistic social sciences such developments should be looked upon as balancing tendencies. This paper takes the view that resurfacing of those two concepts speak of an old tension in social science, the place (or no place) for values in social theorizing, and the renewed interest in them represents an unacknowledged apology for past mis-theorizing attempts. The paper argues further that, for the most part, those concepts failed to find a proper place for values in social sciences.

From the outset, we need to remind ourselves that the development of social sciences came, largely, as a response to traditional religion. Religion and religious notions in Europe were the basis of culture along with a political-economic structure in which the Church was prominent. The dismantling of the Church was accompanied with a gradual deconstruction of its ideology and with the desecration of its traditional value repertoire. The social sciences came to fill in at both levels. At the structural level, it envisioned a new form of social institutions in which traditions play a much smaller role. At the cultural level, it preached conceptions that are "fit" to the modern age. Social sciences, in effect, was the new religion, call it civil religion, which constructed a framework for understanding and constructing the modern social world. The Church did not directly rule, and so did social sciences. Like the Church, there was an implicit contract with social institutions—social sciences in relation to modern institutions functioned as the provider of vision, criticism, and legitimacy. The secular religiousness of social sciences was internalized and camouflaged.

However, the nonrational elements of the social survived (those elements that do not fit straightjacket rationalism); the natural proved its durability. On the other hand, the failures of the social sciences accumulated, and the crisis became imminent. Specifically, the internal dynamics of social sciences forced them to shed-off holism. The American Social Science Association, founded in 1865, withered away and was replaced by "specific" fields—economics, history, political science, sociology, etc. (cf. Haskell 1977). Teleology was condemned; indeed, if there is no authoritative source of the absolute, any end can be accused of bias and centrism. Analytical functionalism, the last refuge of holism, was finally defeated for being imperialistic.

The crisis of social sciences was manifested in two phases. The first came in increased fragmentation among social sciences and within disciplines. The US academia turned into tribes, territories, and small worlds, governed by its own rules and driven by its internal dynamics (Clark 2002). The inevitable next step was the rise of reductionism, and its spiral ensued with no end in the horizon. The sophistication of ideas was rejected in favor for the obscurity of methods. Abstract empiricism appeared as the only viable solution since it claims no authority except that of numbers and codes. In other words, social sciences do not need any more to speak of a normative order, only of *desired outputs*. Abstract empiricism raised the cost of discoursing and reduced the space available for insight, only to foster new forms of ideologies tucked underneath split-hair methodologies and misplaced complexity. The second manifestation came in the form of a postmodern criticism that, with all of its insightful introspection, it is complacent with or destined to nihilism. Equipped with vicious excavating and demolition tools, postmodernism is capable of deconstructing everything, including itself. In responding to

single-minded imperialistic positivism, postmodernism single-mindedly was caught in a spiral of perpetual revenge of systematic understanding. Postmodernism is handicapped in construction exactly because construction calls for acknowledging the nonrelative, the eminent and the normative in social life and human history.

The notions of civic society, social capital, and communitarianism are attempts on behalf of social sciences to restore some wholeness to the social phenomena and to distance itself from narrow rationalism. While communitarianism is the most holistic among them, it is hardly acknowledged by social sciences. As an illegitimate child, communitarianism had no choice but to carve for itself a safe haven *outside* of the parameters of social science proper. Whereas the concepts of civic society and social capital stay within the larger boundaries of liberalism, communitarianism is well aware of the place of values in modern societies and deals with it seriously. In contrast, civil society talk is weary of values, and when it speaks of values it invokes them in terms of a utilitarian consensus. The discussion below visits the major elements of social capital and civil society conceptions, and briefly points to their theoretical blind spots. The paper specifically highlights the problematic of values, or the avoidance of their discussion. Lastly, the paper suggests criteria for non-sectarian universalistic values.

Theorizing Social Capital

The core concept of social capital is not a novelty to modern sociology, but it recently reemerged in interesting ways. Among the recent pioneers was Evans (1979) who reintroduced Polayni's concept of embeddedness and its relation to economic transactions. As opposed to this institutional school, Granovetter (1973, 1985) approached the concept from a network perspective, emphasizing the centrality of

connectedness to social processes. Granovetter criticizes two different views of connectedness. He disagrees with the institutional view of economics on the basis that it is functional. He also does not accept the economists' view of an "undersocialized concept of man." Instead, he uses the term "embeddedness" to assert that we cannot talk about economic activities without recognizing the concrete personal relations and networks that generate trust, mold expectations, and enforce norms. Coming from the same perspective as Granovetter, Burt (1992) sees social capital as simply "relationships with other players" (pg. 8). However, he adds to it another layer that gives it depth: *opportunities* such as job promotions and influential participation. This conceptualization might be limited, but it is consistent with Burt's nature of study since it focuses on the structural determinants of competition—those structures that enhance actors' benefits in terms of information and control (pg. 12).

Coleman (1988) theorizes for social capital taking rational action as the starting point. For him, "social capital constitutes a particular kind of resource available to an actor" (S98). Coleman espouses an expansive conception of social capital since he sees it as a general facilitative aspect of social structure. He admittedly defines social capital by its function: social capital is that which makes "possible the achievement of certain ends," but a "given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others" (S89). Coleman distinctively notes that there should be some correspondence between any social situation and the specific available social capital at hand; and although he does not develop this idea further, it is a valuable hint that allows for applying the concept of social capital on different classes of activities and groups. Finally, it should be mentioned that Coleman speaks of *forms* of social

capital, not of specific components; these forms are (1) obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of structures as well as information channels, and (3) norms and effective sanctions.

Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) stress the normative nature of social capital, redefining it in terms of "those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal-seeking behavior of its members, even if these expectations are not oriented toward the economic sphere" (pg. 1323). Their conceptualization of social capital invites us to see it as the blending of four qualities: value introjection, bounded solidarity, reciprocity exchanges, and enforceable trust. The first two, they note, are *principled* sources, and the other two are *instrumental*. However, they are less clear these elements could be blend since they call them at once "types" and "sources" of social capital. Furthermore, Portes and Landolt (1996) are among the few that seriously consider the downside of social capital.

Putnam (1993) presents a clear definition of social capital: It "refers to features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (167). Putnam inaugurates his discussion by pointing that Game Theory underpredicts voluntary cooperation, which can only be understood by examining social capital. Social capital explains the prevalence of voluntary cooperation since it is efficient in solving the problems of opportunism and the dilemmas of collective action (Putnam 1993:165; 1997:31). Putnam speaks of social capital in terms of civic participation and membership in voluntary organizations, all of which is backed up by a moral sense. However, in Putnam (1997) brief commentary on social capital, he implies a modification to his earlier conceptualization. In this piece, he

makes of civicness but *one form* of social capital; good neighborhoodness and social trust are others (p. 51); also he speaks of possible costs (p. 61). There is a measure of difficulty in assessing Putnam's theorizing of social capital, because each of his pieces (e.g., Putnam 1995a; 1995b) patches the elements of the theory or shifts the emphasis.

In summary, social capital theories differ in the (1) conceptualization of the concept, and (2) in accounting for its *effects* as absolutely positive or contingently good. Firstly, Granovetter provides a general definition but he restricts its use to micro encounters. Coleman (1987; 1988) provides an open-ended definition, which could be deemed as loose, but his discussion is rich and includes lead ideas that can be elaborated further. To Burt social capital is just one precise network feature. Portes et al. provide a multidimensional definition, but their elaboration on the concept is closely tight to ethnic applications, which reduces the utility of the general use of the concept. Putnam provides a clear definition and a rich empirical investigation, but he arrests the concept of social capital by restricting it to one class of phenomenon—civicness.

Secondly, Granovetter sees social capital's impact in terms of general societal strength, although he restricts it to personal, micro encounters. Coleman sees it as a generalized resource that has positive effects on several social activities, which includes education. Burt conceives of social capital as a booster to competitiveness. Portes and Sensenbrenner have a more heterogeneous view of social capital that can produce a variety of outcomes depending on the availability of other social factors. Putnam generally equates social capital with civicness and makes of it a panacea for all social problems, but he specifically sees it as a precursor for economic wellbeing. However, his later addition of possible costs of strong social capital makes the concept more dynamic.

Limitations and Blind Areas

Social capital is rather a contested area in social sciences. Beside that it is conceived to have good effect, there is not agreement on its definition, constituting elements, and the processes in which it operates. Specifically, Burt's study is strictly network based, and is the most reductionist. Obsessed with explaining competition and opportunity, it does not lead itself to the consideration of values. The unspoken premise of Coleman's study is the relevance of values, although he never uttered the word. In fact, Coleman in his research on social capital committed two sins, forgivable only to a person of his stature. First, his definition of social capital is functional; he admits that and closes the argument. Second, his approach allegedly stereotypes single-head households (read single motherhood families) by showing that their children have more tendencies for dropping out from high school; again, a person other than Coleman could hardly touch the subject of single-headed households. Nevertheless, Coleman did not utter the common sense conclusion of a normative family structure. He merely spoke of expectations; that is, mother's expectations are the *causal* factor behind the tendency of dropping out from school. The theorization attempt of Portes is the most direct in invoking values, since he shows that economic exchanges are imbued with values that help assuring their reciprocity and give guarantees that trusting will not go in vein.

Putnam invokes the normative in a particularistic way. To be sure, he inaugurated his analysis by referring to Game Theory dilemmas (the prisoner dilemma, the tragedy of the commons, the public good, and the logic of collective action); his theory of social capital is a response to Game Theory. For him, social capital explains the prevalence of voluntary cooperation in being efficient in solving the problems of opportunism and the dilemmas of collective action. Putnam implicitly invokes the normative, and not

surprisingly, Northern Italians fair higher in their civicness compared to the (darker) southerners. Furthermore, Putnam social capital, by definition, is restricted to industrial democracies (since it is measured in terms of the number of formal civic organizations). Ironically, non-industrial democracies are the bastion of social capital; their survival in the modern world was largely facilitated by it. The East Asian miracle, to a certain extent, is a miracle of social capital. It should be mentioned here that Michael Woolcock (1998) provided a highly synthetic and abstract theory of social capital, in relation to development, focusing on autonomy as well as embeddedness. Unfortunately, his systemic theory did not become an ultimate reference for understanding the processes of social capital.

In sum, it could be said that the floating of social capital conceptions is aimed at providing a remedy to social science thinking, although it is an un-repented effort that, in some of its variants, reproduced shortsightedness. Nevertheless, the concept of social capital has specifically challenged the following notions: the Weberian model of rationalism and organizational effectiveness; the pure positivistic view of social relations, including family and kinship relations, education, and social control; and the modernist perspective on economic development.

Theorizing Civil Society and its Peculiarities

The literature on civil society is not formally reviewed in this paper. Rather, the paper identifies three major elements of civil society concept. First is the voluntary aspect of civil society. Second, and almost a corollary to the first, is the participatory quality of civil society of which there are two notions, almost in opposition. The third element is that of identity, also with internal variation.

The overwhelming emphasis that is shared by most writings on civil society is its voluntary aspect of association. The image is that of individuals freely joining associations of their choice. They have the choice of entry as well as exit, without considerable cost. While the underlying motivation for joining civil associations varies, self-expression and self-development are considered prime incentives. This dimension carries the heaviest weight in expressing the individualistic nature of the concept of civil society, firmly rooted in the liberal worldview. Not only the voluntary nature of civil society is contract-based with legal rights and obligations, but it is also market-spirited. That is, civil society is assumed to be benignly open, but it carries the market's inherent selective affinity tendencies. Civil society within the market model is not aspirationally discriminatory, but transactionally filtering. It has high potentials for inclusion and tends to resist caste-like divisions and outright entry obstruction. Nevertheless, in practice and depending on context, civil society is riddled with closure mechanisms. Closure is constructed around status, and the more associations are status-bestowing the more they are securely closured.

The voluntary aspect of civil society is the most rooted in liberalism and the least universally valid. Terminology here poses a problem. Making reservation about the voluntary aspect of civil society might be contrasted to a totalitarian mode of association. However, such an attitude itself is an exclusionary liberal attitude fixated in the view of a despotic East. Thus, it might be appropriate to speak of the voluntary aspect in terms of individual taste rather than in terms of voluntariliness, per se. In this way, the term delivers justice to actors within the liberal fold who see the voluntary aspect in terms of

satisfying choices of tastes, and at the same time avoids discounting other non-individualistically based voluntary concepts.

Moreover, it should be noted that the taste-interest dimension of civil society is only achieved, in its fullest, in capitalistic systems, and in the wealthy ones among them in particular. For other societies, and apart from the ideological base of such a dimension, civil society of taste is not affordable. The ideological base that individuals should have the right to participate in any activity they wish, to create associations for fine-grained interests, and the ideology of the physic right for experimentation are all highly coupled with advanced capitalism. Therefore, when the voluntary aspect of civil society, as commonly understood within the framework of liberalism, is marketed to other nonwestern environments as ready-made and bulletproof solution, it becomes totalizing. Furthermore, we can speak here of *cultural* Dependency Theory. To the extent that we can say that the luxuries that advanced capitalism enjoys is not possible without subjugating the resources of the periphery, and to the extent that we can say that living the civil society of taste is predicated on resources, we can say that pressing civil society of taste in the periphery creates "cultural dependency." In addition, cultural dependency itself reproduces, or augments, economic dependency and peripheralization.

The second element of civil society is about identity and pluralism. With all of its charm, the pure liberal concept of civil society seems to fall short from satisfying the imagination of certain segments of people. Minorities speak of a civil society, but of a different form. In fact, minorities highly depend on special types of social capital and civil society. Lacking access to external formal power, they turn to internal resources of livingness. Kinship networks, churches, friendships, neighborhoods, and even non-

violent gangs, represent crucial resources for the underprivileged. That is true whether it is social, political, or economic activities. For example, credit associations are crucial for the entrepreneurial endeavors of minorities. That is not only true for minorities in industrial democracies, but also for nations, nonwestern nations. The economic miracle of Southeast Asia hinged largely on social capitals and a civil societies that emphasized group identities—not exactly of the size of nationalism with a political ideology and formal borders, but certainly not micro identities.

Thus, when we speak of the identity element of civil society, we can recognize a micro individualistic (and not simply individual) emphasis, and a macro collective (and not simply group) emphasis. These two polar emphases provide distinct images of a society, with implications that pervade all the social structure of the society. Obviously, the micro individualistic version is squarely rooted in liberalism, or more specifically neoliberalism. The marco collective version might have some elements of liberalism (or might have appropriated some element of it), but certainly draw on more extent worldviews and outlooks on organizing life. Having two versions of what a civil society is (or should be) would not be a problem should they are equally acknowledged as valid. However, the macro collective version finds hard time to garner formal legitimacy, which is crucial for extracting resources. Moreover, the collective version is marginalized and even considered the source, or the cause, why minorities are not doing well. More crucial than the negative psychological effects of such magnetization is the structural misalignment that minorities face because of the lack of acknowledgment of the collective version of civil society. When the matter comes to the Third World, the

collective macro view of civil society is often looked upon with great concern, as it forms the base for contesting political hegemony and economic penetration.

Therefore, we can speak of two kinds of pluralism, a liberal pluralism and a corporate pluralism. The distinction is serious enough that the veteran authority on the subject, Milton Gordon who once preached liberal pluralism, recently affirms that the choice between the two in the United States constitutes "New American Dilemma," re-invoking Myrdal's call half a century ago. Empirically, the most telling point is that minorities are starting not to like pluralism that is celebrated in their names. Some see that pluralism in not more than a White celebration of what is perceived as exotic, while pluralism in real life practically translates into "give up your culture and I give up my prejudices." Indeed, some see that pure liberal pluralism is no more than ceremonial acknowledgement of nonwestern culture, which not only does not put much bread on tables but it also infantilizes the other and blocks their cultural vision from being reflected in structural arrangements.

The third element of civil society is the mode of participation. Again, we find here a strict neoliberal version that emphasizes the individual mode of participation that is countered by a "natural order" vision. The former emphasizes happy individuals choosing to participate in a market of associations, and the latter emphasizes community relations in its more traditional sense (cf. Bryk, Lee, and Holland. 1993). In the middle, there is the vision of a society that takes values and traditional connections more seriously, whether it is in the emerging literature of communitarianism (Etzioni 1996) or in the vision of a North European style of society-community that suggests that "the impasse between welfare liberalism and its counter-movement, neocapitalism, was

coming to an end and that two alternatives, the administered society and economic democracy, were looming in the scene" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton 1996:xxv). Thus, we find that individualism underlies the three elements of civil society and constitute an important factor behind its different assumed manifestation.

The three elements of civil society, depending on its version, correspond to three ideal type organizational bases: associations of individuals, cleavage associations, and mediating associations. The associations of individuals are assumed to be widely open, and draw membership based on personal tastes and interests. Participants form social groups as they join, but this group identity ranges from being semi-fluid to totally fluid. In such organizations, exit is usually without sanctions, commitment could be minimal, interaction could be infrequent, and more importantly, less intense. Those types or organizations are considered advantageous because they protect from "illiberal vices" (Brint 2001). Cleavage associations range from semi-open to semi-closed. Commitment, frequency of contact, and emotional intensity of belongingness tend to be strong, although they significantly vary. Lastly, the "natural order" view of participation reminds of the importance of mediating institutions: neighborhood, family, and church (Berger and Neuhaus 1996). Communitarianism seems to favor the first mode of organization but after significant modification to its associational ideology, which protects such organizations from degenerating into a pure individualistic self-centered mode (Etzioni 1996).

Further Limitations and Blind Areas

The concept of civil society, attractive as it is, needs to be modified and qualified to become a universally useful theoretical construct. First, restricting civil society to

formal organizations and "associations of individuals" is useful for studying western industrial democracies, and, in particular, the non-lower class segments of such societies. Without acknowledging the more informal types of associations, the concept misses the ability to analyze many social settings, from Southeast Asian to Muslim countries. Empirical studies become circular; if informal associations are not acknowledged, then the absence of formal voluntaristic associations is considered an indicator of the absence of connectedness. This is a circular reasoning at the methodological level. It is also circular reasoning at the theoretical level since "it promotes a dichotomized view of state-society relations which obstructs an understanding of the way in which they mutually constitute each other" (Bekman 1996:1-2).

Another area in which the idea of civil society needs to be elaborated is its relation to government. Civil society associations relate to the stability of government, but they can also be a mobilizing force against overviewing governments (Post and Rosenblum 2002). If the concept not to favor one type over the other, then it becomes entangled with social protest, resistance and revolutionary movements; but social protest can be fragmentary and feisty.

Third, the optimum degree of independence from government is challenging for theorizing about the civil society concept and challenging for empirical research. If the concept to be more universally useful, it has to accommodate different types of structural interdependence with government. Indeed, the concept as it is used is mostly preoccupied with separateness rather than with interrelatedness (Bekman 1996). Skocpol, Ganz, and Munson (2000) show, agianst common held beliefs, that the

historical experience of civil society associations in the United States were highly coupled with local and regional political institutions.

Interdependence is also problematic at the social level. Ironically, theorizing social capital here comes head-to-head with theorizing civil society, although they are considered as twin concepts. The emphasis on autonomy in the concept of civil society is countered by an emphasis on connectedness in social capital. However, autonomy might develop into malaise as connectedness may develop into decadence. The concept of civil society clearly privileges the modernist style of connectedness, which could be alienating, triggering the need for privatized compensators that are only available for the privileged sectors in the society. Sometimes, the modernist method of connectedness is sacralized, while they are inherently strategic and often intensifies social inequality by highlighting aesthetic preferences (Bourdieu 1984)

Fifth, the concept of civil society marginalizes, and even excludes, visions of social cohesion that are connected to religion. There is a need to decouple civil society from its presumed pure liberal content. Religion is as capable for producing the desirable outcomes of civil society: “The sacred canopy of global civil society, to the extent that we can identify it in specifically religious terms, is more of a universal translator than a substantive world view” (Thomas 2001:523).

Lastly, rivalry and conflict among the different strands of civil institutions is often overlooked (Beckman 1996). Moreover, civil society that is formed around market-based ideology of association may undermine the very foundations of the society. As Walzer (1995) succinctly put it: “They need the state but have no moral relation to it, and they control its officials only as consumers control the producers of commodities, by buying

or not buying what they make… They need the state but have no loyalty to it; the profit motives brings them into conflict with democratic regulation" (pg. 14).

The Problem of Values

As noted at the outset, social sciences have developed a phobia from the normative. However, since the normative is part of social reality, it kept bothering researchers with its imminence. Indeed, serious research was forced to acknowledge that there are more to social reality than lonely interest-driven actors, and more than dead structures. The rise of the ideas of social capital and civic society is one sign of such recognition, which should be considered a healthy development. However, the rise of a more holistic view of society and its dynamics fell back into a degree of reductionism because of methodological choices and paradigm constraints. Theories of social capital typically ignore the normative and focus on concrete *relations*, even when these connections are value-impregnated. In contemporary writings, only communitarianism stresses the centrality of values, which came at the cost of becoming excommunicated from mainstream social sciences. Communitarians "see a need for a social order that contains a set of shared values, to which individuals are taught they are obligated. Individuals may later question, challenge, rebel against, or even transform a given social order, but their starting point is a shared set of definitions or what is right versus what is wrong" (Etzioni 1996:12).

Similarly, the concept of civil society is often presented as purely neutral. However, "[c]ivil society is constituted by cultural assumptions about human nature, the individual, society, and history, all woven into normative narratives. Theorists and the actors within civil society talk of it as an arena in which individuals and groups interact

according to standardized procedures and reasoned discourse. They depict this arena as neutral, with individuals and groups -bringing in interests and passions. Built into the discourse and practice, however, are strong assumptions which are anything but neutral" (Thomas 2001:518). Interestingly, the discussion of civil society often invokes Tocqueville; however, it is selective citing. Only one dimension of Tocqueville is brought up, the desirability of having dense civic organizations. Tocqueville's moral dimension that calls for the respect of the law and the rigorous injunctions of Protestantism and its effects on the lives of people are altogether skipped.

This paper suggests that there is a need to clearly situate the normative within social theory, despite that it is a messy and dangerous task. As it has been argued, escaping values is self-defeating. The challenge is to invoke the normative without becoming centered on particularities and without becoming culturally biased. Three conditions allow the theorist to invoke the normative without falling in the trap of reductionism and ethnocentrism.

First, accounting for merely utilitarian concerns was once considered the guarantee against value-laden arguments. However, utilitarianism is not an amoral position. Escaping the challenge does not solve it. Discounting the moral through focusing on the material of exchanges is itself a moral position. Similarly, appropriating moral dimensions in social life into a utilitarian framework is paradigmatically determined; it is not less dogmatic than *directly* acknowledging the normative of social life. Invoking the normative forthrightly brings bias to the surface and allows for meaningful deliberation, a deliberation that does not hide presumptions behind acrobatic methodologies.

Second, to reduce the particlaurism of values, the normative dimensions that are used should have historical validity. Focusing on instantaneous values naturally heightens the particularity of values. Indeed, when the term value itself has been reduced to particularistic tastes of different groups, it started to become particularistic. The historical depth of a normative claim does not necessarily make it right or desirable. Nevertheless, the persistence of values is one indication for their durability and of their importance in understanding the social world. I suggest that it is possible to define a core of values of historical persistence, and to trace their adaptation in creating and maintaining civil societies. Civil society is not a new phenomena; mass society is. The conceited rationalistic view of modern societies makes us see it only in terms of formal institutions, which underestimate the more infused and the less visible of social life. Not only the normative exists, but also it evolves slowly. Searching for the long-lived elements in the normative allows for a non-particularistic discussion of values, although it might conflict with some contemporary ideologies.

Third, inserting values into analysis is meaningful only when they are conceived operating simultaneously at the individual and the collective levels. It should be absurd to think of a "value" if it is not a collective phenomenon. However, the trend to confuse values with tastes and lifestyles calls for such a statement; and as tastes are becoming more individualized in hyper-capitalist societies, so are tastes. Thus, when we want to discuss normative claims, they have to be observably collective. More accurately put, we need to carefully match the effect of the normative and the degree of its collectivity. The discussion of the normative order has been successfully utilized in studying small group dynamics. I argue that we need not to escape discussing the normative group order at the

macro level. The challenge is to invoke it in a way that shows how the macro operates despite the micro. Micro normative orders need not to be a subcomponent of the macro; frequently they are not. However, we also need not to think of the micro as a counter-macro normative order, as it is fashionably portrayed. I further argue that conceiving the micro as such is itself a moral stance, and not a stance that avoids moral determinism. Thus, we can invoke the normative at the marco level despite that there are many counter examples and non-conforming cases. The logic here is not a statistical representation but of societal holism. The challenge is exactly in searching for the penetrating elements of the normative, which can be traced at all levels of social reality.

Lastly, in reference to the Muslim experience, Islamic values should be analyzed in the way they operate within the totality of a worldview. Muslims often speak of the practice of the West juxtaposing it to Islam's pristine values, while the West speaks of Muslim contemporary culture juxtaposing it to the west's operationalized legality and procedures. This type of "doubly blind" discourse is not conducive for mutual understanding. As for the shape of the preferred civil society in Muslim countries, the western models could be highly suggestive. However, in specific non-western situations, as Hann (1996) asserts, "they are far from being plausible as universal template" (pg. 24). Indeed, the potential for Islam to form the ideological cement of a civil society should not be hasteningly discounted.

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