Underdevelopment as Meta-Axiological Dilemma: The Socioeconomic Implications of African Axiology for Rational Choice Determinants of Microeconomic Agency

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UNDERDEVELOPMENT AS META-AXIOLOGICAL DILEMMA: THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF AFRICAN AXIOLOGY FOR RATIONAL CHOICE DETERMINANTS OF MICROECONOMIC AGENCY

by

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UNDERDEVELOPMENT AS META-AXIOLOGICAL DILEMMA: THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF AFRICAN AXIOLOGY FOR RATIONAL CHOICE DETERMINANTS OF MICROECONOMIC AGENCY

Sundiata Keita Ibn-Hyman, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University, 1997

The intergenerational problems of indigence, poverty and social dysfunction that plague African societies are inextricably grounded in the broader issue of ethnocentrism in neoclassical microeconomics. Economic anthropology provides a methodological critique of the conceptual limitations of neoclassical micro-behavioral assumptions narrowly imposed on non-western economic organization. While recognizing non-western economic praxes, the sociological implications of strict neoclassical microeconomic agency for non-western socioeconomic development is conspicuously ignored. The critique fails to specifically consider the impact of neoclassical ethnocentrism to non-western sociocultural organization and improvement.

This research utilizes an African-centered, social psychological approach to examine the paradigmatic implications of rational choice criteria for microeconomic agency within African sociocultural organization. Rational choice criteria appear incapable of resolving African underdevelopment since they engender normative behavioral expectations that interdict the social reproduction of African cultural praxis. The simultaneity of diametric behavioral expectations and deep structural impetuses establishes meta-axiological dilemma as propagative social conditions for underdevelopment.
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Bismillahi-r-Rahman-r-Rahim! I am forever indebted to the Creator for according me this work through a didactic vision twenty years ago in Bamako, Mali, prior to commencement of formal western training. I have dutifully nurtured and selflessly pursued this vision. With deepest humility do I submit this effort to my ancestors for acceptance and approval. Any faults herein reflect attempts by the unrighteous to mystify the Way and obtund Truth; scores of unbelievers whose willful opposition to Divine obligation shall incur Allah’s justice.

To acknowledge the significance to destiny of time and place -- as taught to me by les veilleux aux Bamako, Nairobi and Mambwe (Zambia) -- I bow to the greatness of Allah lived only by a few. To M. Boubacar Ba, Hamsa al-Catlett, and Dr. Michael Kamara. To Helen Waithira, Sonia Chiringa and Miriam Banda. And to my sons, Diata ("The Savior Lion") and Maghan ("He Who Captures The Town").

The loving memory of my only biological brother, Timothy Allen Hyman, moved this effort. This non-human society murdered him, leaving his slumped body spewing life from an open wound. Your belief, Baby Boy, was sufficient. And I shall never forget. Alhamdullilah!

Sundiata Keita Ibn-Hyman
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ................................................................. ii

**LIST OF TABLES** ................................................................................................ v

**LIST OF FIGURES** .............................................................................................. vi

**CHAPTER**

I. INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1

The Problem of African Development ......................................................... 1

The Nature of Underdevelopment? ......................................................... 2

Neoclassical Approach to Development .............................................. 4

Methodological Critique of the Neoclassical Paradigm .................. 10

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .................................................. 16

III. ON CULTURE .............................................................. 29

Sociological View of Culture .............................................................. 29

Culture as a Scientific Construct ......................................................... 33

IV. THE CALCULUS OF RATIONAL CHOICE ......................... 37

Micro-behavioral Determinants of Growth ........................................ 37

Neoclassical Microeconomic Agency ............................................... 40

The Calculus of Utility ................................................................. 43

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Table of Contents --- Continued

CHAPTER

On Reifying “Quality” ................................................................. 49
Animism as an Example ................................................................. 53
“Nonsatiation” and “Convexity” as Deep Structural Constructs .... 57

V. MICROECONOMIC AGENCY AS META-AXIOLOGICAL DILEMMA ................................................................................ 60
Meta-Axiological Dilemma ................................................................. 60
African Utility .................................................................................. 63
Distinctions in Deep Structure .................................................. 63
Cosmology ................................................................................ 64
Ontology ............................................................................... 66
African Axiological Set .............................................................. 68
Implications for Neoclassical Microeconomic Agency ............. 70

VI. CONCLUSION ........................................................................................ 75

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................ 78
LIST OF TABLES

1. Comparison of Monotonicity Under Differential Axiologies .................. 72
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Neoclassical Utility Function and Indifference Curves ................................... 50
2. The African-Centered Utility Function ........................................................... 73
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem of African Development

This dissertation intends to address a glaring absence within economic discourse of the implications for socioeconomic development of African cultural propensities that predate the colonial legacy. Such a deficiency supports immature exegeses on African socioeconomic development that merely affirm the impact of colonialism and western relativism while disregarding the painfully obvious issue of "How?". A continued disregard for African cultural propensities discounts both the significance and consonance of residual non-Western objective realities. Furthermore, it raises concern over the extent to which an imposed social manicheism remains entrenched yet unchallenged within development theory and research. An alternative view of the persistence of underdevelopment is herein presented as positively related to the extent to which the neoclassical microeconomic paradigm frames African microeconomic agency.
The Nature of Underdevelopment?

Over three decades of formal interventions in African socioeconomic development can hardly be characterized as dismal; ineffective would appear an exceedingly more accurate description. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, three-quarters of the world population living within developing countries generated a penurious twenty percent of the total world production of goods and services, twenty-five percent of world export earnings, and escalated its foreign debt by well over six hundred percent (World Bank, 1980, 1983, 1986; IMF, 1986, 1989). For the 75 million people in developing African nations, an impoverishing combination of balance of payment crises, increased food and capital importation, precipitous commodity prices, skewed and declivitous real per capita incomes and soaring debt persisted well into the austere 1980s. At present over half of the “Sub-Saharan” countries are severely indebted, with debt-service ratios surpassing forty percent in some instances. A forty-eight percent decline in the commodity price index in 1989 alone effectuated a fifty billion dollar loss for the Africa region, providing continued evidence that “Sub-Saharan” economies remain heavily dependent on volatile primary commodities for desperately needed foreign exchange earnings (World Bank, 1989). Also in the same year, regional agricultural and industrial contributions fell from fifty to thirty percent, with investment scarcely more than fifteen percent of GDP. These trends forced many “Sub-Saharan” nations like Zambia to face revised World Bank
classification and the conditional financial access it entails. Inflation in Zambia reached 122 percent at the close of 1989.¹ Its consumer prices increased by as much as sixty percent, with disaggregated indices showing a 144 percent increase in consumer durables and a 138 percent increase among non-durables. Statistically, "dismal" does not begin to describe formal development intervention in Africa any more than it captures the continent's socioeconomic pejoration. Ineffective is exceedingly more accurate.

Economic and social dislocations abound throughout Africa, and there is little reason to anticipate a reversal of these worsening trends. Relief can hardly be hoped for by those living at life's margin in the "Sub-Saharan" region. Residual colonial infrastructures continue to deteriorate through disrepair and inattention. The ranks of the impoverished and indigent continue to swell as sporadic internecine conflicts further marginalize civilian populations. Health care in the post-colonial era is just as remote and educational opportunity just as difficult to secure. Decades of foreign aid, questionable industrialization and investment strategies, and immiserizing structural adjustment programming have managed only to further enfeeble structurally weak and politically mismanaged economies, to further impoverish indigenous populations, and to further deepen ubiquitous despair, trepidation, and legendary suffering.

Just what has gone wrong with socioeconomic development in Africa? Is there something inherent in the very nature of underdevelopment that makes development an impossible task? Historically, no shortcut to development shy of deferring to the presumably catholic post-war models of reconstruction and growth looms apparent. And the absence of an alternative paradigm that is methodologically contradistinct to the conventional conversion or indigenization models (see Mudimbe, 1985), yet tolerant the reformative spirit of AAF-SAP\(^2\) encourages repeating in the 1990s the very modes of intervention that have further entrenched African impoverishment.

**Neoclassical Approach to Development**

Neoclassical diagnoses of Africa's economic ills remain conceptually moored to indices sensitive only to colonial-era methodologies and which presume to abstract the macrodynamics of western economies (e.g., per capital income, the Gini coefficient, capital-labor ratios, and others). Moreover, these neoclassical indices estrange African economies from those sociocultural realities that managed to survive an obstructive and repressive colonial legacy. As the dominant method of

\(^2\) The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes (AAF-SAP), introduced to UN General Assembly in 1988, concerns itself with establishing economic reform in accordance with requirements for addressing Third World debt. It consists of four central points designed to accommodate structural adjustment programmes to wit: (1) democratization of the development process, (2)
socioeconomic development, the neoclassical paradigm posits a praxeological perspective on the persistence of African underdevelopment which imputes the quality of "backwardness" or general state of underdevelopment to a "special case" of non-rational behavioral propensities that impede otherwise normally functioning, self-equilibrating, free market dynamics (Leibenstein, 1957; Baran, 1961, 1968; Bauer, 1981; Fei & Ranis, 1964, 1966; Lindert & Kinderburger, 1983; Herrick & Kinderburger, 1983; Meier, 1984). From this paradigm, various strategies for African development ranging in approach from the basic needs, growth with equity, and dependencia of the 1960s to the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s derive methodological significance. Through them, virtually everything behaviorally disparate and inconsistent with Western "rationality" appears causally suspect and pathological rather than causally indicative of the root of underdevelopment -- whether its the bovine nature of political decision-making, draconian legal codes, misguided public administrators, uninspired entrepreneurs, or disinterested professionals and consumers. The neoclassical notion of development is conceptually restricted to a social process that promotes the maximization of productive and allocative efficiencies in functional macro-level relationships between four key variables: production, capital, labor and savings (Jones, 1976; Solow, 1988). Therefore for socioeconomic growth to occur in underdeveloped societies, their non-indigenization of development, (3) regard for the human aspect of development, and (4) full mobilization of resources.
rational behaviors which the neoclassical perspective identifies as pathological would appear to require exorcising from the conditions of underdevelopment, not explanations that are methodologically recondite and praxeologically remote.

In building upon the classicals' methodological tradition, the neoclassicals' strict analytical framework predicing formal approaches to development emphasizes quantitative growth and efficiency among predetermined units of analysis: variables whose African performance are regarded as endemically occluded within a larger superintending and highly protean global economy. Research in national economic growth approaches the development problem largely from the basis of simple aggregated system concepts, with growth commonly associated with aggregate capital accumulation. This approach is cast in the Harrod-Domar extension of the Keynesian model. In the empirical setting of underdeveloped societies, the problem is framed by a preoccupation with displacing lagging economies with forms of microeconomic behavior that conform more closely to Western normative standards. The rate of development is associated with expectant patterns of capital accumulation and renewed sources of savings and investment. Neoclassical theoretical concepts have been extended in two principal directions, with greater attention being given the allocation of investment between development options. One of these directions is the occasional attempt to identify necessary growth sequences or "stages" of development in the interest of producing a more dynamic framework for prediction
and planning (Rostow, 1960). One trend occurring in this direction includes considering development in the context of more complex functional systems, which seeks to extend time horizons and perspectives. Clearly a restive search is under way for concepts that are more relevant to interpretation of the harsh realities disclosed by experience.

For the neoclassical economist, African underdevelopment presents itself as a "special case" of complex behavioral and institutional constraints to otherwise normally functioning market dynamics. The neoclassical analytical framework lies contradistinct to alternative Marxian perspectives which affirm constraints — whether global, national, or in the context of a community — resulting from the siphoning of wealth by macrostructures created by equally suspect modes of production. To the extent that the more substantive, more structurally-oriented position within these perspectives maintains that which corrupts an essential, mutually inclusive relationship between social and material production is institutional and therefore behavioral, and that institutions cum infrastructure contribute to underdevelopment, these seemingly internecine economic perspectives find middle ground in conceding that a poorly developed infrastructure contributing to the absence of a foundation for "modern" socioeconomic growth cannot accommodate historically proven empirical theories for growth. Cash crop, export-oriented economic infrastructures would, for example, require either Frank’s (1967) or dos Santos’ (1970) dependencia-styled
adjustments, or Nurkse's (1955) structuralist-styled adjustments through behavior modifications that are functionally consistent with Harrod-Domar paradigmatic relationships (see Jones, 1976) for viable growth to occur. It is upon this issue of institutions cum infrastructure that, as Godelier (1986) argues, a contentious moment -- a basic theme -- lies weighted by the existence and substance of a logic governing social evolution and dynamics. Beyond mutual concurrence on the existence of comparatively undeveloped infrastructure, concern over the plausibility of either perspective (that is, either structuralist or Marxist) with respect to African development deliquesces to a solitary question of the general applicability of western behavioral postulates imputing their presumed analytical difference more to philosophical bases than to issues of determinancy. Ultimately, it is consistency with this single question and its imputation to which the reasons for over thirty years of African development must be reconciled.

The neoclassical paradigm and its attendant assumptions of universally applicable strategies for socioeconomic growth set up an implicit casuistry between exogenous albeit inured Western behavioral responses to non-indigenous cultural stimuli and endogenous cultural norms for pre-colonial patterns of institutional praxis. Consequently, policy assessments overtly examine seemingly endemic empirical problems relative to an agenda for integrating disruptive behavioral propensities into
"rational" economic institutions. The regard held by researchers for residual pre-colonial African axiological constructs that inform behavioral propensities directly challenged by Western economic institutions appears pejorative at best, and nonexistent at worst. Static exegeses in Western socioeconomic relativism abound, wholly imperceptible this dynamic opposition: from Nurkse's (1955) "vicious cycle of poverty" and Hirchman's (1958) discussion of the futility of investment behavior amid the absence of a functional link between saving propensities and investment in LDCs to Modjeska's (1982) revelation of sexism and discrimination in Duna productive relations, Sahlin's (1972) contention that the dichotomy between atomistic productive units and the "phenomenon" of extended family grounds a "kinship to kingship" social evolution, and Coquery-Vitrovitch's (1978) hypothesis of an "African" mode of production stemming from its Asian counterpart. What is required at this juncture in the discourse on African development is an acknowledgment of the existence of subjective and objective realities in non-western societies; one that ventures beyond a simple cognition to excogitate from the neoclassical paradigm antitheses to persistent, pre-colonial social praxes, and their implications for and effectuations upon African socioeconomic development.

See Schmoller (1884) and Cunningham (1910) for a discussion of the mechanisms that assisted in the transformation of European economies from feudalism to mercantilism.
Methodological Critique of the Neoclassical Paradigm

That a western perception of reality and an equally western conceptualization of the relationship between human beings and their environment implicit in social science research limit the predictive and evaluative efficiencies of its paradigms when examining non-western social dynamics is hardly a novel hypothesis. Nor, as plausible imputations for paradigmatic bias, do they escape the attention of social scientists across diverse disciplines concerned with the methodological significance of these limitations for understanding behavioral modalities among racially and culturally differentiated groups. Much of the scholarly discourse on paradigmatic bias only considers its evaluative implications. Analytical scope is typically restricted to issues of external validity, significant only in its ascription of questionable interpretations of non-western reality to promiscuous hypotheses or empirical problems of determinancy commonly associated with difficulties in objectifying noumenal or axiological characteristics of socio-behavioral modalities. It acknowledges the spatial and temporal conditions of non-western social reality, but only comparatively and in terms of a causal evolution toward normative standards of refinement. With the notable exception of the critical traditions in African (Black) psychology, African philosophy, and Black/Africana Studies, critiques of paradigmatic bias do generally ignore the preconditioning of research methodology by epistemological orientation and the implications of its worldview specificity for both the evaluative and predictive
functions of social science paradigms. Consequently, paradigmatic assumptions remain unchallenged, their validity persists untested, and the relativity of their axiological orientation sustains its guise of catholicity. At issue is the role of Western axiological ethnocentrism in predicting outcomes relevant to non-western social dynamics: an issue whose cogency redounds more to the fact of cultural differentials in socioeconomic organization than to its ideological grounding in presumptions about comparative human superiority.

This theoretical examination of the neoclassical microeconomic paradigm aims to broaden the analytical scope of the Polanyi Group critique by further elaborating its affirmation of cultural differentiation in micro-behavioral performance to consider the rational choice criteria implicit in the microeconomic paradigm as normative bias. Indigenous institutional nonage and the inability to produce rational socioeconomic outcomes is recast as a concern over a paradigmatic interdiction of African-centered socioeconomic praxes. The central hypothesis of this dissertation is that Western ethnocentrism within rational choice criteria support an idiosyncratic modality of microeconomic agency whose consistency with the cultural orientation of African social organization determine its social contribution to African socioeconomic underdevelopment. An economy is defined as instituted social relations possessing distinct, closed sets of well-defined social behaviors and expectations that produce, transmit and reproduce a common experience or "worldview". Within the neoclassical
perspective, microeconomic behavior is represented by the characteristic properties of a constructed utility function predicting potential economic choices deduced out from an association of field of preferences and set of axioms of utilitarian choice. Six axioms of choice mathematically encode utilitarian assumptions about economic behavior that mallet its functional form -- a hyperbolic surface traversing axes of measurable utility and two presumably independent commodities, physical or otherwise -- and comprise rational choice criteria for individual demand. With demand for goods and services sociologically specified and an economy assumed fully responsive to societal dynamics, and axiologically restricted thereby, the relationship between the neoclassical paradigm and African underdevelopment can be investigated through its constituent utility function by locating and examining post-colonial discrepancies (conflict) in otherwise rational and predictable economic choices. Conflicting axiologicai orientations prescribe different sets of normative expectations for microeconomic agency and outcomes. Neoclassical rational choice criteria represent normative impositions that pillory indigenous behavioral motivations to alien social institutions and organization which currently stand in need of legitimization.

The social psychology of African-centered metatheory (see Azibo, 1991; Montgomery, Fine and James-Myers, 1990) provides an appropriate analytical framework with which to assess the utilitarian assumptions implicit in rational choice

Upon identifying rational choice criteria as having a strictly Western axiological orientation, neoclassical microeconomic agency is considered within a social context as inconsistent with an African axiological orientation. While a comparative evaluation of microeconomic agency under assumptions of European and African worldview specificity and within "modern" and traditional socioeconomic conditions promises meaningful intellectual insights, such a task is beyond the objective scope of this work and is not immediately useful to the development of its central hypothesis. Moreover, as a converse approach, African-centered microeconomic agency within a European social context, appears a problematic that pertains more to the socioeconomic condition of diasporic Africans and concerns itself more with the validity of Western ontology than the present focus requires.

It is argued that culturally inappropriate rational choice criteria supports a form of African microeconomic agency that evidences meta-axiological dilemma. Meta-axiological dilemma is defined as the use of non-indigenous utilitarian modalities.
as a surface level behavior to support, sustain and reproduce African big-social existence. This concept also encompasses the obverse, i.e., the satiation of Western social and material wants through traditional modalities. Different axiological sets attached to behavioral expectations and the situational demand of social organization conflict in their manichean conjugation to the social objectives of individual microeconomic outcomes. The degree of axiological proportionality within this philosophical conjugation determines the strength of functional dependence between social and material objectives. In addition, it determines the direction of socioeconomic development as utility (use value) is predicated on axiological orientation and necessarily influences the pattern of both consumptive and productive modalities.

African underdevelopment is argued herein to be positively correlated the extent to which rational choice criteria of the neoclassical utility function conditions inurement of 18th century European axiology and produces meta-axiological dilemma in African micro-behavioral performance. And, inasmuch as culture's functional association to social behavior yields a deterministic relationship that African social psychological theory recognizes as having important epistemological significance for the African personality construct, neoclassical microeconomic agency estranges the African actor from traditional socioeconomic organization by reproducing "modern" socioeconomic praxes that generate culturally unsupportive outcomes. The
reproduction of alien social axiology dissociates material from social development only to isolate the former as the greater objective for consumptive modality. Intertemporal processes of African rationality are revealed to find their expression in intergenerational poverty and indigence encouraged within permissible limits of microeconomic agency by meta-axiological dilemma and sustained by decades of concessional foreign aid, industrialization and investment strategies, and structural adjustment programs.

At a minimum, this approach intends specific consequences that suggest areas for more parturient theoretical and empirical work on the involvement of antipodal self-concept and meta-axiological dilemma in African socioeconomic behavior. First, it provides conceptual clarity to a heretofore ambiguous and unfocused critique of ethnocentrism in neoclassical development theory. Second, it places pedestrian scholarly acknowledgments of Western ethnocentrism squarely within intellectual discourse on internecine social psychologies, thereby substantiating pertinent questions about policy implementations of racist development theories. Third, it suggests areas for more parturient theoretical and empirical work on the involvement of meta-axiological dilemma and antipodal self-concept in African socioeconomic organization. And lastly, it justifies critical examinations of the predictive and evaluative efficiencies of the utility function.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the body of literature within economic anthropology which critiques the neoclassical microeconomic paradigm as predisposed in its theoretical assumptions toward Western social organization and behavior. Its sociological orientation centers this literature on two main dimensions of the historical debate over economic determinism and the functional nature of economy as a social institution. Broadly, it posits an inability to apprehend microeconomic behavior as teleologically independent of social relations and organization. It questions, in addition, the extent to which the neoclassical concept of "economizing" as an ecologically informed propensity appears a catholic human predilection. With its distinction by kind rather than degree of non-western from western economic modalities, this literature advances an argument for an inherent inability of the neoclassical approach to transcend its narrow methodological scope and consequently yield accurate insights into the socioeconomic performance of underdeveloped non-western societies.

In order to situate within the objective scope of this dissertation a review of this specific body of literature with its inherent multiplicity of analytical foci equally
as numerous and varied as are reasons deduced from the neoclassical framework for Africa's difficulty to surmount economic stagnation and, in some cases, regression, attention is confined topically to its singular treatment of social organization as rational choice determinants. This purposive focus is hardly suggestive of a similar reduction of the subtle complexities underlying related issues of reciprocity and redistribution as a basis for social relations (Polanyi, 1968) or historical examinations of market and pre-colonial modes of production (e.g., Meillassoux, 1972; Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1978), of Marxian and neo-Marxian contributions to economic anthropology (e.g., Weber, 1984; Sahlins, 1972; Firth, 1975; Godelier, 1978) or more technically involved considerations of price determination that risk preoccupation with comparative efficiencies (e.g., Cook, 1969). Rather, the confinement to rational choice and its social determinants serves to limit consideration of this critical literature to its examination of the ontological and axiological dimensions of microeconomic assumptions that predicate and center the methodology of neoclassical growth theory.

The neoclassical approach equates "economic" with "material", and implicit in its behavioral assumptions are the beliefs that microeconomic agency concerns itself with the provision of material goods that satisfy unlimited biological and social wants; and scarcity, as a condition of microeconomic agency, results from the insatiability of man's material wants. Scarcity can only obtain in those societies which place great value on accumulation relative to more social and collective goal attainments, and
whose institutional structure impels such a propensity. Thus within the neoclassical purview, the individual contravenes society in a relationship of exteriority, appearing to be autonomous its effectuations as society itself becomes a collection of means toward material self-gain.

In her recapitulation of the intellectual progression of scholarship within economic anthropology, Ortiz (1983) notes that underlying the neoclassical approach is a concept of economy as an adaptive modality to ecological constraints that shape the direction of cultural effort and social organization (1983:viii). Its usefulness in elucidating the problem of underdevelopment came under scrutiny with Malinowski's ethnographic study of Trobriand Islanders and its attendant suggestion that economic activity in underdeveloped areas requires consideration beyond their endemic technologies (Malinowski, 1921). An emergent homeostatic view of the relation between man and environment raised concerns over the relationship between technology and social need that fostered a more sociological orientation, one whose focus on the social significance of technological change to social need lies contradistinct the neoclassical conceptual focus on "economizing", i.e., problematic rational choice allocations inherent conditions of unlimited want satisfaction, scarcity and uncertainty (Firth, 1975; Herskovits, 1952).

A clearer delineation of this core distinction is provided by Sahlins (1969) as a central disagreement over the ambiguous meaning and ontological locus of economy,
from which all other conceptual and methodological differences of method and conception derive. In the neoclassical sense, economy is a generalized human activity or behavioral propensity, rather than the cultural endeavor or sub-unit of sociocultural order that it is under the sociological approach. Because economic agency is differentiated contextually, the action of each economic subject unfolds on different levels. Under the neoclassical approach, economic action becomes a mode of rationality or sub-category within a general human behavioral repertoire. The sociological approach on the other hand signifies the cultural process through which productive and consumptive allocations sustain social organization. Sahlins points out that this essential disparity between inherent assumptions about natural behavioral propensities and the influence of social forces upon individual behavior predicates the contrast between the "formalist" neoclassical and "substantivist" sociological approaches to economic organization and activity.

In addition to Malinowski's earlier work, Herskovits (1952) provides one of the initial critiques of the neoclassical method to emerge from what had been regarded heretofore as economic sociology. Working within the neoclassical framework, he concerns himself with understanding its inter-societal applications of the process of economizing, which he defines as a way of conceptualizing and initiating economic action amid scarcity imposed by expanding desires. He asserts that basic needs provisioning inevitably involves choice conditioned by alternative resource availability.
and cultural patterns which socialization engenders within the individual decision maker. Thus, a "cultural matrix" frames the process of economizing and affects individual want and want-satiation. Herskovits maintains that the theoretical point of departure for neoclassical economizing as rational choice must of necessity be the social individual constrained by resource availability and cultural axiology. Its method comprises universals in the human experience that provide a basis for all generalizations on the nature and functioning of economic organization and the achievement of socially sanctioned economic objectives.

Most importantly for underdevelopment and the inter-societal applications of rational choice are Herskovits' implication of cultural variation across societies and the Durkheimian significance it ascribes to technology, divisions of labor and capital as universals in the human experience. Ecological scarcity does constrain the economizing process by limiting the range of maximizable human want, presuming that human want is inexhaustible. Rational choice narrows as a result, and non-literate, underdeveloped societies become moored to simple economies that satisfy only the most basic biological needs. The degree of sophistication for economic rationality appears ecologically or materially determined, as do axiology and ontology as its cultural antecedents. Consequently, for Herskovits, the neoclassical approach to economic organization is not geared to consider those societies wherein resource
alternatives are so severely arrested as to narrow the margin between utility and disutility.

Indisputably, the body of theoretical work submitted by Karl Polanyi (1957, 1968) and elaborated upon by his former student, George Dalton (1961, 1968, 1969, 1971), offers the fullest examination of the limitations of the neoclassical analytical scope. Polanyi further develops Herskovits' contentions that cultural variation configures rational choice through affective socialization, and the range of human wants is circumscribed quantitatively by scarcity and qualitatively by culture. He similarly distinguishes economic behavior from economy as mutually interdependent yet discrete social phenomena confused by neoclassical assumptions that generalize relative human motivations and behavioral propensities. The nature of individual behavioral impetus and the collective productive patterns that result as necessary social outcomes predicate not only this distinction but one central to Polanyi's critique of economizing as an abstracted economic process and rational choice as a concrete form typified by market social organization.

Polanyi regards economic agency as the essence of rationality in much the same fashion as Herskovits. Both theorists concur that economizing is the disposition of time and energy in order to maximize subsistence goals in an unyielding environment of scarcity. But Polanyi rejects the neoclassical notion of a particularized rationality complementing an equally particularized mode of
subsistence provisioning. The neoclassical approach may indeed evidence selective consideration of sociological factors on the dynamic operation of an economy. But its essential core of utilitarian rationality remains unaffected. For Polanyi, the relationship between the economy and economic agency is such that the institutional structure of the former compels the latter. Thus, where the neoclassical approach fails is in its non-integration of abstracted, sociologically grounded human wants with their satiation through generalized, socially prescribed productive modalities. In an essay on the social location of economy, Polanyi argues that the process through which material want-satisfaction occurs serves as the point of common interest throughout the history of economies. Locating and analyzing this process however, which the neoclassical approach fails to do, can only be achieved by emphasizing a generalized configuration associating subsistence provisioning to a mode of agency rather than to a specific type of rationality.

Dalton (1961, 1968, 1969, 1971) later substantiates Polanyi's assertion by noting that central to the failure of neoclassical theory is its exclusive emphasis on industrial capitalism as the most highly evolved form of social organization. Nevertheless, non-western economies do provide useful insights into those aspects of industrial society that directly pertain to the development of welfare and communistic state economies. Polanyi, he argues, as a central theorist in economic anthropology attempts to elucidate the societal divisiveness of capitalist economies and its
inevitable requirement of social control. A clear disjunction between otherwise teleological social relations and economic behavior conditions the inevitability of divisiveness and requisite social control. Dalton points out that Polanyi's analytical focus on institutional processes underlies Tonnies' point that archaic, non literate societies are gemeinschaft rather than gesellschaft (1968:xiii). Moreover, his perspective lies contradistinct Marx's earlier analysis of social dichotomies within capitalist organization inasmuch as the latter only presumes some measure of congruity between axiology and praxis that renders collective social objectives heterogeneous, however potential and unrealized they may be for labor.

Focusing on the residual physiocratic underpinnings of formal economic theory, Dalton further specifies Polanyi's critique by arguing that combined neoclassical conditions of human insatiability and scarcity are not only fundamentally incorrect as universal principles, but confuse a biologically sound assumption with a specific social orientation (Dalton, 1961). He maintains that in seeking to explicate price determinations of rational choice in allocative, productive and consumptive modalities, the neoclassical approach treats economy as natural and divine in its superintendence by market dynamics. This nominalist position accords Western social organization a catholicity presumably deducible as an inevitability from a conjectured refinement of human evolution on the assumption of a sovereign ubiquity of physical scarcity (cum "accessibility"), an autonomy from social factors, and a
ligation of the noumenal and phenomenal through a human link between self-preservation and material acquisition. At their root these assumptions necessarily imply a dual human behavioral characteristic under the neoclassical approach that is a tautological identity, not an interdependent inequality.\textsuperscript{4} Biologically, man's very existence is insatiable, requiring continuous material sustenance. Socially, and of biological necessity, man values and pursues more material acquisition (cum: "consumption") to less.

Dalton asserts that if the human being is to fulfill material wants and desires, and s/he economizes to do so, then material acquisition must be a socially determined value whose institutional structure impels society to behave accordingly. Thus by acknowledging "bio-social existence", an approach to economic organization must explain the socio-organizational requirements, rights and obligations that both integrates and preferentially orders resources and productive techniques for the continuous provisioning of material livelihood. This collection of normative rules more precisely distinguishes an "economic system". Even under the adumbration of the neoclassical framework, social convention determines social organization by informing its utilitarian foundations of rational choice economizing to the extent that the axiological significance of material acquisition is ranked ordinally higher than alternative objective attainments. Institutionally, social organization must both

\textsuperscript{4} Mathematically, a tautological "identity" and an interdependent "inequality".
support and propagate this ordinal valuation as summum bonum, or the supreme social good.

For both Polanyi and Dalton, it is precisely because the neoclassical approach erroneously accords universality and a Darwinian sovereignty to a particular ontologically and axiologically closed set that its resultant analyses of underdevelopment are both prescriptively empty and methodologically inapplicable to underdeveloped societies. The very basis of utilitarian rationality yields significant implications for various definitive characteristics of underdevelopment (see Rostow, 1960; Leibenstein, 1957; Baran, 1961), as well as ascriptive Lamarckian notions of comparative degrees of human evolution and civilization.

That strictly Western social reality grounds the neoclassical approach to development is hardly a novel hypothesis. Economics, the argument postulates, is eurocentric in its behavioral assumptions and use of principles relative to a Western predisposition toward market organization and atomistic capital accumulation. Unfortunately, however, the argument ends here, thereby rendering insufficient its simple observation and acknowledgment of inconsistency between methodological principles emphasizing observation of social life and analysis of expectations under different circumstances without drawing inferences that result in scientific, objective political precepts (Myrdal, 1954). The same holds equally true for attempts to explicate probable methodological problems of objectification while that portion of
reality Western paradigms presumably model persists to reproduce transculturally Western social reality (Weber, 1984; Akbar 1985a).

It should perhaps be mentioned that the neoclassical approach would not necessarily disagree with the economic anthropological critique of formal microeconomic analysis, its market orientation, or its conceptualization of scarcity and material want satisfaction. Both approaches exhibit an ontological congruity in their perception of ecological constraints on the human being that define his/her relationship to the natural environment. Each, in addition, similarly recognizes that poorly developed institutions cum infrastructure, absent a foundation supportive of "modern" socioeconomic growth, cannot accommodate the normative behavioral expectations implicit in the neoclassical paradigm that prelimit rationality. But beyond these mutual concurrences, these approaches diverge on the issue of how man's relationship to his natural environment affects individual behavior and the

5 Or, institutional economics for that matter. Keller, et.al. (1982) note institutional economics' concern with change and the process of change in community values, its recognition of the endogenous role of social values in shaping economic preferences and tastes, and its regard for economic policies consistent with such normative principal as equality, individual dignity and self-actualization, democracy and "honesty". Tool has similarly criticized the neoclassicals' use of utility as a criterion of judgment for being tautological, relativistic and inapplicable (Tool, 1980:313). While the institutionalist perspective does provide some useful insights into social value theory, its institution-specific, policy-oriented, and therefore decidedly macrosociological focus fails consistently to treat the character, origin and consequence of culture, and the impact of these dimensions of culture on habituated patterns of social interaction and relations. Institutional economics assumes the catholicity of Western cultural abstractions (e.g., "honesty", democracy, equality).
causal direction that ontology obliges this effectuation to follow; that is, whether the ontology is characteristically nominalist or realist in scope. The significance of the economic anthropological position redounds to its acknowledgment and acceptance of non-western rational choice modalities. It fails however to provide a cogent explanation for an institutional ethnocentrism that accounts for western cultural determinations of counterproductive socioeconomic outcomes, being too epistemologically narrow and conceptually redefining that its task of overcoming the neoclassical problem of ethnocentrism warrants. The inability of poorly developed social organization to produce rational socioeconomic outcomes must necessarily present itself as a question of the applicability of neoclassical micro-behavioral assumptions to non-western societies. Thus, the economic anthropological discourse requires a broader theoretical scope that more acutely attends to the influence of western ethnocentrism on non-western socioeconomic development, and which allows a fuller consideration of the implications for the predictive efficiency of microeconomic agency subject to culturally consonant, non-western conditions of social organization. It simply wants of thought beyond both the solipsistic parameters of the neoclassical approach and its own parochial observations.

In sum, the critical discourse of economic anthropology reconceptualizes microeconomic agency as a cultural process of definite teleological (functional) patterns of interaction possessing historical and geographic relevance. It maintains
that insatiability is a cultural rather than natural human propensity, and that scarcity is, ipso facto, sociological, empirical and relative, not axiomatic and ubiquitous. A dual meaning of the concept "economic" is perceived to be at the root of neoclassical assumptions about scarcity and the pervasiveness of microeconomic agency. Biological man/woman requires continuous material sustenance while sociological man/woman wants more to less material goods. Because the human being "economizes" to satisfy material wants, material acquisition must be a socially determined value whose institutionalization compels society toward conformity with normative micro-behavioral expectations. All societies possess the common propensity to sustain "bio-social" existence through socially sanctioned allocative modalities (e.g., market, reciprocal, redistributive). And while valid inter-societal or transcultural analysis can only concern itself with their institutionalization, the economy appropriate to each appertains to a culturally determined logic, method, strategy or mode of rationality unique to circumstantial evaluations of bio-social existence.
CHAPTER III

ON CULTURE

This chapter briefly reviews a sociological perspective of culture. A more cybernetic model of culture is introduced which further elucidates the Polanyists' omission of relevant cultural factors. Moreover, the cybernetic model of culture provides an analytical framework from which to consider the neoclassical paradigm as a cultural model of reality. The spatial-temporal simultaneity of disparate axiological sets which the imposition of colonialism firmly established is argued to condition the meta-axiological dilemma of pursuing culturally consonant economic outcomes from an alien model of reality.

Sociological View of Culture

Broadly defined, culture encompasses the learned values, norms, knowledge, artifacts, language and symbols that are constantly communicated among aggregates of people who share a common way of life. For sociologist Howard Becker (1986), culture has more of a praxeological focus as shared understandings that people use to coordinate their activities. Benton (1982) conceptualizes culture ontologically as a system of symbols and meanings, including knowledge, beliefs, morals, customs, and
any other capabilities and habits acquired as a member of society. It is the learned repertoire of every transmissible thought and action. Benton contends that culture is not additive, but integral to the formation and development of the human being. Since instincts do not organize, mind and body, themselves incapable of directing human behavior or organizing human experiences, evolve within the framework of culture. Williams (1982) says that the meaning of culture ranges from an emphasis on a noumenal "spirit" informing distinct ways of life, to distinctively discernible social processes. The sense of culture as the active cultivation of the mind similarly ranges from a "developed" state of mind, to processes of intellectual development and the means of such processes (e.g., the arts). For Williams, the current notion of culture references means of intellectual development that are contradistinct its anthropological and extended sociological interpretations as a total way of life. Presumably, this contemporary understanding of culture results from the convergence of an eighteenth century philosophical focus on "informing spirit" that is most apparent in specific cultural activities (e.g., rituals), and a later nineteenth century behavioralist focus on a total social order consisting primarily of integrated social activities. Williams designates these pre-convergence perspectives on culture as idealist and materialist respectively. The method of each perspective differs only inasmuch as there are

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6 Griswold (1994) makes the distinction between a humanities viewpoint that privileges an opposition between culture and civilization, and a functionalism that emphasizes more of a harmony between culture and civilization.
socially corroborating distinctions between culture as worldview and culture as the formation, organization and production of signifying systems.

The idealist perspective identifies an informing spirit as central to the interests and values of a social group as they are manifest in institutions and activities. Williams asserts that the idealist perspective must extend and qualify its position to avoid a historical repetition of culture's development and spurious validation of culture as a total way of life. The notion of culture cannot be abstracted as an informing spirit at the root of cultural production. He argues that such an interpretation reduces cultural praxis to mere ideology by ignoring the dynamic, complex processes of tension and conflict, resolution and irresolution, innovation and change through which culture is produced. A broadening of the idealist perspective must include, of necessity, the distinctive feelings, attitudes and assumptions important to tracing the changing culture of continuing or persistent social groupings. In addition, Williams maintains that the idealist perspective must further consider manifest cultural productions that are not directly expressive of formal and conscious beliefs (e.g., drama, fiction, painting).

Contrastly, the materialist perspective incorporates specific forms of the known or discoverable character of the general social order. Its more extensive purview subsumes the idealist emphasis on constitutive cultural practices by characterizing culture as a signifying system that communicates and reproduces social
order. Cultural praxis and production cease to appear as merely derivative of a constituted social order, but as factors significant to its constitution. Williams observes that considering the materialist perspective as not incorporating the idealist one is perhaps more precise since both do acknowledge a superintendent social order. The materialist perspective privileges anthropomorphism to account for a more biological propagation of social order. In fact, it is Benton who observes that it is the responsibility of culture to impose order. Without it, human behavior becomes an ungovernable "chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions" (1982:463). He points out further that "[i]t is by and through symbolic models that humans are able to come to terms with their environment, that they come to understand it, to see it, to interpret it" (1982:464).

Consequently, as a matter of practicality, social man is estranged from his cosmological foundations in order to conflate ontology and its symbolization, encoding through a range of institutionalized social behaviors: from language to journalism, fashion and advertising. Williams notes that although the idealist perspective is contrasted against the material as a false consciousness or illusionary experience, it nevertheless is identical to the common experience that empirical sociology alleges to observe. Their similarity -- that an a priori explanatory method or logic governs social experience and cultural production -- is itself a fact of a particular
developmental phase of culture, and their difference lies in their possession of distinctively diametrical philosophical bases.

Culture as a Scientific Construct

The treatment of culture within a proactive Fanonian tradition centers on theoretical and empirical research on the structure, functioning and implications of African-centered cognitive modalities, personalities constructs and worldview within socially oppressive environments (Azibo, 1991; Baldwin, 1980; Akbar, 1976, 1991a; Nobles, 1976, 1991a, 1991b; Dixon, 1976; Fanon, 1963, 1967; King, 1976). This tradition, elements of which are found in the work of Frantz Fanon, posits a social psychological association between several layers of culture that produces a dynamic cybernetic process that subsumes Williams' comparatively static typology under three interactive levels: primary, secondary or "intermediate", and surface levels of culture. Hereupon, culture becomes a scientific construct characterized as "a process which gives a people a general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality" (Azibo, 1991). This more process-oriented framework clarifies Williams' idealist emphasis of culture as an epistemological pattern for interpreting reality that originates in the primary and secondary levels of culture.

Various constituent elements interact at each level of culture to provide for a functional order within the overall interpretive design. Cosmology and ontology
structure the axiological orientation of social behavior and interaction at the primary level. Cosmology, distinguished herein from its confused popular usage as "worldview", refers to a philosophical conceptualization that models a systematic understanding of the origin, structure and processes of the universe. The self-conceptualizations that form in response to this conceptual system which confers a sense of human purpose and direction, with its attendant set of social psychological personality constructs, structures ontology. These two primary level factors structure in tandem the formation of value sets from which emerges a general design for living and interpretive pattern that "models" a conceptual universe, and that governs surface level social behavior and social interaction. This primary level activity predicates secondary level formation of worldview or "ethos", and ideology. Combined, the primary and secondary levels comprise what Nobles' refers to as "deep structure. Deep structure organizes the scope and nature of the surface level of culture, which is constituted by a vast array of overtly expressed, manifest behaviors and practices, inclusive but not limited to symbols, language and customs. Formed of these primary and secondary levels, the objective functioning of culture's deep structure is to organize or "model" a conceptual universe for the members of a society.

Nobles, as do Benton and Williams, notes a tendency in human society to construct symbolic models that function both as worldview-specific paradigms of reality that harbor a metaphysical acceptance of actuality, and ethos-specific
paradigms for reality that prescribe moral or evaluative standards for living. Accordingly, the surface level of culture becomes a collection of observable material objects and behavioral repertoires that signify deep structural philosophical cum metaphysical orientations and social values. Surface level activity then corresponds to Williams' materialist emphasis on signifying systems that communicate and reproduce a social order whose construct and internal validities rests within cultural deep structure.

Essentially, culture models a process of human development through an idiosyncratic interpretive framework. Myriad forms of observable social interaction and the institutionalized clusters of recurrent social patterns of behavior combine to constitute this process of human development, while concomitantly communicating, reinforcing and propagating the foundations of culture. Socialization, as a process of enculturation that is dynamic, multidimensional and participatory, presumes to evolve, develop and sustain the individual member of society into a particularized conceptualization of human being that defines the nature of man's association with his environment and, consequently, the scope of his relationship with himself and with others. These defining assumptions about the nature and scope of human being form respectively the cosmological, ontological and axiological underpinnings of culture.

The implication of the Nobles' model of culture for neoclassical microeconomic agency is a further elaboration of the Polanyist critique of its rational choice
assumptions. It widens the conceptual scope of the Polanyi Group's contrastly static claim that embedded within non-western economic behaviors as surface level praxes are distinctively non-western social relations. Moreover, it suggests that the post-colonial incidence of conspicuously dissimilar social praxes typically demarcated along lines of "traditional" and "modern", or "rural" and "urban", reveal differences in axiological sets grounded in the cultural deep structure of two disparate cultures. Their spatial and temporal contiguity, veiled by the debate between Polanyists' and Formalists over the dual meaning of economy, persists as residuals to African colonial heritage. Inasmuch as the Polanyists recognize this spatial-temporal contiguity as modes of economizing, they overlook its deep structural significance as antipodal axiological sets governing the scope and nature of surface level economic behaviors.

By elucidating the existence of necessary and sufficient cosmological and ontological antecedents to rational choice assumptions, the Nobles model renders the neoclassical paradigm of economic behavior significantly more than merely descriptive of some universally experienced economic reality. The neoclassical microeconomic paradigm becomes a cultural paradigm that models a European-centered method for how to live by providing (a) a cosmological assumption about the natural environment; (b) several ontological assumptions that prescribe the scope and nature of human predisposition; and (c) a derivative axiological postulate that serves as objective motive for social behavior.
CHAPTER IV

THE CALCULUS OF RATIONAL CHOICE

This chapter presents the rational choice criteria that underlie the neoclassical microeconomic paradigm. As the mathematical representation of microeconomic agency, the utility function encodes six axioms of choice, two of which evidence Western deep structural bias. The axioms of nonsatiation and convexity are identified as a primary level assumptions about human nature and the relationship between man and his environment within an axiologically closed set of cultural values. These assumptions render the neoclassical paradigm of economic agency culturally relative to a Eurocentric mode of socioeconomic organization. As a consequence, the paradigm models a non-African interpretation of reality; one that imposes a normative index or typology of human worth.

Micro-behavioral Determinants of Growth

As the "dominant method of growth economics" (Jones, 1976), the neoclassical paradigm understands capitalism to be a system based on an assumed ability to rationally choose among competitive alternatives and an equally assumed ability and willingness to adapt and innovate; all in response to mutable market
conditions and in pursuit of wealth accumulation. Wealth is equated to gross national or domestic product; its level, rate of growth and per capital allocation are presumed indicative of accumulation. Presupposing characteristics of "backwardness" and a general state of undevelopedness (Rostow, 1960; Leibenstein, 1957; Rodney, 1972), cyclical poverty (Nurkse, 1955), and apriori notions that impute such qualities to imperfect behavior in otherwise naturally equilibrating markets, development is regarded as a process that promotes maximization of output (production) and allocative efficiencies once blockages are extirpated. Perfect competition is implicit development; "under"-development is understood as a "special" or exceptional case.

Analysis and modeling of development centers around four key variables, their functional relationships and attendant assumptions: production (Y), capital (K), labor (L) and savings (S). The gross national/domestic product (GNP/GDP) approach as an income-based measure of productivity and, in its per capita form, distribution, provides a proxy for wealth that insufficiently indicates well-documented and controversial tradeoffs between growth, distribution and equity (Streeten, 1979; Ahluwalia, 1976; Kuznets 1955). Consequent indices of identified "basic needs" supplemented GNP/GDP measures toward the end of the seventies and afforded gauging or, in the very least, refocussing attention upon redistribution and translating real income into measures of social production. This widening of the key variables proceeded refinement of the Harrod-Domar model of the rate of growth of output to
incorporate a variable capital-labor ratio over time, as well as to allow for factor substitution and adjustment through pliable returns to scale and perfect factor markets. These improvements resolved Harrod's concern over an intrinsic instability of the warranted growth rate due to investment and its propensity to diverge from the natural rate. Apart from this theoretical fine-tuning, his basic functional relationship between the key variables remains the foundation for planning and analysis of approaches to industrialization and the macro-management of development interventions.

The notion of demand causally predicates the key variables of the growth model. And whether implicit theories of national income distribution between consumption and investment, wages and profits, or policy-oriented structural adjustment strategies, demand affects macro-level market activity and patterns movement in these primary growth indices. Thus, it is entirely appropriate to specify the micro-level utility function as that unit of analysis determining the role of demand in macro-level economic processes through its mathematical encoding of behavioral assumptions. This treatment of the utility function follows a more sociologically specified understanding of economy as a societal institution possessing teleological properties of legitimation, propagation and rejuvenation, as well as the endogenous properties of a recurrent pattern of social interaction that is oriented.
toward human sustenance as a basic social need. It is this understanding of economy that demystifies macroeconomic processes, regards development as mere outcomes of purposive sociocultural behaviors and interactions, and associates underdevelopment with the incidence of anomie between culture and social behaviors.

Neoclassical Microeconomic Agency

The neoclassical perspective identifies microeconomics as the analysis of the economic behavior of the individual units that comprise an economic system. Like any branch of the social sciences, microeconomics attempts to explain and predict observed human phenomena regardless of whether such explanations or predictions have any immediate application to practical problems. It is concerned with the relationships that exist between each unit of analysis: prices and the demand and supply of goods and services.

Several key concepts are crucial to neoclassical microeconomics. Microeconomic "agency" is defined as a pattern of social behavior which allocates "scarce" resources among alternative uses to satisfy human wants. Choice is assumed to govern this atomistic propensity, and is itself governed by specific assumptions about the motivations for economic behaviors, viz., (a) people act in their own self-
interest, and (b) people prefer more to less. Both assumptions assist in making
predictions about the outcomes of economic problems. Microeconomic agents are
regarded as "rational" when their behaviors are informed by these assumptions.

The larger macroeconomic system in which microeconomic agency occurs is
defined by "what it does" rather than by the seemingly more logical "what it is". An
economic system must allocate resources among competing uses, combine and process
those resources to produce goods and services for human want, determine the
amounts of goods and services to be produced, distribute those goods and services
among society's members, and, determine provisions to be made for the future growth
of the society's accumulated wealth. An economic system is assisted in the
performance of its functions by a price mechanism. Problems unique to the proper
functioning of an economic system are predicated upon questions of efficiency, i.e.,
price efficiency, technical or productive efficiency, income distribution and growth.

Resources, being defined by the concepts of scarcity and ownership, produce
the goods and services used to satisfy human wants. They are scarce because their
supply is limited in the face of unlimited wants for goods and services. Scarce
resources are economic because they command a price\(^7\), while non-economic resources
are free, readily available and unable to be claimed as individual property. Ownership

\[^7\] i.e., an exchange value.
of resources constraints their supply through property rights. Owned resources (land, labor, capital) having alternative uses\(^8\) command an opportunity cost for their use (rent, wages and interest) which constitutes their respective prices. The market price for a scarce, owned resource further depends on how the resource is utilized.

Human wants are psychological occurrences that goods and services satisfy. As psychological occurrences, human want is spawned by physiological factors (e.g., food, clothing and shelter) and influenced by cultural factors that affect tastes and preferences for goods and services. Needs is not a concept generally considered by economists since they are regarded as normative rather than positive and, hence, exogenous formal logic processes. There exists no objective method for determining allocation on the basis of needs; wants are readily observable and measurable, and are referred to as "demand" to reflect how much consumers are willing to pay for the goods and services they want. Obversely, observable and measurable satiation of human wants is referred to as "supply".

Market demand is the aggregate desire for a specific good or service as represented by summed individual demand curves generated by plotting individual demand schedules. Whether for market or individual demand, demand schedules are simply tables that show the quantities demanded of a specific good or service at various prices. Individual demand curves and, ultimately, market demand curves are functionally dependent upon relative prices, the prices of related goods and services,

\(^8\) i.e., alternative use value.
the number of consumers in the market, incomes, and preferences. Mathematically, an individual demand curve is symbolized by the equation: \( Q_d = f(p, r, n, y, t) \), where

\( Q_d \) = quantity demanded, \( p \) = relative prices, \( r \) = prices of related goods, \( n \) = number of consumers, \( y \) = income, \( t \) = tastes and preferences

The demand curve represents the relationship between the dependent variable, \( Q_d \), or quantity demanded, and the independent variable, \( p \), or relative price. The remaining independent variables (i.e., number of consumers, prices of related goods, number of consumers in the market, the consumer's income, and tastes and preferences) are held constant and considered exogenous to the model of microeconomic behavior. Changes in each independent variable affects the position and shape of the graphed demand curve.

The Calculus of Utility

Topically restricted to microeconomic agency, utility is normally regarded as synonymous to the satisfaction of human wants through the consumption of goods or services. Conceptually, it evolved from a normative postulate about human behavior to a theory of social value reconciling behavioral assumptions deduced from this "first principle" to the demand for scientific rigor. And while an expediency is involved

\[ \text{It is important to note a growing scholarly interest in the theoretical impact of variable tastes and preferences on quantity demanded (} Q_d \text{). This contemporary field of inquiry has been referred to as quasi-rational economics. See Thaler (1994).} \]
utility’s connotative shift, the validity of its contemporary understanding is considered, if at all, to be accident its evolutionary root in the development of jurisprudence and political theory yet firmly entrenched in its mathematical expression.

It was Aristotle who provided post-medieval, preindustrial Europe the framework with which to preface its inquiry of economic behavior's moral underpinnings with discussions of the nature of microeconomic agency, its societal implications and significance. While Aristotle's observations were later mooted as pedestrian, slightly mediocre and irrelevant by the less than reflective, his borrowed "Doctrine of the Mean" furnished Bentham and the later marginalists with a typology and evaluative framework with which to contemplate the substance of political economy. For Aristotle behavior is morally assessable, hence "rational" behavior orients toward some desired end or "good" restricted to the soul cum mind. Assuming that man serves a natural function, happiness — perfect and self-sufficient — is revealed to be the highest virtue of the soul, its summum bonum. Virtue, as an attribute of the soul, concerns action and feeling mediated by pleasure and pain. It is a disposition toward an equilibrium of action and feeling. Happiness predicates itself in consequence upon activities balanced of action and feeling, and thereby consistent with virtue. Pleasure and pain, neither being virtue or objective happiness, and wealth
as an objective presumed of economic agency, serve only as parameters to obtaining an end in accumulated want satisfaction.

Upon this, a difficulty as confusing as it is protracted attaches itself to understanding Bentham's association of wealth as an objective end with "rational" parametric dispositions toward pleasure and pain: a specification wholly inconsistent with Aristotle's more abstract behavioral objective which later emerges fully armored from physiocratic notions inextricably bound to a model of natural law which Bentham presumed burned into the soul of men and revealed through a system of pure logic.

Utility as satisfaction is, prima facie, empirically indeterminate and incapable of cardinal measurement. It can however be ordered or ranked in accordance with a set of assumptions about how want satisfaction is obtained through economic choice. Economic choices that conform to this set of assumptions, commonly referred to as axioms of choice, evidence microeconomic agency that is both "rational" and capable of mathematical encoding. These six assumptions about how human want is satisfied hew out a hyperbolic mathematical association between ordinal utility and commodities presumed existentially independent satisfaction of human wants, yet quantitatively corresponsive some fixed magnitude of satisfaction. The quality of ordinality is dependent upon nominal degrees of satisfaction derived from an equilibrium between use and exchange values. Projecting these equilevel, nonlinear
associations onto a two dimensional space yields contours commonly referred to as an indifference map. Thus, the axioms of reflexivity, completeness, transitivity, continuity, nonsatiation and convexity facilitate a one-to-one mapping of bundles of commodities ($Q_d$) to utility.

The axiom of reflexivity posits logical equivalency through tautological material equivalence: for any bundle of commodities $q$, $q = q$. Each bundle is as satisfying in utility as itself — an insignificant mathematical necessity once choice is properly defined (Deaton, 1980:26). With comparative indifference being as important as tautological indifference, the axiom of completeness posits material equivalence between two quantitatively disparate, qualitatively equal bundles $q_1$ and $q_2$ consonant a fixed level of utility such that mutually exclusive indifference exists between them. Transitivity exports indifference across qualitatively equivalent bundles via hypothetical syllogism: if $q_1 = q_2$, and $q_2 = q_3$, then $q_1 = q_3$. This three axiom consecution constructs an inchoate basis for preference orderings. It is important to note that the utility function's existence was presumed at the outset; its empirical grounding requiring one remaining stage of manifestation.

This prototype utility function cannot represent all preference orderings without assigned magnitudes facilitating indifference comparisons across quantitatively divergent commodity bundles and a smooth and differentiable connective surface between them. Preferences can be discontinuous and reasonable, as

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is the case in lexicographic ordering (Deaton, 1980:27). The fourth axiom, in conjunction with some degree of expediency, opportunes preterition and continuity upon introduction of closed sets: for any bundle q', define \( A(q') \) the “at least as good as q’ set” and \( B(q') \) the “no better than q’ set”, by \( A(q') = \{q/q > q'\} \). \( B(q') = \{q/q > q\} \) (Deaton, 1980:127-128). Simply put, \( q' = A(q') = B(q') \), or \( A \) and \( B \) are sets of quantitatively different bundles q such that each is at least as good or no better than q’ in human satisfaction (utility).

Hereupon, preference orderings are said to be adequately represented by a utility function and capable of analysis using conventional mathematical techniques of optimization by means of a fifth axiom of nonsatiation: the utility function is non-decreasing in each of its arguments and for all q in the choice set is increasing in at least one of its arguments (Deaton, 1980:128). This axiom establishes increasing monotonicity, further defining the utility function up to a monotone increasing transformation or by ordinality. The final axiom of choice, convexity, implicates the function’s quasi-concavity by defining indifference curves as convex to the origin: if \( q_1 \geq q_0 \), then for \( 0 < z < 1 \), \( zq_1 + (1-z)q_0 > q_0 \). Any combination of commodities within the domain of the function and restricted to a particular level of utility is preferred and substitutable within the restriction.

Mathematical representation of microeconomic agency predicates itself, for the nonce, upon these six axioms about the nature of the association between utility as
human want and commodities as material want-satisfaction. Further restrictions on this functional relationship proscribe certain possible behavioral tendencies (e.g., the domain of the opportunity set, the absence of corner solutions, first-order conditions, ecetera) but only subsequent to the function’s construction. With satisfaction now ordinally measured, and the utility obtained being functionally dependent the quantities of goods and services demanded, to wit:

$$U = f(q_1, q_2, \ldots, q_n)$$

microeconomic agency can be symbolized by a mathematical function that is:

1. **smooth and continuous** (i.e., twice differentiable).

   $$U = f(q_1, q_2), \text{ such that:}$$
   $$\frac{\partial U}{\partial q_1} = f_1, \hspace{1cm} \frac{\partial U}{\partial q_2} = f_2$$
   $$\frac{\partial^2 U}{\partial q_1^2} = f_{11}, \hspace{1cm} \frac{\partial^2 U}{\partial q_2^2} = f_{22}$$

2. **monotonically increasing.** The function is defined up to a monotone increasing transformation:

   if: $\beta q_1 > q_2$, and $\beta q_2 > q_2$

   then: $U_1 = f(\beta q_1, \beta q_2) > U_2 = f(q_1, q_2)$

   where: $U_1 = \beta f(q_1, q_2)$
or: \[ U_1 = \beta U_2 \]

Thus, utility functions are homogeneous of degree one.

3. **ordinal.** Monotone increasing transformations of a utility function rank higher in utility:

   if: \[ U_1 = f(\beta q_1, \beta q_2) > U_2 = f(q_1, q_2) \]

   then: \[ U_1 > U_2 \]

   and: \[ U_1 \] ranks higher in utility and consumer preferences.

4. **quasi-concave.** The slope of the utility function is increasing at a decreasing rate:

   \[ \partial U > 0, \text{ and } f_1 dq_1 + f_2 dq_2 > 0 \]

   \[ \partial^2 U > 0, \text{ and } f_{11} \partial q_1^2 + 2f_{12} \partial q_1 \partial q_2 + f_{22} \partial q_2^2 > 0 \]

   as depicted in Figure 1.

**On Reifying “Quality”**

Mathematical treatment of what was otherwise considered a branch of moral science is imputed to the early neoclassicals' concern with notions of wealth, utility, value, demand, supply, capital, interest, labor, and all other quantitative notions belonging to the daily operations of industry and subject to continuous variation. Jevons acknowledged doubt over quantifying satisfaction yet
Figure 1. The Neoclassical Utility Function and Indifference Curves.
accommodated this proxy to facilitate comparisons, however imprecise the congruence between reality and scientific abstraction is rendered as a result. But what of the implications of Jevons' doubt for the constructed utility function and ultimately for rational choice criteria superintending microeconomic agency? It would appear an unresolved methodological dichotomy not so much between ordinal and cardinal measures as it is between quality and quantity.

On mathematics, two essential perspectives prevail. The first (Frege-Russell) maintains a basis in formal cum symbolic logic; the second (Heyting) is proposition free, experientially autonomous but dependent intuition (Runes, 1979:189-191). Both characterize mathematics by method rather than subject or purpose. It is a method of formal logic which abstracts sets of characteristic piths into corporeality, serving thereby as a reifying process so long as its noumenal subject remains existentially unimportant and its objective form is merely presumed to approximate its tangible existence. What emerges then is a technique applicable to a domain (set) of unproved essences (axioms), a range (set) of undefined essences (objects), and the task of reckoning their elements through an associative mapping of one to the other.

A function is a functional type of associative mapping of domain onto its image, or range (James, 1976:161-162). Quantity, not quality, characterizes its associative property, as does a state of monotonic equivalence between argument and value (Alcian, 1953). This relationship exists independent the function itself -- which
merely reifies the relationship's noumenal existence. It would appear that doubt over whether the mapping can be performed is unfounded as any association implies logical equivalence, by definition, between specified sets. That its veracity may impel inquiry proves the more relevant concern upon considering this association's independence from its functional form, its ensconcing quality and quantity, its objectification of quality, and the nonaffectuation of quantity (i.e., a seven or eleven cannot be physically experienced). Therefore, with association being independent functional form, quantity and quality may be mapped into determinancy by scientific empiricism and its call for quantification — a call to overdeterminancy heralding the birth of noumena into phenomenal form.

The implication for microeconomic agency is a curious distinction implicit in how the utility function is understood; one which estranges want from need. Both, being quite psychological, are noumenal and as such are beyond mathematical representation. The neoclassical approach posits that need is non-positive and non-empirical by nature, which causes it to be unsuitable for economic analysis since no objective method exists to attend its determination. On the contrary, however, commodities do objectify human wants, rendering them readily observable, measurable and determinate resource allocation. This distinction made between essentially identical motivations appears so in order to respect mathematical modeling of primary elements abstracted from reality, when in fact the reification required to
provide resource allocation with a basis for determination accommodates either noumenon. Rather than be an issue of accommodation, the distinction is more relevant the strictly psychological origin of want. Need is want, but want --non-purposive, highly protean and timeless -- is not necessarily need. The caprice want connotes imbues consumption, production, and the wealth of nations with far-reaching implications. This ascription of the range to an open interval or open set of unlimited wants amounts to little more than predetermination, whether viewed relative to mathematics as technique or to desirable functions of the utility function once quantity is mapped into quality.

Animism as an Example

Descriptions of animism as an unrefined religious form exemplifies this reification and subsequent estrangement of the association of want and material satisfaction from its functional form through restricted sets. Prior to understanding its intricate theological complexities, animism suggested a predisposition, albeit literary, for earnest genuflection before trees, rocks, mountains, money, animals, totems and the like. Such behavior evidenced an association between genuflector and genuflectee. A quantitative one? - perhaps. The amount of worshippers could be construed as a monotonically increasing function. Should the domain be defined as the set of all worshippers, (each materially equivalent so as to normalize differentials in gender,
abilities, cetera) and the range as the set of all objects worshipped (similarly
normalized across differentials in gender, responsibility, capacity, ecetera), the
resultant function would reflect homogeneity of degree zero in worshippers. A
qualitative association? - categorically so. Animism is the belief that the spirit of the
Creator or Universal God permeates all his creations, living or dead (Akbar, 1976;
Williams 1976:246). Thus, any object whether animate or not possesses the nature of
the Creator, is sacred, and is worthy of deference.

Clearly, a mapping of this qualitative association of "spirits" would only
demonstrate the importance of the object in quantitative terms: the greater the
gathering, the more significant that aspect of God. And the function subsuming this
phenomenon would necessarily omit the preponderant noumenal relationship between
individual and world souls. Therefore, this function would be only partially
descriptive, totally nonexplanatory, and completely underdeterministic.
Consequently, this function as an "objective" association would of necessity vitiate
the "subjective" association from whence it was deduced and whose now reified
existence is indeterminant (i.e., the worshippers to the worshipped). Rather, its
reified existence now presumes to symbolically characterize it within an empirical
framework using scientific language.

Predetermining either range or domain conditions the type of mapping and
functional form the association assumes, as it does the accuracy with which the
objective function mirrors perceived reality. The possibility for bias is opportuned as early as the abstraction of elements or the construction of the functional form each association occasions. Associating ordinal sets to cardinal sets, as is the case when human want and material want-satisfaction are related, produces an algebraic function which reckons behavioral variation. But when two qualitative sets are associated, the resultant function can only reckon noumenal qualities ordinally — a stark contradiction to Einstein's assertion that the language of mathematics must be employed to draw quantitative conclusions (1938:27). The neoclassical approach to microeconomic agency estranges human behavior from an association of human want and material want-satisfaction, the resultant function, and its task of reckoning behavioral variation since an open set reflecting the subordination of needs to wants preconditions the form (quality) of human want (utility). The behavioral implications attending this predetermination are held exogenous to an analysis of variation, yet inferred ex post facto. Moreover, when these restriction are regarded as requisite ceteris paribus normalization across associated sets, and use-value assumed inherent both human want and material want-satisfaction, it becomes clear that value is culturally estranged in a similar fashion from the resultant function.

Association characterizing quality cannot possibly exist independent of its functional form. It is the function itself. Association is strictly quantitative only when their qualitative piths are necessarily ignored or normalized (i.e., held constant)
prior to reification. Moreover, the veracity of functional equivalency, by warranting suspicion, must be understood to appertain to a "goodness of fit" between explicant and explanation, or subject and reified subject. Preferences are duly metamorphosed into not just a logistic system of quantity and space, but quantity, space and time. Hereupon, preferences preserve their quality of moment (intertemporality), being predisposed to mutability and human caprice. The resultant function is monotone increasing, which justifies neoclassical assumptions of accumulation and insatiability now strictly mathematically based and non-cultural. Its rate of monotonicity reflects a momentous substitutability of range for domain. With human want (utility) now quantified and its noumenal cum social aspect proxied by income, it becomes subject to neoclassical interpretation. Indifference toward sets of material want-satisfaction obtains to underscore material goods as objective choice and reduce microeconomic agency to issues of efficiency wherein those choices consistent with "rational" behavior are least consumptive of costs (income). Consequently, the direction of choice becomes predictable and normative.

Thus the question is raised: can mathematical technique as a neoclassical methodological imperative be responsible for this estrangement of quantity from inherent quality, phenomena from inherent noumena, rational choice criteria from inherent cultural values? Quite clearly, mathematics as an analytical technique is absolved of responsibility for this obfuscatory estrangement. For once phenomena
are assumed at the outset to possess noumenal antecedents of strong affect, this problem of estrangement, as well as the explanatory power of the neoclassical approach which is based on variously shifting predeterminations of associated sets, redounds suspiciously to the normalization of axiological postulates by the utility function's mathematical construction.

"Nonsatiation" and "Convexity" as Deep Structural Constructs

Stansfield (1982) affirms the cultural character of the neoclassical paradigm by identifying the rational choice criteria of nonsatiation as a cultural, not a natural, human propensity, and scarcity as a relative, not a consubstantial environmental phenomenon. In his argument against the survival of liberal democracy in a post-industrial West, MacPherson (1961) similarly identifies two ontological assumptions about human nature that were posited centuries earlier by Aristotle and later elaborated by Jeremy Bentham, and which he describes as unique to Western social organization. Embedded within the notion of democracy are the ontological assumptions that man has unlimited wants and needs that he seeks to satisfy, and that man satisfies these unlimited wants and needs through material consumption. MacPherson presents the cosmological assumption of scarcity as an environmental condition. These utilitarian notions justified capitalism as a new institutional form and the incentives required to habituate its patterned behaviors. Man, compelled as a
bundle of appetites, strives for the satiation of want. Happiness obtains as a result of his unrestrained consumption of utility, or the "satisfaction" provided by material goods. Because the availability of goods is conditioned by natural scarcity, man must accumulate utility in the form of material goods and thereby stockpile "happiness" in order to feed his constant esuriency. Individual talent and ability determine the amount of utility secured and of the level of consumable happiness available. Accordingly, individual worth is measurable by the breadth and depth of quantifiable, accumulated happiness.

Although Aristotle did earlier discount wealth accumulation as an end (see Ethics, 1976:69, 88-90), Bentham and subsequent marginalists would later confer upon it great behavioral significance (Bentham, 1988:70). As a consequence, wealth would become an objective end grounded in a cosmological belief in environmental scarcity, an ontological belief in insatiability, and a social norm encouraging "more to less". As Nobles earlier points out, scarcity and nonsatiation as cosmological and ontological assumptions respectively, necessarily conflate in the primary level of culture to support the axiological proposition "more is better" as a moral or evaluative standard for surface level microeconomic agency (Ajani, 1991). Rationality, as a characteristic of neoclassical microeconomic agency, signifies the deducibility of microeconomic behavior from this deep structural syllogism of mutually inclusive cosmological, ontological and axiological postulates. It is through socialization that
these deep structural beliefs and values become consensual and thereby function to normalize otherwise chaotic social interaction, to order a particularized mode of institutional behavior, and to reproduce a particularized arrangement of social interactions and relationships. Because socialization endows culture with the quality of consensus, axiological propositions become a restricted, or "closed" set of deep structural valuations both quantitatively (i.e., mathematically) and, most importantly, qualitatively (i.e., culturally). Thus, the neoclassical microeconomic paradigm is a cultural paradigm of reality that models a quite relative mode of subsistence provisioning and bio-social existence.
CHAPTER V

MICROECONOMIC AGENCY AS META-AXIOLOGICAL DILEMMA

This chapter introduces the concept of meta-axiological dilemma as a condition of African underdevelopment upon considering the neoclassical microeconomic paradigm as a non-African interpretative model of reality and subsistence modality.

Meta-Axiological Dilemma

The epistemological orientation of society provided for by the primary level of culture preconditions the conceptual organization, structure and approach to the task of interpreting reality (Dixon, 1976; Baldwin, 1980; Akbar, 1991; Ani, 1994). In his explanation of how culture configures epistemological orientation and scientific methods in consequence, Dixon (1976) asserts that the nature of the "knower" conditions assumptions that pattern an approach to knowledge. The philosophical orientations inherent cosmology and ontology essentially ascribe worldview-specificity to epistemological assumptions and methods for interpreting reality. Accordingly, logical consistency between these cultural orientations — i.e., between Nobles' primary and secondary levels of deep structure -- establish the necessary
condition for a worldview-specific interpretive paradigm of social reality to exhibit
construct validity. Thus, any alternative interpretive model of reality must be well-
grounded in accepted metaphysics, and employ accepted notions about human nature,
society and the environment (Benton, 1982). What this implies is that while
behavioral modalities and material objects may change or even evolve in form, their
mooring to the cosmological and ontological foundations of the deep structure of
culture must remain secure. Any incongruity shown through contrastly different
social praxes exhibits much more than simple divergences in form. Different,
antipodal praxes demonstrate cognitive differentials at the primary and secondary
levels of culture about how the human being is to organize his/her interaction both
with and within a perceived reality.

The spatial-temporal coincidence of antipodal axiological sets within African
society conditions a "conceptual incarceration" (Nobles, 1991b) that produces a meta-
axiological dilemma of seeking sociocultural behavioral objectives through parameters
of inappropriate social valuations. Within the context of socioeconomically
underdeveloped African societies, the precise implication of meta-axiological dilemma

11 Logical congruity between and among cosmology, ontology and axiology would
prove a necessary, but sufficient condition for an interpretive model to exhibit
construct validity. There would also have to be a high level of consistency between
the deep structure of culture and its surface level. This consistency is evidenced by
nor Williams' nor Benton's treatment of culture as a means of intellectual
development which conjoins idealist and materialist emphases. Their treatment
dissociates the mutual interdependence between axiology and praxis from their
cosmolocal and ontological groundings.
for microeconomic agency as a surface level behavior involves the use of an inappropriate axiological set — in this case, rational choice criteria — to support, sustain and reproduce African bio-social existence, and to promote its general welfare.

Discussing the birth of four types of states out of a dialecticism between the social and political philosophies of endemic cultural tradition and exogenous environmental challenges to productive modes, Diop (1991:129ff) intimates a need for consistency between indigenous moral and human values and adapted socioeconomic praxis should institutionalized social interaction avoid a basis in stratification. Rodney (1972) however notes their negative association in his classic study of African underdevelopment, pointing to a correlation between social relations and economic activity such that the former predisposes productive and consumptive modalities within an economy. Based on this correlation, his study affirms that the social relations embedded within colonialism compelled, through its imposition of an antipodal European economic modality, the occlusion and consequent stagnation of African socioeconomic development. Boateng (1985) similarly notes that an inappropriate axiological set in the guise of Western systems of formal education disrupted the vital intergenerational transmission of indigenous culture and resulted in the development of conflicting values, social disharmony and rebuffed traditions. Akbar (1985a) characterizes the inappropriate use of Eurocentric cognitive and surface level behavioral modalities as supportive of the social reproduction of the
values, behavioral expectations and self-images of "the middle class, Caucasian male of European descent." Elsewhere, he correlates psychological disorder among African peoples with the extent to which self-rejection is employed to resolve meta-axiological dilemma (Akbar 1991b).

African Utility

**Distinctions in Deep Structure**

The historical and contemporary social organization, behavior and customs, values, beliefs and attitudes of Africans and Europeans reflects a cultural distinctiveness of each (Tembo 1985). Kaunda (1966) observes an epistemological distinction between a European "problem-solving" mind and an African "situation-experiencing" mind. Elsewhere, differing assumptions about work are indicated by Chisiga (1973), who asserts that whereas Europeans assume man "lives to work", Africans believe man "works to live". Distinctions in African and European cultural deep structures have received careful attention in the work of several scholars, many of whom note striking similarities across various African societies in accepted notions about human nature and social organization (see Ani, 1994; Mbiti, 1970; Diop, 1978). This growing body of literature, principally in the fields of African-American psychology, anthropology and cultural studies, provides a generalized typology of African deep structural constructs about the natural environment and the scope and
nature of the "self" or human essence that supports the formulation of a two postulate closed axiological set.  

Cosmology

Elemental to African social organization is the cosmological belief in a universal oneness which permeates and infuses all that exists. This oneness, conceived as a vitalism or life force, defines man's continuity with all phenomena within the world. African conceptions of this life force range from its functional integration of action and circumstance to the natural functioning of all things (e.g., "nyama" of the Dogon, or "dya" of the Bambara) to its nature and functioning with the individual (e.g., "okra" of the Akan, the "chi" of the Ibo). The internal rhythm of this life force, Akbar (1976) points out, is maintained in social organization through codes of morality, i.e., basic axiological notions of self-respect and respect for others. Rituals reinforce the interconnection between the individual and society, continually renew and reaffirm these axiological codes, and further support the maintenance of the life force. King (1976) maintains that the individual is vested with a spirit to sustain life, to be creative and productive. This life force empowers life and is continually transformed through interaction and praxis.

12 It must be pointed out that the distinctions made herein neither presume explications of origin, historical development or genetic bases for worldview, nor posits a linear evolution that intimates comparative worth.
Under this conceptualization, human arrangement becomes more than a product of individuals aggregated by consensual deep structural notions and beliefs, and physically bounded by clearly discernible demarcations. The natural environment, as an analog of a life force permeating all of reality and infusing all living things, acquires dynamism and imbues society with life, which renders it a system of human relations and interactions that function as a microcosm of nature's macrocosmic processes. Between them exists an integrative relationship of reciprocity. Nature cannot exhibit scarcity in what the life force furnishes or contributes through it to the living phenomenal world; scarcity would occlude the functions of the life force. Rather than demonstrate an attribute of parsimony, the natural environment -- through the life force -- is capable of sustaining manifest changes in the form or expression of the life force without altering its essential pith. Such changes in form or expression are in fact consistent with known physical law (e.g., \( E = mc^2 \)), and serve to balance, renew, and/or correct the relationship between man and nature. Manifestations of the life force are "ways of being" that define cognitive styles and methods used to develop and organize consciousness and transform reality (King, 1976). Because the life force predicates their mutually interdependent existence, nature and man become extensions of one another. Scarcity in nature, then, would reflect human imbalance that the life force must move to equilibriate through phenomenal transformations. Inasmuch as it is not characterized by the same intrinsic
permanence to which European cosmology subscribes, the natural environment's ability to provision is a function of its relationship to man and its capacity for change endowed by the life force.

Ontology

In addition to functioning as a vessel for the life force, man is also conceived of as perfectible; that is, he/she strives to become a perfect reflection of the life force both in thought and action (Akbar, 1976; Nobles, 1991a). This notion of perfectibility lies contradistinct to a more finite conceptualization of man as predisposed to the corrupting influences of base instincts and thereby prone to error and fallability. King (1976) characterizes it as an innate drive toward changes consistent with maturity, increased competency and equilibrium. To fully actualize human potential and be completely and organically continuous with nature and one's social unit is the motive for exploration, transformation, mastery and competency of the self. Humans are continuously driven and motivated to action and creation, which presupposes equality, communality, cooperation and participation in social arrangement. In this regard, Dixon (1976) describes activity as a spontaneous expression of what is conceived of as "given" in the personality. More than a mere expression of impulse or desire, activity is a stressing of being: a behavioral expression that utilizes sensitivity to affect the phenomenal world and harmonize with it.
N'daw (1966) notes an ontological distinction wherein the African conceptualization of man, quite unlike that of the Cartesian European emphasis on individual insularity and uniqueness, is neither dualistic nor dichotomous. The self, understood as an ontogenetic concept, is an interdependent entity shared with all members of the social group. The idea of seclusion and separateness is synonymous with clinically-defined madness (Akbar, 1976). Accordingly, the relationship and interconnection between men, which places high significance on spirituality, unity and group participation, becomes a key emphasis in African ontological principles.

An African disdain for the self as a separate and isolated entity is nourished by the very nature of the life force, unity as interdependence and interconnection, and social participation as a mutual expression of both. Within an African ontological understanding of the human being as one in nature and is inseparable from it, humans become the community and seek its reconstruction, not its destruction. Nobles (1991b) goes so far as to suggest a need to transcend finite individual definition ascribed by one's society (see Mbiti, 1970) in order to extend oneself backward into the collective consciousness of the social group and thereby reaffirm unity and interdependence. Social organizational and institutional patterns exemplify, through social praxes, the concrete reinforcement of unity, interdependence and interconnection. Accordingly, discord in social praxes would necessarily evidence...
contact with and inurement of alien ontological concepts that subvert natural social patterns and their underlying relationships and interconnections.

**African Axiological Set**

It is from these cosmological assumptions of harmonious man-nature interdependence and an ubiquitous, integrative life force, in tandem with the ontological assumptions of perfectibility, indivisibility, and collective responsibility, that a set of values can be formulated which orients and superintends African social behavior and interaction. This axiological set consists in the main of principles of environmental harmony, perfectibility and satiation.

When considered in the context of this African-centered axiological set, bio-social need, as defined by the neoclassical paradigm, gains significance only in relation to a system of social and non-empirical relationships which holds little regard for continuous material accumulation as a consumptive modality. Contrary to the Polanyist position, biological and social wants are not mutually exclusive under this framework. They become identical within the African-centered axiological framework since want does not exceed need, and equally satiable through social networks and interaction. Herein, the sustenance of bio-social need through material accumulation amounts to little more than an individual self-centeredness that breaches the morality of indivisibility and collective responsibility which ultimately reproduces and sustains the function and logic of the macrocosmic life force in microcosmic social organization.
Thus, bio-social need presents itself as something to be materially resolved, then quickly abandoned once the exigency of need has been addressed should conditions that foster tragedies of character are to be avoided. Mbiti (1970:266ff) treats such conditions as a consequence of breaking moral and ethical codes: an offense of the corporate social body against the life force. Evil, then, is not an intrinsic characteristic of man or the environment. Rather, it connotes a behavior whose very nature threatens the balance between social relations (man-man) and spiritual relations (man-life force, or God).

Moreover, the existence of "need" bears an additional exigency beyond its material satiation to which its psychological characteristic alludes; one that is rooted in a noumenal "want" within human life and relationships since individual existence, group existence, and the existence of the life force are identical and mutually reinforcing. It is this non-material dimension of need that Polanyi identifies as reciprocity and redistribution, which he describes as the salient modes of rationality predicating non-Western economic agency (Polanyi, 1957, 1968). The satiation of this non-material dimension of need presents itself as a matter of relocating the pith of the life force -- now merely changed in form and expression -- within the man-nature and man-man relationships. Through this acknowledgement of the functional integrity of the life force within both relationships do codes of morality receive continual
validation as prescriptive guidelines for balancing both relationships, and thereby strengthen man's pursuit of perfectibility in the context of these interconnections.

Implications for Neoclassical Microeconomic Agency

The implications of the African axiological set for the neoclassical utility function centers on the axioms of nonsatiation and convexity. The axiom of nonsatiation endows the utility function with the property of increasing monotonicity, which defines the function up to a monotone increasing transformation or by ordinality. The function is non-decreasing in each of its arguments, to wit:

1. **monotonicity.** The function is defined up to a monotone increasing transformation:

   if: \( \beta q_1 > q_2, \text{ and } \beta q_2 > q_2 \)

   then: \( U_1 = f(\beta q_1, \beta q_2) > U_2 = f(q_1, q_2) \)

   where: \( U_1 = \beta f(q_1, q_2) \)

   or: \( U_1 = \beta U_2 \)

2. **ordinality.** Monotone increasing transformations of a utility function rank higher in utility:

   if: \( U_1 = f(\beta q_1, \beta q_2) > U_2 = f(q_1, q_2) \)

   then: \( U_1 > U_2 \)
and: \( U_1 \) ranks higher in utility and consumer preferences.

The axiom of convexity implicates the function's quasi-concavity by defining indifference curves as convex to the origin: if \( q_1 \geq q_0 \), then for \( 0 < z < 1 \), \( zq_1 + (1-z)q_0 > q_0 \). More commodities are preferred to less commodities, and any combination of commodities within the domain of the domain and restricted to a particular level of utility is preferred and substitutable within the restriction.

The African axiological set posits that man is both satiable and prefers only that quantity which materially satisfies want since more creates a human condition for the establishment and propagation of a condition for evil conceptualized by Africans.\(^{13}\) Accordingly, the incremental amount of utility or satisfaction obtained through consumption of material goods beyond satiation declines precipitously. Mathematically, the utility function now decreases at a decreasing rate from a non-zero Y-intercept representing the maximum satisfaction or utility initially obtained (See Table 1).

\(^{13}\) Refer to Mbiti (1970). Evil is conceptualized as a condition of separation, estrangement or transgression from both God and the self. An act is characterized as evil by virtue of its nature, i.e., who creates the condition for or commits the separation, estrangement or transgression from both God and the self, against whom, and from what direction — that is, from a low level to a high level (physical to metaphysical) or vice versa.
### Table 1
Comparison of Monotonicity Under Differential Axiologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monotonicity under European axiological set</th>
<th>Monotonicity under African axiological set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>if: $\beta q_1 &gt; q_1$, and $\beta q_2 &gt; q_2$</td>
<td>if: $\beta q_1 &lt; q_1$, and $\beta q_2 &lt; q_2$ *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then: $U_1 = f(\beta q_1, \beta q_2) &gt; U_2 = (q_1, q_2)$</td>
<td>then: $U_1 = f(\beta q_1, \beta q_2) &lt; U_2 = (q_1, q_2)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where: $U_1 = \beta f(q_1, q_2)$</td>
<td>where: $U_1 = \beta f(q_1, q_2)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or: $U_1 &gt; \beta U_2$</td>
<td>or: $\beta U_1 &lt; U_2$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

where the utility function is:  
- smooth and continuous  
- ordinal  
and acquires the characteristics of:  
- quasi-concave  
- monotonically increasing  

where the utility function remains:  
- smooth and continuous  
- ordinal  
but acquires the characteristics of:  
- monotonically decreasing  
- quasi-convex  

*This is because "less" is preferred to "more", and need does not exceed want.

Increasing quantities of substitutable material commodities $q_1$ or $q_2$ become superfluous, useless and unsatisfying, which possibly further skews the non-material equilibrium between social and natural relationships beyond human intervention and correction. This utility function incorporating an African axiological set while holding the physical properties of commodities constant (i.e., the neoclassical axioms of reflexivity, completeness, transitivity and continuity) becomes convex to the origin and declines sharply as Figure 2 depicts—which is vastly different from the neoclassical’s depiction of the universal function in Figure 1.14 Once need is satiated, marginal utility plunges to zero.
The use of a Western axiological set to predicate microeconomic agency in African society encourages permanent imbalance in man-man, man-nature relationships while simultaneously institutionalizing a condition of evil that Western strategies of development (e.g., "big push", balanced growth, "green revolution", dual economy, export promotion, and most recently, structural adjustment) reinforce and

14 Indifference curves for the African-centered utility function would be similar to those for the neoclassical utility function. The difference would be that African-centered indifference curves would depict decreasing ordinality since the African-centered utility function decreases at a decreasing rate.
perpetuate. Social and spiritual interconnections are shattered as a result with little concern given equilibrating measures or a reactionary abandonment of cultural traditions. Akbar (1991b), and to some extent Cross, Parhan and Helms (1991), treat this situation as the basis for psychological disorders whose prominent feature involves coping mechanisms for self-alienation. In the final analysis, the dilemma of antipodal axiological sets that inform microeconomic agency induces a socioeconomic schism and ultimate stagnation originating in severe intergenerational dichotomies over preferred African ("traditional") or European ("modern") social behaviors that preserve an institutional delinking of consumptive, productive and allocative modalities.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The issue of the transcultural applicability of neoclassical economics wield a certain intuitive uncertainty held insurmountable the more interminable reflection upon it becomes. This research endeavored a focused conceptual inquiry of the usefulness of the neoclassical development paradigm in redressing the intractable problem of African underdevelopment, being mindful indeed of Keynes' early admonishment to locate the responsibility of a potent idea in exorcising the obvious, not introducing the recondite and remote (Keynes, 1964:351).

It has been demonstrated just why neoclassical microeconomic agency as it is subsumed by theories of socioeconomic growth, is incapable of assisting to reverse or resolve conditions of African underdevelopment. A glaring axiological bias within rational choice criteria supportive of an idiosyncratic mode of microeconomic agency is inconsistent with African cultural orientations, organization and interactions. The adoption of European-centered surface level praxes to both realize and sustain African deep structural assumptions about the scope and nature of the natural environment and human existence induces meta-axiological dilemma, which impacts upon the direction of development through its affect on consumptive modalities. Thus,
neoclassical microeconomic agency estranges the African economic agent from tradition sociocultural moorings by reproducing "modern" praxes for a behaviorally incommodious society. Material wealth accumulation through productive capacity becomes a disjointed and isolated affair from general social welfare as material accumulation increases in significance as the general objective for local subsistence modalities. This better explains the persistent social dichotomy in African societies between the "traditional" and the "modern". Intertemporal processes of African cultural rationality must necessarily find their expression through increasingly inured alien social values as intergenerational poverty and protracted indigence — both of which meta-axiological dilemma encouraged and sustained as decades of concessional foreign aid, Western-styled industrialization and investment strategies, and structural adjustment programs — firmly attest. Current treatment of inured alien social values, far from being analytical in scope, appears apologetic in its support for the adoption by the formerly colonized of "mainstream" values, attitudes and social behaviors.15

This research, as a conceptual framework for more parturient empirical work on antipodal self-concept and meta-axiological dilemma within consumptive and productive modalities in African social organization, obtains significance from its extension of an African-centered social psychological perspective into behavioral

15 See Wilson's (1996) analysis of new urban poverty. He argues that joblessness, not poverty, and its effects on neighborhood institutions, social networks and endemic behavioral patterns disassociates the inner-city from macro-societal, macroeconomic
issues within neoclassical theories of microeconomic agency under conditions of underdevelopment. It provides a better elaborated basis for fuller explanations of persistent socioeconomic stagnation through its consideration of those axiological constructs and patterned social behaviors that render African society regenerative and propagative. As a consequence, diagnoses of African underdevelopment become conceptually unmoored from meaningless statistical indices and variables sensitive only to idiosyncratic behavioral repertoires wholly inappropriate and nonconforming to African cultural orientations. Earlier pedestrian acknowledgments of Western cultural bias are thrown squarely within scholarly discourse on internecine social psychologies to substantiate critical questions of policy over the implementation of "racist" growth strategies that impoverish, as well as doubt over the relevance of their predictive and evaluative efficiencies. Moreover, the model of African utility can serve to better inform and substantiate local level, community-based approaches to African economic reform similar in scope to the AAF-SAP which emphasizes a broader regard for the human aspect of socioeconomic development and its indigenization.

processes of the "larger society", and urban residents from "mainstream" standards, norms and values.
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