THE REFLEXIVE TURN AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the prospects for the development of theoretically reflexive theory in the discipline of international relations. First, the issue of theoretical reflexivity is discussed in terms of the "reflexive turn" associated with post-positivist philosophy of science in contemporary social and political theory. The question of whether a parallel to the "reflexive turn" in social and political theory can be identified in theorizing about international relations is then addressed. It is argued that in the context of international relations theory's Third Debate one sees evidence of the growth of the "broader and deeper kind of political and epistemological self-consciousness" which is fundamental to the development of a theoretically reflexive disposition. As a consequence, if it remains premature to speak of an authentic "reflexive turn" in the discipline of international relations, it can nonetheless be argued that the prospects for the growth of theoretically reflexive international relations theory are real and significant, while the need for such theory is urgent.

Introduction

Increasingly over the last decade calls have been heard for a fundamental "restructuring" of international relations theory (Cox, 1981; Ashley, 1987; Hoffman; 1987). Moreover, it has been argued that a key part of the movement "beyond international relations theory" - conventionally defined - is the recognition that:

> Theory is always **for** someone and **for** some purpose ... There is ... no such thing as theory in itself, divorced from a standpoint in time and space (Cox, 1981: 128).

A restructured international relations theory which incorporates this recognition into the process of theorizing would, as a consequence, strive to be

> more reflective upon the process of theorizing itself: to become clearly aware of the perspective which gives rise to theorizing, and its relations to other perspectives (to achieve a perspective on perspectives) ... (Cox, 1981:128)

In short, a restructured international relations theory would be distinguished by "theoretical reflexivity".

It is the objective of this paper to explore the prospects for the growth of theoretically reflexive theory within the discipline of international relations as we enter a new decade. To that end, I will proceed as follows. First, an explanation will be advanced to account for the traditional lack of theoretical reflexivity in social science in general - and by extension, in the discipline of international relations. I will then review briefly recent developments in the philosophy of science which have opened the door to increased theoretical reflexivity. Finally, I will return to the discipline of international relations to examine to what degree the "reflexive turn" in social and political theory more generally is parallelled in theorizing about international politics. It will be argued that, notwithstanding the fact that "[f]or many years the international relations discipline has had the dubious honour of being among the least self-reflexive of the Western social sciences" (Lapid,1989:249-50), the prospects for the development of theoretically reflexive international relations theory are real and significant, while the need for such theory is urgent.

PART I: PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND THEORETICAL REFLEXIVITY

> *That we disavow reflection is positivism.*   Jürgen Habermas (1971:vii)

Truth as Correspondence and Theoretical Reflexivity

Traditionally, theoretical reflexivity has been lacking in the social sciences. This lack can be explained in terms of the predominance of the positivist approach to the study of society.[1]
Specifically, it is the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" - and its underlying assumption of the separation of subject and object - which has inhibited theoretical reflexivity.

The tenet of "truth as correspondence" has stood as one of the core tenets of the positivist tradition throughout its history - from August Comte, to the Vienna Circle, to the contemporary reformulations of positivism offered by Karl Popper and, most recently, Imre Lakatos[2]. That is, positivism stipulates that theoretical explanations

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[1] This applies as well to the study of international society, ie. international relations theory. For a discussion of the predominance of positivism in international relations theory, see Olson and Onuf (1985).

[2] Lakatos' "methodology of scientific research programmes" is the most recent reformulation of the positivist tradition. Because of its current popularity among international relations theorists, it bears special mention. The central distinctions between Lakatos' formulation and that of his teacher, Karl Popper, are i) Lakatos' rejection of Popper's "strict falsificationism", ii) his shift of emphasis from individual statements to meta-theoretical units, ie. "research programmes" as the

will be true to the extent that they accurately reflect reality; to the extent that they correspond to the facts. This tenet, in turn, rests upon a particular assumption: that of the separation of subject and object, of observer and observed. In other words, the tenet of "truth as correspondence" assumes that through the proper application of research design and techniques, the researcher(s) can be "factored out", leaving behind a description of the world "as it truly is". In short, the tenet of "truth as correspondence" is the expression of the goal of rendering science a "process without a subject".

The consequence of this tenet and of this assumption is that a number of problematic issues are swept aside. In making the separation of subject and object a defining condition of science, the positivist approach ignores the active and vital role played by the community of researchers in the production and validation of knowledge. It ignores the fact that the standards which define "reliable knowledge" are dependent upon their acceptance and application by a research community.

As a result, a number of important questions not only go unanswered - they are never raised. They include questions of the historical origin and nature of the community-based standards which define what counts as reliable knowledge, as well as the question of the merits of those standards in the light of possible alternatives. These questions do not arise in a positivist-inspired theorizing because the central standard of scientific truth - that of truth as correspondence - is seen to belong not to a time-bound human community of scientific investigators, but to an extra-historical natural realm. In short, the knowledge-defining standard of positivism is understood to be "Nature's own" (Rorty, 1982: xxvi).

Thus it is that the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence", based as it is on the assumption of the separation of subject and object, effectively forecloses theoretical reflexivity. For the question of the origin, nature, and merits of "reliable knowledge" in a given context and for a given researcher/ research community is central to the agenda of theoretical reflexivity. It is these issues which serve as the focal point of the on-going process of "theoretical reflection on the process of theorizing itself". Since positivism conceptualizes science as a "process without a subject", and views the standards for assessing truth claims as those of nature itself, it becomes virtually impossible to reflect either upon the role of the scientific community in adopting and reproducing the standards which define reliable knowledge, or on the merits of those knowledge-defining standards.

It follows, then, that if an element of theoretical reflexivity is to be incorporated into social science, the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" must be challenged. And it is precisely such a challenge that has been raised within contemporary social and political theory - and within the philosophy of science in particular - by way of a re-examination of the underlying assumption of the separation of subject and object. It is to a review of that scholarship that we now turn.

Post-Positivist Philosophy of Science and the Opening to Theoretical Reflexivity

One of the impetuses to the development of a post-positivist philosophy of science - and to the "reflexive turn" associated with it - was the work of Thomas Kuhn. In particular, it was Kuhn's thesis of the

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proper concern of the philosophy of science, and iii) his advocacy of tolerance of theoretical pluralism. Nonetheless, Lakatos' "sophisticated methodological falsificationism", like Popper's "methodological falsificationism" before it, continues to uphold the core tenets of the positivist logic of investigation: namely, i) value-freedom in scientific knowledge, ii) the methodological unity of science, and, most importantly in terms of the concerns of this paper, iii) the correspondence theory of truth.

"incommensurability" of contending paradigms that marked a clear break with positivist formulations. Kuhn's basic account of the movement of mature sciences through a cycle of

<div style="text-align:center">

normal science -> crisis -> revolution -> new normal science ->

</div>

is well known and need not be repeated here (Kuhn, 1970; Lakatos and Musgrave, 1970; Chalmers, 1982). But because it is on the understanding of Kuhn's notion of incommensurability that so much disagreement rests, and because of its centrality for theoretical reflexivity, let us review in more detail the exact meaning of the term.

Incommensurability, according to Kuhn, is a defining feature of paradigmatically-defined normal science. In Kuhn's words, "The normal-scientific tradition that emerges from a scientific revolution is not only **incompatible** but often actually **incommensurable** with that which has gone before" (1970:103, emphasis added). As Bernstein notes, the best way to understand what is meant by incommensurability is to compare it to the positivist understanding of the structure of scientific explanation and theory. Within this understanding, there is the assumption of a "permanent neutral observation language" - achieved by means of the strict separation of subject and object - by which we can evaluate rival theories/ research programmes. It is through this permanent neutral observation language that one can determine the truth content of a given theory/ research programme understood in terms of the degree of correspondence to the "real world"; it is because of the permanent neutral observation language that one can know that the standards applied are more than conventions - that the standards applied are "Nature's own" (Bernstein, 1985).

It is this assumption of a neutral observation language that Kuhn's notion of incommen-surability is meant to challenge. For it is Kuhn's argument that paradigms are not derived from empirical evidence; rather, paradigms are social conventions whose function it is to determine what is to count as evidence. Paradigms do not just provide model solutions to significant problems: they define what are to count as significant problems in the first place. The incommensurability of paradigms - literally, the absence of a common measure - is an incommensurability of meanings, problems and standards. And it is for this reason, asserts Kuhn, that scientists working within rival paradigms "practice their trades in different worlds" and, in some areas, even "see different things" (Bernstein, 1985:82). As a consequence, no straight-forward appeal to evidence can be used either to support one theory over another in the present (à la Popper) or even to explain the superiority of one research programme over another in retrospect (à la Lakatos). Rather, the shift of allegiance from one paradigm to another is, in Kuhn's terms, not a function of evidence but of "persuasion"; not an instance of acquiescence in the face of demonstrable proof, but an experience of "conversion".

It is interesting to note that contemporary proponents of the positivist approach such as Popper and Lakatos did recognize the "theory-laden" nature of all empirical evidence. Indeed, it was in response to this recognition, and the problems it posed for methodological falsificationism, that Popper reformulated the question of the reliability of empirical evidence in terms of public observation statements (a reformulation which Lakatos adopted in his own work). Public observation statements, or "basic statements", argued Popper, "are accepted as the result of a decision or agreement, and to that extent they are conventions" (1968:126).

This is exactly Kuhn's point. Public observation statements - statements of fact - are never anything but paradigmatically-informed social conventions. And this being the case, it is quite understandable that scientific investigators working in terms of different paradigm-defined conventions might "see different things".

As a consequence, concludes Kuhn, "There is no neutral algorithm for theory choice, no systematic decision procedure which, properly applied, must lead each individual in the group to the same decision" (1970:200). In short, notes Bernstein, Kuhn "denies that there is a `third' completely neutral language or framework within which rival paradigmatic theories `could be fully expressed and which could therefore be used in a point-by-point comparison between them'" (1985:85).

The work of Thomas Kuhn, along with others such as Paul Feyerabend (1975) and, most recently, Richard Rorty (1979), have been key to the emergence of a post-positivist philosophy of science in which incommensurability hold a central place. The central tenets of this post-positivist philosophy of science are summarized below by Hesse (1980:172-73):

i) In natural science data is not detachable from theory, for what count as data are determined in the light of some theoretical interpretation, and the facts themselves have to be reconstructed in the light of interpretation.

ii) In natural science theories are not models externally compared to nature in a hypothetico-deductive schema, they are the way the facts themselves are seen.

iii) In natural science the lawlike relations asserted of experience are internal, because what counts as facts are constituted by what the theory says about their inter-relations with one another.

iv) The language of natural science is irreducibly metaphorical and inexact, and formalizable only at the cost of distortion of the historical dynamics of scientific development and of the imaginative constructions in terms of which nature is interpreted by science.

v) Meanings in natural science are determined by theory; they are understood by theoretical coherence rather than by correspondence with facts.

In short, post-positivist philosophy of science affirms that all scientific inquiry - natural science and, by extension, social science as well - involves interpretation of theory-laden evidence by means of incommensurable theoretical frameworks which are themselves never other than social conventions adopted by a community of investigators. The post-positivist philosophy of science breaks the link with the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" by underscoring the central role of the "subject" - the community of investigators - in constituting the "object" - the world around us. It is through this break that a space for theoretical reflexivity is created.

It is important to note, however, that although incommensurability as encapsulated within post-positivist philosophy of science provides an opening for the development of theoretical reflexivity, the acceptance of the notion of incommensurability does not automatically result in a reflexive disposition. The problem lies in the tendency to equate incommensurability of paradigms with the **incomparability** of paradigms. To grasp this better, let us return to Kuhn's work.

Kuhn's willingness to take the recognition of the paradigmatically-determined nature of all evidence to its logical conclusion has made him the object of attack by positivists such as Popper. Popper (1970:56) accuses Kuhn of promoting the "Myth of the Framework" according to which "we are prisoners caught in the framework of our theories; our expectations; our past experiences; our language," and that as a consequence we cannot communicate with or judge those working in terms of a different paradigm.

If it is true that the incommensurability of paradigms means that attempts at inter-paradigmatic communication are futile, and that reasoned judgements about the relative worth of rival paradigms are impossible, then the notion of incommensurability is as much an obstacle to theoretical reflexivity as is that of "truth as correspondence". For it is the underlying premise of theoretical reflexivity (as found in the tradition of critical theorizing) that rational reflection and reasoned judgements about the relative merits of paradigm-specific conventions which define what is to count as reliable knowledge are possible - and indeed, indispensable.

In fact, it is not at all necessary to equate incommensurability with the incomparability as implied by Popper's "Myth of the Framework". As Bernstein notes,

> . . . Kuhn did not introduce the incommensurability thesis in order to call into the question the possibility of **comparing** theories and rationally evaluating them, but to clarify what we are **doing** when we compare [incommensurable] theories (1985:86).

To understand what we are doing when we compare the incommensurable, it is necessary to see how both the positivist insistence on "truth as correspondence" - as well as Popper's notion of the "Myth of the Framework" - are expressions of a common philosophical apprehension. They are both expressions of what Bernstein has termed the "Cartesian anxiety" - the notion, central to the thought of René Descartes, that should we prove unsuccessful in our search for the Archimedean point of indubitable knowledge which can serve as the foundation for human reason, then rationality must give way to irrationality, and reliable knowledge to madness. Notes Bernstein in his review of the work of the "father of modern philosophy",

> With a chilling clarity Descartes leads us with an apparent and ineluctable necessity to a grand and seductive Either/Or. **Either** there is some support for our being, a fixed foundation for our knowledge, **or** we cannot escape the forces of darkness that envelop us with madness, with intellectual and moral chaos (1985:86).

It should be noted that the Cartesian anxiety, which has served as the driving force of modern philosophy - and which is reflected in positivism's insistence on the ahistorical, extra-social standard of "truth as correspondence" - is bound up with the conception of knowledge that Aristotle called *episteme*: apodictic knowledge of the order and nature of the cosmos.

The peculiarly modern fear that the undermining of the viability of *episteme* must lead inexorably to irrationality and chaos is itself, it can be argued, the result of the limiting of the modern conception of knowledge and rationality to *episteme*. What is particularly noteworthy is that classical conceptions of knowledge were considerably broader. In addition to the conception of knowledge known as *episteme*, Aristotle also spoke of a form of knowledge he termed *phronesis*: a form of "practical reason" oriented toward the prudent exercise of judgement in contexts characterized by the contingent and variable. And since the political realm, in the classical conception, had such a character, the practice of *phronesis* was considered indispensable to the goal of leading a good and just life in the *polis*.

What is particularly interesting, is that although the classical conception of *phronesis* has been all but lost as a formally recognized category of knowledge in the modern period, the core traits of this kind of knowledge are clearly recognizable in the attempts to articulate a post-positivist philosophy of science. As Bernstein notes in a comparison of the work of Kuhn to that of the classically-oriented philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer,

> . . . the type of rationality that Kuhn has been struggling to articulate when dealing with the complex issues of theory-choice and paradigm switches - his insistence that reasons function as values which can be differently weighted and applied to concrete situations, and his defence of the role of judgement in making choices and decisions - are closely related to Gadamer's analysis of *phronesis* . . . There is a groping quality in Kuhn's several attempts to clarify the characteristics of the type of argumentation that is involved in choosing among rival paradigms. It is as if he has been searching for a proper model to express his awareness that such deliberation and choosing are rational activities, but not the sort of rational activity that has been characterized as deductive proof or empirical verification or falsification (1985:40-41).

In short, argues Bernstein, "without being completely aware of what he is doing Kuhn is appealing to a conception of rationality that has been at the core of the tradition of practical philosophy [*phronesis*]" (1985:41).

Thus what we are doing when we compare incommensurable paradigms is refusing to limit our conception of human reason to a mechanical application of an eternal, unchanging standard. We are affirming that a broader and more subtle conception of reason is possible than that which underlies both the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" and that of radical relativism as the logical consequence of incommensurability.

When we compare incommensurable paradigms we are participating in the revival of a neglected but potent "practical" form of reason - *phronesis*[3] - which allows adherents of rival paradigms to communicate with each other and to learn from one another's arguments, and which enables us to weigh the relative merits of rival paradigms by comparing them with each other "in multiple ways without requiring the assumption that there is or must always be a common, fixed grid by which we measure progress" (Bernstein, 1985:86).

When we compare incommensurable paradigms we are recognizing that the standards we employ to judge between paradigms - like those we use to judge between theories within a paradigm - are **human standards** which are "made", and not nature's standards which are "given". We are recognizing that there is no straight-forward way of "keeping score" between rival paradigms (because incommensurable paradigms are, by definition, playing different "games"). But we are also affirming that we can use our powers of reason to evaluate different "games", to "persuade" others of the well-foundedness of our judgements, and thereby to "convert" others through a process of reasoned debate and argument to our point of view.

To compare the incommensurable is to affirm that it is possible to provide "good reasons" for judging one paradigm superior to another, even as we acknowledge that the standards for what counts as a "good reason" - and by extension, for what constitutes a "superior paradigm" - are themselves products of human reasoning which is always historically contingent and context-dependent.

To compare the incommensurable is not to abandon the realm of reliable knowledge for that of madness; it is to recognize that knowledge-defining standards are always open to question and to reassessment. In short, to compare the incommensurable is to engage in theoretical reflexivity.

Conclusion to Part I

The dissolution of the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence" (through the undermining of the underlying assumption of the separation of subject and object) has brought the issue of theoretical reflexivity to centre stage in contemporary social and political theory. And the recovery of a lost conception of reason - *phronesis* - by social and political theorists provides a means by which the practice of theoretical reflexivity may be justified in a context dominated by the "Cartesian anxiety". The question remains, however, to what extent this "reflexive turn" in social and political theory more generally has its counterpart in the discipline of international relations? It is to that question that we now turn.

PART II: REFLEXIVITY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

> *The "personal equation" of the political scientist both limits and directs his scholarly pursuits. The truth which a mind thus socially conditioned is able to grasp is likewise socially conditioned. The perspective of the observer determines what can be known and how it is to be understood.*
>
> Hans J. Morgenthau (1959:21)

Introduction

In the first part of this paper, we examined the question of theoretical reflexivity in terms of social and political theory. We noted the important contribution of post-positivist philosophy of science which, by underscoring

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[3] Some authors refer to this conception of reason as a "dialogical" conception of reason. See, for example, Cornell (1985).

the central role played by the community of inquirers (the subject) in constituting their subject matter (the object), challenges the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence". This recognition, combined with a form of reason (*phronesis*) suited to the comparison of incommensurable knowledge-defining standards which are paradigm-specific, creates ENDFIELD
a space for critical reflection on those standards - in short, for theoretical reflexivity.

The question remains, however, to what degree the "reflexive turn" in social and political theory has a parallel in international relations theory. To what extent has a space for theoretical reflexivity been created in the discipline of international relations?

I will attempt to answer this questions by exploring the issue of theoretical reflexivity in international relations theory through a recently arisen meta-theoretical debate in the discipline - international relations theory's "Third Debate".

International Relations Theory's "Third Debate"

To understand the significance of the Third Debate for the discipline of international relations, it is necessary to place it in context. The contemporary debate, which dates from the late 1980s, can be seen as the third in a series of "discipline-defining" debates (Lapid, 1989:236) in the twentieth century: the first being that between "idealism" and "realism" in the 1940s and 50s (Carr, 1939), with the second, which occurred during the 1960s, centring around the confrontation between "history" and "science" (Knorr and Rosenau, 1969).

One should also see the Third Debate in terms of contemporary developments in the realm of social and political theory more generally. It has been suggested that the claim that "International Relations is a discrete area of action and discourse, separate from social and political theory", can no longer be sustained (Hoffman, 1987:231). Nowhere is there better evidence for this position than in international relations theory's "Third Debate". In short, the rise of the Third Debate can be understood as international relations theory's response to contemporary developments in social and political theory more generally, and in the philosophy of science in particular.

There is no question that the Third Debate reflects the general emphases shared by both contemporary positivist and post-positivist philosophy of science. Like the debates which preceded it, the Third Debate is part of the search for better theory. In the case of the Third Debate, however, and in line with contemporary philosophy of science, this search is being conducted not in terms of individual propositions or hypotheses, but in terms of larger conceptual schemes. The Third Debate is a "discourse about choice of analytic frameworks . . ." (Banks, 1985:20). It involves a focus on "meta-scientific units" (ie. on paradigms), where particular attention is directed to examining the "underlying premises and assumptions" of the paradigms in contention (Lapid, 1989:239).

A good example of this approach to the on-going quest for better theory is the work of Michael Banks. In an important contribution to the Third Debate, Banks conceptualizes the present state of the discipline in terms of three contending paradigms: realism, pluralism, and structuralism. "The debate about their respective merits," argues Banks, "occupies centre stage in the
discipline . . ."(1985:9).

Banks attempts to detail and contrast the "basic images" of the respective paradigms. Notes Banks:

Each of the three starts with a wholly different basic image. For realists, the world society is a system of "billiard-ball" states in intermittent collision. For pluralists, it is a "cobweb", a network of numerous criss-crossing relationships. For structuralists, it is a "multi-headed octopus", with powerful tentacles constantly sucking wealth from the weakened peripheries towards the powerful centres (1985:12).

It is these contrasting images, notes Banks, that serve as the foundation for the erection of theoretical structures. These structures, while internally coherent, contradict one another in terms of major theoretical categories including i) actors, ii) dynamics, iii) dependent variables, iv) subject boundaries, and v) specific concepts.

With regard to actors, notes Banks, " . . . realists see only states; pluralists see states in combination with a great variety of others; and structuralists see classes".   As regards dynamics, "realists see force as primary; pluralists see complex social movements; structuralists see economics". As concerns dependent variables,

> realists see the task of IR [international relations] as simply to explain what states do; pluralists see it more grandly as an effort to explain all major world events; and structuralists see its function as showing why the world contains such appalling contrasts between rich and poor (1985:12-13).

With regard to subject boundaries,

> Realists define the boundaries of their subject in a narrow, state-centric fashion, often preferring the term "international politics" to describe it. Pluralists widen the boundaries by including multinational companies, markets, ethnic groups and nationalism as well as state behaviour, and call their subject IR or world society. Structuralists have the widest boundaries of all, stressing the unity of the whole world system at all levels, focusing on modes of production and treating inter-state politics as merely a surface phenomenon (Banks, 1985:13).

And finally, as regards specific concepts, Banks notes that:

> Some concepts are found only in one paradigm, because they are of crucial importance to it: deterrence and alliances in realism, ethnicity and interdependence in pluralism, exploitation and dependency in structuralism. Others, however, are used with broadly similar meanings in all three: power, sovereignty, and law, for example. Yet others, like imperialism, the state, and hegemony, are used in all three but with sharply different interpretations (1985:13).

It is clear there is much room for disagreement with the specifics of Banks' intervention. His conceptualization of the contending paradigms - from their basic images through to their contrasting notions of actors, dynamics, etc. - can be challenged as to its accuracy and adequacy. Indeed, disagreements may extend all the way to the labels used to designate contending paradigms.[4] In contrast to Banks' use of the terms "realism", "pluralism" and "structuralism", for example, Kal Holsti (1985) prefers those of the "Classical Tradition", "Global Society", and "Neo-Marxism"; Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi (1987) employ those of "realism", "pluralism", and "globalism"; R. D. McKinlay and R. Little (1986) identify their paradigms by the labels of "realist", "liberal" and "socialist".[5] The point remains, however, that Banks' work serves as an excellent example of how the emphases of contemporary philosophy of science have spilled over into the discipline of international relations, and influenced the form that interventions have taken in the Third Debate.

As was noted above, the Third Debate, like its forerunners, is a discipline-defining debate; it is concerned, as Banks notes, with the "search for better theory" (Lapid, 1989:237). For that reason alone, it bears consideration.

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[4] Apart from disagreeing on the content and labels of contending paradigms, authors also disagree on the issue of the number of relevant paradigms, some identifying many more than three. Three does seem to be the most common number, however, and in this regard Banks is once again representative.

It is interesting to note that the practice of conceptualizing the discipline as a set of contending paradigms extends to the non-English speaking academic community as well. For examples from Francophone international relations, see Huntzinger (1987) and Korany (1987).

[5] Similarly, in his overview of the sub-field of international political economy, Gilpin (1987) speaks in terms of the "Nationalist", "Liberal" and "Marxist" perspectives.

However, the Third Debate has special significance in terms of the concerns of this paper. For beyond the immediate arguments about the number, identifying characteristics, and appropriate labels for the paradigms in international relations theory, the Third Debate affords a valuable opportunity for exploring the issue of theoretical reflexivity in the discipline.

It has been argued that international relations theory's Third Debate not only reflects the influence of contemporary philosophy of science in general (ie. the focus on meta-theoretical units), but that it is a direct response to **post-positivist** philosophy of science in particular. In the words of Yosef Lapid, the Third Debate is "linked, historically and intellectually, to the confluence of diverse anti-positivistic philosophical and sociological trends" (1989:237). In fact, as an ostensible response to post-positivist philosophy of science, the Third Debate has been interpreted by some as marking international relations theory's break with positivist orthodoxy. Moreover, as a consequence of its purported break with positivist orthodoxy and, specifically, with the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence", the Third Debate has been credited with contributing to an important increase in theoretical reflexivity within the discipline of international relations (Lapid, 1989:249-50).

In the remainder of this paper this interpretation of the Third Debate will be examined. It will be argued that to see the Third Debate as marking a conclusive break with the positivist legacy, and an opening to theoretical reflexivity would be a mistake. Rather, it will be suggested that for two important reasons, the Third Debate's contribution to increased reflexivity in the discipline has been limited. First, a significant number of interventions in the Third Debate continue to be structured in positivist terms (particulary as concerns the tenet of "truth as correspondence"). As a consequence, the possibilities for the development of theoretical reflexivity remain extremely limited. And secondly, of the interventions which do evidence an attempt to break with the positivist legacy, many have adopted a formulation which closes off openings to theoretical reflexivity as effectively as does positivism.

Nonetheless, it will also be argued that some interventions in the Third Debate do evidence a clear break with the positivist approach to theorizing, and do so in terms which are conducive to the development of a theoretically reflexive disposition. It is these interventions which hold out a real hope for the development of thorough-going theoretical reflexivity in the discipline of international relations.

Interventions in the Third Debate

On the basis of our discussions of recent developments in the philosophy of science in the first part of this paper, three possible stances with regard to contending paradigms can be distinguished. The first stance, corresponding to positivist tradition (and in particular, the Lakatosian reformulation of that tradition), is that of "commensurable and therefore comparable". Rival paradigms ("research programmes") are comparable, asserts this position, because ultimately they can be assessed according to a common standard - that of correspondence to the real world. This stance, it will be remembered, is incompatible with the development of theoretical reflexivity, in that it sees the standard for what constitutes reliable knowledge as "Nature's own", and thus beyond criticism.

A second stance with regard to contending paradigms is that which corresponds to the Popperian notion of the "Myth of the Framework". According to this stance, rival paradigms are "incommensurable and therefore incomparable". This stance breaks with positivism to the degree that it recognizes that standards for what constitutes reliable knowledge are human constructs and social conventions. However, it shares with positivism the idea that the acceptance of incommensurability means that rival standards cannot be compared and assessed, thereby closing itself off to the development of theoretical reflexivity as effectively as does positivism.

Finally, a third stance was identified. This is the stance associated with the position of Thomas Kuhn, according to which rival paradigms are "incommensurable yet still comparable". This stance recognizes the social

nature of the standards for what constitutes "reliable knowledge". But it also affirms that these conventions can be compared and assessed by means of reasoned argument and deliberation. It is this stance which is most conducive to the development of theoretical reflexivity.

These three stances will be used to categorize the interventions in the Third Debate. Through this process, the question of the extent to which the Third Debate has in fact contributed to a growth in theoretical reflexivity in the discipline of international relations will be addressed. We will begin with the first stance: that of "commensurable and therefore comparable".

a) Stance I: "Commensurable and Therefore Comparable"

The stance of "commensurable and therefore comparable" is, as was noted above, consistent with the Lakatosian reformulation of the positivist tradition. In terms of international relations theory's Third Debate, this stance has been most consistently adopted by neo-realists. One of the best examples of this type of intervention in the Third Debate is to be found in the writings of K. J. Holsti (1985, 1989).

To begin, there is no question that Holsti is most comfortable within the realist - or in his terms, "Classical" - tradition. Indeed, *The Dividing Discipline* can be seen as a spirited defence of the realist approach to the study of international politics at a time when calls are being heard for its replacement.

What is equally significant, however, is Holsti's adherence to a Lakatosian version of positivism, including the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence". Holsti's allegiance to positivism is clearly evidenced in his statements concerning the purpose of theory and the nature of knowledge accumulation. For Holsti,

> the ultimate purpose of theoretical activity is to enhance our understanding of the world of international politics"; it is to "increase our knowledge of the **real world** by helping to guide research and interpret data" (1989:255-56, emphasis added).

Moreover, notes Holsti,

> We add to knowledge primarily when we render reality more intelligible by seeking generalizations of empirical validity . . ." (1989:256)

It is out of the understanding that theory is a reflection of the "real world" that Holsti explains the origins of the contending paradigms which constitute the Third Debate. "A plethora of . . . `paradigms'", notes Holsti, "is an expression of greater international complexity" (1989:256). And because "[o]ur world is complex and growing more so", he asserts, "it is . . . unlikely that any single theory or perspective . . . could adequately explain all of its essential characteristics . . . (1989:256). Thus, he concludes, "Theoretical pluralism is the only possible response to the multiple realities of a complex world" (1989:256).

It is in the tolerant and at times almost welcoming stance that Holsti takes to paradigmatic pluralism that one sees clearly the Lakatosian dimension to Holsti's positivism. For Holsti, paradigmatic pluralism is more than just an inevitable condition of theorizing which tries to comprehend a complex reality. In keeping with a Lakatosian orientation, pluralism is an important principle which, when respected, serves some very beneficial functions. Clearly echoing Lakatos' rejection of the Popperian notion of strict falsification, Holsti affirms that

> Pluralism . . . guards against the hazards of "intellectual knockouts," those attempts to disown past methodologies and theories on the assumption that they are entirely wrong . . . This was a major shortcoming of the most extreme behaviourism and of some recent efforts to demolish realism and its variants (1989:256).

In addition to guarding against straight-forward falsification of paradigms which, despite anomalies, have proven their worth as interpretive tools, the principle of pluralism also serves to insure that the discipline keeps progressing in its

quest for ever truer descriptions of reality. Thus, notes Holsti, if the dominant realist tradition shows itself to be inadequate as a description of reality, "then new departures may help us redirect inquiry into the proper channels". If realism is lacking, argues Holsti, it can be refurbished by "grafting" new theoretical formulations onto it (1985:viii).

It is important to note that despite his Lakatosian support for paradigmatic pluralism, Holsti is not arguing that all paradigms are of equal value. In keeping with the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence", paradigms may be evaluated according to the accuracy of their description of the facts. Notes Holsti,

> Progress is thus not measured by unlimited accumulation of perspectives, paradigms, models, or methodologies any more than it is by the replacement of "units of knowledge". Some perspectives, models, and the like should and do have higher intellectual claims than others. The ultimate test is how elegantly and comprehensibly they describe and explain the **important** persisting, new, and developing realities (1989:258).[6]

Thus it is that early in *The Dividing Discipline*, Holsti affirms that "isomorphism" and "correspondence with the observed facts of international politics" are the standards by which rival paradigms must be assessed (1985:vii).

Indeed, it is on the basis of its transhistorical correspondence with the facts that Holsti continues to promote the realist paradigm over its rivals. In an interesting reversal of the traditional inferiority ascribed to social scientists in comparison with their natural science counterparts Holsti affirms that:

> We cannot throw away paradigms (or what passes for them) as natural scientists do, á la Kuhn, because the anomalies between reality and its theoretical characterization are never so severe in international relations as they are in the natural sciences. None of the thinkers of the past portrayed the world of international (or world) politics in so distorted a manner as did the analysts of the physical or astronomical universe prior to the Copernican revolution (1989:257).[7]

From his affirmations that competing paradigms may be "synthesized" (grafted onto one another), and that realists have been more successful than many physicists in approximating reality - not to mention his assertion that "correspondence with the observed facts of international politics" is the basis upon which rival paradigms must be assessed - it is clear that Holsti does not accept the Kuhnian notion of incommensurability. The implications of the notion of the theory-ladenness of all "facts" is something he cannot embrace. Notes Holsti,

> I remain skeptical of the "liberation of theory from data", or, as Halliday has put it, a "rejection of empiricism in favour of a theoretical approach that accepts the place of data in a subordinate position" (1989:259).

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[6] No doubt Holsti would share Ball's view that "Lakatos ... provides a means of `keeping score' in the contest between rival research programmes" (1987:37). The "means of keeping score" derives from Lakatos' position that progressive research programmes are successful in the discovery of new "facts" where degenerating ones are not.

[7] With these remarks, Holsti also demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of Kuhn's position. Kuhn has never suggested that one theory/ paradigm (eg. pre-Copernican astronomy) is replaced by a succeeding paradigm because is successor provides a more accurate description of reality. Indeed, Kuhn's notion of the incommensurability of succeeding paradigms is designed to counter exactly this conception of linear progress toward an ever more accurate description of the real world.

It should be noted, however, that Holsti's adherence to the "linear progress" school of thought is thoroughly consistent with a Lakatosian position. Asserts Lakatos: "... the methodology of scientific research programmes is better suited for approximating the truth in our actual universe than any other methodology" (Chalmers, 1982:104).

The implications of Holsti's rejection of the notion of incommensurability for increased theoretical reflexivity are clear. In the continued affirmation of the notion that "nature's own" standards - specifically, "truth as correspondence" - must be applied in the knowledge validation process, the possibility of critical reflection on the origins and merits of the conventions which define what is to count as reliable knowledge remains remote. Theoretical reflexivity, to the degree that it figures at all, is reduced to the much more limited notion of "careful examination of assumptions and premises" - a notion that Holsti correctly notes is perfectly consistent with positivism (1989:255).

In conclusion, it should be noted that a significant number of interventions in the Third Debate - of which Holsti's stands out only because of its clarity - fall into the Lakatosian positivist stance of "commensurable and therefore comparable".[8] As a consequence, the interpretation of the Third Debate as marking a disciplinary shift toward post-positivist theoretical reflexivity bears being reconsidered.

b) Stance II: "Incommensurable and Therefore Incomparable"

Although the majority of the interventions in international relations theory's Third Debate reflect what has been termed here "Stance I",[9] it should be noted that there are important exceptions. Noteworthy among these are those theorists who have adopted the second stance: that of "incommensurable and therefore incomparable".

An important intervention by R. D. McKinlay and R. Little - *Global Problems and World Order* (1986) - is a good example of this stance in the Third Debate. McKinlay and Little's starting point is that the source of the paradigms found in the literature - in their terms, Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism - is not to be found in "international complexity" (where paradigmatic pluralism is seen as the inevitable by-product). Rather, contending paradigms are expressions of radically different normative orders embedded in competing ideological frameworks. And, argue McKinlay and Little, with obvious reference to those who have adopted "Stance I", it is the refusal of those engaged in the Third Debate to acknowledge the ideological character of their work that leads them into "endowing their model with a spurious empirical or scientific validity, which is made all the more striking in contrast to the ideology offered by other models" (1986:272).

In short, argue McKinlay and Little, the contending paradigms in international relations theory are incommensurable. And as a consequence, the hope held out by the adherents of "Stance I" - that of paradigm "synthesis" - is a pipedream. The consequence of incommensurability, note McKinlay and Little, is that

> ... even when the models [ie. paradigms] look to the same topics, the general framework within which the topic is processed leads to systematic variation in problem explication ...

As a consequence " ... as any one model begins to engineer solutions to its perceived problems, it will in all likelihood create a problem for another model" (1986:267).

With their rejection of the tenet of "truth as correspondence", as well as the accompanying notion of a theory-independent realm of facts by which one can assess the merits of competing paradigms, adherents of "Stance II"

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[8] Keohane also supports this stance. For his discussion of the merits of a Lakatosian positivist approach to international politics, see Keohane (1986). Others, who by their call for a "synthesis" of competing paradigms, despite a nod to the difficulties posed by incommensurability, also seem to have adopted this stance are Viotti and Kauppi (1987:575-81). See also the discussion of the relevance of a Lakatosian approach for the study of foreign policy in Herman and Peacock (1987:22).

[9] "Commensurable and therefore comparable".

appear to be on the post-positivist path to theoretical reflexivity. Unfortunately, this is not the case. It is not the case because the adherents of "Stance II" equate the incommensurability of paradigms with that of the incomparability of paradigms.

Again, McKinlay and Little serve as a useful example. The ability to assess the merits of competing paradigms, they argue, " . . . presupposes some form of comparatively valid evaluation procedure, entailing some decision rule which would stipulate which model was to be retained". And since any evaluation procedure which might be proposed would be no more than a social convention, and hence, inherently contestable, comparative assessments are virtually impossible. The "only comparatively valid test procedure", they conclude, "is to enquire whether each model is internally consistent" (1986:269,270). And this criterion they judge to be met in each case.

Indeed, not only is comparative assessment virtually impossible, argue McKinlay and Little, but the very idea of meaningful communication between the adherents of rival paradigms - and the learning which is a product of that communication - is out of the question. The

> sophistication and internal coherence of each model, combined with their very different goals, structural arrangements and belief systems, make meaningful inter-model debate well-nigh impossible . . . Compromise and constructive debate can largely only be conducted within the confines and parameters of a single model (1986:272-73).

Given the assumption of the incomparability of paradigms, which forecloses the possibility of providing reasoned argument in support of one paradigm over another, how is one to account for paradigm choice by members of the research community?

The position of James Rosenau on this issue is a good example of how Stance II adherents respond to this question. In accordance with the core assumptions of the stance of "incommensurable and therefore incomparable", Rosenau (1982:4) affirms that " . . .the way in which analysts become adherents of one or another approach is not necessarily based on intellectual or rational calculation". What then is the explanation for paradigm choice? By definition, the explanation must be found outside the realm of reason and argumentation. Rosenau's answer is consistent, if disconcerting: "our temperaments", he affirms " . . . are the central determinants of which approach we will find more suitable" (1982:5).[10]

Fortunately, it can be argued that the a-rational - if not, anti-rational - nature of paradigm choice is not so much the logical consequence of incommensurability as a symptom of an underlying limitation of the stance of "incommensurable and therefore incomparable". The problem with this stance, for which the intervention of McKinlay and Little stands as example,[11] is that it has only broken with the positivist tradition in part. For while rejecting the positivist tenet of "truth as correspondence", it remains consistent with the positivism's understanding of the "Cartesian anxiety": that only an ahistorical, extra-social standard can serve to adjudicate between competing

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[10] Rosenau also affirms that temperaments "tend to remain ... fixed and resistant to new evidence" (p.7), underscoring further the impotence and irrelevance of reasoned argumentation in the process of paradigm choice.

[11] Once again, McKinlay and Little are not the only authors to adopt such a stance. Rosenau's support of this position has already been noted.

Another intervention which would fit into this category is that of Mansbach and Ferguson (1988). In addition, certain of Gilpin's comments (1987) might also qualify him as at least a part-time proponent of the stance of "incommensurable and therefore incompatible". For further discussion of Mansbach, Ferguson, and Gilpin as advocating a form of "radical relativism" in paradigm assessment, see Keenes (1989:46-48).

conceptions of knowledge generation and validation. As a consequence, the reasoned assessment of the merits of contending paradigm-specific conventions for what constitutes reliable knowledge - that is, the development of theoretical reflexivity - is foreclosed.

Fortunately, however, the view that paradigms "pass like ships in the night" (McKinlay and Little, 1986:273) is not the only alternative to that of positivism's "commensurable and therefore comparable". It is to the third stance - a stance compatible with the notion of theoretical reflexivity - to which we now turn.

c) Stance III: "Incommensurable Yet Still Comparable"

We have examined two distinct stances which are represented in international relations theory's Third Debate. And in each case, we have seen that the possibilities for the development of theoretical reflexivity - to the degree that they exist at all - are extremely limited. There is a third stance, however, which does hold out a real hope for the development of theoretical reflexivity. It is the stance of "incommensurable yet still comparable".

Those who adopt this stance share with the adherents of "Stance II" the rejection of the positivist tenet which defines truth as that which corresponds to the "real world". They accept that different paradigms constitute the world in different ways, that there is no way to know the world independently of our descriptions of it, and that as a consequence there is no neutral, context-independent standard by which competing paradigms can be assessed.

Adherents of "Stance III" differ from those of "Stance II", however, in their refusal to equate incommensurability with incomparability. The fact that no neutral, context-independent standards exists to assess competing paradigms does not mean that humans cannot use their faculty of reason in a given context to articulate standards and to persuade others, by means of argument, of the worth of those standards (even while remaining cognizant of the fact that new arguments and new contexts may result in a re-examination and revision of those standards). It is just this position which expresses the core of the theoretically reflexive disposition.

While the numbers are few and the formulations remain under-developed - and even inconsistent across different works - it is the contention of this study that some international relations theorists are moving in the direction of this third stance. That is, a small but significant number of international relations theorists have begun to exhibit the "broader and deeper kind of political and epistemological self-consciousness" (Alker and Biersteker, 1984:138) that is fundamental to theoretical reflexivity. They are exhibiting this political and epistemological self-consciousness by underscoring "the deep connections between the social and political contexts of particular theoretical enterprises and the kind of work actually done" (Alker and Biersteker, 1984:138-39); by recognizing, along with critical theorists such as Horkheimer, that "What scientists ... regard as the essence of theory ... corresponds, in fact, to the immediate tasks they set for themselves"; in short, by stressing the indivisible link between the "epistemological" and the "political" realms, between the question of "how do we know" and visions of the "good life".[12]

Stressing the link between the "epistemological" and the "political" has important implications for re-conceptualizing the relationship of paradigms to the world, as well as for the notion of reliable knowledge. Rather than viewing contending paradigms as different ways of representing the same reality, one can understand them as

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[12]It should be noted that as Bernstein observes with regard to Kuhn, there is a "groping quality" in the attempts of these scholars "to clarify the characteristics of the type of argumentation that is involved in choosing among rival paradigms". And, as in the case of Kuhn, it can be argued that "without being completely aware" of what they are doing, they are "appealing to a conception of rationality that has been at the core of the tradition of practical philosophy [[12]*phronesis*]".

expressions of different political projects for "coping" in the world.[13] Rather than defining reliable knowledge as knowledge which accurately represents the "real world" - a definition rendered inapplicable by the recognition of the constitutive role played by the "subject" in the knowledge validation process - reliable knowledge is understood as knowledge which proves useful in terms of a specific "coping" agenda. Accordingly, a paradigm will be found to be "true" - will be judged to produce reliable knowledge - to the extent that it demonstrates its "usefulness" as a guide to action in terms of the general political vision in which it is embedded and of the concrete political project to which it is directed.

The case of the realist paradigm in international relations theory serves as a good example. In terms of the perspective being advanced here, the success of realism has, *pace* Holsti, had less to do with its alleged accuracy in grasping the "facts" of international politics, than with its demonstrated utility for guiding state managers in their activities of "state- and nation-building" (Keenes, 1989:65). That is to say, the realist paradigm has validated its truth-claims by demonstrating its ability to guide state policy-making;[14] realism is "true" because it has met the needs of the policy-makers of the great powers - most recently and perhaps most importantly, the United States - engaged in the pursuit of a specific agenda and faced "with a specific set of foreign policy problems" (Smith, 1987:197). As Smith has argued, because international relations theory, as primarily an "American discipline", has been:

> . . . so closely identified with the foreign policy concerns of the country, it is not surprising that the assumptions of Realism have proven to be so difficult to overcome. This is because the focus of Realism, namely how to maximize power so as to manage international events, fits extraordinarily well with the needs of a hegemonic power. The three key elements of Realism's account of world politics, the national interest, power maximization and the balance of power, are particularly well-suited to the requirements of a foreign policy for the U.S. (1987:198-99).

If the success of the realist paradigm cannot be understood apart from particular social actors and their political projects - specifically U.S. state managers dedicated to the maintenance of American hegemony - then a similar relationship must hold for other paradigms. Notes Smith,

> Just as it has been argued . . . that the US policy agenda dominated the study of international relations by dominating Realism within the US, so we should expect different paradigms [ie. pluralism and structuralism] to appeal to persons in different settings (1987:202).[15]

Alker and Biersteker concur:

> Two global superpowers both able to destroy each other, but likely to self-destruct in the same process, are likely to have scholars especially interested in "global interdependence" or "peaceful

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[13] The notion that paradigms represent not different ways of describing the "real world", but rather different ways of "coping" in the world is central to the work of Richard Rorty. For a good discussion of Rorty's pragmatism, see West (1989).

[14] The employment of the word "guide" is meant to indicate realism's importance for the practice of state managers in both a "practical" as well as a "technical/ instrumental" sense. For a discussion of the distinction between the two senses as manifest in the realist tradition, see Ashley (1981).

[15] "After all", notes Smith, "if you are not a great power, in Morgenthau's use of the term, what foreign policy options do you have?" (1987:201).

coexistence" . . . Anti-colonial revolutionaries in relatively underdeveloped countries are driven by other practical imperatives (1984:139).[16]

The conceptualization of competing paradigms as expressions of general political visions and corresponding to concrete political projects is vital to the stance of comparing the incommensurable in international relations theory. It is vital in that it provides a way of assessing contending paradigms which is not bound to the notion of "truth as correspondence", but which is also capable of going beyond a-rational "temperament" as the justification for paradigm preference. By linking the "epistemological" and the "political", it becomes possible to assess rival paradigm-specific knowledge-defining standards in terms of the relative merits of the political visions/ projects in which the paradigms are embedded. In short, a means for rationally comparing incommensurable paradigms in international relations theory is possible once it is recognized that the question of "which paradigm is superior?" can be restated as "which general political vision/ concrete political project is most appropriate to the global *polis*?"; once it is recognized that at the meta-theoretical level, the question of "what is reliable knowledge?" can be reformulated as "how should we live?"

This recognition is imperative in the discipline of international relations. Given that paradigms validate themselves in terms of both social actors and specific purposes, the question of social identity and political purpose can no longer be avoided by those who comprise the community of international relations scholars. For if it is true that at the level of scholarship, "[paradigms] compete by virtue of the accounts they provide in explaining **what we as scholars . . . define as central to our purpose, enquiry, ideology**" (Smith, 1987:202, emphasis added), then the need to compare incommensurable paradigms directs us to a broader debate about which "purposes", which "enquiries" and which "ideologies" merit the support and energy of international relations scholars. If it is true that, in the words of Fichte, "the choice between comprehensive theories rests on one's interests entirely" (Feyerabend, 1975:128), then the nature of the interests with which international relations scholars identify themselves must be considered.

To acknowledge the link between the "epistemological" and the "political" is to recognize that participating in the "normal science" tradition of any paradigm means - consciously or not - lending support to a specific political project; it is to accept that to engage in paradigm-directed puzzle-solving is - intentionally or not - to direct one's energies to the establishment and maintenance of a specific global order. As a consequence, it becomes vital to engage in a critical examination of the relative merits of rival political projects and of contending global orders. For once it is recognized that the knowledge-defining standards that we adopt are not neutral, but have an undeniable political content, then it becomes imperative to "bring politics back in" (Keenes, 1989) - openly and explicitly - to our deliberations on the character of reliable knowledge of international politics.

It should be emphasized that it would be a mistake to view the stress on the indivisible link between the "epistemological" and the "political" as marking the end of rational assessment of knowledge claims. It is of course true, that in the assessment of contending political projects and global orders there is no neutral, context-independent standard to guide us. Even so, the tradition of *phronesis* - of practical reason - affirms that meaningful debate about the merits of contending political visions is possible; that human reason can be employed to judge wisely and humanely. At the very least the attempt is worth making. For in a context in which the dominant political projects of the past have brought our global *polis* to the brink of annihilation, a reasoned discussion and theoretically self-

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[16] For Alker and Biersteker's efforts to link contending paradigms to particular political agendas, see (1984:138), Figure 4.

conscious assessment of the relative merits of the political projects and global orders represented by the contending paradigms of international politics is essential. In short, theoretical reflexivity can no longer be viewed as a frill that the discipline can afford to do without.

Conclusion

This paper began with the question of the prospects for the development of theoretically reflexive theory in the discipline of international relations. First, the issue of theoretical reflexivity was related both to the predominance of positivism in the social sciences (including that of international relations theory), and to the challenging of positivism - and in particular, the tenet of "truth as correspondence" - by post-positivist philosophy of science. It is this challenging of positivism which has given rise to the "reflexive turn" in contemporary social and political theory.

The question of whether a parallel to the "reflexive turn" in social and political theory can be identified in theorizing about international relations was then addressed. It has been argued in this paper that the questions central to theoretical reflexivity have begun to make inroads from the margins into the centre of contemporary theorizing about international politics.[17] Specifically, in the context of international relations theory's Third Debate - and despite the continuing predominance of non-reflexive interventions - one sees evidence of the growth of the "broader and deeper kind of political and epistemological self-consciousness" which is fundamental to the development of a theoretically reflexive disposition. As a consequence, if it remains premature to speak of an authentic "reflexive turn" in the discipline of international relations, it can nonetheless be argued that the prospects for the growth of theoretically reflexive international relations theory are real and significant. If true, this is indeed fortunate. For it cannot be denied that the need for theoretical reflexivity in the study of international relations - and the explicit recognition of the political dimension of the process of knowledge creation and validation it entails - has never been greater.

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[17] As is evidenced by the recent discussion in the *International Studies Quarterly* concerning the significance of the "Third Debate" (Lapid, 1989; Holsti, 1989; Biersteker, 1989; George, 1989).

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