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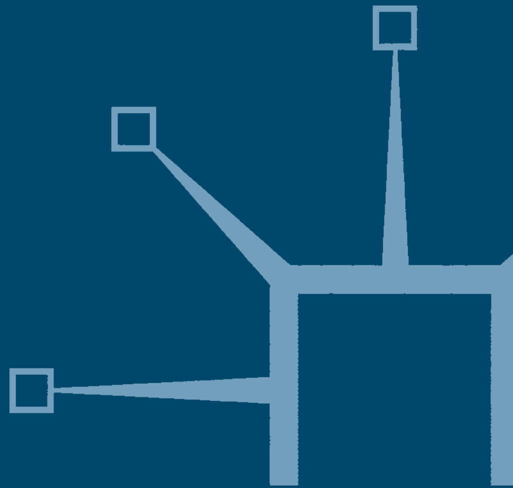
Towards a Post-Modern Understanding of the Political

From Genealogy to Hermeneutics

Andrius Bielskis



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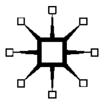

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Preface and Acknowledgements

There are two ways of writing philosophy books. The first is through making sure that everything you wanted to argue and say is argued and said. The argument is well worked through, all the counter-arguments are explored, all the philosophical points are supported with meticulous scholarship. Such (rare) books constitute fully finished philosophical positions and nothing needs to be changed or added. They are like beautiful fully matured wine. The second way is through developing one's philosophical position without being able to provide a fully worked out argument with all its pros and cons. These books pose more questions than answers, questions indeed to the authors themselves. They are as much statements as arguments, statements that have yet to be fully argued for. This book is of the second type. It presents a philosophical position rather than a fully articulated philosophical argument. It is a statement that has, I hope, the potential to become a mature philosophical argument, in part through being tested in the fires of public debate.

This book is the result of my doctoral research at the University of Warwick. I am greatly indebted to a number of people. Without their support this book would not have been possible. I am first of all grateful to Martin Warner and his help throughout five years of my research at Warwick. I am particularly indebted to his enthusiasm in the difficult task of improving my English. I am indebted to Peter Poellner who has taught me a great deal about Nietzsche. I am also grateful to Kelvin Knight and his critical comments on my reading of MacIntyre, Aristotle and Marx. I want to thank Arne Rasmusson for agreeing to read a section on the theology of Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas, and for his friendly encouragement. I am infinitely grateful to my wife Jolanta and my daughter Severija whose care, support, encouragement and understanding have made my work possible. I am also indebted to my friends Robert and Elizabeth Garlicks, Christopher Brown and Mehran Mehrabanpour. I thank Andrius Smalinskas and my daughter Severija for agreeing to design the cover of the book. Finally, I want to thank my parents and my brother for having faith in me and my ability to accomplish this task.

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1
Introduction: Moving Beyond Liberalism

> Liberalism is the political theory of modernity. Its postulates are the most distinctive part of modern life – the autonomous individual with his concern for liberty and privacy, the growth of wealth and the steady stream of invention and innovation, the machinery of government which is at once indispensable to civil life and the standing threat to it – and its intellectual outlook is one that could have originated in its fullness only in the post-traditional society of Europe after the dissolution of medieval Christendom.
>
> John Gray (*Liberalism*, p. 82)

> What I have attempted to do is to generalize and carry to a higher order of abstraction the traditional theory of the social contract as represented by Locke, Rousseau, and Kant.
>
> John Rawls (*A Theory of Justice*, p. 11)

Modernity and humanism

It has often been argued that the conceptual beginning of modernity lies in the notion of man's self-determination and what Charles Taylor famously called 'the disenchantment of the world'.[1] It will be one of the tasks of this introductory chapter to suggest that the idea of modern humanism should be understood in relation to the loss of the traditional ontological order of the world. This will enable us to provide a contextual background for our discussion of two alternative approaches to the political, approaches attempting to go beyond modern humanism. Thus I shall argue that the modern conception of humanism, the idea of self-determining reason, the Enlightenment attempts to formulate rationally justified autonomous morality which,

as it was believed, would serve as the cornerstone for universal civilisation, together with instrumental reason giving the impetus for the establishment of modern science – all of these have to be understood together and in relation to the decline of the traditional ontological world-view. Such a conception of modern humanism contrasts with Martin Heidegger's and more recently John Gray's understanding, since this notion of humanism will be exclusively linked to modernity. It will be claimed that only in modernity and due to modernity has humanism become the all pervasive ideology and *Weltanschauung* of the contemporary world.

John Gray, following Heidegger's and to a certain extent Nietzsche's reading of the tradition of Western thought, has argued that modern humanism is closely linked to and has been fostered by the 'Baconian instrumentalist' conception of science which sees nature as an object for purely human purposes.[2] However, despite the fact that such a conception of science culminated and has been fully developed only in modern times, and hence is essentially a modern phenomenon, it is the result of a much broader intellectual tradition which started long before modern times. Thus John Gray claims that the self-refuting and self-undermining character of the Enlightenment, its humanism, and especially modern science and technology, which have together resulted in the nihilism of contemporary culture, were the continuation of classical and medieval 'foundationalist universalism' and 'representationlist rationality'. That is why Gray can oppose Alasdair MacIntyre and his philosophical attempt to restore Aristotelianism. Gray believes that there is no such way to return to a pre-modern tradition of thought

> if only because the Enlightenment was itself an authentic development of a central Western tradition going back to Socrates, and indeed beyond, to the pre-Socratics, such as Parmenides and Heraclitus, in whose fragments the fundamental commitments of Greek logocentrism – which I understand as the conception in which human reason mirrors the structure of the world – are affirmed.[3]

The central claim of Gray's argument is not only that it is impossible to restore a pre-modern mode of philosophical thought. He also claims that inability to accept the disenchantment of the world, produced by the Enlightenment, whose self-undermining failure has led us to nihilism and the loss of a coherent world-view, will result in the rise of fundamentalism and violent attempts to overthrow modern liberal institutions. All we can do is to accept the disenchantment as an

inevitable fate of the post-modern West, learning to live with it without, however, being overtaken by its nihilism. In this sense John Gray's position within the context of contemporary political philosophy is somewhat unusual. He proclaims that we have to learn to live with the modern disenchantment of the world. Yet at the same time Gray believes that since liberalism and liberal institutions together with its policies are the continuation of the self-undermining project of Enlightenment, we have to accept that liberalism, precisely because its identity is closely linked to the Enlightenment and its progressive historical philosophy of human emancipation, as theory, institutional order, and way of life, has no universal validity and should not have any exceptional authority among the peoples of the world, hence has to be transformed as well. Such transformation of liberalism should result in the acceptance of radical pluralism. The latter would promote a peaceful coexistence of different cultures, thus getting rid of the remnant Enlightenment belief that liberalism and its way of life should be exported to the rest of the world. It would also prompt us to accept that those peoples or communities that do not want to have anything to do with the modern economic and political order should be freely allowed to do so.

Against this two objections may be raised. First of all, it is true that it is impossible to undo the modern disenchantment of the world. It is also indeed true that we cannot return to the pre-modern mode of philosophical thinking, nor is it desirable if such relapse is understood as a mere repetition of a once powerful pre-modern way of thinking as it was embodied, for example, in the Aristotelian thought of Thomas Aquinas. What is questionable, however, is his reading of Alasdair MacIntyre's philosophy as an attempt to return to such a pre-modern way of thinking. And this is so not only because neither MacIntyre himself nor his philosophy can be seen as advocating such an attempt to return to a pre-modern mode of philosophical thinking embodied within the wider ontological hierarchical order of the world. Yet what is at stake is far more than Gray's reading of MacIntyre's thought, because it touches a much deeper philosophical problem of hermeneutic thinking. The fact that it is impossible uncritically to return to a pre-modern way of philosophical thinking does not preclude us from a hermeneutic attempt, an attempt which is itself paradigmatically modern (or rather post-modern), to *redevelop* a tradition of philosophical thought going back to the pre-modern age *within* the contemporary situation of late-modernity. Indeed, my own discussion of an alternative hermeneutic approach to the political will be understood

precisely as such a 'futuristic' (i.e. open to the future) hermeneutic attempt to re-develop the Aristotelian conception of the political within the context of the contemporary world. Secondly, it is highly questionable whether the prevailing humanism of our post-Enlightenment culture enabled by modern science can be traced back and conceptually linked to pre-modern thought as it was embodied in Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and especially their medieval re-articulations by thinkers such as Albertus and Thomas Aquinas. It is equally questionable whether modern humanism is the further continuation of Socratic philosophy and then Christian theism. Furthermore, I doubt whether in order to go beyond the nihilism of contemporary humanist culture we need to renounce not only the Enlightenment but also Christianity and the entire European tradition. Such a reading of humanism is no doubt influenced by Heidegger's reading of the Western tradition of thought. In his post-*Being and Time* writings Heidegger argued that the entire tradition of Western philosophy has led to forgetfulness of *Dasein* and that the traditional Christian metaphysics was inherited by and transformed into modern science and technology. It is this extremely influential reading of Western metaphysics and modern science as that which, as Gianni Vattimo commenting on Heidegger has recently claimed, 'has brought the premises of Greek metaphysics to their logical conclusion',[4] which needs to be questioned. However, my task here will not be critically to engage with Heidegger and his interpretation of metaphysics and modern science, but rather to sketch an alternative philosophical narrative suggesting that traditional metaphysics and Christian theism have very little to do with modern conceptions of science and humanism.

On this account a truly humanist culture could start only in modernity and humanism should be understood through the paradigmatically modern notion of self-determination.[5] Many accounts of man's self-determination have been developed from the time of the Italian Renaissance. Probably one of the best known and most often cited is Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. What we find here is the formulation of an essentially modern idea of human freedom. In Pico's Platonic re-interpretation of the Biblical story of creation we read that God creates and places man in the middle of the world, where 'all things have been assigned to the highest, the middle, and the lowest orders', and tells him that:

> Neither a fixed abode nor a form that is thine alone nor any function peculiar have we given thee, Adam, to the end that accord-

> ing to thy longing and according to thy judgement thou mayest have and possess what abode, what form, and what function thou thy-self shalt desire. The nature of all other beings is limited and constrained within the bounds of laws prescribed by Us. Thou, constrained by no limits, in accordance with thine own free will, in whose hand We have placed thee, shalt ordain for thyself the limits of the nature. We have set thee at the world's centre that thou mayest from thence more easily observe whatever is in this world. We have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgement, to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine.[6]

What is important is that God places man in 'the middle' deliberately and that he, being neither of 'the lower' nor 'the higher' order, can at the same time become either if he wants to. Thus the free will to choose to be 'brutish' or 'divine' is not the consequence of man's sinful fall in the sight of God, as it is in, say, Augustine's philosophy when the notion of free will is linked to the original sin, but the deliberate act of God. Pico's language to emphasise the notion of free will then is strikingly modern: man, as opposed to 'all other beings' whose nature is 'limited and constrained within the bounds of laws', has no fixed in advance given nature but can determine himself according to his wishes and talents and hence become the nature he himself creates. And although, as Charles Taylor indicates, it is possible to find a similar conception of man as God's helper who is called to finish God's unfinished creation in the thought of some of the Church fathers, such as St Ambrose and Origen,[7] it nonetheless signifies and anticipates the revolt against the traditional conception of a cosmic order, the revolt which would later become so paradigmatic to modernity.

Another example of the notion of man's emancipation through a self-determining act can be found a century later in Descartes's philosophy. Whilst looking for the first principles of philosophy and the rules of scientific reasoning, Descartes in his *Discourse on Method* comes to the conclusion that nothing in the world (neither his body nor external reality nor even God) is certain, except the fact that he thinks. Thus he concludes that *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) is 'the first principle of philosophy I was seeking'.[8] It is not difficult to see

its novelty within the intellectual context of the early 17th century which, despite the confessional controversy and religious wars, was still shaped through Christian doctrine and traditional world-views. On Cartesian principles the thinking disengaged *ego* is the *only* certainty and therefore is antecedent to the omnipotent God and his creation. It is only through the postulation of the *ego*'s existence that Descartes is able to derive God and then external reality. What is important is not so much the formulation of inwardness which was apparent in and so important to Augustine. Augustine taught that finding the greatness and the infinite beauty of God was possible only through the inward reflection of one's soul, a lesson which arguably was much more important to Pascal than to Descartes. What interested Descartes was not the 'existentialist' inwardness *per se* but the establishment of the first principles from which one could construct the unshakable system of knowledge. It was believed that the latter would enable us to grasp the very laws of nature and the world. The novelty of Descartes, as Charles Taylor has argued, lies in the fact that the character of such knowledge is possible only if it is achieved through the act of disengagement from our 'ordinary and embodied way of experience' due to which the objectification of both our bodies, with their desires, and the external world could be achieved.[9] Thus Descartes's philosophy not only postulates the disengaged *ego* as the first certainty but also maintains that reality can be objectively approached only through a strictly defined objective method. What is significant is that such a conception of scientific enquiry prompted the gradual establishment of the mechanistic conception of the world. If for pre-modern thinkers, from Plato to Thomas Aquinas, rational reflection on the world was impossible without such teleological categories as that of a final end, in the thought of Descartes, Bacon and Hobbes the teleological conception of the universe becomes transformed into a mechanical conception. Furthermore, from a Platonic point of view the aim of philosophical reflection on the world was to arrive at the conception of the Good which was seen as being embodied in the general cosmic order of the world. Thus the aim of philosophical reflection was to discern the overall order of the universe which was also the order of the Good. It was precisely such an understanding of the world as a harmonious and perfective *Cosmos* that was gradually rejected by the mechanistic conception of the world of Descartes, Bacon, and Hobbes. The primary aim of the modern conception of science was not a mere reflection of the cosmic order and the Good embodied in it, but to achieve, as Francis Bacon claimed in his *New Atlantis*, 'the knowledge

of causes and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible'.[10] For Plato, Aristotle and Augustine philosophical reflection was directed towards the ability to understand the harmonious cosmic order. Reflection then was meaningful in itself precisely because the self engaged in such activity not only exercised intellectual powers essential to humans but also through such contemplation itself became more divine[11] – through discerning the cosmic order and the Good the contemplating self would become a part of that harmonious cosmic order.[12] That is one of the reasons why neither for Plato and Aristotle nor for Augustine and Thomas was philosophical knowledge directed towards *praxis*,[13] as in scientific knowledge after the epistemological shift in the modern age. Philosophical contemplation was 'useful' as long as its reflection of the harmonious cosmic order helped to situate the human self within the perfective universe and in doing so give meaning to the self's existence. The self was always part of the wider structure of cosmic order and the 'practical' importance of philosophical contemplation was to embody that cosmic order within the sphere of human life. Hence the human self was always subordinated to this order not *vice versa*. This was not the case within the epistemological paradigm of Descartes, Bacon, Hobbes and their 19th and 20th century successors. They saw the meaning of scientific enquiry in its practical usefulness as the ability to reshape the human environment and nature through an active *intervention* made possible by technological innovation and instrumental rationality in general. And it was possible due to the modern scientific innovation to apply formal knowledge based on calculative/mathematical methods to the world conceived as matter without any qualitative differences.[14] Thus the Cartesian disengagement from the world through the act of the self-determining thinking *ego* not only symbolises the modern shift from the classical and medieval conception of the world as hierarchical cosmic order. It also contributes to the renouncing of this order, the order which was gradually changed into a mechanistic conception of the world.

This revolt against the traditional cosmic order through the gradual establishment of a mechanistic, anti-teleological conception of the world is clearly associated with the modern notion of self-determination. The emancipation of the individual goes hand in hand with the paradigmatically modern conception of science and technology as the instruments to reshape the world in accordance with human wishes and desires. But if this is so, then the truly humanist culture – the culture where everything is subordinated to the fulfilment of human freedom

and desires – could have started only in modernity and only due to the gradual decline of the traditional teleological cosmic order. Thus if this interpretation is correct, then John Gray is wrong in his claim that 'the pre-modern Western view of the world' was 'inherently supportive of human values',[15] by which he means that human values were projected onto the world. And this is so because it was not human values which were projected onto the world thus determining the pre-modern *Weltanschauung*. Rather human values were deduced/ derived from the teleological cosmic order. Human beings were part of the wider cosmic ontological order and hence their values and rational standards were subordinated to that order. It is only after Descartes that 'the disposition of things' ceased to be 'the measure of rationality' and 'the ultimate criteria of rationality' ceased to conform to 'this order itself'.[16] It is only in modernity, which appears in its paradigmatic guise of the affirmation of human emancipation, that it becomes fully possible to project human values and desires on the world through scientific instrumental rationality, enabling the active intervention into and exploitation of nature. It is in this sense that we can claim that the modern notion of self-determination was the emancipation *from* and the revolt *against* the traditional teleological cosmic order. The emancipation of man and individual which, as Ernst Cassirer argued, started from and was so essential to the Renaissance,[17] became fully possible only due to the decline of the hierarchico-teleological order of the world. Accordingly, truly humanist culture could have happened neither in Ancient Greece nor in Medieval Europe without such a cosmological and epistemological shift. It was this shift which enabled humanity's liberation from the heavy cosmic order of being to which pre-modern man was subordinated. Hence the disenchantment of the world, for the first time so distinctively embodied in the Cartesian disengaged *ego*, was a necessary condition for the establishment of, and arrival at, the truly humanist culture in which we live today.

Liberalism and modernity

So far we have been discussing the nature of modern humanism suggesting that it is only in modernity, due to the development of modern science and instrumental rationality being closely linked to the modern notion of human freedom as self-determination, that a truly humanist culture has become possible. Thus understood 'humanism' is based not only on the idea, as Heidegger claimed, that 'man becomes the relational centre of that which is as such'.[18] It is also based on the belief

that all moral sources of human activity are within humanity itself (whether in autonomous reason or in human sentiments and desires). Man becomes the law-giver in the broadest sense: he is the self-determining being who can freely reshape not only his immediate natural environment but also freely choose and determine even his own nature. The ultimate horizon of such a culture is the expansion of humanism to the extent that nature itself – something which traditionally was beyond human control and was seen as lying under the providence of God – becomes humanised and tamed, first through modern sciences and later through such late-modern scientific technologies as genetic engineering and modification, reproductive cloning, and various surgical techniques of sex changing. The Fichtean distinction between nature and culture ceases to make sense in late-modernity precisely because nature shrinks to the extent that everything becomes culture. Today we have approached a new era in human history when our biology, our natural environment, and the biology of non-human species will be determined not by Nature or God, but by the fashions of our culture, ever more sophisticated scientific technologies, the economic relations of the free-market, and the flow of global capital. However, any picture of modern humanist culture will be radically impoverished without discussion of the development of the predominant political ideas and institutions of modernity. Here my primary concerns will be the following. Firstly, I shall attempt to show the conceptual continuity between the ideas of early modern or/and Enlightenment thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant and their late-modern successors such as John Rawls. Secondly, I shall note how understanding of the political from the late 16th century onwards has been primarily linked to the modern conception of the state. My interpretation of liberalism is thus in line with Alasdair MacIntyre's and John Gray's claim that liberalism is *the* political theory, ideology, and institutional practice/order of modernity and that it is in liberalism that the Enlightenment project is 'now most powerfully, and certainly most pervasively, embodied'.[19]

Since the beginning of the modern age in the 17th century the distinctive feature of political philosophy has lain not so much in the changing conception of the legitimacy of political authority (i.e. the legitimacy of political authority comes not from God, as was argued by the proponents of the divine right of kings, but is the result of people's consent through social contract)[20] as in the gradual consolidation of individualism. The theory of natural rights and the conception of social contract were widespread long before Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau.

However, what was different between the Hobbesian and Lockean, on the one hand, and, for example, the 16th century's theories of social contract, on the other, was that there still was a strong theological motive within the latter (i.e. social contract is first of all the pact between God and the political body together with the magistrate and then between people and the civic magistrate).[21] Furthermore and more importantly, the 16th century's contract theory (as it was embodied in Johannes Althusius's thought, for example) was 'corporativistic' in the sense that the main social contract was the result of a pact not between individuals *as such* but between different corporations and guilds, on the one hand, and the magistrate, on the other. Thus the idea that the main social contract could result from agreement between free and equal individuals as such was absent in pre-17th century political theory. It was precisely such individualism that became essential to the political theories of Hobbes, Locke, Kant, and even Rousseau. We can link such 17th century individualism with our above claim that the notion of self-determination is paradigmatic for modernity. That is to say, the moral/political equivalents to the self-determining disengaged *ego* of Cartesian epistemology are the Kantian autonomous self, being able to act according to self-determining autonomous reason, and Lockean free and equal individuals, who come together to establish political community in order to safeguard their 'natural' and equal rights. In all of these cases the emancipation of the modern individual is already in place. However, despite the significant differences between these theories, it is important to note their common premises. We shall see that contemporary liberalism largely accepts and continues them.

First of all, as is already clear from what was said above, one of the most fundamental features of these theories was, what may be called, the ontological primacy of the individual. Individuals from the very beginning and by 'nature' are free and equal and thus have ontological primacy over the political community.[22] Such ontological primacy of the individual was a characteristic feature not only of the theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Kant but also of Rousseau, despite the fact that neither Hobbes nor Rousseau can be seen as founders of classical liberalism.[23] At the heart of this notion is the distinctively modern idea that the main normative principles constituting the establishment of political community are the result of the rational consent of ontologically primary free and equal individuals. What is important is that such a conception of political community as derived from the ontological freedom of individuals is a fundamental premise not only in the theories of Hobbes, Locke and Kant but also of contemporary liberalism as it is embodied

in such thinkers as John Rawls, Robert Nozick and Ronald Dworkin.[24] All of these and other philosophers start to construct their moral and political theories precisely from this paradigmatically modern notion of the ontological primacy and freedom of the individual.

Secondly, 17th century contract theory lays the foundation for the development of, what can provisionally be called, the 'minimal' conception of the political community.[25] That is to say, if the state and/or political community are the result of autonomous individuals' rational consent, and if its primary aim is to secure peace and 'life, liberty, and estate' (as it is in Locke's case), then political community and the political are secondary with respect to individual (i.e. personal/subjective) conceptions of the good and the individual's attempts to realise them. The fundamental premise of such an approach is that individuals are self-sufficient in their pursuits and understanding of the good, and thus political community is important to the extent and in as much as individuals cannot solve by themselves the conflicts which are inevitable in their pursuit of happiness and in defence of their rights.

Thirdly, such 'minimal' conception of political community was partly related to the gradual decline of the teleological mode of thinking, which from the 17th century has been gradually excluded from moral and political contexts as well as from the wider philosophical/scientific tradition.[26] The scientific and philosophical achievements of Newton, Bacon, Pascal and Descartes, as already noted above, contributed to the establishment of a mechanistic conception of the world which not only gradually detached itself from theology. It also adopted the view that only through objective mathematical methods was it possible to describe the mechanical laws of the world. Previously essential concepts of end/purpose and meaning were gradually excluded from the modern epistemological paradigm. A political reason for this shift relates to the radical divide of Christendom. The 16th century's religious wars encouraged detachment from the at that time still dominant Christian world view which, despite differences between Aristotelian realism and Ockhamist nominalism, was formed through scholastic teleology. This division and religious warfare posed not only the fundamental political question of how to restore civil order and peace within the highly divided European societies. It also rendered pressing the related theological question of how the Christian faith is possible once the inevitable fact that there are different readings of the Bible and different communities of worship is accepted. An influential answer to the latter question was provided by John Locke in his *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. The only way to preserve and foster the

Christian faith, so Locke argued, is to accept that the competence of the civil magistrate is strictly separated from religious matters and that there is no way that the magistrate (or any other external authority), using its legitimate means of 'fire and the sword', can foster the 'true religion', for the 'controversy of these churches about the truth of their doctrines, and the purity of their worship, is on both sides equal'. Accordingly the best any civil government can do is to be neutral towards these 'free and voluntary societies'.[27] Such an approach was closely linked to and provided the conceptual resources for engaging with the problem of civil disorder. That is to say, the way to restore political order and peace is through accepting the idea that the state has to limit itself to securing order and preserving 'life, liberty, and estate' only. In this sense Locke's political philosophy anticipates modern liberalism in a twofold way. First of all, the civil government has to be neutral towards competing voluntary communities of faith not only because its coercive means are essentially foreign to religion and its practices. It is also because there is no, and cannot be any, external arbiter who could objectively judge as to which doctrine approximates more closely to the truth. Secondly, the competence of the political authority has to derive from and be limited by free and equal individuals' consent and should see its role only in securing civil order and peace.

It is here that the conceptual link between classical and contemporary liberalism, as arguably most famously embodied in John Rawls's thought, can be seen. It is possible to characterize John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* and *Political Liberalism* as an attempt to rearticulate and continue classical contract theory within the contemporary context of a multicultural society.[28] One of the fundamental questions which Rawls seeks to answer is how justice is possible within a society in which there is a variety of different and often incompatible conceptions of the good and where the conflict between different moral, religious, and philosophical doctrines is an ineliminable feature of the contemporary world.[29] The answer that he provides is his theory of justice. Fundamental to this theory is the famous notion of the 'original position', which he links to the pre-civic state of the classical contract theory. This is so not in the sense that the social contract that follows from it institutes a concrete civil society; rather, it is the hypothetical condition from which the fundamental principles of justice can derive. The essential feature of the original position is that all its individuals, who hypothetically come to deliberate and establish the fundamental principles of justice, should suspend their knowledge not

only about their conceptions of the good (which Rawls later called 'comprehensive doctrines'), but also their moral and psychological inclinations, talents, wealth, and status in society. This necessary condition of the original position – the veil of ignorance – is needed in order to guarantee that each individual will be impartial and fair. This, according to Rawls, will enable everyone to agree on the fundamental principles of justice. If this condition is fulfilled, then the principles of justice derived from the original position will be approved by all rational individuals. Having established this, Rawls gives an account of what these principles are. The first is the principle of equal liberty, according to which each individual should have 'the most extensive basic liberty compatible with the similar liberty of the others'. The second is the principle of difference according to which social and economic differences should be so arranged that they would benefit the worst off and that the positions of social and economic importance would be open to all.[30]

Such a conception of justice as fairness, which Rawls sees as essential to liberal democratic institutions providing their citizens with 'universal rights', requires neutrality towards different conceptions of the good. Thus, in a similar manner to Locke, it implies that the space of the political, in as much as it is linked to the formulation and embodiment of fundamental normative principles, should be separated from deliberation as to which of these different conceptions of the good are true or better. Rawls is explicit about this when he says that political liberalism is not concerned with whether the moral judgments, which derive from these conceptions, are true or not.[31] This in principle Lockean idea – that substantial dialectical deliberation about the validity of different conceptions of the good should be separated from the political authority – again presupposes that the space of the political is 'minimal'. That is to say, the sphere of aims and meaning is left to the individuals themselves, while the political domain should remain impartial towards the varying aims and individual conceptions of the good life.

Rawls himself provides a historical narrative within which he situates his conceptions of justice and political liberalism.[32] He rightly claims that since the Reformation division and irreconcilable conflict have become part of European culture, maintaining that acceptance of reasonable pluralism is inevitable. It is also true that the nature of modern pluralism is closely linked to religious pluralism which has a specific transcendental element making compromise particularly difficult.[33] Furthermore, it is equally true that the nature of Christianity, as the

religion of salvation requiring a special allegiance of individuals, was different from the conception of classical Greek culture. In Ancient Greece religion was a civic religion and philosophy, being neither its foe nor friend, focused on the ideal of the highest good. That is why, according to Rawls, the nature of modern Western culture and politics is that of conflict and thus political philosophy has to start from its acceptance. It is within this context that Rawls develops his political liberalism as a conception which accepts the irreducible plurality of reasonable comprehensive doctrines, rightly implying that it is impossible to have a conception of the political for the whole multicultural society based on a substantive conception of the highest good.

Now what I would like to question in response to such conception of the political is twofold. Firstly, what is the relationship between the 'minimal' conception of the political, on the one hand, and a civil ethos and notion of active citizenry which are essential to any polity, even if it is a liberal polity? Furthermore, what is the relationship between politics thus understood and culture, the relationship which was so important to Nietzsche and those influenced by him? For if we agree that to be a committed citizen and a patriot of one's *polis*, i.e. to have a civic ethos similar to that of the citizens of, for example, 5th century BC Athens or *quatrocentto* Florence, the civic virtues which, following Aristotle, are always moral virtues as well, are essential, then we have to admit that the predominant liberal conception of the political, if the above interpretation is correct, does not have and cannot have moral and conceptual resources to foster such a civic ethos, something which was so essential to the classical conception of the political from Socrates to the civic humanism of the Italian Renaissance. And this is so not only because there is no and cannot be an at least partly unified culture and a vision, no matter how loose, of the common good. It is also because the political is deliberately separated from the substantial moral judgments about the sphere of aims and meaning.[34] It is in response to this set of problems that our attempt to develop an alternative Nietzschean genealogical critique of the predominant conception of the political will be set.

A second set of problems is related to the prevailing understanding of the political as exclusively linked to the modern conception of the state. Quentin Skinner has argued that since the late 16th century a concept of the state has been formed which has become the main object of European political thought.[35] Its pre-history started when Aristotle's *Politics* was translated into Latin in the 13th century, gradually prompting theorists to see philosophical enquiry into the issues

of government as an independent political science. One of the lessons of Aristotle's *Politics* was the notion of political community as the highest form of community. What is significant is the notion of the *sovereign* state. This development was a far from straightforward historical process through which the initially Aristotelian conception of the political (as the *highest* community) was transformed and linked to the modern idea of sovereignty. In the Middle Ages the notion of the state, as we have it today, was absent. There were several institutions – the Holy Roman Empire, the Church, semi-independent Italian city-states – which had law making power and therefore could all be seen as embodying the political. Thus what was missing was a conception of unified sovereign political authority which would be seen as the highest and the only source of law-making power within a strictly defined territory. Fun-damental to this formation was the diminishment of the Church's powers during the Reformation and the development of ideas about the ecclesia as *congregatio fidelium*. The latter was seen as having no share in secular authority to make laws. This led to the treating of the secular ruler as the sole possessor of political authority, hence laying the foundation for the distinctly modern conception of the state. The development of the modern conception of the state meant that to be considered as political philosophical enquiry had to be into the nature of the state and the principles of government.

Skinner's account of the idea of the modern state is clearly broadly correct. What, however, is important to stress is that such a conception of the political as exclusively linked to the notion of the modern state is essentially a *modern* phenomenon. Now my claim is that an attempt to go beyond the modern conception of the political, i.e. to go beyond liberalism as the political theory and practice of modernity, one has to question the assumption that the only locus of the political is the liberal modern nation-state. In this respect both alternative approaches to the political – genealogy and hermeneutics – developed in this book represent attempts to think the political beyond this strictly modern assumption that the only locus of the political is the modern state.

Utilitarianism: redemption of deontological liberalism?

A possible objection needs to be addressed here. A critic might claim that my interpretation of the modern conception of the political is rather restrictive. To present modern politics only in terms of liberal contract theory is to exclude at least one very influential tradition of

thought, namely utilitarianism. Were not Jeremy Bentham and, especially, John Stuart Mill trying to develop an alternative, teleological conception of the political? Is not their approach radically different from modern liberal theory based on universal rights? Thus a utilitarian liberal would object that all the problems that I listed are only problems of a certain type of liberalism, namely deontological liberalism. Hence moral or cultural liberalism, as it was developed, for example, in Mill's thought, is able to address these issues. Therefore the answer is not to aim at transcending liberalism as such, so an utilitarian critic would argue, but *only* to reject deontological liberalism.

My response to this is the following. Neither utilitarianism can pose a serious challenge to liberal contract theory nor can it be seen as its redemption. Political liberalism, as distinct from more substantive moral liberalism as represented by John Stuart Mill, looked at it sociologically, incorporates and is perfectly compatible with political liberalism based on neutrality. Furthermore, and more importantly, utilitarianism, despite the Millian distinction between the lower and higher pleasures, is unable to provide us with means politically to deliberate about the good and the best in the way an Aristotelian teleology can.

J. S. Mill's attitudes towards democracy are important here. In his *Considerations on Representative Government*, as well as in his *Utilitarianism* and elsewhere, Mill attempts to balance between two different and often opposing goals. On the one hand, he sought to extend democratic representation as wide as possible (e.g. his lifelong campaign for women's political rights). It is well known that throughout his life Mill showed sincere commitment to general democratization of the British political system. In *Representative Government* Mill states:

> There is no difficulty in showing that the ideally best form of government is that in which the sovereignty, or supreme controlling power in the last resort, is vested in the entire aggregate of the community; every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty, but being, at least occasionally, called on to take an actual part in the government, by the personal discharge of some public function, local or general.[36]

On the other hand, he also wanted to make sure that there were 'checks and balances' in place in order to control the growing political influence of possibly ignorant majority and its rule. Mill believed that it is important to arrange political institutions in such a way that they may promote freedom and individuality of character and, if needed,

serve as 'a perpetual and standing Opposition to the will of majority'.[37] Hence his proposal to have a body of intellectuals and experts, a so called 'Commission of Legislation', which would be responsible for drafting the laws. Furthermore, he believed in the controversial idea of plural voting designed to give more votes to well educated individuals.[38] What is important is that Mill, in promoting these meritocratic political principles, adopts a utilitarian argument. That is, we need to have a critical proportion of enlightened and influential individuals in order to live respectful, cultured and good lives. In *On Liberty* Mill attempts to show that one of, if not *the*, essential conditions of the general well being of any civilized society is individual liberty. Thus in postulating the famous harm principle – power over others can be rightfully justified only if it prevents harm to others – Mill enriches Bentham's and his father's utilitarianism with the liberal principle of individual autonomy. But it is not only utilitarianism that gains from Mill's philosophical rigour and his virtuous character. It is also liberalism which, since its very dawn with John Locke, was always more a political than moral phenomenon. Mill's contribution to the development of liberalism is important precisely in that the liberalism of *On Liberty* becomes not only a political theory but also substantive moral one. With Mill liberalism becomes morality.

My aim here is not to discuss, as it has been done a number of times, the inconsistencies of Mill's argument, even though they are important.[39] Instead, I would like to focus on a distinction between two types of liberalism, namely cultural/moral *vs*. political liberalism.[40] In so doing I hope to show that Millian-utilitarian liberalism faces similar problems to those of deontological liberalism. To put it simply, moral liberalism can be described as that type of liberalism which acknowledges its own cultural bias and which is based on 'thicker' and far more substantive moral principles than neutrality. It presupposes a degree of common moral culture based on individualism. It believes that individual autonomy is the highest moral principle whose embeddedness in society and its culture is the essential condition of its healthy existence. Moral liberalism sees the principle of individual autonomy as the highest moral *good* and believes that its social realization produces and is possible only in liberal moral culture. The most famous proponents of this liberalism are J. S. Mill, Joseph Raz and to a certain extant Robert Nozick. Political liberalism, on the other hand, is different from moral liberalism not only in that it does not presuppose a strong need for common moral culture. Neither does it require that individuals believe in ethical individualism as a personal morality.

From this point of view, ethical individualism is one of many comprehensive moral beliefs and should not have any exceptional rights with respect to other similar moral beliefs. Political liberalism requires a *political* principle allowing us to mediate between these different and often incompatible moralities. Two paradigmatic philosophers of political liberalism are John Rawls, who claims that such a political principle is possible only if it is based on fairness *vis-à-vis* different conceptions of the good, and Ronald Dworkin, who argues for the principle of neutrality.[41] In *Political Liberalism*, for example, Rawls claims that his conception of liberalism is political not metaphysical or moral. Thus the philosophical problem as to which comprehensive moral doctrine is true, as was mentioned above, is not an issue for political liberalism. Rawls goes so far as to claim that even his own conception of political liberalism is important not because it is true, but because it is reasonable in the sense that it can accommodate a plurality of comprehensive moral doctrines.[42]

The reason it is important to stress this distinction is that a Millian critic of deontological liberalism can say that moral liberalism provides us with a substantive morality and in so doing closes the gap between morality and politics. This then solves the problem of the 'minimal' conception of political community and politics as secondary and artificial, something that both Lockean and Rawlsian liberalism presupposes. After all, Mill's principle of liberty and the way he defends it in *On Liberty*, is both moral and political. It is moral in as much as Mill believed that individual autonomy, exercised through the active pursuit of our ideals and moral desires, is essential to our well-being. In this sense we can say that Mill's belief that it is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied is utilitarian – living a satisfied pig's life one would not live well. It is also a political principle because it serves as a normative ideal which regulates, so Mill believed, the permissibility of the state's and society's interference with the lives of individuals. Thus, to put it in Isaiah Berlin's terms, the principle of harm combines both positive (moral) *and* negative (political) liberty, both commitment to strong morals *and* the classical liberal idea of *laissez-faire* in its widest sense. But maybe it doesn't.

I have argued elsewhere that although it is possible to distinguish between moral and political liberalism in this way, looking at it historically and sociologically, the difference between Lockean and Millian liberalism is of minor significance.[43] Rather, what is significant is the historical transformation of our moral culture and how it is linked to the development of liberalism. Therefore the question we need to pose

is: What is the relationship between the gradual consolidation of liberalism, the decline of moral sources and the advent of secular consumer culture? Behind Locke's politically liberal conception of 'minimal' political authority there were unshakable moral Christian principles. Mill's faith in ethical individualism and moral progress was probably still sustainable in the 19th century European culture where a clear sense of right and wrong was present. This, however, is much less plausibly the case today. We are not so optimistic as naively to believe that individualism and individual freedom as such will bring moral progress. The criticism of this flaw in Mill's argument is well known. Isaiah Berlin, for example, argued that individualism and the commitment to moral ennoblement is more likely to be produced in disciplinary than in liberal and tolerant societies.[44] Thus Mill's attempt to link individualism to the belief in moral progress and commitment to moral nobility is rather questionable today. His optimism that true individualism will encourage moral education of its citizens is simply unfounded. Furthermore, we know now that there is no direct link between commitment to individualism and our moral ability to prefer higher to lower pleasures. Those who have tried to teach Mill's 'elitism' to contemporary students will know how difficult it is to explain what Mill had in mind with his 'higher pleasures' when he wrote that:

> If one of the two is, by those who are completely acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity as it render it, in comparison, of small amount.[45]

What is hard to understand today is not so much the claim that there are qualitative differences in pleasures, but Mill's optimism that a higher pleasure, far outweighing quantity of any other lower pleasure, will always be directly linked to our higher (moral) faculties. This naïve optimism appears to be completely arbitrary within our secular consumer culture. Why do we have to assume that people, who have experience in both types of pleasures, will necessarily qualify Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* rather than a sophisticated computer game of killing Nazis as a higher pleasure?

Liberal individualism arose out of a Christian *ethos*. The 19th century Europe and its culture of *Bildung* could still provide the background against which a commitment to individualism and passionate search for truth could foster people's moral ennoblement. This culture is now long gone. Ethical individualism, together with Mill's principle of liberty, can be expressed in different ways in today's emotivist moral culture.[46] It can be equally adopted to justify diverse cultural practices and ways of life – from practicing traditional religions to such extreme practices as S&M. It is in this sense that is plausible to say that moral liberalism amended with Millian utilitarianism does not fundamentally differ in *practice* from deontological liberalism. Both presuppose moral pluralism and neutrality between competing conceptions of the good, even though moral liberalism finds it difficult to accept such neutrality. Liberal *morality* is far too tolerant and not substantive enough to provide us with strong morals.

Why Marxism can not be an alternative to modernity and liberalism

It is not an exaggeration to say that the place where Marxism, both as theory and political practice, has truly died is in East Europe. The era of post-communism brought about radical changes in the Western part of the former Soviet empire. Countries such as Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia broke away from their communist past not only politically but also, and first of all, intellectually and culturally. In fact, the unambiguous political orientation towards the 'West' was possible only because these countries always saw themselves as belonging to common European culture, the culture from which they were cut off after the Second World War. The official Marxist ideology and the enforced dominance of dialectical materialism were hated and secretly rejected in the philosophy departments well before the 1989 revolution by the majority of honest East European intellectuals. The advent of *glasnost* and the post-communist era brought about cultural openness and intellectual diversity. The classical texts of the liberal tradition were translated, read, and debated. As a result, more than fifteen years on the most advanced countries of East Europe have successfully adopted liberal democracy and transformed themselves into capitalist societies. It is ironic that now these newly accepted countries form the most pro-capitalist and libertarian wing of the traditionally social-democratic European Union.

Studying philosophy and the social sciences in this intellectual milieu meant at least two things. First of all, it was to reject any form of modern collectivism and étatism. Both of them symbolized the totalitarian past and its traumas which were, and still are, deeply rooted in the personal histories of many East Europeans and their families. It also meant looking for alternatives to socialism by embracing the prevailing moral theories of the liberal West. No doubt the longing for the capitalist West was naïve and uncritical. However, faced with liberalism and consumer culture from inside (in my case, after moving to Britain), my disappointment fostered the search for a moral theory that would be critical of the instrumental rationality of liberal individualism and yet non-Marxist. Alasdair MacIntyre's Thomism provided me with such an alternative.

Kelvin Knight, discussing the failures of Marxism, noted that today '[w]hat remains of Eastern Marxism is merely conservative; what remains of Western Marxism merely academic'.[47] Leaving aside the objection that Marxism is no longer conservative in East Europe because it has ceased to exist, I will briefly discuss why Marxism, despite recent attempts to renew itself through thinkers such as Slavoj Žižek, can hardly be seen as a feasible alternative to liberal capitalism and modernity.

My immediate issue with Marxism is the following. If the above interpretation of modernity is plausible and if it should be linked to the gradual but ever increasing expansion of humanism, then Marxism is paradigmatically modern. And it is so not least because of its humanism. Despite the fact that there have been examples of non-humanist Marxism (e.g. Louis Althusser), it has always been informed by the Hegelian idea of alienation. Even in Marx's mature work, i.e. *Das Kapital*, which moves beyond the German philosophical tradition by claiming to be rigorous social science, there is the implicit idea of progressive history and the Hegelian notion of human freedom.[48] To put it crudely, history moves from one set of structural conflicts to another. According to Marx, it is inevitable that the internal contradictions of capitalism will finally lead to the proletarian revolution gradually resulting in establishing a just society based on brotherhood and equality.[49] In such a society human labour would be based on people's individual abilities and their needs; and thus human alienation would cease; needs and enjoyment would lose 'their egoistic nature'.[50] While Kautsky, the Mensheviks and Stalin believed that this process was objective and thus the proletarian revolution was its inevitable result, Lukács and the Western Marxists inspired by him rejected the objective

march of history. Nevertheless, all of them agreed that human history is a dialectical process which is intelligible only through the notion of human freedom as self-possession. In what are now known as the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Marx, commenting on positive aspects of the Hegelian dialectic, wrote:

> [I]t is the estranged insight into the *real objectification* of man, into the real appropriation of his objective essence through the annihilation of the *estranged* character of the objective world, through the annulment of the objective world in its estranged mode of being – just as atheism, being the annulment of God, is the advent of theoretic humanism, and communism, as the annulment of private property, is the justification of real human life as man's possession and thus the advent of practical humanism (or just as atheism is humanism mediated with itself through the annulment of religion, whilst communism is humanism mediated with itself through the annulment of private property).[51]

In this sense we can say that Marxism continues the philosophical project of Enlightenment. In relying on the notions of freedom, the idea of progress, technological improvement and mastery of nature it remains within the horizon of Enlightenment thought. It is not an accident that Soviet socialism, which embodied Leninist Marxism, has been interpreted by contemporary sociologists as an alternative project of modernity.[52] But these notions of humanism and freedom as self-possession need to be transcended if a truly alternative account of the political is to be formulated.

However, a more substantive problem with Marxism is its reliance on class identity and class struggle. Again, the theory of class struggle is essential to the entirety of Marxist thought, although in Marx's later writings (first of all in *Capital*) it ceases to be informed by Hegelian speculative philosophy. Early categories of alienation and emancipation, in which the theory of class struggle is expressed, transform into the socio-economic struggle between those who control capital and surplus-value and those who live off wage labour. The underlying presupposition of Marxist theory (whether traditional or contemporary) is that individual identity is and should be formed through class identity and that politics is and should be seen in terms of struggle between capitalists, on the one hand, and the proletariat, on the other. The theory asserts that class identity should not be misunderstood in terms of group identities (racial, homosexual, local, etc.), since the actual fact

of feeling of belonging to a particular social group or community is not essential. What is essential is the socioeconomic reality behind the different identities that individuals and their groups happen to have. There is a fundamental conflict between capital (means of production and profit) and labour, thus the process of capitalist production is contradictory and leads to its inevitable exhaustion. It is in relation to this contradictory process and the circulation of capital that the struggle between classes, so contemporary Marxists argue, should be understood. Hence, despite the fact that there have been considerable social changes (e.g. the weakening of the labour movement and a growth in general living standards) over the last thirty or so years, it is still possible to see social reality in terms of class struggle. In *Marx for Our Times* Daniel Bensaïd illustrates this by showing that, despite the expansion of the middle class (or, as he calls it, petty bourgeoisie), a tendency which was foreseen by Marx himself, two-thirds of the population in advanced modern societies live off wage labour and thus, following Marx's theory, fall under his description of the proletariat.[53] Therefore the social classes (first of all, the proletariat) are still objectively present within the socioeconomic structures of capitalism and thus the essential part of political struggle lies in recognising and being self-conscious about it.

The argument is not convincing for several reasons. This is not only because of the apparent fact that class struggle *has indeed* dramatically declined over the past thirty five years. Consumer societies, as will be argued later in this book, are no longer driven by strict class identities. Today individuals form their identities not by virtue of belonging to a social class, but through a growing desire to express their individuality through the variety of commodities they consume. In this cultural condition consumer capitalism, which, no doubt, creates a desire for self-expression, becomes indispensable precisely because it promises and *is* able to satisfy these desires. The sociocultural transformation of post-industrial societies is far greater than contemporary Marxists such as Bensaïd want to acknowledge. If, as he claims, the class structures are still real, how is the political struggle for the self-consciousness of the proletariat possible today? The objective fact that more than two thirds of the world's population are living off wage labour and thus formally form the proletariat can in no way unite people who have nothing in common. Even without any sociological analysis we can say that the so called proletariat is socially, culturally and economically so diverse that it is impossible even to imagine it having common interests. What is common between a British petty bourgeois with his

twenty thousand pounds wage and an impoverished wage-labourer in Russia? On the other hand, the exhaustion of the labour movement complicates the matter further. Without the latter the organised class struggle and revolutionary praxis become hardly possible. Bensaïd and Zizek very skillfully analyse the ills of commodity fetishism, globalisation and the cultural wasteland of comsumerism. However, what they lack is a convincing argument as to how the politics of class struggle is possible today. And to a certain extent both of them acknowledge this. Zizek, for example, thinks that despite all difficulties the utopian space for a global alternative should be kept indefinitly open. Similarly, Bensaïd is unsure how and even whether 'the universal logic of capital and commodity fetishism' will create conditions for a unified political struggle.[54] It is not surprising, and is indeed ironic, that today Marxism has become a mere academic discourse with almost no practical and political relevance. After nearly a hundred and fifty years Marxism has become what it always tried to transcend – a mere philosophy.

But it is not only that. Even if these Marxist theories are right and it is the case that the logic of capital will bring about the possibility of a Marxist revolution, we still need to ask further important questions. Do we really want this type of praxis to happen? Who is the agency that will advance such a revolutionary praxis? What would its ethical and political consequences be? It is very rare that revolutions happen in an entirely peaceful manner. The 1989 Velvet Revolution in Europe was an exception. It overturned the socialist order of Soviet Marxism by peaceful means. It is instructive that all of the main Marxist revolutions so far have turned out to be extremely violent and bloody (Bolshevik in 1917, North Korea in 1945, China in 1949, Vietnam 1954, Cuba in 1959). And although Zizek has argued that there was a fundamental difference between the 'authentic' Leninist revolution, which did not rely on the deterministic conception of history, and the Stalinist totalitarian regime based on the 'objective' laws of history, his Lukacsean suggestion of seizing the right moment in order to repeat the Revolutionary event does not become any more appealing. Is it not the case that no matter how 'authentic' a Marxist revolutionary theory is, in practice it will always end up in bloody dictatorship?

In 'The grand dichotomy of the twentieth century' Steven Luke argued that the left today cannot have an overriding, coherent political ideology and political theory which would serve as the reference point for an alternative political movement or party[55]. The left is fragmented partly because of the nature of today's politics. Contemporary politics

has become increasingly dominated by social movements: Green, feminist, animal rights, etc. The fundamental question posed at the end of Luke's paper, however, is left unanswered: Can socialism 'still be used to mean a feasible and viable socio-economic system that is an alternative to capitalism and has a prospect of replacing it?' My own answer is 'No'. An uncompromising socialism, as a *global* alternative to liberal capitalism, is gone for good. And this is so not least because the idea of *global* civilization, a remnant of Enlightenment thinking, is simply impossible. The world has lost its coherence and overriding meaning; it is irreversibly fragmented, and trying to mend this fragmentation will only bring further frustration.

It is precisely in this context that the notion of post-modernity becomes useful. In this book 'post-modernity' will be simply understood as *after* modernity, where 'after' is first of all conceptual and only then temporal. The temporal aspect is secondary because what is important is our ability to *think* and *imagine* the world beyond modernity. Such a conception of post-modernity, however, will not mean, as is often the case with post-modern theorizing, the affirmation of fragmentation and the loss of meaning. In this sense post-modernity is similar to Albert Camus's traumatic affirmation of the absurd. According to Camus, the absurd lies not in the fact that the world is absurd. Rather, it lies in the discrepancy between our rational attempt to explain the world and its very impossibility, between 'our wild longing for clarity' and the understanding that, by means of our rationality alone, we cannot comprehend the meaning of the world.[56] Similarly, post-modernity signifies to our understanding that fragmentation and the loss of coherence is irreversible and yet the longing for coherence is still present. The central contention of this book is that today this longing can only be *local*. That is, within a particular intellectual and moral tradition.

Introduction to the argument: genealogy *versus* hermeneutics

The key to my interpretation of genealogy and hermeneutics, as they will be understood through the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault, on the one hand, and Hans-Georg Gadamer and Alasdair MacIntyre, on the other, is the conceptual distinction between power and meaning. The linguistic turn in philosophy highlights the importance of language and meaning. Both of these philosophical approaches are concerned with the linguistic nature of philosophy and both of

them, as contrasted with the Enlightenment project, acknowledge the essentially historical character of philosophical enquiry. Furthermore, both genealogy and hermeneutics, in their attempts to go beyond modern humanism, will be presented as opposed to the Enlightenment project and modernity in general. However, the difference between them rests in their understanding of 'power' and 'meaning'. What this means is not simply that genealogy is philosophy of power while hermeneutics is philosophy of meaning. After all both of them are interpretative philosophies dealing with different meanings of different texts. In this sense both genealogy and hermeneutics are 'linguistic' philosophies. Both of them agree that understanding reality is possible only through language. Rather the question is that of priority. It will be argued that for hermeneutics meaning has priority over power, while in the case of genealogy *vice versa* is true. The aim of genealogical interpretation is not primarily to arrive at a new meaning but to increase the will to power.

This ontological interpretation of genealogy (Nietzsche and Foucault) and of hermeneutics (Gadamer and MacIntyre) will be developed in my search for an alternative post-modern conception of the political. In pursuing it I shall interpret them as two responses to the predominant modern conception of the political as exclusively linked to the institution of the modern-nation state and conceptualised in terms of liberalism. They are two responses to modernity and liberalism in as much as liberalism is understood as the political embodiment (both in practice and theory) of the modern humanist project of self-determination.

The notion of self-determination is realised in liberalism and its politically embodied ideas of individual autonomy, the notion of limited government, the 'minimal' conception of political community, and the ontological primacy of individuals. What is important is that, thus understood, self-determination is closely linked to and dependent on the expansion of power; it is realised only through the removal of all possible ontological limits. Man becomes the centre of the universe through his ability constantly to reshape the world and himself according to his desires. Modernity then opens as the cultural horizon in which the constant move towards new advancement, towards further progress and rationalisation, towards higher level of efficiency, and thus towards more power is essential. However, the fundamental feature of modernity (in as much as it is linked to and is the heir of the Enlightenment project), rests in its belief in progress and humanism. Beyond modernity's obsession with power to reshape the world and human nature itself, there is a paradigmatic belief that the change is

for the better. It is the belief if not in the moral progress of universal humanity then that secular history will lead to the creation of a better universe, a world where suffering will eventually be overcome. Thus the modern myth of progress, of constant improvement of the human condition through technological mastery, is the legitimisation of modernity's obsession with power. Liberalism is part of this myth. It is based on belief in man's emancipation, individual autonomy, and self-possession. Its response to modernity's obsession with power is two-fold. On the one hand, it seeks to limit the individuals' desire for power through postulation of everyone's equal liberty (i.e. everyone is allowed to do as he/she pleases unless it infringes others' liberty). On the other hand, through the postulation of the autonomous individual and the endorsement of the institution of the free-market, it claims that power should be exercised for and in the name of humanity. Thus there is a constant striving for power through the increasing desire to control the world and the human environment, but at the same time a sentimental ideal of humanity and human happiness, happiness achieved through meaningless consumption. Liberalism, inheriting the Enlightenment's myth of humanism but unable to sustain moral resources to distinguish between the noble and the base, is predestined to endorse the culture of kitsch with its sentimental ideals of rosy existence without pain and suffering, love without giving, and adventure without tragedy.

It is within this context that Nietzsche's genealogy becomes important. Nietzsche's thought for the first time radically breaks from modern humanism in his readiness to admit that beyond modernity's obsession with power there is nothing but the inverted will to power. The Enlightenment belief in universal reason and truth is just a pretence to mask the will to power – the mastery over the world in the name of sentimental love for humanity. Appearing as one of the first radical critics of modernity and its political culture, Nietzsche rejects the Enlightenment's humanism and nearly everything that is paradigmatic for modernity: the linear and progressive conception of history, the notion of objective truth, disengaged universal reason, universal morality and justice, and the metaphysical conception of the free will/subject. It is in this context that the Nietzschean genealogy, as *la gaya scienza* to deconstruct the nihilism of the Western humanism, will be interpreted as a post-modern intellectual-aesthetic tool enabling us to form our lives according to the standards of good taste. Such an initially Nietzschean conception will be linked to Foucault's notion of genealogy and his deliberate attempt to conceptualise discourse and

power together. My own attempt to utilise genealogy in the analysis of contemporary forms of kitsch will be discussed precisely within this conceptual background. However, it will be argued that despite the fact that the genealogy of kitsch can be utilised in criticising contemporary liberal political institutions from a distinctly post-modern point of view (i.e. without adopting a form of modern humanism as it is embodied in such theoretical paradigms as Marxism, including Critical Theory), it is unable to provide an alternative substantive conception of the political. In claiming that the fundamental political issue becomes the discursive production of our subjectivity, Foucault's post-modern conception of the micro-politics of resistance locates the political within the subject. What such a conception of the political lacks is a substantive conception of (political) community without which any conception of the political will be incomplete.

My discussion of hermeneutics will start with an attempt to redefine a conception of hermeneutics *vis-à-vis* Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogies. Against Paul Ricoeur's twofold conception of hermeneutics (i.e. hermeneutics of faith *vs*. hermeneutics of suspicion), which sees Nietzsche's interpretative philosophy as the hermeneutics of suspicion, I shall argue that hermeneutics necessarily presupposes an affirmative relation to tradition. Following Gadamer's conception of hermeneutics I shall argue that MacIntyre's conception of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry can be understood as a valuable contribution to hermeneutics and towards its new philosophical definition. If hermeneutics necessarily presupposes a proximity to tradition, and if it draws on the moral and intellectual resources of tradition, then provided that there are different traditions of rational enquiry, there can be as many different hermeneutics as there are different traditions. Thus understood, hermeneutics is an interpretative attempt to provide a philosophical as well as historical narrative that would enable one to situate one's own philosophical enquiry in relation to those past philosophical accounts and thinkers that one considers authoritative and significant. It is precisely the ability to provide philosophical narrative continuity between the past and the present that constitutes tradition as an open ended moral and intellectual phenomenon. Such an understanding of hermeneutics as constituted by and constituting tradition will allow us to confront the Enlightenment's conception of universal rationality, enabling us to see contemporary cultural reality in terms of conflicts between different traditions and different hermeneutics. This meta-theoretical discussion will enable us to situate our attempt to construct an alternative conception of the political within the Aristo-

telian tradition. I shall argue that an Aristotelian conception of political community, a community which has an ontological primacy over the individual, can be located within the Christian *Ekklesia*, a political community which shapes its life through an alternative post-humanist narrative.

2
A Genealogical Approach to the Political

> "Has existence meaning?" is, according to Nietzsche, the highest question of philosophy.... Strictly speaking it means "what is justice?" and Nietzsche can say without exaggeration that the whole of his work is an effort to understand this properly.
>
> Gilles Deleuze (*Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 18)

> What we need, however, is a political philosophy that isn't erected around the problem of sovereignty or, therefore, around the problems of law and prohibition. We need to cut off the king's head. In political theory that has still to be done.
>
> Michel Foucault (*Power*, p. 122)

Nietzsche's genealogy

The first quotation of itself indicates a radical break with the way contemporary liberalism understands justice and politics. To refer the problem of justice to the question of the meaning of existence can hardly be the enterprise of a contemporary liberal. In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls deliberately avoids questions such as 'What is the meaning of existence?' because they are considered to be questions concerning values. Following Rawls, values are always within a particular conception of the good and thus cannot be the ground for justice since justice, as we have seen, requires fairness and impartiality between different conceptions of the good. It requires us to look at the social world through the veil of ignorance and presupposes the conception of the neutral state and deontological liberal politics.

Values for Nietzsche are the main concern of philosophy. The examination of values leads to the question 'What is the meaning of existence?' For Nietzsche it is hardly possible to ask, 'What is to be just?' without asking, 'What is the meaning of our life?' These questions are interconnected. The problem of justice derives from the question of meaning. It is important therefore to consider how Nietzsche approaches this question.

At this point one qualification is needed. My aim here is not to provide an in depth analysis of the entirety of Nietzsche's philosophy. This would hardly be possible within the limits of this book. Rather, it will be to sketch a conceptual background against which a genealogical conception of the political can be developed. I shall argue that Nietzschean genealogy should be read ontologically and that a specific genealogical account of the political can only be developed in the light of such a reading. In brief, an ontological reading requires us to ask what type of being the epistemological project of genealogy presupposes. It also calls us to think the ontological premises behind Foucaultian theorising. My initial claim is that the way Foucault thinks the political can illuminatingly be read via Nietzsche's genealogy.

Nietzsche's answer to the question 'What is the meaning of existence?' is that there is no answer. That is to say, there is no meaning. Thus Nietzsche, as his commentators have argued, is the first complete nihilist.[1] However, Nietzsche's nihilism – the answer that there is no true answer – is far from being a negative and reactive one. On the contrary, it is active and affirmative. Furthermore, to say that Nietzsche does not provide any answer could be challenged. In the prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Zarathustra, speaking for Nietzsche, distinctly says that the meaning of human being is the overman. Hence the ambivalence and contradiction: there is no meaning of (human) being and thus it is *Übermensch*. How should we understand this? This ambivalence is a major Nietzschean motif; a motif perfectly captured in the Prologue of sections six, seven and eight. Zarathustra, after a tiring day of preaching, sees an uncanny sign. The cautious tightrope walker falls down while he is sprung *over* by an ironic buffoon. The tightrope walker, who symbolises the last man, falls and dies next to Zarathustra. While carrying the burden of the corpse out of town Zarathustra hears the ironic words of the buffoon: 'Leave the town, Zarathustra, nobody understands your preaching. Leave or otherwise I'll jump over you too – a living man over a dead'. This, I believe, brings us to the very centre of Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch*. That is, the man who overcomes the last man denies Zarathustra's teaching of the overman.

Zarathustra's later transformation confirms this. After the night spent in the woods Zarathustra wakes up with a new understanding that his task is not to be a shepherd preaching to a crowd the message of the overman. Thus it is more than plausible to say that Nietzsche's philosophy about the *Übermensch* and the eternal return is not another teaching or another attempt to bring about a new system of values either. To this he says:

> The last thing I should promise to accomplish would be to 'improve' mankind. I set up no new idols...[2]

The message of the overman then is not an answer nor is it a new meaning. In so far as Zarathustra is preaching he has to be overcome. The overman is the ironic buffoon who jumps over the too profound, too cautious, but too slow tightrope walker. The overman is one who cares neither about the burden of the death of the last man, nor wants to create a new, 'better', or 'higher' meaning. He finds strength not in meaning but in life itself, even if it is cruel, unjust, and meaningless.

The notion of void – the void of meaning – is then something quite crucial in Nietzsche's thought. It is possible, however, to speak about the void of meaning in Nietzsche only if 'meaning' is understood as a kind of life subordinating principle. Life is meaningful only because of certain beliefs or ideas that accordingly subordinate it. The meaning of life then is something higher than life: only meaning justifies life. In this respect Albert Camus, influenced by Nietzsche, argued that if a belief in certain ideas provides meaning for our life and hence becomes the main reason to live, it can equally be the reason for death once it is realised that these ideas are wrong.[3] This remark is Nietzschean because it captures Nietzsche's distinction between meaning and life. Furthermore, it is significant in another sense as well. It presupposes the belief that meaning is something stable. And this is what we discover in Nietzsche: the opposition between meaning and life is possible only if meaning is seen as having a stable identity. Thus Nietzsche is a nihilist in as much as he radically criticises the entire tradition of Western metaphysics because it judges the world and life in the name of a higher and stable meaning, meaning first of all as a moral phenomenon. It is important to emphasis this Nietzschean notion of the void of meaning as its constant discontinuity is important for it will allow us to distinguish between Nietzschean genealogy, on the one hand, and Gadamer's hermeneutics, on the other. Even though we shall return to this later, it is worth noting here that genealogy as the origi-

nal Nietzschean philosophical approach will be understood precisely in terms of the void and discontinuity of meaning. That is, if hermeneutics is to be understood as an attempt to preserve and continue already existing structures of meaning, genealogy's concern, so I will argue, is not the continuity of meaning, but its break and rupture in order that the energies of power can be freed.

The content of Nietzsche's nihilism – the radical break with meaning ('we have deprived reality of its values, its meaning, and its truth'[4] and 'now that the shabby origin of these values is becoming clear, the universe seems to have lost values, seems 'meaningless'[5]) – can be summed in his famous words 'God is dead'. This claim is far from being only an atheistic announcement. In fact, the main import of 'God is dead' lies not in its atheistic meaning. The difference, say, between Feuerbachian atheism and Nietzsche's '*Gott ist tod*' is fundamental. Nietzsche's aim was not just to deny religion, showing that it was man who created all gods. If this was his aim Nietzsche's thought would not have been so important, since atheism has long been an intrinsic part of the Christian West. On the contrary, 'God is dead' represents the point at which this tradition has reached its inevitable end. And it reached the end because God *has died*. Furthermore, we should not be misled in understanding 'God' only in terms of theism. 'God' here represents a whole range of concepts, which have been dominant throughout the history of Western thought. 'God' involves not just a divine being but also metaphysical concepts such as 'truth', 'justice', 'the good', 'reality', 'essence', etc. As Gianni Vattimo notes 'for Nietzsche "God is dead" means nothing else than the fact that there is no ultimate foundation'.[6] Hence Nietzsche's thought is much more profound and ambitious – it aims to situate the tradition of Western thought as a whole. And this in part is what Nietzsche's genealogy is about – to understand what *we are* through critical engagement with the history of Western thought, morality and culture. One of the aims of his genealogy is to show that nihilism is the result of our metaphysical faith in reason and its attempt to see the universe in categories such as 'aim', 'unity' and 'truth'.[7]

Nietzsche's genealogy is closely linked with his conception of the will to power.[8] The will to power, however, has little to do with the irrationality of arbitrary and abusive power. Gilles Deleuze argued that it should be distinguished from the desire for domination over other people. To interpret it this way would be to miss the real import of the will to power, because it would remain trapped within the understanding of power as involving recognition.[9] Power then would be

experienced only through others. That is, only the obedience of others would demonstrate my power. This, however, is not what Nietzsche had in mind – the will to power is not the craving for power as an object. Indeed, this is the vanity of the weak – slaves – who want to be recognised as superior.[10] Such understanding of the will to power would lose its critical character, because 'only values which are already current, only accepted values, give criteria of recognition', hence power, money, honour, reputation, i.e. anything that already exists, would be taken for granted.[11] Instead Nietzsche teaches us about self-creation and the necessity to invent new values, which would be impossible without a critical stance towards existing values.

The will to power is thus a maximally abstract principle. It has no identity. It is a will which wills itself,[12] thus objects, values, forces or symbols, i.e. anything through which the will to power exercises itself, are derivative and cannot be seen as the source of its identity. In other words, although the will to power can exercise itself only through willing *something*, this something cannot be its *telos* as that which constitutes and defines the will to power itself. The Nietzschean will to power therefore has no affinity to teleology, which always presupposes that there is something higher than or beyond the will to power itself. It is in this sense that we could suggest that the will to power is a pure striving for potentiality. This is important because it will enable us to see yet another difference between genealogy and hermeneutics to which the aspect of *telos* is essential. However, if it cannot be identified with any object, value, or particular force, this does not mean it has no qualitative *differentia*. The differentiation of the will to power, according to Deleuze, comes from the distinction between reactive and active will.

The active will is able to affirm itself and it strives for freedom understood as growth, development and expansion.[13] It is able to command not only others but first of all itself. The will to power affirms itself as the only principle of life. Furthermore, the active will strives for freedom in another sense as well. It has through the rational process of genealogy an ability to feel what oppresses it and thus is able to oppose this oppression (we will return to this later). Freedom here, understood as a faculty of the active will to power, is not something given. This is precisely the point that differentiates Nietzsche's understanding of freedom from what the Enlightenment thinkers took it to be. Freedom, for Nietzsche, is not a given, natural, or hypothetical state, where individuals equally enjoy their rights and autonomy, but the *process* of self-overcoming, the constant actualisation of one's will to power through revaluation and creation of new values. The idea of self-overcoming, or

in Foucault's case limit-experience, once again refers to the notion of the break of meaning.[14] It is not the creation of new structures of meaning and values that Nietzsche is concerned with, even though any text or philosophical discourse creates these (and Nietzsche's philosophy is not an exception), but rather with power as pure potentiality enabling us create them. It cannot be equally given to everyone, because freedom is the privilege of the strong and noble. Freedom is culture in the sense that it requires cultivation. It is the process that leads to the creation of the sovereign individual, the individual who has strength to promise. Nietzsche does not separate the subject from his/her deed (for only from deeds we can say whether one *can* promise or not) and thus rejects the modern notion of the self as the subject of free will.[15] Not everyone has free will, because only the few have their own values, only the few can make their own judgements and only the few fulfil them. Thus Nietzsche's sovereign individual is the lawgiver who, nonetheless, is quite different from, say, the Kantian one. For Kant the sovereign individual is able to promise too, nonetheless, he acts according to the formal imperatives, which are applicable universally to every human being. Indeed, it is only this universality that enables freedom. This is not the case in Nietzsche's thought. Here the lawgiver is a creative artist who is able to create his own values, his own style, and submit himself to it because it is his own creation. Nietzsche's sovereign individual is the artist of self-creation, an artist beyond good and evil and beyond any possible universal morality. It is in this sense that we can claim that for Nietzsche self-creation is not a moral but an aesthetic phenomenon. This, however, has nothing to do with such aesthetisation of life as is portrayed in Oscar Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* or in Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*. Nietzsche's requirement to give style to one's character and his ontological claim to see life and the world as aesthetic phenomena have a status akin to moral imperatives. Genealogy transforms ethics into aesthetics not in the sense of its annihilation but in that aesthetisation starts functioning as ethics. Thus if Kierkegaard draws a distinction between ethics and aesthetics, where the latter is portrayed in terms of dandyism, irresponsibility, and the lack of integrity, for the Nietzschean artist such a distinction does not exist since the stylisation of one's character requires both responsibility and integrity. It is in this sense that it is possible to claim that the notion of the stylisation of character, which enables us to see aesthetics in terms of morality, together with the denial of the Western moral tradition, can be seen as being at the core of Nietzsche's genealogy.

The active will to power is thus the will to pure potentiality. It is the constant attempt at expansion and self-creation exercised through the revaluation of old and the creation of new values. However, new values here are not something which an active will wills for itself. We thus come back to the point that Nietzsche does not try to create new values, for values derive from the will to power and thus are secondary. The will to power, as a maximally abstract principle without any identity, has to unfold and exercise itself through something, and these can only be values, values as the expression of affirmation or rejection. That is why 'new' values themselves are not the furthest and the ultimate point, the point that the will to power aims at. The active will to power willing itself and through the act of self-overcoming always goes forward, thus the constant revaluation of values is indispensable. Nietzsche, talking about traditional Christian moral values, expresses this in saying that 'the highest values are devaluing themselves'.[16]

For life to grow it is necessary to foster its empowering instincts. All the instincts relate to the main instinct of the will to power. Indeed, every instinct has its own will to power thus the will to power is something that is common to the whole multiplicity of forces. However, this does not mean that all forces are of the same quality and quantity. The will to power is their differentiating principle:

> [I]t is only through the will to power that one force prevails over the other and dominates or commands them.[17]

Furthermore, as Deleuze argues, it is the will to power which makes certain of our instincts to obey other ones. This is the process of cultivation transforming oneself into a sovereign individual. What is important is that the will to power as the main instinct of life has not to be curbed if life is to expand and grow. Life and the will to power need to be affirmed themselves. To affirm life as *it is* means to insist that there should be no external or given boundaries over its expansion. To be sure every life is constrained within different boundaries but genealogy presents a conceptual claim which forms a certain approach towards the world, existence and its constraints. What is this approach? It is the refusal to see the world and life, life which indispensably has suffering, in terms of a global meaning. In other words, to affirm existence as *it is* requires the suspension of judgement over the world and existence. And first of all it refuses to provide a global explanation of why there is suffering in our life. To provide meaning, which globally explained our suffering, would ultimately lead to the metaphysical condemnation of

the world. It would be to say that this world and our existence are corrupt *per se*, therefore we have to repent for the sake of their salvation. Nietzsche is exactly against such a 'priestly conspiracy' because it neglects this world and its timely existence understood as the expression of the will to power. Such logic of conspiracy for Nietzsche is the nihilism of the reactive will of the weak.

The reactive will, or rather the reactive will to power, according to Nietzsche, is nihilistic *par excellence*. It is nihilistic because it turns against itself – it starts to create values that neglect life. With the nihilism, according to Nietzsche, starts the revolt of slaves; and it starts with the Jewish–Christian morality. The core of this moral tradition is that human existence begins with original sin. Thus the deepest reason for all suffering is original sin as the primordial corruption of the world. Such a logic of revenge against the world empowers *ressentiment*. The bitterness of suffering defeats the active will to power, which now makes others to be responsible for its own suffering.

The reactive will, instead of treating the causes of suffering as something indispensable and natural, starts to blame others. This is not only to demonise the exterior world (the other) but also to intensify one's suffering by situating it as part of the cause called 'evil'. Hence the only thing the will can do is to resign, to resign from that which causes evil. That is why Deleuze can say that the reactive will separates itself from that which it can do.[18] And it does so through the invention of the entire tradition of morality, metaphysics and religion.

The genealogy of morality thus is the examination of the reactive will and its values, of 'the mode and principles of the triumph of reactive forces'.[19] Even though Nietzsche's genealogy questions the value of morality, its implications go far beyond the limits of morality. Nietzsche himself emphasises that his genealogy of morality cannot be understood properly without the wider context of his thought.[20] This is so because morality for Nietzsche is the very centre of Western metaphysics. Therefore only through questioning morality as such is it possible to get to the foundations of Western metaphysics as a whole. Thus the moral discourse of good and evil is indispensably related to the concepts of 'God', 'truth', 'essence' or 'eternal justice'. We find this in the *Genealogy of Morality*. The first chapter starts with the genealogy of the morality of good and evil. The second chapter goes on with the analysis of the psychological implications of this morality (bad conscience). The last chapter deals with ascetic ideals as involving practices which are necessary once the distinction between good and evil, on the one hand, and the concept of bad conscience, on the other, are

taken for granted (two main ascetic ideals are God and truth, which accordingly involve two ascetic practices – religion and science).

Genealogy then is a historical enterprise or, as Foucault characterises it, a historical ontology of ourselves.[21] However, Nietzsche does not believe in the existence of the ontological self. Genealogical self-understanding is something very different from the classical 'Know thyself'. In fact, to realise that there is no true self is a part of genealogy.[22] Rather Nietzsche, as I already noted, is concerned with the will to power; thus only the will to power – not the self – is the centre of genealogy. But because the will to power as the abstract instinct of life unfolds itself only in time genealogy has to be a historical analysis. Thus genealogy is the history of values where values are not only to be described but also and first of all evaluated. To question the value of values themselves or to ask what stands behind these values is the primary task of genealogy.

But what are values for Nietzsche? Values for a genealogist are quasi-reality. They are 'quasi' for two reasons. First, Nietzsche does not believe in the idea of 'reality' as something fixed and stable. Genealogy is not to unfold true reality and thus, contrary to Conway's reading, Nietzsche does not commit himself to realism.[23] (Speaking about the 'real' Nietzsche says: 'The belief in "immediate certainties" is a *moral naïveté*'; 'Why might not the world which concerns us – be a fiction?' and 'nothing else is "given" as real but our world of desires'.[24]) Second, values are the surface behind which there is always a certain will to power. The world seen from within, 'the world defined and designated according to its "intelligible character" is the becoming of the will to power'.[25] This emphasis on becoming is crucial, because being a part of becoming we find ourselves already captured within certain values and structures. That is why neither self-understanding nor freedom would be possible without a critique of these values, values which shape our existence.

For Nietzsche the values which shape us today are the values of the weak. Our morality, together with its wider context in Western metaphysics, is the product of the reactive will to power. The values of obedience to God, humility and love have been dominant for almost two thousand years. Even post-Christian values and concepts like neutrality, utility, humanism, democracy and truth are, according to Nietzsche, the further development of the same Jewish-Christian morality of the weak. However, this morality has not always been dominant. It was gradually established at some point in history, when the aristocratic morality of the strong, a morality based on the aes-

thetic distinction between good and bad, was overthrown by the revolt of the weak.[26]

The aim of genealogy is to oppose these values through their devaluation. The process of devaluation (or deconstruction) is possible only through critical enquiry into the history of our culture. It is to disclose that the origin of these values is the nihilism of the weak, the nihilism which denies this world and hence the will to power. The difference between an ordinary historical enquiry and genealogy lies in their purposes. For an ordinary historian historical enquiry is meaningful in itself. This is not the case for a genealogist: genealogy does not seek just to describe the past. Its purpose is to free the will to power from constrains of the reactive type, and this is possible only through breaking with the current value structures. Genealogy's logic of the break derives from the will to power itself: the active will to power is a constant self-overcoming, which unfolds itself through constant destruction and creation at the same time. ('To enable a sanctuary to be set up a sanctuary has to be destroyed: that is a law – show me the instance where it has not been fulfilled!'.[27]) Hence, if it is possible to define genealogy in one sentence, it can be put as follows: genealogy is the creative destruction of the nihilism of the weak.

Here it is appropriate to return to the aesthetic aspect of Nietzsche's genealogy. Nietzsche's distinction between good and bad (contrary to 'good versus evil') has a significant affinity with aesthetics. To be good, according to Nietzsche, is to be noble; it is the ability to master oneself. We have seen that for Nietzsche the mastery of oneself is not Kantian. It is not about submitting to one's *own* but nonetheless *universal* morality. Rather it is aesthetic. In a famous passage of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche writes:

> To 'give style' to one's own character – a great and rare art! It is practised by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weakness delights the eye. Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed – both times through long practice and daily work. … In the end when the work is finished, it becomes evident that how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small. Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste![28]

There are at least two important aspects to this claim. First of all, Nietzsche speaks not about superficial stylisation but about the hard work of forming one's character. To master oneself in this way then is closely related to the concept of the sovereign individual, who has integrity and is responsible for his/her own deeds and promises. Second, to create a single style of one's character is aesthetic rather than ethical and thus is opposite to the mastering of oneself into a moral agent. To master my-self as a moral agent is to judge my character, life and behaviour according to common moral standards, which are equally binding on everyone. Indeed, moral cultivation of this sort would not tolerate weakness. Being consistent to the logic of his own thought Nietzsche refuses to deny weakness and vice but requires that they should be a stylish part of our character. Man has to retrieve his pride and courage to form him as an artist. To do this one needs to realise one's character and then reform it in such a way that even weakness may be delightful. Once beauty of character is created man reaches the ease when he is not ashamed of anything he does. This, however, is possible only if life, life with all its charm and disgust, good and evil, is affirmed in itself. The evil and weaknesses of my character should not be neglected and judged according some external moral standard. Everything has to be transformed through and into creative artistic power.

Genealogy is precisely such a critical enterprise, which helps one to form oneself as an artist. In this respect genealogy is an aesthetic project – *la gaya scienza* – which encourages us to shape our life according to the standards of good taste. It fosters the strength to fight all kinds of ascetic ideals, which naïvely promise safety, holiness, chastity, comfort, peace, i.e. any one-dimensional notion of paradise, the place where there is no suffering – the promised state into which the reactive will can finally hope to retreat. Genealogy is the gay science, which knows that life is tragic but, nonetheless, is able to affirm it without any attempt to redeem it. It is able to do this so long as it treats existence (life and the world) as an aesthetic phenomenon – something beautiful in itself. That existence can be justified only if it is seen as the phenomenon of beauty is a belief which we find throughout almost all Nietzsche's creative works. This beauty, however, is not something intrinsically given in the world. In the depths of existence there is the terrifying sense of meaninglessness. Speaking about Greek tragedy Nietzsche seeks to show that behind the Olympian world of beauty there is Silenus answer that best of all for man is not to be born, not to be or to be nothing.[29] Only because the Greeks knew the horror of

existence and its meaninglessness did they create the delightful dream of the Olympians[30] – gods who were happy and delighted. The tragic feeling of meaninglessness breaks through the creation of beauty, which reflects and affirms the world as *it is*. Only art – an attempt to see and create beauty – could make the unbearable being lighter, hence making life desirable.

This for Nietzsche is the context of the question of the political. There cannot be justice for Nietzsche if it does not encourage cultivation of human greatness. For him contemporary understandings of justice, equality and democracy do not take account of their cultural reality, and hence of culture's potentiality in enabling us to reform our lives by freeing our artistic powers. Justice is not a value in itself for Nietzsche. What good is justice if it ends up producing weak individuals, the culture where its values are full of sentimentality and naivety? Nietzsche does not separate politics from culture, for only culture can give meaning and thus justify politics. And this perception that politics should not be separated from culture, that the political cannot be distanced from the aesthetic, is, so I shall argue, one of the leading themes of Foucault as well. What is significant, however, is that Foucault, accepting this Nietzschean notion that culture and politics should be analysed together, reinterprets it in such a way that it has none of the totalitarian overtones which were present in the intellectual culture of the vulgar nationalism of interwar Germany. Foucault goes beyond this nationalistic conceptualisation of the togetherness of politics and culture, insisting that it is the concept of the discursive regime that links culture and politics together.

The purpose of culture and the political for Nietzsche is the overman. However, the overman itself is not a *telos*. The *Übermensch* is an ironic artist who lives beyond good and evil because the man who was concerned about good and evil has been overcome. The overman is beyond the morality of good and evil for it has ceased to exist for him. The *Übermensch* does not care about the morality because he simply forgot it. He is an artist who is not afraid to experiment with his creative powers and is able to follow his own style. To push oneself to the limits, being able to laugh and affirm even insanity, can only be possible for the overman. To make the insane sane – that is the challenge for the *Übermensch*.

The culture of the overman is able to overcome man as a lower breed. It is a post-humanist culture. Within it politics have to serve culture, when the intense pleasures, artistic greatness, and experimentation with human limits are affirmed and flourish. Both politics and

culture of this sort are essentially anti-humanist. The Nietzschean *Übermensch* then is a theme which signifies the move away from the humanism of the modern age, which starts with the notion of man's self-determination. For Nietzsche and later for Foucault the notion of man's emancipation is not the ethical end of history. The will to power and energy to go beyond what has been previously man, to push humanity to its limits, to pursue aesthetic and cultural greatness, is more important than man with all his or her 'natural' rights and entitlements. The power to go beyond one's limits is one of the reasons that both Nietzsche and Foucault, although in different ways, affirmed tragedy and cruelty in their own lives. Perhaps the main lesson of Nietzsche is that the decadence of the West has led to our culture becoming saturated with sentimental love and pity for man. If pity for man is the paradigm of contemporary humanist culture with its ideals of consumer happiness and cheap sentimentality, then, as we shall see, it is inevitably linked to the culture of kitsch. Hence we turn now to the political significance of what will be called the 'genealogy of kitsch'.

Foucault on genealogy and power

Introduction: the political significance of Foucaultian genealogy

One of the main differences between Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogical projects lies in their rather different accounts of power. The concept of the will to power in Nietzsche's philosophy is more linked to power as individual willing. Of course, in the *Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche discusses structural and discursive power in terms of the structural embodiment of values of the reactive will to power in European culture. Despite of that, the culture of *Bildung*, which emphasised the spiritual and cultural cultivation of one's soul through art and philosophy, had a significant influence on Nietzsche's ideas. It is within this cultural context that some of Nietzsche's elitist overtones can be understood – the distinction between the 'masters' and the 'slaves', the longing for individual greatness and his distinction between sophisticated 'noble' taste and the 'bad' taste of the masses. It is not surprising that the concept of the will to power in Nietzsche's thought has a conceptual affinity with voluntarism as the affirmation of the strength and greatness of individual will. It is this nineteenth century cultural legacy of elitism and voluntarism, which is present within Nietzsche's understanding of power, that ceases to play an important role in Michel Foucault's account of power. In Foucault's

writing power is decentralised and appears through various and often anonymous strategies, discourses, tactics and institutional practices. If Nietzsche proclaims the death of God, Foucault goes further proclaiming the death of the subject.[31] This emphasises a structural change in the genealogical approach to power. Nietzschean will to power transforms into Foucaultian power as a network of tactics, strategies, discourses and disciplinary practices. As Thomas Dumm has argued, Foucault did not share the aristocratic attitudes towards power and politics that his predecessor Nietzsche did.[32] Thus in Foucault's thought genealogy ceases to be 'the deconstruction of the nihilism of the weak', since power is not seen through the Nietzschean (and even Deleuzian) distinction between reactive and active wills. Furthermore, Foucault did not share Nietzsche's conspiracy theory that Western metaphysics in general and the Judao-Christian tradition in particular is the revolt of the slaves against the aristocratic values of the strong. It is in this sense that we can say that Foucault's own genealogical project, despite the fact that he adopted it from Nietzsche, does not continue the Nietzschean themes and thus could, indeed, will be seen as an independent subversion of Nietzsche's genealogy. In Foucault's genealogy all value structures and discursive regimes (not only the values of the pious Christians) are equally dangerous and seen with suspicion, hence all of them need to be genealogically analysed. This is a way of subverting the claim that there is 'good' *vs*. 'bad' will to power; Foucault analyses them in a much more unitary way. For Foucault power is both the reason for resistance and that which one seeks.

And yet, as we shall see, both Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogies have very similar conceptual premises as well as philosophical implications. The both of them are based on the conceptual subordination or, more sharply, diffusion of meaning/truth into power, and both are driven by the logic of resistance towards existing values and discursive power practices. Both Nietzschean and Foucaultian genealogies presuppose the 'suspicious' logic of resistance as in principle negative, to be exercised through constant overcoming of the old values or prevailing discursive structures. Thus the nature of genealogy and its encounter with historical tradition is essentially negative and has the logic of rupture and break, rather than continuity of tradition as in hermeneutics.[33]

One of the objectives of my discussion of Foucault will be to show that his genealogical analysis adopts the Nietzschean notion of the stylisation of one's character, which in Foucault's thought takes new shape. There are two aspects to this notion of stylisation. On the one

hand, Foucault, through analysis of the sexual practices of Classical Greece, links the concept of stylisation with the ability to master oneself. Here stylisation as mastery is similar to the Nietzschean conception as it appears in *The Gay Science*'s fragment 290. The Foucaultian version of it could be put in following terms. It is to be stronger than oneself in being able to master one's own desires through knowing when and how to engage in the aesthetic use of pleasures. It is noteworthy that Foucault stresses that such mastery of oneself – *enkrateia* – giving dignity and beauty to one's character was closely linked to the political dimension in Classical Greece. That is, only those who were able to master themselves in this sense could have claims for mastering others. Another aspect of the stylisation of one's existence rests in Foucault's philosophical attempt to write the genealogy of modern subjectivity. To put it briefly, it develops and applies the idea that our pre-reflective self-understanding, and what we are in general, are shaped through the different discourses and practices of our culture and that understanding of who we are is possible only through historico-genealogical analysis of those discursive regimes which shape our subjectivity. What this suggests is that it is impossible to undergo internal transformation within our subjectivity (which for Foucault is always a certain form of subjugation), and in so doing experience freedom, without historical understanding of what we have been made to be. To examine the conceptual link between the first aspect, of aesthetisation, and the second, genealogical, aspect of self-mastery will be an important issue in our discussion of Foucault. This conceptual link will provide the background for our discussion of the genealogy of kitsch and its political significance.

One of the aspects of his genealogical interrogation of the formation of our subjectivity is Foucault's project of writing the history of sexuality. During the process Foucault himself underwent significant transformation. Starting from the modern experience of sexuality, Foucault moved to the ancient practices of *aphrodisia* in order to go beyond the prevailing understanding of sexuality as stable and ahistorical. But it is not only that. His aims were more ambitious since he also sought to facilitate, through the analysis of sexuality, the writing of the history of the desiring subject.[34] Contrasting modern European culture with other cultures, Foucault claimed that modernity never developed what Japan, China or India had, namely an *ars erotica*, where the art of sex stems from the internal truth about it, a truth which has to be treasured and can be revealed only to those who undergo special cultivation by an experienced teacher, hence a truth which is always confidential.

In contrast, the modern West has produced the discourse of *scientia sexualis*, where the truth *must* be told, 'objectively' analysed, but through these very articulations shaped and even produced. It might be argued that it is not an accident that this contrast between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis*, mentioned in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, is important for Foucault because it allows him to situate the historical analysis of the practices of *aphrodisia* in Classical and then Hellenic Greece in the second and third volumes. Foucault's shift to historical genealogy of the practice of Classical *aphrodisia* in the second volume has the appearance of being an attempt to escape from the modern discursive regime of sexuality and subjectivity. It seems to be an attempt to trace an initial transformation from the Classical notion of *enkrateia*, which was not based on any unified conception of sexual behaviour used as a model for interpreting human nature (thus the issue was not what sort of love affairs a Greek male had and with whom, but how it was conducted and whether one was the master or slave of one's sexual and other drives), and thus which was much closer to that of the oriental *ars erotica*,[35] to the second and third century notions of sexual activity which slowly moved to a more unified and universalised conception of sexuality which became predominant in the Western world. Whatever Foucault's intentions were it is clear that such genealogical analysis allowed him to emphasise the productive aspect of discursive practices relating to sexuality in modern times. Through the constant investigation, research, story telling and other forms of the need to tell the 'truth' about sex, a proliferation of discourses of sexuality was produced. Thus it is not that the proliferation of the variety of different discourses revealed the nature of our 'true' sexuality, but that our sexuality (i.e. the way we see ourselves as sexually driven beings, how we engage in and practice sexual behaviour and what is normal and abnormal) has been produced through these very discourses. Scientific and pseudo-scientific discourses do not so much *reveal* the nature of things but rather *produce* them. The most straightforward contemporary examples are those of biotechnology and reproductive cloning, which perfectly reinforce Foucault's insight that one of the tasks of genealogy is to develop an analysis in which biology and history are put together. Such an approach would be contrary to a traditional social analysis where biology not only has been separated from history but it has been presupposed that our biology is beyond history. Foucault enables us to conceptualise the fact that it is history which changes and determines our biology as much as *vice versa*.

Such a Foucaultian perspective enables us to see that even the discourse of sexual liberation in the late twentieth century is inevitably related to the power structures through which our perception of the body and sexual practices are produced, intensified and normalised. This derives from Foucault's understanding of power as productive, power, as it is put in the last chapter of the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, without sword and king. Thus it is Foucault, as *a political thinker*, who shows that power in modernity has to be understood and analysed not within the legal framework of the sovereign state, but within the framework of the discursive power of normalisation through which our subjectivity is produced. In this sense Foucault can be seen as opposed to traditional liberal thinking which operates in terms of narrowly understood political power. According to this understanding, whose conceptual background has been shaped by thinkers such as John Locke and Immanuel Kant, in the civil state the initial/natural sovereignty of individuals is given to public authority, i.e. the state or civic government, which alone has legal monopoly of power as the apparatus of coercion. On this logic, in order to guarantee individual freedom the civil government has to be a *limited* government. Following this tradition, modern liberal democracy is a political society whose government is limited by the 'natural' rights and liberties of its individuals. A society is just if both, its individuals respect each other's rights and liberties, and if its sovereign civic government does not abuse, restrict or limit in any way those individual rights and liberties. From such a perspective normalising and disciplinary structures are not an issue for a political philosopher unless they are directly related to the state's apparatus. By contrast, in fusing power structures with discursive practices Foucault goes beyond this understanding of power and asks how particular power relations and institutions are related to and supported by certain discursive knowledge practices. Thus the genealogical approach enables us to understand that power in modernity cannot be adequately seen as embodied only in the sovereign state. Rather, it attempts to analyse the diffusion of power into the variety of its different modes. It is in this sense, as will be argued, that the contemporary discourse of sexual liberation may be interpreted as a new normalising regime. It is the discursive power which produces desire through different discursive practices (e.g. advertising, media, pornography) and power structures and institutions (free trade regime, liberal democracy, multinational corporations, practices of toleration) of global capitalism. It is within this context that our claim about kitsch as another contemporary discursive regime which shapes and produces

both our subjectivity and our desires will be discussed and analysed. However, before turning to discuss this we need to clarify Foucault's philosophical understanding of power.

Foucault's ontology of power

To understand Foucault's ontological conception of power would be impossible without thinking it together with another, a rather different philosophical concept, namely 'meaning'. It was already briefly mentioned in the previous discussion of Nietzsche. I suggested that Nietzsche's answer is negative – the traditional structures of meaning are lost and consequently there is no fixed and stable meaning. It is within this context that we understood Nietzschean genealogy as the intellectual tool of the will to power which seeks to re-evaluate traditional 'nihilistic' values and meanings, so that it should be possible to advance creatively towards a new set of meanings. What was also suggested, however, was that the aim of genealogy in re-valuing the prevailing structure of meanings is not to create a new, 'better' set of meanings, but to reveal them as the expression of the will to power as abstract potentiality. What I now seek to show is that Foucault's philosophy[36] is developed in a very similar conceptual context and that Foucault understands power relations as closely linked to a variety of discursive structures of meaning.

In one of his interviews, talking about the history of scientific discourses, Foucault says:

> Here I believe one's point of reference should not be the great model of language and signs, but that of war and battle. The history which bears and determines us has the form of war rather than that of language: *relations of power, not relations of meaning*. History has no 'meaning', though this is not to say, that it is absurd or incoherent. On the contrary, it is intelligible and should be susceptible of analysis of down to the smallest detail – but this is in accordance with *the intelligibility of struggles, of strategies and tactics* [my italics].[37]

What Foucault is saying here is important since it relates to the centre of his ontological conception of human experience and its history. The emphasis on war and battle should not be understood in its ordinary/banal sense, that only empirical wars and battles determine and move the course of human history. Rather it should be understood within the specific Foucaultian conceptual schema which fuses knowledge and its discourses with the realm of power. Furthermore, this approach

should not be seen as merely a more advanced form of materialism and/or economic determinism which presupposes that it is the empirical power relations, economic interests, and bodily instincts that determine the discursive reality. If this were true, Foucault would see the variety of discursive formations as *only* determined (and not *vice versa*) by the power relations. The novelty of Foucault's position rests in his ability originally so to re-develop the Nietzschean position that discourses and their interpretations have to be seen not as mere epiphenomena of power relations, but as having themselves the logic of power strategies and tactics. In other words, Foucault in his genealogy fuses power and knowledge – he grants power to language and discourse, on the one hand, and reduces the structure of meaning to power tactics and strategies, on the other. It is in this sense that it is defensible to call Foucault's genealogy the linguistics of power since his analyses of power practices are not seen through their obvious and apparent forms but through language, scientific discourse and knowledge. The character of his genealogy as a *linguistics* of power will become less surprising if we remember that Foucault's early archaeological thought (especially as it is embodied, for example, in his *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*) was entirely concerned with the status of human sciences and their claims for truth. Thus from the very beginning Foucault's thought was concerned with the analysis of discursive practices and the scientific regimes of truth.

We read in Foucault's methodologically important essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' that human history should not be seen as driven by the uninterrupted continuity of meanings but by a variety of different and often contradictory forces.[38] It is the task of a genealogist to provide a detailed description of them. In order to emphasis discontinuity in history, Foucault re-articulates Nietzsche's notion of *Herkunft* (origin), claiming that the emergence of things is not to be understood through an attempt to trace their beginning in a hidden identity. Instead, what a genealogist has to do is to decipher *petty* bodily weaknesses, discontinuities and chances in a word all possible small and local forces which hide behind these apparently lofty origins and identities. All the meanings, prevalent identities, moral values and rules emerged and were formed through the play of different forces and forms of domination. Instead of seeing the origin of things and practices in 'metaphysical' identity, genealogy sees the beginning in 'descent': in the exteriority of accidents, deviations, faulty calculations, and the play of forces. Summarising this Foucault quotes Nietzsche: 'We wished to awaken the feeling of man's sovereignty by showing his

divine birth: this path is now forbidden, since a monkey stands at the entrance'.[39]

Foucault's shift from a mere archaeological analysis of *episteme* to his genealogical analytics of power practices supported and constituted by a variety of discourses starts with his refusal of, what Foucault calls, the repressive hypothesis. The prevailing Western understanding of power, according to Foucault, has been based on a conceptual distinction between power and truth. Power is the brutal force, which can make people do what they do not wish to do, it is a force which sheds blood, tortures, has the ultimate say over people's lives, and indeed their deaths. Precisely because of its brutality it has to be controlled and thus the state as the sovereign, first as it was embodied in the monarch and later in the state as the representative of the people, has to be the only agent which has the monopoly of power. According to such traditional understanding power, as embodied in the sovereign state, expresses itself through the means of the variety of the sovereign state's activities: laws, decrees, regulations, and prohibitions. In constituting what is allowed and not allowed, power is seen in its ability to say 'No' through punishing those who disobey. According to Foucault, the symbol of such a conception of power is the sword and it is exercised through repression. It is within this context that the Enlightenment's contractarian political theory was developed. If the sovereign has the monopoly of power, then it has to be limited through a contract with the people, who delegate part of their sovereignty to the state as the civil government. Accordingly, the civil government will be just if it abides by the original contract and the rule of law from which it derives. For Foucault this conception of power is misleading. And this is not only because it reduces power only to the realm of law (hence Foucault calls this conception of power 'juridico-discursive'). It is misleading also because it presupposes that resistance to power is possible only through the intellectual discourse of telling the truth about how power is being abused. A public intellectual who criticises power in the name of the idea of universal humanity is perceived as someone who stands outside power relations since he/she represents the discourse of truth as the only tool against the domination of power. Truth then appears as opposite to power and is seen as having a potentially liberating effect.

Foucault rejects this repressive hypothesis and attempts to develop a new conception of power beyond the traditional juridico-discursive understanding. Instead of seeing power in negative terms and as something which is centralised within the institution of the sovereign state,

Foucault insists that it is should be understood in terms of an open, both coordinated and ill-coordinated, cluster of relations.[40] Power does not suddenly emerge at a given time and place, but transforms from one set of relations to another. Far from being opposed to knowledge, power is inevitably interlinked with a variety of discourses. Thus for Foucault truth is itself both supportive of and supported by power relations. For this initially Nietzschean understanding of power Foucault has a specific term, *dispositif*, which could be translated as 'regime of intelligibility'.[41] Foucault describes *dispositif* in the following terms:

> What I am trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid.[42]

But it is not only that. It is also the relations and connections between these heterogeneous elements. Furthermore, as Foucault indicates, the regime of intelligibility has an active function and ability to respond, or to put it in his own terms, it has a dominant strategic function. Later, summarising, he provides a concise definition what he means by 'regime of intelligibility': it is 'strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge'.[43]

To illustrate this specific approach to power, as strategies and tactics supporting and supported by a variety of discourses of knowledge, it is worth turning to Foucault's own examples. The first one can be found in his *Discipline and Punish*. In it Foucault genealogically describes a major transformation that European countries went through in the 18th century. That is, the 'humanisation' of punishment as a result of which punishment becomes more discreet, definitely less brutal and much more 'shy'. One of the aspects of this transformation, the transformation which manifests the dawn of the Enlightenment era, is that punishment ceases to be public show and gradually becomes to be less concerned with the body. If in previous times torturing and cruelty towards the body is the way justice is enforced, the Enlightenment refuses that. Instead of causing pain to the body it now wants to correct and educate. The modern penal system starts to aim at something higher than a mere punishment through which the body is tortured. The body then ceases to be the ultimate point of reference in enforcing justice. Drawing the picture of this transformation Foucault shows that punishment during the Enlightenment slips from the body to the soul

– the object now becomes the soul. One of the aims of such genealogical study, according to Foucault, is to write the history of the modern subject via the analytics of the power to punish and discipline. What is significant, and here the discourses of knowledge and power practices interlink, is that this Enlightenment 'humanisation' of punishment and discipline took place through and was supported by a variety of juridical-scientific discourses. A whole set of descriptive scientific forms of knowledge, acquired through the examination of individuals' behaviour, was invented. These knowledge practices attempted to monitor, survey, observe, and measure individuals in modern institutions such as prisons and hospitals as well as, to a lesser degree, in military colleges and schools. They enabled the placing of individuals into the different grading systems. Each individual became at once the subject and the object of the bureaucratic-examining discursive power. Through these discourses the normalisation of humans took place. Knowing what is normal and abnormal, individuals were prescribed their particular place within the normative system of modern institutions. In short, the modern punishment and disciplinary power practices were intermeshed with the emergence of a new type of objectifying knowledge, and hence the modern *dispositif* of discipline and punishment enabled the normalisation of individuals within the structures of modern society, which increasingly was becoming a capitalist society.

What this Foucaultian analysis shows is that while the changes of the penal system in the eighteen century, seen through a traditional understanding of power, would be understood as 'humanisation of cruel and backward Medieval punishment', such an understanding is misleading. Without the Foucaultian power/knowledge analytics this transformation could be easily misunderstood as the triumphant victory of reason and compassion against the 'backwardness of unrestricted and barbaric rage of violence'. In this sense Foucault's genealogy shows that apparently more humane punishment had nothing to do with people and their penal practices becoming more compassionate. Instead it was about a transformation to an entirely different punishment and disciplinary power technology. And in showing this genealogy serves to unmask the Enlightenment's self-justifying myth of progress.

Another example can be found in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. Instead of approaching the problem of sex as something which is biologically given and thus a-historical, Foucault proposes that both sex and sexual relations are produced and constructed by the discourse of sexuality, and that scientific knowledge has been an

important and constitutive element in this production.[44] In similar fashion to *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault concentrates on the changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and provides a genealogical analysis of how, through the discursive technologies of telling the truth about sex, sexuality became an essential part of human identity. The repressive hypothesis as embodied in the traditional approach to power would limit itself to showing that the transformation of sex and sexuality in the eighteen century, compared to earlier times, was that sex became more repressed and controlled. (On Foucault's account, during the previous centuries the social control was far less intense: one was obliged to attend only an annual confession; this runs counter to the common stereotype that sex was most repressed in Christian Medieval times.) Foucault's analysis is more ambitious and far reaching. He argues that repression should not be seen as the only form of power and domination. The modern West, so far as sexuality is concerned, has produced a far more elaborated power strategy namely, confession. Even though the modern West inherited it from the Christian culture, confession was adapted and incorporated within the different scientific discourses such as medicine, psychiatry and psychoanalysis in the nineteenth and especially twentieth centuries. Together with these scientific discourses 'modern confession' became a new technology through which the regime of sexuality was produced. Foucault called this regime *scientia sexualis*, which he contrasted, as briefly mentioned at the beginning of our discussion of Foucault, with the *ars erotica* of the ancient cultures of Japan and China. What was characteristic of *scientia sexualis* was not only the requirement that people should be constantly exposed to the necessity to tell the truth about their sexuality, desires and practices but also that the meticulously recorded facts and truths were perceived as representing the universal nature of human sexuality. It is through these scientific discourses, together with different power strategies (Foucault distinguishes four of them: hysterisation of women's bodies, pedagogisation of children's sexuality, socialisation of reproduction, and psychiatrisation of perversions), that *scientia sexualis* produced the new type of 'universalised' subjectivities. For example, if sexual relations between two males up until the eighteen century was understood as the sin of sodomy (thus what was important was the act not a person and his 'specific' identity), from the nineteenth century onwards, due to the development of psychiatry and other pseudo-scientific discourses such as sexology, such individuals were prescribed a fixed 'homosexual' universal nature: 'if sodomite had been a temporary aberration; homosexual was now a

species'.[45] In other words, the regime of sexuality became a new power technology in imposing and shaping people's subjectivity. Through normalising, objectifying, pseudo-scientific discourses humans were forced into imposed subjectivities.

These two schematic examples from Foucault's work illustrate the genealogical idea that power, far from being only repressive, is also forming and productive. In fusing power with knowledge, and analysing them within a wider network of tactics and strategies, Foucault shows that discourses have formative power. Thus it is not that things happen and 'material' changes take place just because there are 'material' forces at work. Rather, discourses, knowledge, and theories also play a significant role in bringing about these changes. As Foucault says, such an approach brings practice and theory closer to each other. Furthermore, it enables us to 'unmask' a very important power strategy, the strategy of making us into subjects with imposed identities when discourse and knowledge are a constitutive part of this type of power. It is with this power strategy of subjection (that is, the subjective aspect of this subjugation: through the confessional power of telling the truth about their deepest desires people produce their subjectivity) that the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* is concerned. *Discipline and Punish*, on the other hand, explores, at least to a certain extant, its objective aspect: disciplinary practices together with the newly emerging scientific discourses treating individuals as their objects.

It is here that Foucault's conception of resistance becomes important. Since power relations are omnipresent within the whole social body and not only within certain institutions such as the state, they always bring resistance. The fact that power is always challenged by resistance, which comes at the point where power is exercised does not mean that resistance 'co-exists' with power and that it belongs to the same net of power relations. According to Foucault, resistance is not the 'frustrated compatriot of power'.[46] This is so because power relations are relations of domination and thus resistance is a response to them.[47] However, resistance is not and cannot be outside power. It responds to the domineering power relations but since it acts against domination it does not itself have the same dominating nature. This does not mean that a successful resistance may not end in the establishment of new power relations; however, the moment resistance creates new power relations, it ceases to be resistance.

Foucault in one of his essays claimed that the primary concern of his genealogical analysis was the different modes or techniques by which

human beings are made into subjects.[48] His research developed in *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* was devoted to showing how the new mode of power/knowledge discursive practices enabled this modern historical process of making humans into subjects. Furthermore, what Foucault implies is that the prevailing modes of power relations in modernity, which are closely linked to the decentralisation and democratisation of political power (i.e. the transformation from an absolutist/monarchical politico-social culture when political power was owned by a monarch to the contractarian political culture), become more decentralised, invisible, and start to aim less at the body than at 'the soul'. Thus modernity, with its multiplicity of scientific and pseudo-scientific discourses claiming to be universally valid, produced new types of power technologies which made people subjects with their imposed identities. The genealogy of 'confessional power' and its modern transformations provides one of the examples of how people through different technologies of telling the truth about themselves become the subjects of imposed identities. It is in this sense that Foucault can say that 'we have become trapped in our own history'.[49]

Thus in fusing power and knowledge together Foucault extends the understanding of power beyond its mere juridico-discursive conception. Such an approach enables him to see discourse not primarily in terms of its meaning and its internal truth (it is the task of genealogist to stay, as Foucault's commentators suggest, at the surface of things, avoiding any attempt to grasp ideal significations or essences[50]) but in terms of the effects that it produces in supporting or opposing certain forces and power relations. Furthermore, Foucault implies that historical discourses are transparent if they are approached in terms of the logic of tactics and strategies. Such an approach to discourse is radically different from an approach which seeks to recover the internal meaning of a historical text. We shall return to this issue in our discussion of hermeneutics when we consider Gadamer and MacIntyre. However, it is instructive to note the difference between genealogy and hermeneutics here as well since it helps us to understand Foucault's genealogy better. If hermeneutics attempts to reveal the internal meaning of a historical discourse through attentive listening to the text, genealogy ignores meaning and truth, not in the sense that it claims that they do not exist, but maintaining that the inner meaning and truth of a text are neither important nor independently intelligible since the only way to understand them is through the effects that they have on things and on us. It is in this sense that that what has been said about

Nietzschean genealogy and the notion of the void of meaning relates to Foucault's genealogy as well. The notion of the void of meaning applies in that Foucault's genealogy reduces the meaning of discourse to its tactical and strategic effects so that truth and meaning are seen as supplementary to power techniques and practices. This approach, which is fundamentally different from the hermeneutic approach, relates to Foucault's understanding of history. As we saw, he insists that history, 'which bears and determines us', should be seen not as having the logic of language and meaning but that of war and power. On a different occasion Foucault maintained that:

> Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination.[51]

If history and its discourses, enmeshed with strategies and tactics, move from one domination to another, then our subjectivity and our present identity, assuming that they are formed historically precisely through these strategies and discourses, constitute the contemporary form of domination. This is what I take to be the most important both premise and conclusion of Foucaultian genealogy – our present subjectivity is a result of domination and that we are historically forced into 'our-selves'.[52] It is from this genealogical premise-conclusion that the Nietzschean theme of the overman becomes intelligible in Foucault's thought. Genealogy, for Foucault, is the historical ontology of ourselves.[53] But to understand what we are, and to understand this is possible only through genealogical analysis of history and its discursive regimes, is only part of the project: 'maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are'.[54] The theme of the overman in this context relates precisely to that of 'to refuse what we are'. That is, our present identity has to be overcome partly because it has been historically formed through the regimes of truth and power practices. Thus through the analysis of who we are genealogy also engages in resistance and struggle against what we have been made. It is here that Foucault's notions of the forming of one's life as an art and of limit experience become important.

In numerous essays and interviews about homosexual relations Foucault attempted to articulate the notion that what the homosexual movements needed was not to fight for mere liberation of homosexuals through the logic of identity. The gays' liberation movement in

the sixties advanced its struggle in the name of the right to be homosexual. This strategy, according to Foucault, was politically effective at that time since prohibition of homosexuality through cultural, social and legal restriction was still very widely spread. In utilising the rhetoric of rights gays accommodated the essentialist approach to homosexuality which was seen as an intrinsic characteristic of one's nature. If homosexuality is naturally predetermined, then one has to have a natural right to be and live a life according to this nature. Thus the process of liberation was seen through an attempt to 'discover' the intrinsic nature of one's sexuality. Foucault, following his philosophical investigations, suggests that gays have to move beyond such politics of identity. Rather than trying to reveal the nature of one's sexuality, people have to experience their sexuality as the art of invention.[55] Sexuality thus perceived is something that people exercise as part of their freedom. Homosexuality as a creative process, then, has to open new forms of behaviour and experience of pleasure. It should open new cultural activities, new ways of relating to each other, creativity and courage to experiment with experiencing pleasure. Homosexual relations should become a creative activity through which one does not so much discover the truth about one's homosexuality. Rather people have to create themselves as homosexuals. Foucault invokes the notion of *ascesis*, which he distinguishes from traditional asceticism as the renunciation of pleasure, and defines it as 'the work that one performs on oneself in order to transform oneself or make self appear which, happily, one never attains'.[56] This notion of self-creation and the necessity to work on oneself is very similar to Nietzsche's notion of the stylisation of one's character.[57] Both Nietzsche and Foucault see life as a work of art even though they differ in the directedness of this stylisation. For Nietzsche the self-creation is directed towards the nobility of one's character, whereas for Foucault such *ascesis* is directed towards the intensification of pleasures. This, however, should not be seen as Foucault's relapse into traditional hedonism even though Foucault's personal life was full of hedonistic pleasures. Foucault's engagement with sexual pleasures was a systemic attempt to live his understanding of life as the art of experimentation with limits. It is precisely his fascination with the 'unliveable' and his philosophical interest in such authors as Nietzsche and Bataille that distinguish Foucault's engagement from a mere hedonism, which sees each occasion of life as a possibility to experience maximum pleasure. For Foucault the intensification of pleasure should not be achieved passively. Rather it should be creatively constructed through a variety of tech-

niques and practices, which always go hand in hand with its opposite – that which is 'unliveable', maximum impossibility or even pain.[58] His engagement with the S&M subcultures of Los Angeles and New York illustrates this well. The intensification of pleasures as closely interlinked with pain, the desexualisation of pleasure (creation of pleasure with a variety of things and through different parts of the body which traditionally have nothing to do with sexual pleasures), and experimentation with drugs were those techniques and practices with which Foucault was often engaged.

Before turning to discuss the issue of kitsch, it will be useful to draw together what has been said about genealogy. One of the main methodological pillars of genealogy is its attempt to fuse power and knowledge (discourse) together. What this implies is that both Nietzsche and Foucault extend the understanding of power beyond the traditional conception according to which power is that which merely forces, kills, commands to obey, and which is monopolised by the sovereign state. Thus genealogy asks the fundamental question whether power in modernity is only embodied in the state. If Foucault expands and re-articulates the understanding of power in a new, but at the same time Nietzschean, way then, assuming that power is essentially a political issue, it appears that genealogy becomes a political project. This project can be called the micro-politics of resistance. Genealogy as a political project in this sense has two aspects: negative and positive. The negative aspect attempts to provide the historical analysis of how discourses, tactics and power structures shape us. It lies in that what Nietzsche called the re-valuation of the predominant nihilistic values. The reason that such genealogical re-valuation is political is that it is through these predominant value structures, discursive regimes, and power tactics that our subjectivity is shaped. It is in this sense that the 'historical ontology of ourselves' is political since our becoming subjects with imposed identities is the outcome of the historical process of domination. Thus any self-reflective attempt to understand who we are, looking at it from a genealogical point of view, is always an act of resistance against the prevailing discursive power structures. The issue of our subjectivity is then political since the question of what we are does not imply the answer that we are what we are, but that we are what we were made to be through the discourses and tactics of domination. The positive aspect of genealogy, an aspect which is inevitably linked to the negative, arises from the way that genealogical analysis, conceived as resistance, offers new modes and possibilities to form our lives in terms of our own creative standards. For both Nietzsche and

Foucault this aspect is embodied in two inter-linked notions: the forming of one's life as an art, on the one hand, and the overman (or in Foucault's case, 'limit experience'), on the other. For Nietzsche this positive aspect culminates in his implicit political project which Keith Ansell-Pearson called the 'great politics':

> [T]he justification of the political must lie beyond the state in the realm of culture and genius, which means that society must be structured and designed in a way which leads to the production of a higher type of human being.[59]

For Foucault it is expressed in his insistence that society should be structured in such a way that it will be always open to an *agonal* play of forces. Society should admit that power relations are immanent and deeply rooted within the whole nexus of the social body, and that the modern myth that only the sovereign state embodies power leads to power becoming disguised and invisible. Foucault's position is that the political task of genealogy rests precisely in uncovering the power relations diffused within the whole social body so as to enable the *agonal* or resistancial relations and in so doing bring more freedom into people's lives. One of the possible expressions of such freedom for Foucault was his experimentation with limits and his engagement in the S&M subculture. What is more important, however, is that both for Nietzsche and Foucault freedom is that which requires cultivation. It is only because of cultivation that new forms of artistic innovation and culture are possible. And they are possible only given an important condition – a genealogical resistance towards the power discourses which shape and enforce on us subjugating identities making us the subjects of the predominant power/knowledge regimes. One of these regimes within our contemporary culture, so I shall argue, is kitsch. I shall consider first the general characterisation of kitsch and then its genealogy.

Characterising kitsch

To define 'kitsch' is theoretically complicated. The concept of kitsch is complementary to the concept of art. That is to say, kitsch is bad art – something which is not art but which nonetheless claims, pretends or in some other way imitates art.[60] Thus kitsch can be most broadly defined as that which imitates art but which does not have the qualitative characteristics of art. Even at this early point one can say that

there might be a variety of genres of kitsch that do not claim to be art. This could be said, for example, about many Hollywood popular films which, lacking in artistic depth and quality, are considered to be a mere genre of entertainment rather than of art. It might be argued that any production of entertainment, which does not have aesthetic qualities but which at the same time does not claim to have them, cannot be considered kitsch. To this, however, one can reply by providing a conceptual distinction between ordinary entertainment and that of kitsch as it is embodied in popular Hollywood screenplays with few aesthetic qualities. The difference lies in the fact that any cinematographic production has, what can be called, a narrative depth. It not only tells a certain story but also portrays certain ideas and values expressed through that story such that it is appropriate to interrogate that story for its truthfulness. Thus a screenplay, no matter how banal it is, is a complex creative phenomenon which has a certain form, genre, content, theme, set of underlying ideas and values which enable us to question their truthfulness, and thus cannot plausibly be considered a mere phenomenon of entertainment. Fox hunting, Disneyland or a cabaret are all different from film because engaging in these different entertainments we do not pose the question of whether what we experience and see is true or not. It is this possibility of asking the question of truthfulness that separates art and kitsch from entertainment.

Aristotle in *Poetics* argues that the nature of any art is imitation. The idea that art is imitation of reality goes back at least to Plato. It was in *Republic* that Plato, within the context of his philosophical construction of ideas as the primary forms of things, argued that since natural things are like shadows of these true forms, an artist who imitates the variety of things which we perceive through our senses is involved in imitating mere shadows. What is important, however, is the underlying notion that art is an imitation of reality and that precisely the lack of reality is the reason why Plato, and partly Aristotle, had reservations towards certain types of art.[61] These examples of the conceptualisation of art provide us with the important notion that art imitates or in some ways represents reality. Thus, even if art cannot straightforwardly or, being more precise, cognitively reflect reality, the fact that art, no matter how and through which artistic expression, says something about reality enables us to pose the question whether a particular piece of art is 'real'/truthful.[62] In this respect kitsch differs from genuine art since it is unable to withstand this specific aesthetic quest for truthfulness: kitsch is aesthetically untruthful, unconvincing or deceiving.

That aesthetic truthfulness is different from that of cognitive truthfulness is clear not only from a paradigmatically modern conceptualisation of art as it was developed in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* but also from Aristotle. The aesthetic aim of any drama or any epic art is *katharsis*. Aristotle defines *katharsis* in terms of the aesthetic feeling of pleasure (or liking) through the experience of pity and fear.[63] This aesthetic pleasure is achieved due to emotional involvement in the dramatic story without, however, being directly (i.e. in reality) involved in it. Thus for Aristotle good dramatic or epic art enables a viewer to experience the feelings of despair, pity and fear as if a viewer was part of that drama. An important point is that Aristotle emphasises that good dramatic art should be able to bring about *katharsis* due to its story rather than its sceneographic means. The latter did not have much to do with creativity since it depended only on the special tax, *choregia*, which rich Athenian citizens had to pay for the decorations and costumes.[64] Thus *katharsis* – an aesthetic pleasure of emotional involvement in an artistic narrative – could not be achieved by a mere technicality of rich sceneography but through a powerful story and its artistic expression.

This Aristotelian notion of *katharsis*, despite its difference from Kant's notion of aesthetic judgement, is still similar to it in one particular point. Both Aristotelian *katharsis* and Kantian aesthetic judgement involve emotional involvements that are accompanied by the *feeling* of liking. This is especially clear in Kant's case: aesthetic judgement is not based on cognition but is a *liking* freely caused by the contemplation of the formal purposiveness of fine art. The nature of this liking, according to Kant, is free because it is not based on any pragmatic interest towards that object. When we view a drama we may experience an emotional involvement which nonetheless is detached from the world of practice. According to Kant, we like the beautiful not because we have a particular interest in it but for its mere contemplation.[65]

Internal freedom as disinterestedness reveals another aspect of fine art in Kant's thought: art is similar to nature. Kant says that we admire an object, be it an object of art or an object of nature, because of its inward formal purposiveness. In both cases the formal purposiveness seems to us free from all constraints and rules. That is why art being so natural and immediate looks like nature even though we are conscious that is it art. Thus good art looks natural and sincere even though it is a piece of intentional work, i.e. human-made. Precisely this tension between art as an intentional piece of work, on the one hand, and its immediate and natural character, on the other, enables Kant to say that fine art can be produced only by genius – someone who has a

talent given by nature. This supports Kant's point that the production of fine art cannot be taught in principle since art is always both original and exemplary and thus even an artist him/herself cannot fully explain how he/she created a piece of fine art. Hence fine art, according to Kant, is different both from science and craft, since the excellence in both of them can be achieved through learning and hard work.

This paradigmatically modern understanding of fine art provides us with a background to understand kitsch better. Kitsch, as both bad art and bad taste, is neither exemplary nor original. The driving force of kitsch is popularity and commercial success thus it seeks to conform to the taste of the majority. In this sense it never has that which is so essential for a genuine art – the tension between the intention to produce a purposeful work of art and its disinterestedness. The latter is related to the fact that art finds rules in itself which means that the main intention of creating art cannot be to conform to the rules and laws of others. The disinterestedness of art then implies that its primary intention can never be popularity or commercial success, even though each artist may seek recognition. This tension makes an artist vulnerable and it is precisely this vulnerability, arising from the concern to be faithful to oneself no matter what the reaction of the audience is going to be, that is absent in kitsch. Kitsch loses the internal freedom of art and becomes a mere craft which primarily seeks to achieve popularity. And it does so not through an attempt to achieve artistic excellence but through, as Aristotle called it, *choregia* – external decorations, costumes or special effects, that which is not aesthetically necessary and which does not contribute to the internal purposiveness of that particular work of art. It is this lack of aesthetic/conceptual integrity, when each part contributes to the fullness of the perfectly integrated whole, that is missing in the 'cheapness' of kitsch's special effects. Therefore, the characteristic feature of kitsch is the lack of 'natural' integrity not only between its parts (thus kitsch often is unjustifiably eclectic) but also between the form and its content. This aspect of kitsch as lacking natural internal integrity, when its parts do not contribute to the whole and are not aesthetically justified, will be important when I turn to discuss whether kitsch can be considered a certain *style* of art.

The intention to achieve popularity and commercial success is not the only characteristic of kitsch. What is also important is that the success is achieved through flattering the public in the easiest way. Kitsch will never say or portray something which the public would not

like and which would not be easily enjoyed. That is why kitsch is always superficial and simplistic, which takes us back to the fact that kitsch is unconvincing and deceitful. It imitates, draws out and extends reality unconvincingly.[66] Very often such simplification is vulgar and banal. It seeks to *manipulate* our feelings through creating simplified and cheap ideals, which, as Adorno put it, promise an easy *katharsis* which becomes its own parody.[67]

The widespread diffusion of kitsch, as many theorist of popular culture have argued, seems to be closely linked to the gradual development of consumerist society.[68] Thus even if kitsch as bad art and bad taste may have been present at all times, kitsch, as a systematised and institutionalised type of 'art', is a recent cultural phenomenon. It is intimately linked to the development of popular culture, the economy of mass production/consumption, and the development of modern technologies, in particular media technologies and industries such as advertising, television, Hollywood cinematography and such like.[69] The mass production and consumption of modern commodities also involves the mass production of popularised art which in these circumstances has to accept the pressure of efficiency. Such mass production of cultural artefacts was conceptualised by the Frankfurt School in terms of the culture and entertainment industries. According to Adorno, the present capitalist mode of production fosters the supplying of the cultural market with commodities specifically designed for relaxation.[70] The production of art becomes closely related to the production of entertainment and thus art functions as entertainment. Even though, as was noted above, kitsch cannot be seen strictly as mere entertainment, it becomes inevitably linked to it since in a consumer society it starts to function as entertainment (to relax or to enable people to have a good time). It is in this sense that it is possible to characterise kitsch as the 'art' of consumerist culture which ceases to function as art and instead starts to function as entertainment. As a result kitsch does not require any intellectual effort from its consumers, i.e. the consumption of kitsch does not require any moral and intellectual cultivation. Thus, putting it in Kantian terms, kitsch does not call for (aesthetic) judgement since any judgement conceived as an ability to evaluate involves the exercise of our moral and intellectual faculties. Kitsch as entertainment with a narrative structure (it is precisely narrative structure as a constitutive part of kitsch which typically differentiates kitsch from mere entertainment) naturally seeks to suspend the necessity of judgement in that it seeks to stop its consumers from an active moral and intellectual engagement. Kitsch does

not stimulate people to think. Rather, it is constructed precisely in a way that would prevent us from exercising our intellectual and moral faculties. It is in this sense that thinkers such as Theodoro Adorno and Max Horkheimer who, linking kitsch with the culture industry and the advent of popular culture, characterise mass culture (or culture industry, as Adorno renamed it later) and kitsch as 'ideology'.[71]

Their notion that kitsch should be seen as the dominant contemporary form of popular ideology is an important one, inviting philosophical scrutiny. It is important for two reasons. First of all, it facilitates the move from strictly aesthetic discussion to the issues of political philosophy, and in so doing enables us to see the political significance of such aesthetic discourse. Secondly, it helps us to develop an alternative, Nietzschean, understanding of 'ideology' as kitsch to the Marxian approach of the Frankfurt School where kitsch is understood as ideology. But before turning to discuss this we still need to consider one further related issue, namely, the relationship between kitsch and popular culture.

Matei Calinescu in his otherwise illuminating book *Five Faces of Modernity*, one of whose chapters is devoted to the critical analysis of kitsch, claims that kitsch may be generally identified with the popular culture of contemporary consumerist society. Thus by spelling out some of the characteristics of contemporary popular culture (its mediocrity, its commercial nature, its being based on 'all-too-human readiness for self-deception', its hedonism and entertainment-driven character and the instrumental logic of efficiency) Calinescu not only argues that the widespread diffusion of kitsch is possible only within the context of the development of popular culture. He also claims that popular culture – the 'pseudo-culture', 'the ideal life style' of the middle class – itself turns out to be the culture of kitsch.[72] That kitsch may be conceptualised as 'the triumphant aesthetics and ethics of consumerism' characteristic for the whole society is plausible, but it does not follow that popular culture itself is the culture of kitsch. And this is so for at least one reason. Popular culture is by definition culture which is popular and widely accessible to people. This, however, does not necessarily entail that its artefacts are of low artistic quality even though that that is often the case. Popular culture can produce, indeed many times has produced, quality art (be it different styles of rock music, film or literature) which can and does become both popular and commercially successful. This is especially the case with pop-music which in the sixties and seventies gave birth to often high quality music and artistic performance. What this suggests then is that popular

culture in itself is not necessarily kitsch and that kitsch, as a relatively recent phenomenon of contemporary consumer society, nevertheless should not be seen as a certain *popular* aesthetic movement or style of art deliberately chosen in aesthetic opposition to academic or high art.[73] Despite the fact that much pop-art in the sixties and seventies was created to portray and aesthetically exalt the banality of consumerist commodities, thus often appearing as kitschy art, it nonetheless, strictly speaking, was not kitsch in as much as it was based on the conscious aesthetic decision to portray the banality of consumerism. That is to say, what is important is the critical distance and reflectivity, the aesthetic self-consciousness of the creative act, which provides conceptual/aesthetic integrity and in so doing aesthetically justifies itself. It was precisely such aesthetic reflectivity of some exemplary pop-art which lifted it from kitsch enabling us to consider it as the new style of art. What this suggests then is twofold. First of all, it shows us that it is not the object which determines whether its aesthetic portrayal is art or kitsch but how it is portrayed and whether there is enough reflectivity (banality and kitsch cease to be banal and kitschy if an artist creates art from banality and kitsch). Secondly, it allows us to bring out another important conceptual difference between art and kitsch, namely, such reflectivity allows an artist to achieve stylistic integrity in relating content to its form and thus aesthetically justify his/her artistic creation. This sheds light on the claim that kitsch, despite the fact that its diffusion was closely linked to the development of popular culture, should not be identified with lower taste, the popular art of the 'uneducated lower class and its tasteless hobbies and joys'. Thus a philosophical critique of kitsch need not be seen as elitist. Kitsch, indeed, does not play a role analogous to that of ideology, since as a contemporary discursive regime (using Foucault's terminology) it has nothing to do with a particular class and cannot therefore properly be seen as an ideological means for the ruling class's domination. Thus this account conflicts both with that of Adorno and Horkheimer, who saw popular culture and kitsch as the false-ideological consciousness of the masses,[74] and that of Matei Calinescu, who sees kitsch as the predominant aesthetic and ethical ideal of the middle-class. Any class can have both its own art and its kitsch, its own specific taste and aesthetics. Both Frank Zappa and the Spice Girls could be put into the same genre of 'popular culture' or 'popular music', but nonetheless the former is an artist whereas the latter are an example of kitsch.

In summary, kitsch is based on flattering people. It is directly opposite to the cultivation of and ability to have a nobler vision of the beau-

tiful and the good. It is the manipulation of people's wants, desires, and whims. In this sense kitsch, on the one hand, and moral and aesthetic development and education, on the other, are incompatible phenomena. Furthermore, kitsch does not require creativity and serious thinking. It is based on ready made commonplace templates, which are produced and consumed one after another without any attempt to transform one's understanding and thinking. It has nothing genuine and original in precisely the Kantian sense. If art, according to Kant, is always both original and exemplary, and thus can be created only by genius through his/her ability to give the *rule* to art, kitsch is neither original nor exemplary. Hence kitsch is created by the mediocrity who simply applies the ready made standards and rules of others. Now if we shift such an understanding of kitsch from purely aesthetic to ethical issues (as was suggested in our discussion of Nietzsche's genealogy which transforms ethics into aesthetics), and in so doing apply what has just been said not to art itself, but to human character in the way Nietzsche did in paragraph 290 of *The Gay Science*, then it will become clear that morality, from Nietzschean genealogy's point of view, is very similar to kitsch. One of the reasons that Nietzsche rejected morality was that for him it was a sign of the reactive will being unable to form itself according its own standards. Morality is wrong because it compels individuals to act according to already given rules and standards which are supposed to be universally valid for everyone. This for Nietzsche is repulsive, since what he requires is that people have courage to create their lives as the Kantian genius creates his art – by giving the rule to one's life. It is at this point that the genealogy of kitsch needs to be developed.

The genealogy of kitsch

I have argued above that Nietzschean genealogy should be seen as both an aesthetic and a historical project which crucially involves the possibility of forming oneself as an artist. To shape oneself according the standards of good taste and style, for Nietzsche, is an imperative which requires the courage to affirm one's life without any reverence for dogmatic ready-made standards imposed on us by society. It is a constant attempt to liberate oneself from all possible ascetic ideals, which simplify and sentimentalise the world around us. If such a reading of Nietzschean genealogy is plausible, it is equally plausible to suggest that that what Nietzsche calls the values of the weak, deeply rooted within Western culture, can be seen as the values of kitsch, i.e. bad

taste. This will become less surprising if we recall that in the *Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche distinguishes between good and bad tastes, arguing that only the strong are able to form their lives according to the standards of good taste. That is why, even at a superficial level, the concept of kitsch perfectly fits the Nietzschean conceptual schema.

Kitsch as an inverted ascetic ideal

However, my more important, and controversial, claim is that kitsch can be seen as a new transformation of, what Nietzsche calls in the *Genealogy of Morality*, the ascetic ideal. The ascetic ideal, according to Nietzsche, initially originates from the Jewish–Christian tradition and its belief in a supernatural God, through which alone the justification and redemption of life and the world are realised. Such belief in a supernatural being becomes institutionalised as a religious practice which subjugates and restrains human life for the sake of the higher ideal – God. In this sense the ascetic ideal is closely linked to the morality of the weak based on the distinction between good and evil, since it gives *meaning* and directedness to the 'slavish' morality. That is, the ascetic ideal gives reason to be moral. What is important, according to Nietzsche, is that such an ascetic ideal enables us to see life as a mere ephemeral transition towards 'true' being (eternity) and requires us to abstain from this-worldly affections and passions that cause suffering. In short, Nietzsche links the original ascetic ideal with such traditional virtues as chastity, fasting, disinterestedness, meekness, all of which separate and restrain the will from its power. The ascetic ideal dis-empowers the will and enforces the belief that in order to deserve eternal joy and happiness in the future (a state without suffering) one needs to constrain and restrict one's life from all its affects, passions, bodily desires, everything which disturbs the tranquillity of the soul. To Nietzsche all this is nothing else but a sign of weakness of the will since the hidden motive of such ascetic practice is the fear of life with all its natural pleasures, dangers and suffering. It is a subtle 'drug' against suffering; a drug which enables the weak to retreat from life and active will to power.

Such is the general characterisation of the ascetic ideal. What is important here is Nietzsche's genealogical analysis of different transformations of this, originally Jewish-Christian, ascetic ideal. The task of a genealogist is not to define a phenomenon (to define something is possible only if it has no history[75]), but rather to describe its historical transformations. And that is what Nietzsche seeks to do in the third essay of the *Genealogy of Morality*: he provides a historical analysis of different transformations of ascetic ideals. Thus Nietzsche suggests that it

would be misleading to think that since the Christian dogmas are in decline, the ascetic ideal is in decline too. Rather, the original ascetic ideal transforms into other spheres and practices of life: in art (Nietzsche dismisses Wagner, who in the later stages of his creative life and music adopted Christianity), in historiography (the belief in neutral, objective, value-free historic observation, history as a mirror of the past), in philosophy (when philosophers start to avoid the business of life, restrain themselves from passions, from marriage, from fame, when they seek to escape into safety and quietness for the sake of undisturbed contemplation), in science (when the old fashioned belief in God turns into the atheist scepticism of the 'free, really free minds', but which nonetheless still holds to the ideal of truth), or in knowledge in general (when knowledge is understood as a value in itself and when it sees itself as 'objective' and without affects and the perspectivism of the will).[76] It is precisely the description and devaluation of these different transformations of the variety of ascetic ideals that is the primary task of Nietzschean genealogy. This understanding is further articulated and reaffirmed in Nietzsche's idea of self-overcoming, due to which all the greatest European values transform themselves into their different forms:

> Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness which was taken more and more seriously, … translated and sublimated into scientific conscience, into intellectual purity at any price. Regarding nature as though it were a proof of God's goodness and providence; interpreting history in honour of divine reason, as a constant testimonial to an ethical world order and ethical ultimate purpose … : now all that is *over*, it has conscience *against* it, every sensitive conscience sees it as indecent, dishonest, as a pack of lies, feminism, weakness, cowardice. … All great things bring about their own demise through an act of self-sublimation: that is the law of life, the law of *necessary* 'self-overcoming' in the essence of life. … In this way, Christianity *as a dogma* was destroyed by its own morality, in the same way Christianity as *a morality* must also be destroyed, – we stand on the threshold of *this* occurrence. After Christian truthfulness has drawn one conclusion after another, it will finally draw the final *strongest conclusion*, that *against* itself; this will, however, happen when it asks itself, '*What does all will to truth mean?'*…[77]

What I shall argue is that a new and further transformation of the ascetic ideal is precisely the widespread diffusion of kitsch within contemporary culture.

The claim that kitsch can be seen as a further and contemporary transformation of the ascetic ideal may seem surprising. It might be argued that nothing can be so different from the ascetic ideal, an ideal which originally was meant to constrain and tighten the body, than contemporary kitsch. Not only it has nothing to do with the restriction of various bodily pleasures, but it fosters different pleasures and naïve sentimentality. Furthermore, kitsch, as it is portrayed in advertising or banal Hollywood films, cannot be separated from the development of secularised culture, where the demise of the traces of any transcendent being or traditional morality, which one way or another limit the body, is ever present. The core values of contemporary consumer society are based on the cult of hedonistic bodily pleasures and thus any morality that seeks in some way to limit them is bound to fail. How then can we see kitsch as a new form of the Nietzschean ascetic ideal?

Kitsch is the inversion of the traditional ascetic ideal – it turns the ascetic ideal up side down. This, however, does not mean that the internal structure of kitsch is different from the ascetic ideal. Both contemporary kitsch and the Nietzschean ascetic ideal are directed towards an overcoming of any form of tension, pain or suffering. Traditional Christian asceticism, according to Nietzsche, created the myth of original sin and the paradigm of salvation in order to overcome suffering. Similarly kitsch, as the inversion of traditional ascetic ideal, through its sentimentality and naivety promises the eternal happiness of consumption here and now and thus 'overcomes' suffering as well. There is no tension or non-sentimental tragedy in kitsch. Any non-sentimental suffering becomes simply indecent; through the genres of *happy ending* Hollywood screenplays and advertising, kitsch functions as the promise to overcome pain and suffering. However, the overcoming of suffering does not involve its denial. Rather, it becomes an essential part of kitsch's narrative so that through the manipulation of a consumer's feelings it becomes possible to overcome it. For Nietzsche an ascetic ideal works as a drug in killing pain ('[h]e [the ascetic priest] combats only suffering itself, the listlessness of one suffering, *not* its cause, *not* the actual state of sickness – this must form our most fundamental objection to priestly medication'[78]), which is natural to every form of life precisely because life grows only through the ability to react to the variety of obstacles. Only due to this ability to overcome obstacles, which necessarily requires courage to withstand pain, is life refined and strengthened.[79] In this sense kitsch can be seen as a means to manipulate suffering (it is worth recalling that Nietzsche ascribes to the ascetic ideal that same function of manipulation of suffering: an

'involuntary craved narcotic against torment of any kind'[80]) through sentimentality. Tension and pain is necessary to kitsch so that it can overcome them later. Kitsch, similarly to the traditional ascetic ideal, promises a state of happiness, but this time heaven is here and now: a painless existence surrounded by commodities, happy and conflictless love, or any pleasure oriented state of being. In short, the promise of an easy happiness offered by kitsch is radically different from that which the Greeks and the Renaissance humanists (to whom Nietzsche himself was sympathetic) meant by *paideia* – the cultivation of the self and one's virtues through art and philosophy. Thus kitsch as an inverted ascetic ideal appears in strong opposition to that of active will and determination to fulfil one's own aim in seeking to overcome obstacles and hardship. Kitsch becomes a commodity to kill the pain.

The difference between the traditional ascetic ideal on the one hand, and kitsch as an inverted ascetic ideal on the other, is due to the secularisation of our originally Christian culture. Considered genealogically, the fundamental feature of traditional Christian Western culture was the metaphysical tension between the transcendental world and this worldly reality. It is precisely this metaphysical tension that was inscribed within the structure of the traditional ascetic ideal which was directed against bodily affections. One had to enter into an ascetic practice through which bodily senses and pleasures would be limited so that the state of eternal happiness could be reached in the afterlife. Accordingly, if any metaphysical tension between transcendence and this worldly reality ceases to exist in today's secular culture, the tension in whose name the traditional ascetic mortification of the body was practised, then the traditional transcendental promise of eternal happiness becomes secularised into the here and now. It is within this genealogical logic that it is possible to suggest that the traditional ascetic ideal's transcendental promise of heavenly happiness has been gradually secularised into this worldly happiness. It is in this sense that kitsch is an *inverted* ascetic ideal, since it aims at an inverted secularised happiness of the traditional ascetic ideal.

However, kitsch, as noted above, is not a mere commodity or a form of entertainment. In similar fashion to art, it has a twofold structure – a duality of form and content. The possession by both of content enables kitsch and art to produce or generate certain ideas and values that in one way or another form our behaviour, world-view, and our self-perception. If, following Nietzsche and Foucault, one sought to investigate the genealogy of kitsch, the description and analysis of the origin of these ideas and values, such accounts would not simply

provide analysis of certain forms of popular art such as is found in literary/film criticism. The latter seeks to analyse the content, the inner logic or the artistic quality (or lack of it) of a particular work of art (kitsch). Instead the genealogy of kitsch would first of all attempt to trace the values, the clichés and the structures of our self-perception formed by kitsch. In short, if literary/film criticism is concerned with art (bad art) in itself, the genealogy of kitsch is not concerned with kitsch in itself, but rather with the function or impact that kitsch has in forming our*selves*. This is what the genealogical approach for both Nietzsche and Foucault is about in general. It is based on the fundamental premise that humanity is a historical project that is shaped and structured through a variety of power discourses (science, morality, religion, media, etc.) which transform and are transformed in the course of history. We find this in Nietzsche's thought in the form of his philosophical claim that the morality of the weak in its widest sense is the entire network of the predominant Western values of the reactive will, which was formed in the course of history and which genealogy has to uncover so that the 'liberation' (i.e. the constant self-overcoming[81]) of the will to power can be possible. This ontological premise is further developed by Foucault who, as mentioned above, sees genealogy as a historical ontology of ourselves, which too presupposes that our subjectivity is historically formed through contingent discursive regimes. For him, genealogical analysis would treat kitsch as another discursive regime without concentrating merely on kitsch itself. That is, without posing the question of truth to that particular discourse or, in the case of kitsch, without posing the question of taste. It is precisely here that the difference between Nietzsche and Foucault may be seen. Foucault, as we have seen, in his understanding of power abandons Nietzsche's dualism between the reactive (weak) and the active (strong) will to power and sees power as a network of discursive regimes. Abandoning the Nietzschean dualism Foucault, so it would seem, abandons his distinction between good and the bad taste as well. This, however, does not mean that Foucault abandons the concept of the stylisation of life. After all the first and second volumes of *The History of Sexuality* are concerned with the contrast between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis*, where the latter, but not the former, is seen as driven by universal rules of what sexuality is. *Ars erotica* is seen as an art having informative parallel with the Greek notion of *enkrateia*, which is also seen in terms of the stylisation of life. If then from Nietzschean genealogy the concept of noble taste provides a strong conceptual tool to engage in the genealogical analysis of kitsch, how is it possible to do so (i.e. to ana-

lyse kitsch in terms of Foucault's understanding of genealogy) without posing the question of taste? I shall return to this issue but a short answer is the following. If, from Nietzsche's thought, it is possible to infer that kitsch represents weakness and the aesthetic vice to affirm life with its pain and suffering, an inability to form one's life as a work of art, Foucault may be seen as showing how this weakness is utilised by advertising, media and the whole set of socio-economic structures of capitalism. In other words, if Nietzsche's genealogy of morals serves as a conceptual tool to describe contemporary kitsch as a new transformation (inversion) of the traditional ascetic ideal, Foucault's genealogical analytics of discursive power networks is an intellectual device 'neutrally' to describe how this inverted ascetic ideal is utilised by the multiplicity of power structures. Thus the genealogy of kitsch would analyse not so much the forms of bad art themselves. Rather, it would try to uncover the ideals and values that are portrayed in kitsch, and how these values and ideals form our consciousness, our body, our behaviour, i.e. us.

However, for Nietzsche the conceptual dualism between the noble taste and the plebeian taste is essential. Implicitly then it is possible to suggest that kitsch, as the lack of good taste and style (understanding the latter in a Nietzschean sense), exemplifies the values of the weak. Kitsch is the lack of stylistic integrity and the inability to form oneself according to one's own artistic imagination and style. For Nietzsche only the strong and courageous individuals have the ability to form their lives according to the standards of good taste. Kitsch then is weakness which manifests itself not only through a lack of the will to power to form oneself according to one's own style. It is also a weakness in its inability naturally to react towards suffering, since as we saw kitsch functions as a 'drug' against suffering. This enables us to distinguish kitsch from ideology as it is understood in the Marxian paradigm. Kitsch, even if it is utilised by those in power, is a sign of weakness. Thus it is the weak who dominate the contemporary scene of the cultural industry, not the powerful. Hence it is not the strong and powerful who dominate and oppress the working class, as it is on the Marxist analysis, but the 'weak' and thus the cultural industry of kitsch in this sense is different from Marxian 'ideology', since the latter functions as a tool of the powerful to manipulate the weak masses. Before discussing this in greater detail let us first examine some examples of contemporary kitsch.

It is tempting to read the variety of values and ideals of popular Hollywood films as a further secularised cultural transformation of

traditional Christian ideals and values. One can argue, for example, that the ideal of romantic love is the secularised version of the traditional Christian *agape*. However, what is clear is that traditional Christian morality has been gradually degraded within the contemporary Hollywood culture into a constant battle between secularised evil and good, where evil is defeated by the good. Thus, for example, the evil forces within the Hollywood mythology became secularised into the variety of evil maniacs, mean rappers, serial killers, crazy losers who were badly abused in their childhoods, power-mad geniuses and the like. We can recognise almost the same structure of the constant battle between good and evil. That is, the secularised battle between the evil maniacs and the noble minded guardians of civil order and morality – the heroic policemen, uncompromising detectives, soldiers, or beautifully fit supermen ready to die to save the world. Needless to say, this secularised battlefield always finishes with the victorious triumph of the good. Furthermore, is not the promise for maximally prolonged painless existence, which is achieved through the variety of commodities, modern technologies and surgeries designed to renew our bodily powers, a longing for the traditional eternity? But let us turn to the most popular Hollywood ideal, the ideal of romantic love. To illustrate that the Hollywood ideal of romantic love embodies the structure of the inverted ascetic ideal which is directed against pain and suffering it is worth turning briefly to Kant.

Kant derives passionate love from the simple sexual instinct. This, however, does not mean that the feeling of love can be reduced to mere sexual desire. The passion we call love, according to Kant, is not caused by the sexual instinct itself but by imagination which comes into play when the immediate satisfaction of the sexual instinct for one or another reason is restricted. It is precisely the inability to satisfy the immediate sexual desire, in part the result of the formation of culture and imagination, which elevates and poeticises both the sexual desire and a desirable person.[82] Love then is the product of imagination which 'spiritualised' and 'poeticised' the sexual drive.[83] What this Kantian notion suggests is that passionate love requires distance and that some form of restriction of the immediate satisfaction of sexual instinct is its constitutive part. Furthermore, many classical literary works suggest that the more there are obstacles and restrictions to love, the stronger and more passionate it becomes. It is not surprising then that such literary works as Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* or Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrate that very often tragic fate is an ineliminable feature of passionate love.

The ideal of happy love within contemporary cinematographic Hollywood kitsch functions through the denial of this distance and any element of tragedy. The structure of the portrayal of innocent romantic love within Hollywood kitsch is almost always the same. The short intrigue caused by obstacles or unfavourable circumstances are always overcome at the end – the passionate love between two lovers overcoming all obstacles always triumphs. The narrative structure of these films finishes at the point where the major challenge looms, namely, to portray how this beautiful love, being able to overcome all 'dramas' and obstacles, survives and is lived through in daily mundane life. It is precisely this lack of reflectivity, the lack of 'realistic' reflection about the dynamics of love and life in general, that makes this type of cinematographic production kitsch. What is important, however, is that the mass consumption of kitsch shapes our consciousness and bodies in relation to our perception of sexuality and marriage. Let us take a concrete cinematographic example as it is embodied in the 1999 British film *Notting Hill* directed by Richard Curtis. The example is significant because we find in it what can be called Hollywood's false self-justifying reflectivity.[84] The romantic comedy *Notting Hill* is about a 'beautiful' and innocent love between a Hollywood film star Anna (Julia Roberts) and an ordinary book retailer William (Hugh Grant). Their romantic love story starts from the moment Anna steps into a second-hand bookshop in Notting Hill. Her beautiful modesty and innocence slowly overcome William's shyness – he finally proposes to her in the 'extraordinary' circumstances (i.e. typically Hollywoodian circumstances) of Anna's press conference. There are two symbolically important points which create the internal tension of the film. During their first date, which also takes place in some form of press conference, William says that he feels as if he were in a dream that does not have any resemblance to the real world. Hence the tension between dream and reality is a characteristic feature of the screenplay. William understands that he, being an ordinary guy, cannot have that which only other Hollywood celebrities – the gods and goddesses of consumer culture – can have. To start a romantic relation with a Hollywood goddess is possible only for a similar kind of celebrity but not for an ordinary second hand bookshop retailer. It is precisely this impossibility for the dream to become reality that prompts William to decide to forget everything that happened between them. His decision, however, is challenged by the 'purity' of Anna's heart when in the culminating scene she visits William in his bookshop and modestly asks him to love her. Here the moral of the inverted ascetic ideal of beautiful love

triumphs: Anna proclaims that in the face of love fame is nothing. Thus the dialectical tension between the fame-world of Hollywood celebrities and ordinary life is blurred through a perfect synthesis – 'true' love overcomes the antagonism between dream life and reality. It is here that the false self-justifying reflectivity becomes evident. *Notting Hill* not only reaffirms the myth, i.e. the inverted ascetic ideal of romantic love, that love is stronger than all possible obstacles and that it is the only moral ideal of contemporary society which provides meaning to our ordinary lives, but also presupposes that Hollywood celebrities have no immunity against it either and that they can be humble enough to love and be loved in the same way as all *ordinary* people do.

Within the context of Nietzsche's understanding of the traditional ascetic ideal we can see that the inverted ascetic ideal of pure love provides meaning for an ordinary life in the contemporary consumer culture. Love is something that makes life worth living, something that everybody dreams about and patiently waits for. It shapes our beliefs, presupposing that romantic love in itself is the highest value and that once people's hearts are filled with it, it will bring happiness and meaning to the rest of our lives without any additional attempt or effort. This inverted ascetic ideal perfectly corresponds with the general culture of contemporary consumer society where the idea that any conception of good, whether a state of mind or a quality of character, needs virtues or cultivation has increasingly become unpopular. In a culture where such virtues as the qualities of character that require practical reasoning and wilful cultivation have declined, the inverted ascetic ideal of pure love, love as that over which human will does not have control, appears as something which just comes and about which one can only dream. It is not surprising that love is not only portrayed in opposition to fame, as it is in the case of *Notting Hill*, but also as that which money cannot buy. In a culture where the economy is subordinated to consumption and where the content of life itself is constituted by the intensity and the quality of the consumption of the whole range of commodities and where the value of money is essential, the ideal of romantic love as that which cannot be bought appears as an innocent dream which can be perceived as being outside the economy of consumption. This may be why the ideal of love becomes so attractive to the consumers. There must be something more to life than the intensity and quality of consumption, something that can give direction and meaning to the life of consumption.

That human life needs ideals that would provide it with a meaning to live by is a very Nietzschean thought. It serves as a conceptual background against which his genealogy as *la gaya scienza* is developed. Nietzsche in the closing lines of the *Genealogy of Morality* writes that the human is a strange animal who needs to have ideals that give direction and explanation of why he needs to suffer. It is the meaninglessness of suffering, according to Nietzsche, not suffering itself which is the curse of humanity, and the ascetic ideal has fulfilled this need by providing it with meaning.[85] It is in terms of these closing lines that we can re-affirm our interpretation that the ideal of pure love of the contemporary consumer culture is the *inverted* transformation of the traditional ascetic ideal. That is to say, the traditional ascetic ideal really meant the denial of materiality, the hatred of senses, and the fear of happiness and beauty. Hence Nietzsche could claim that its purpose was the escape from the appearance, from becoming, and from life itself.[86] So long as contemporary culture is based on precisely becoming, materiality and enjoyment of the consumerist life, a life which aims at almost complete elimination of suffering through the variety of different commodities, a life without any of the transcendental tensions that the traditional ascetic ideal sustained over the centuries, the Hollywood ideal of innocent love is the inversion not only of the traditional ascetic ideal but also of the whole direction of Nietzsche's thought. Therefore the critique of kitsch as an inverted ascetic ideal can be and, indeed, is here advanced from a Thomistic point of view. If genealogy is an abstract intellectual tool to criticise a variety of different ideals, then it can be independently utilised by another intellectual tradition and directed against its rivals – liberalism and Nietzschean post-modernity. This issue of the inversion of Nietzsche's and Foucault's philosophy will be further discussed in the concluding chapter. Here it will be sufficient to state the general structure of my argument. The advent of post-modern consumer culture with its kitsch ideals (romantic love, the struggle between secularised good and evil and the like) is the outcome of the wider process of secularisation and nihilism which Nietzsche both celebrated (in his announcement that God is dead) and despised (regretting that its consequences were not advanced far enough). To criticise kitsch as an inverted ascetic ideal of secularised happiness *here* and *now* is possible by adopting Thomistic philosophy's tension between the transcendental and the secular.

The cultural outcome of Nietzsche's 'God is dead' was the liberation of sensuality, culture of entertainment and enjoyment, which indirectly resulted from the decline of tension between the world of becoming

and transcendence. It also resulted in the advent of sentimental humanism which Nietzsche himself, of course, despised. In this sense Nietzsche's 'Gott ist tod' has become prophetic only partly. It has 'liberated' life from old-fashioned beliefs and taboos on sex, and enjoyment, it maybe restored faith in life itself, but it has done so in the form of sentimental humanism and the arrival of the mass culture and consumerism. The death of God for Nietzsche meant also the death of man as the necessity to overcome humanism. This was perfectly understood by Foucault who advanced the Nietzschean theme of the overman in his own philosophy. Thus from the genealogical point of view sentimental humanism, with its contemporary ascetic ideals of romantic love, and of the triumph of good and order over the evil forces of maniacs, is something which needs to be deconstructed and re-evaluated. This notion of the re-valuation of sentimental humanist ideals derives, of course, from the Nietzschean conception of the *Übermensch*. It can be understood as suggesting that an 'animal' called human can be justified only through our ability and will to overcome ourselves in reaching the limits of being human, hence ceasing to be that which in the past constituted our humanity.

Kitsch as an inverted ascetic ideal, in particular as it is embodied in the ideal of romantic love beyond the consumer economy, not only shapes our consciousness, but also disguises from us the possibility that the balance of discursive power relations can be changed. What this means in more concrete terms is that if the balance of discursive power relations constitutes what our contemporary cultural, social and even biological reality is,[87] then kitsch as an ascetic ideal distances us from understanding that this reality is historically constructed and hence can be changed. It is in this sense that the genealogy of kitsch is the deconstruction of prevailing values which deceive our consciousness. This should not be understood in terms of the concept of ideology within the Marxian paradigm. The latter sees ideology as the historical effect of men's alienation. It is here that we need to return to the issue of ideology. In order to clarify this point (i.e. the relationships, similarities and differences between kitsch, as it is understood within the context of Nietzschean genealogy, and ideology within the Marxian paradigm), I shall briefly consider the Marxist understanding of 'ideology'.

The genealogy of kitsch *versus* the critique of ideology

My suggestion is that the Marxist concept of ideology (i.e. the system of false ideals utilised by the ruling class to disguise from itself the consciousness of the working class, the powerful category in terms of

which different power structures in a society can be criticised) in the light of genealogical analysis ceases to be fruitful and thus should be modified or even replaced by the concept of kitsch. That is to say, when a Marxist criticises contemporary capitalist society using the concept of ideology, a genealogical critique of contemporary discursive power regimes provides an alternative approach through the concept of kitsch.

In *The German Ideology* (1846) we find the following conception ideology:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time the ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of *material* production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.[88]

Marx's conception of ideology then is an integral part of his wider philosophical schema. Behind his conception of ideology there lie such Hegelian concepts as 'estrangement', 'alienation', and 'false consciousness', which presuppose the fundamental ontological belief that if there is false consciousness, then there must be an enlightened consciousness as well.[89] Furthermore, these Hegelian concepts, which were critically scrutinised and rejected by both Nietzsche and his French 'followers' Deleuze and Foucault,[90] presuppose a conception of essential human nature, which can be realised through the process of the deciphering of false ideological consciousness. Ideology then is perceived as the outcome of the predominant mode of production and economic forces of society serving as their justification. It is the system of beliefs, ideas, moral and aesthetic principles and their embodiment in religion, art and philosophy. Given this paradigm, ideological consciousness is false in that it is incongruent with reality for two main reasons. On the one hand, it is false because it does not universally represent the interest of the whole society but only the interest of certain class, e.g. the bourgeoisie. Hence it is biased towards itself and against other social classes. Furthermore, being an ideology of a particular class, it disguises the fundamental struggle between a dominant, i.e. ruling, class and an oppressed class. On the other hand, in doing so it conceals the fundamental fact of human alienation. The ability to uncover what hides behind the deception of ideology, i.e. to uncover

the antagonistic social reality, is an essential part of the process of overcoming human estrangement. Ideology then functions not only as justification for existing modes of production and economic relations, but also it conceals the fundamental inequality between classes and social antagonism of a capitalist society. It is for this reason that we can say that ideology subserves the estrangement and alienation of human society.

What lies (at least implicitly) behind this Marxian paradigm is threefold. First, it presupposes a teleological understanding of history which is realised through the dialectical process of social and economic antagonism. Second, it is closely linked to a conception of humanism, a conception according to which the aim of history is humanity's reconciliation with itself. 'Social humanity' (as it is called in the 10th thesis on Feuerbach) is precisely the condition of the full realisation of man's potential when man fully becomes his/her own master able to control his/her social and material environment. Third, it is based on a specific conception of power which is understood in terms of domination and oppression. That is to say, the Hegelian schema of thesis/anti-thesis/synthesis unfolds through the movement from slavery and domination (human alienation) to freedom. Implicitly power as domination is understood in opposition to freedom, thus it is essentially negative. These aspects, being at the core of the Marxian conception of ideology, subserve the claim that ideology must be understood as a tool of domination and oppression – it always serves, whether intentionally or not, the economic interest of the ruling class.

This paradigm, which has been dominant among 20th century left-wing European intellectuals from Georg Lukács to the Frankfurt school, is at odds with the genealogical understanding of kitsch. First of all, kitsch as a socio-political concept cannot properly be seen as a property of a particular class or as something which can be directed against another class in order to deceive and oppress it. Kitsch is classless in the sense that it is able to transgress the boundaries of different social and economic classes not only because every class can have its own forms of kitsch, but also because the contemporary kitsch of consumer society can be equally accepted and liked by both rich and poor, left and right wing oriented people, upper classes and lower classes. The TV soap operas, mainstream Hollywood films, the cult of celebrities, etc. are watched and consumed all over the world by rich, developing and poor societies.[91] Even though such kitsch is very often created consciously, through understanding what is popular and arranging the whole production according to these observations, kitsch does not

function as the means to oppress a particular social group. Here Foucault's remark in the *History of Sexuality*, that power should be seen without the king, power without the sword, power which functions not only through objective oppression and domination, is important. From a genealogical point of view, kitsch is a discursive power regime, which, however, functions differently from Marxian ideology since its aim is not to hide the oppression and thus deprivation or suppression of people's needs but, on the contrary, satisfaction of certain psychological needs through comforting, flattering, and through providing false idols. If ideology disguises the fact that political power oppresses society, kitsch fosters the socio-economic regime of consumption which creates desires and needs so that later they may be satisfied. The conception of ideology within the Marxian paradigm could be convincing in industrial society where the social and economic differences between classes were big and where the lower class was deprived of satisfaction of fundamental needs and such rights as social mobility, proper nutrition, rights to rest and holidays, rights to free speech, etc., but not in contemporary consumer society where the socially and economically deprived group of people in advanced capitalist societies are comparatively small and where most of these needs and rights are fulfilled and satisfied.

Thus from a genealogical point of view the normality and banality of our consumer culture has little to do with Marxian ideology (this will become clearer in our discussion of the politics of the consumer/desiring self) as both result and means of alienation and oppression. This is so because the widespread diffusion of kitsch functions not through oppression but through promises and their embodiment of easy happiness.

At this point one may object by pointing to Marx's notion of religion as an intrinsically ideological phenomenon. Are not such characteristics of kitsch as the satisfaction of psychological needs through comforting and the production of idols to fawn upon present in the Marxist understanding of religion? Marx saw religion as both the means and the result of human alienation. For a Marxist religion is false consciousness which at best is seen as a compromise, similar to the compromise of the social-democratic trade unionists who believed that higher wages and better working conditions were the sufficient solutions of their misery. Religion comforts people in making them believe that it is God who is in control of the human environment. The comforting power of religion is misleading to those who accept it because it prevents them from realising that religious idols are the

result of man's estrangement. This estrangement rests in the fact that religious belief in a mystical being results from man's inability to control the natural and human, i.e. socio-economic, environment.[92] Such a belief, looked at from a Marxist point of view, is ideological since it does not allow people to question the predominant socio-economic relations. In serving the *status quo* of existing socioeconomic power relations, religion also functions as a principle of social control and repression. It is in this sense that Marx saw religion as an ideological element of the class society where exploitation and oppression are its essential features.

It is within this Marxist paradigm of ideology that Herbert Marcuse, whose conception of ideology was strongly influenced by Adorno and other Frankfurt school thinkers, developed his critique of consumer capitalist culture. In his *One-Dimensional Man* Marcuse argues that advanced industrial capitalist societies, despite their affluence and saturation with various commodities, are still based on the repression of genuine needs. Thus Marcuse provides a distinction between 'true' and 'false' needs. True needs are those that are biologically and culturally necessary. They are our needs for food, for shelter, for procreation, for intellectual and moral cultivation and the like. However, there is a whole set of deformed needs which have been imposed on us by the economic system of consumer capitalism. Marcuse calls them 'repressive needs' and claims that their repressive character lies not only in the fact that they were 'superimposed' on us, but also in that they serve particular social interests.[93] Marcuse thus endorses the paradigmatically Marxist notion of ideology, where ideology is a set of ideas and norms that serve to justify the self-interest of a particular group of people. What is peculiar about the ideology of consumer capitalist societies is its totalitarian and all absorbing character:

> This absorption of ideology into reality does not, however, signify the 'end of ideology'. On the contrary, in a specific sense advanced industrial culture is *more* ideological than its predecessor, in as much as today the ideology is in the process of production itself. In a provocative form, this proposition reveals the political aspects of the prevailing technological rationality. The productive apparatus and the goods and services which it produces 'sell' or impose the social system as a whole. The means of mass transformation and communication, the commodities of lodging, food, and clothing, the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellec-

> tual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole.[94]

One of the merits of Marcuse's analysis of consumer capitalism is its ability to show the internal transformation of capitalist society and its culture. The increasing living standards, the ability to create and satisfy needs, a 'pleasant' interdependence between producers (including big multinational corporations) and consumers make the socioeconomic system well integrated. The pleasures of consumerism and the steady growth of wealth contribute to social inequalities and injustice becoming less noticeable. This is significantly different from, say, late 19th century capitalism when the terrible conditions and exploitation of the working class were the factors which fostered the consolidation of the labour movement and its active resistance against capitalism. Today, as Marcuse rightly observed, the self-consciousness of working people and the struggle for structural resistance is hardly possible, partly because of the all penetrating nature of the ideology of consumerism. By promising high living standards and easy happiness through a variety of goods the industry of entertainment in consumer capitalism transforms us into docile and satisfied individuals. And yet Marcuse still believed that such 'happiness' of consumerism was deeply repressive. Not only does it serve particular social and economic interests, but also it endorses control and the instrumental rationality of ever increasing need for productivity and efficiency. It creates one dimensional culture where true creativity and originality become nearly impossible.

Marcuse's critique of contemporary culture, which he inherited to a large extent from Adorno, is problematic at least for one important reason. Marcuse claims that the higher culture, which traditionally has always been in contradiction with social reality and preserved an element of resistance to it, has been flattened out by its incorporation into the established socioeconomic order. Thus, according to Marcuse, it is not the case that higher culture is subsumed into mass culture, but that in being incorporated into the commercial universe it becomes a commodity itself:

> If mass communications blend together harmoniously, and often unnoticeably, art, politics, religion, and philosophy with commercials, they bring these realms of culture to their common denominator – the commodity form. The music of the soul is also the music of

> salesmanship. Exchange value, not truth value counts. On it centers the rationality of the status quo, and all alien rationality is bent to it.[95]

This claim – that high culture in becoming commodified becomes subsumed into the ideological whole of consumer capitalism – is not convincing. The fact that a piece of fine art in entering market relations becomes a commodity does not in itself change its aesthetic value. Thus it is simply not true that what counts is 'exchange value, not truth value'. The free market and commercialisation of art cannot change the fact that it is art. Furthermore, the general culture of commercialisation does not preclude the possibility that true art *can* be created and that once it is created and enters the market world of commodities, it will function as art rather than commodity. Art in being consumed is indeed a commodity, but this does not mean that in so becoming it stops functioning as art. This is a common mistake that both Adorno and Marcuse commit. It is the mistake of implying that art and commodity are two mutually exclusive phenomena. I want to suggest that this mistake is closely linked to the fact that their critique of the 'culture industry' is informed by the Marxist conception of ideology. That is, what makes the culture industry ideological is the fact that its 'base' is the commodity fetishism of the economic system of capitalism.

It is in the light of these basic characteristics that it is possible to characterise the differences and similarities between kitsch and ideology. What is similar is that both the genealogy of kitsch and the critique of ideology recognise the fundamental transformation of capitalism; the shift from the culture of exploitation to the culture of gratification. However, what is different are the underlying aims of the criticism of ideology, as it is embodied in religion, popular culture or any other guise of 'false' consciousness, on the one hand, and kitsch, on the other. From a Marxist point of view, ideology needs to be criticised and fought so that the oppressed class may become conscious of its true interests. In Marcuse's case ideology has deeply penetrated throughout the whole body of consumer capitalist society and functions in repressing true human needs and freedom, not only of the lower classes but the genuine needs of every member of contemporary society. However, in both cases the ideological aspect of repression is evident. Since ideology inhibits the consciousness of the oppressed and is useful to and is perpetrated by those in power, it can be and most of the time is utilised in order to justify the ruling class's interests and its

superiority. Thus when someone is criticising the ideological overtones of religion in literature, film or art, he/she asks whose interests they serve and what sort of injustice is disguised by them. Accordingly, such criticism is always class conscious, i.e. it assumes that there is a particular social class which benefits from these ideological overtones. And although Marcuse takes into account the ideological nature and extent of consumerism he remains faithful to Marxism in that he still implies that it is the ruling elites that benefit from it the most. Furthermore, very often such criticism presupposes a vision, and that is where the notion of humanism becomes important, of a certain alternative understanding of what true human relations, needs or even a more perfected human condition, a condition without oppression and domination, might be. This, however, is not the case with the genealogy of kitsch, since it does not attempt to uncover the social or economic interests of a particular class. This is so because genealogy sees kitsch as being widespread in its different forms within all social classes and groups. Kitsch transcends particular class interests and thus cannot be a tool to disguise the true universal interest of 'social humanity'. The way ideology functions within the Marxian paradigm is through the justification of the oppression of people; in doing so it disguises the 'truth' about their true interest (hence, typically, the aspect of *intentional* deceitfulness, even though not always present within different forms of ideology, is fundamental). Kitsch, on the other hand, lacking stylistic integrity and depth, functions not so much as an intentional attempt to disguise our true interests. Rather, without any attempt to do so, it disguises the fact that reality has been historically shaped and that it is possible to challenge the predominant balance of discursive regimes and power structures. Kitsch is a banal *weakness* behind which there is laziness and lack of sophistication, rather than a *lie* to deceive and oppress as it is within ideology. It is a lack of historical depth rather than an ill-intentioned attempt to mislead. In this sense it is possible to say that the genealogy of kitsch is less ambitious and radical than that provided by such Marxist critics of consumer capitalism as Marcuse.

This genealogical approach to kitsch fits with the way Foucault saw ideology:

> The notion of ideology appears to me to be difficult to make use of, for three reasons. The first is that, like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth. … The second drawback is that the concept of ideology refers,

> I think necessarily, to something of the order of a subject. Thirdly, ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic determinant, and so on.[96]

This illustrates that the genealogical approach rejects the underlying concepts of the Marxian notion of ideology. The genealogy of kitsch should be constructed in a way that such concepts as truth, the subject (which in one way or another presupposes a conception of humanism), and the traditional understanding of power (i.e. material force embodied within the state and the predominant economic structures) as primary, merely determining the mode of consciousness seen as secondary, should be avoided. Thus the genealogy of kitsch, deconstructing a variety of inverted ascetic ideals of consumer culture, does not presuppose the Marxian logic that, once the 'unmasking' of kitsch is achieved, a truth that will allow humans to free themselves from prevailing power structures will be 'uncovered'. Furthermore, kitsch should not be seen as an epiphenomenon of economic structures seeking to justify or disguise class interests. Thus the way kitsch as a discursive regime functions is not through deception of our consciousness after the manner of ideology, but through making us subjects of imposed knowledge about human behaviour and sexuality. In this sense kitsch is productive in that it forms and imposes new identities and behaviour corresponding to them (the cult of being sexy, glamorous, slim, and ever younger, on the one hand, and the hysteria of plastic surgeries, anti-ageing consultations, non-surgical facial treatments, and weight-losing techniques, on the other). The 'deceptive' character of kitsch rests in its presupposition that these new identities are universal and inevitable. In so doing kitsch conceals from us the fact that our identities are historically formed and that the balance of the predominant power practices and discursive regimes can be changed. Genealogy as historical enquiry opens up the wider perspective which allows us to understand that we have not been all the time as we are now. Such historical perspective, enabling us to understand that we are different from what humans were in the past and that these differences occurred due to contingent factors as well as to a play of different forces, encourages the specific genealogical notion of freedom. To put it briefly, freedom is the ability to resist the prevailing discursive regimes that make us subject to power practices, which prevent us from changing ourselves. Thus freedom is the ability to become otherwise. To undergo such transformation, i.e. 'to be otherwise', or 'to

refuse to be what we are' is possible through a creative process due to which a new balance of discursive power relations (a balance which would be more acceptable to us) may eventually be established. It is in this sense we may claim that kitsch is another discursive regime of the reactive will to power (to use Gilles Deleuze's terms) which prevents us from seeing the possibility to creatively experience freedom in changing ourselves and/or 'being otherwise'.

Kitsch and the political: the case of consumer democracy

It was suggested earlier that Nietzsche's thought allows us to interpret kitsch in terms of an inverted ascetic ideal, of weakness and of bad taste, seen as a result of the weak will being unable to affirm life and suffering as they are. Foucault's implicit approach to kitsch, on the other hand, can be characterised as an attempt to rearticulate kitsch as a new discursive regime which functions and is utilised within different power institutions and discourses, such as advertising, the media, Hollywood cinematography and pornography. Furthermore, it enables the uncovering of the links between the discursive diffusion of kitsch, on the one hand, and contemporary political institutions and practices, such as the free market, the regime of political correctness, democratic political institutions and democratic culture, on the other. In other words, if Nietzsche 'shows' that kitsch is weakness and aesthetic vice/inability to affirm life with its pain and suffering, Foucault 'shows' how this weakness is utilised by advertising, media, marketing techniques, and the whole socio-economic structures of consumer capitalism. It is this Foucaultian approach that will be our concern for the rest of this chapter.

What I shall seek to do is to link kitsch, as that which is driven by the striving for popularity and commercial success through the manipulation and flattering of people's irrational feelings, to Foucault's notion of the modern production of the self. The notion of the modern, desiring, self is, for Foucault, linked to the modern discourse of sexuality. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault seeks to show that the proliferation of discourses of sexuality in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries became essential constituents in the production of modern subjectivity: the deepest truths about sex and sexuality have become a formative part of our identity. What is significant, as noted above, is that the modern discursive regime of sexuality functions not in terms of repression, but as the discursive power which produces, stimulates, and shapes (as contrasted with discovering or revealing the essential nature

of) our self-identification as sexual beings as well as our sexual practices and desires. It is in this sense that Foucault's claim that the cultural movement of sexual liberation in the late sixties and seventies should be seen as a new discursive regime, which can be, and indeed is, utilised by different power structures. In our consumer society it takes the form of, as Foucault himself puts, 'Get undressed – but be slim, good-looking, tanned!'.[97] What I want to argue is that such a contemporary discursive regime, which through advertising and other techniques utilises stimulation of sexual and other desires, both incorporates kitsch and has the structure of kitsch. Material for such a genealogical analysis of kitsch, as it is embodied in the contemporary regime of the self, has been usefully presented in the illuminating documentary film 'The Century of the Self'.

The BBC documentary 'The Century of the Self', written and produced by Adam Curtis,[98] is a fascinating story about the influence of Sigmund Freud's ideas and psychoanalysis on twentieth century economy, society and culture. This documentary tells a genealogical story. It analyses how the scientific (or pseudo-scientific) discourse of psychoanalysis shaped both the economic and political reality of contemporary consumer society. In using this documentary I shall try to illustrate the essentially Foucaultian notion of how power is interlinked with scientific discourses and theories about human nature. That is, these theories and practices formed a discursive power regime, which contributed enormously to shaping and producing what we now call the consumer society and culture. In this sense the documentary sketches the genealogy of consumer capitalism, the consumer self, and the newly emerged democratic politics of the desiring self. What we find is that the techniques and the ideals intrinsic to them, applied from psychoanalysis by a variety of public relations experts, have the structure of kitsch as inverted ascetic ideal. At the centre of these ideals there is the notion that the self is expressed through a range of commodities that people consume and that the ultimate end of such a self is the ideal of consumer happiness.

Since the 1920s Freud's ideas about human nature as being essentially irrational, and as driven by unconscious forces such as sexual desires, have had an enormous influence in the development of consumer economy and culture in America. What is important for present purposes is not so much whether the Freudian '*discovery*' of the irrationality of human nature was a discovery of scientific truth. Rather, psychoanalysis, utilised by American business, gradually became a powerful discursive regime, which *produced* the nature of the contemporary *self* as

irrational and driven by unconscious forces. Thus this analysis is perhaps most illuminatingly articulated in terms of Foucaultian genealogy, which analyses such pseudo-scientific theories as psychoanalysis in terms of a discursive regime that shapes our social, political and cultural reality. It is in this sense that we can say that the history of twentieth century consumerism, together with the Freudian notion of irrational human nature, has brought us to the socio-cultural condition in which individuals are treated and see themselves not as active and rational citizens, but as passive and irrational consumers. This history started from the moment when, through the psychological manipulative techniques of public relations' experts, it was realised that it was possible to sell commodities by appealing not to people's needs, but to their irrational desires and fears.[99] American corporations soon came to realise that the more people were irrational in their consumer choices the better it was for their business. In stimulating people's desires they were able to sell their goods before the old goods were consumed. This transformation from a needs culture to a desire culture, which was initiated by such American propagandists as Edward Bernays in the mid 1920s, allowed businesses to link the commodities they produced to people's irrational desires and feelings, and to sell them not because of their practical virtues, but as symbols of the purchasers' identities.[100]

Such marketing techniques, the utilisation of psychoanalysis, and the industry of public relations have gradually produced the consumer culture which fosters and stimulates a variety of desires. In stimulating them, big businesses were producing ideal consumers, whose primary concern was not active participation within the public domain, but passively achieved happiness. The peculiarity of this notion of consumer happiness is that it has been the result of contemporary marketing culture which develops and reinforces the image of happiness as the end result of the consumption of commodities. It is also reinforced by a variety of psychological-therapeutic practices which, in seeking to combat stress, mental discomfort and general unhappiness, have led people to believe that happiness is a normal state of mind whereas any manifestation of unhappiness is abnormality. Unhappiness and suffering are considered as inappropriate within contemporary consumer culture.

It is here that is important to stress the link between the notion of kitsch as an inverted ascetic ideal and the conception of the consumer self. Human beings as desiring happiness machines, who are driven by the intensity of consumption, become easily susceptible to kitsch. Indeed, there are the same elements of manipulation, of superficial

happiness, and of striving for commercial success within the structure of kitsch. Furthermore, kitsch has the character of entertainment and commodity as well as it portrays and creates the ideals of happy life within contemporary consumer culture. It justifies and idealises consumer life, without ever posing critical challenges to the ideal of superficial happiness. What is important, and this is what links kitsch as an inverted ascetic ideal to consumer capitalism, is that happiness in both cases is understood as passive. That is, happiness can be achieved through the intensity of passive consumption of commodities and services. Such a notion of the passive happiness of consumerism is radically different from, for example, the Aristotelian notion of *eudaimonia* as essentially active, which is possible only through the full exercise of moral and intellectual virtues such as wisdom, courage, self-control and justice. This is apparent from millions of advertisements which put across in different ways the same message of passively achieved happiness – buy this shampoo and your shiny hair will make you happy; this car will make you exceptionally confident, comfortable, and happy; our holiday package will enable you to enjoy the riches of our services in X country and so on.

The transformation from needs culture to desires culture,[101] and the psychological manipulative techniques used by the experts of public relations and marketing, soon had a significant influence on both the way most people and some intellectuals saw democratic politics as well as the way politics was practiced. Such intellectuals as Walter Lippmann and the founding father of America's public relations, Edward Bernays, saw modern democracy as unsustainable unless it was controlled by experts.[102] If the inner nature of human beings, especially when they are in crowds, is irrational and if, as Lippmann thought, the mass media is manipulated by different self-interested parties (e.g. industries), then the only way to manage mass democracy is through powerful elites which, knowing people's psychological motives, will be able to control them.

It is significant that a thinker such as Bernays, who was deeply influenced not only by Sigmund Freud but also by Gustav le Bon, saw consumerism as the way forward in occupying and in this way controlling the masses. Thus Edward Bernays, as public-relations historians claim, not only initiated the entire tradition of spin within US governments, but also formulated the idea that consumerism is necessary and should be central to American democracy.[103] At the centre of this notion of consumer democracy was the belief that citizens should not be involved in actual decision making and actively participate in the

public domain, and that constant promotion of consumerism is necessary in order to give people the illusion that in buying different commodities they can choose for themselves what they really want.[104] What was central within this conception of democracy were American corporations which produced goods as the means to fulfil people's desires and wants. Such a vision of consumer democracy was based on the idea of classical liberalism. That is, a prosperous society will be created, a society in which every need and every desire of its individuals would be fulfilled, if business were left on its own and all governmental restrictions and controls were to be removed.

A link was thus forged between two different but at the same time related ideas. Consumer democracy, as it was portrayed by Edward Bernays, a democracy based on the conception of the desiring self whose identity is formed through the variety of commodities one chooses to consume, on the one hand, was linked to the liberal notion of *laissez-faire*, on the other. Thus the liberal conception of autonomy, understood as the sphere of non-interference within which individuals can pursue their own individual goals, provided the basis for the formation of the consumer democracy of the desiring self. The liberal notion of autonomy, which initially was developed by such thinkers as John Milton and John Locke in terms of freedom of religious faith and individual conscience, was passed to thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek and later John Rawls, who redeveloped and expanded it in terms of individual freedom to choose one's own good. Such liberal notions of autonomy do not provide any substantial basis to compare and judge the different ends that individuals choose. This inability logically derives from the contemporary conception of autonomy itself. That is, the ends that individuals choose must necessarily be secondary, because what is fundamental is *freedom to choose* itself. Thus any rational ability dialectically to decide that one set of ends is better than the other would undermine autonomy as the ultimate good itself. It is relevant here to note that it is precisely big businesses which benefit the most from such a conception of autonomy. It is the corporations of capitalist society which produce the material – commodities through which, as mentioned, individuals create their identities – for our choices. And they benefit precisely because there can hardly be moral ground on the basis of which within the contemporary liberal public domain it would be possible to say that, for example, certain conceptions of good or certain commodities, which constitute part of that good, are impermissible, inappropriate, or simply wrong. Thus corpora-

tions and emerging new industries, through stimulating the desires and whims of consumers, have the greatest power in shaping people's lives and their identities.

A good example to illustrate how businesses through powerful discursive regimes shape our identities is the media's contemporary commodification of sex. In the beginning of the 1990s British television welcomed its liberated attitude towards sex: the main media companies had now much more power and freedom to show what they wanted.[105] This revolution of 'sexual liberation' within the media and entertainment business, despite the apparent social conservativism, was made possible by the policies of Margaret Thatcher. The enterprise economy which Thatcher promoted had a far bigger influence than her conservative attitudes towards family, public morality and stability within society. After the decade of the Tory government, British society, in similar fashion to American society during the Reagan era, was radically transformed with regard to sexuality. This change came from the fast development of the entertainment business as well as changes in the media, in particular television. The reason for this change was simple and was linked to the attempt to attract more viewers, especially those from 18 to 25, through putting more sex into programmes and shows. It is now estimated that more than half (56 per cent) of all shows on TV in the US contain sexual content, and that two-thirds (67 per cent) of all network time shows include sexual content.[106]

What these figures indicate is that sex and sexuality are utilised and commodified by capitalism and thus, far from illustrating the naïve idea of sexual liberation, reinforce Foucault's notion that the social and cultural structures move not from oppression to liberation, but from one form of domination to another. The gradual commodification of sex and sexuality has become a new powerful discursive regime, which has been utilised by television producers, film directors, advertising experts, spin doctors and the like. It has become an essential part of the contemporary system of consumer economy – sexuality now serves the power relations within the system. It is worth noting that Foucault himself had no doubts about the possibility of such commodification of sexuality. In one of his interviews, asked whether we can be sure that different sexual pleasures will not be exploited in advertisement by their constant stimulation, Foucault answered:

> We can never be sure. In fact, we can always be sure *it will happen*, and that everything that has been created or acquired, any ground

> that has been gained will, at a certain moment be used in such a way. That's the way we live, that's the way we struggle, that's the way of human history.[107]

This returns us to the earlier genealogical claim that it is through such discursive regimes and power structures as the industry of public relations, advertising, psychoanalysis, and cinematography that our contemporary self-perception as desiring happiness machines has been created. The commodification of our desires through the enforcement of the idea that humans are passive desiring happiness machines has been closely linked to the emergence of the new type of consumer politics. Edward Bernays's utopian vision of consumer democracy has, by the end of the 20th century, become our reality. We know that from the latest ever more sophisticated electoral campaigns in Britain and the US.[108] The underlying idea of these electoral campaigns was introduced by leading American public relations experts, who convinced Bill Clinton that he had to change the nature of campaigning and of politics in general by discarding to use the traditional political–ideological concepts and instead introducing purely marketing and psychological techniques widely used in business.[109] This change in politics, of course, has been closely linked to the social changes within society itself. The impact of almost one hundred years of consumerism, in particular the type of consumerism that occurred in the late seventies due to technological advances in producing individualised commodities, was that people ceased to see themselves as primarily belonging to social classes, ethnic groups, or any other forms of community, but started to perceive themselves as mere consuming individuals whose primary concern has become self-expression. The means for this self-expression are provided by business. The latter has now become able to produce commodities according to the variety of individual tastes, which are carefully monitored through marketing researches. It is precisely the same marketing strategies in monitoring people's wants and desires and then later selling to them commodities according those desires that were applied within politics by both the US Democrats and New Labour in Britain.[110] Now politics becomes more and more concerned with how to monitor, calculate, and group the desires and psychological needs of individuals and then modify electoral campaigns and policies accordingly. Therefore the nature of politics has increasingly become based on the need to target and respond to the inner psychological needs, desires and wants of contemporary individuals. Thus understood democratic politics becomes not an active participa-

tion where citizens rationally engage in public debate, but a calculative technology which, through monitoring people's desires and psychological needs, constructs its policies in order to fulfil passive desires.

Such a genealogy of Western consumerism enables us to see the historico-sociological link between consumer culture and its predominant discourses and techniques such as psychoanalysis, marketing and kitsch, on the one hand, and democratic politics together with its institutions of elections, democratically elected governments and regime of political correctness, on the other. This important link, which illuminates the nature of contemporary liberal democracy, would be difficult to discern if the political were approached from the point of view of currently dominant liberal political theory. Approaching political institutions in terms of the old fashioned conception of the minimal/neutral state, or of the sovereign state as the only embodiment of power, is perhaps not the most useful for questioning such phenomena as consumerism and its implications for political institutions. Furthermore, the deontological approach to political philosophy, as it is embodied famously in John Rawls's thought, requires us to see not only liberal political institutions as neutral between different value systems, but the foundation of these political institutions as itself neutral with respect to those value systems. Such an approach presupposes that the political is seen as detached from any attempt to scrutinise pre-existent values or conceptions of the good. Furthermore, it presupposes the relativity of these systems of values and goods which accordingly fosters a cultural context within which strong aesthetic and moral judgements become problematic. Perhaps the best example is the doctrine of political correctness understood as foreclosing public discussion of politically sensitive moral issues. But if the role of strong moral judgements and rational deliberation about what it is to live the good life decreases within the public sphere (and the psychological marketing techniques used by politicians illustrate this), then the sphere of contemporary democratic politics becomes dangerously irrational. No doubt this conclusion is neither Nietzschean, nor Foucaultian since for both of them strong and rationally argued moral judgements are not an issue. From a genealogical point of view what is important is not so much the fact that political discourse has become irrational. Such a claim, after all, is possible from the substantial/ontological understanding of rationality which requires us to take into account not only the so called 'instrumental rationality' of means, but also deliberation of directedness towards goals and the ultimate goal as well as deliberation concerning their goodness. What is important for

genealogy is that politics have become closely interlinked with consumerism and a variety of marketing techniques. From Foucault's perspective it is necessary to deconstruct these power structures and their discursive regimes of consumer democracy through genealogical analysis. In doing so genealogy provides the possibility of a break with and rupture of these power-knowledge regimes, and thus enables freedom in promoting one's own creativity.

To go beyond this, in principle negative, critique (drawn from Nietzsche and Foucault) of the culture of kitsch, contemporary consumer democracy, and the politics of the desiring self in general, we need to look for alternative philosophical approaches *beyond* genealogy itself. The originality of the above would-be Foucaultian genealogy of kitsch lies in the fact that it enables us to see the link between consumerism and contemporary political liberal-democratic institutions. Furthermore, its strength lies in the way it provides us with an alternative, non-Marxist, way to criticise capitalist consumer culture. It shows that there is an intimate link between kitsch as 'a routine of flattery' (to use Plato's critique from the *Gorgias*) and the consumer democratic political culture. It shows that the Marxian critique of capitalism and ideology is inadequate within the culture of consumer individualism. And it is so for two important reasons. First, one of the main characteristics of contemporary consumer culture lies in the fact that individuals cease to see themselves as part of any social class. Instead, they tend to identify themselves as mere consuming individuals who do not see business as that which exploits them, but as something that provides them with identity.[111] In this sense Herbert Marcuse, despite the fact that he was well aware of the dangers of psychological manipulation in corporate advertisments, was wrong in his Marxian claim that consumerism functions as cultural totalitarianism which threatens genuine individualism. This belief, that consumer capitalist culture is and can be a threat to individualism, turns out to be dubious, because the further development of capitalist consumerism from the 1970s adapted and expressed itself through a new form of individualism.[112] These two factors – individuals as consumers do not strongly identify with any social class and they do not see themselves as being exploited by big business – at least partially undermine the fundamental concepts of the Marxian critique of capitalism, concepts such as class struggle and exploitation. Second, the traditional Marxian critique is unable sufficiently to explain the fundamental difference between post-industrial individualistic consumer culture with its inverted ascetic ideals of 'stress-free happy life' and the industrial society of mass production.

The promise of easy happiness and ability to fulfil that through the variety of commodities supported by the entire discursive regime of kitsch is essential for consumer capitalism. It now functions not through exploitation of the working class, or repression, as Marcuse argued, but through the unlimited production and satisfaction of desires.

Furthermore, part of the importance of the genealogy of kitsch is that it brings aesthetics to the centre of the political. It enables us to engage in a novel critique of consumer capitalism and liberalism. What is wrong with capitalism is not so much that it exploits individuals and that it creates gross inequalities. In fact, one can argue that capitalism, coupled with the welfare state, is able to create and distribute wealth as no other economic system can. Rather, the problem with consumer capitalism is that it fosters banal human existence saturated with the artefacts of 'kitsch'. Thus the Nietzschean philosophical approach becomes relevant here. Human existence is bearable only as an aesthetic phenomenon. Thus understood humanity can be justified only through its ability to create the beautiful or the noble, whether through art or more generally in the way human beings interact with themselves and with the world.

However, despite the power of this would-be Nietzschean-Foucaultian genealogy of kitsch, it is nonetheless unable to provide any *substantive* alternative account of the political. It is in this sense that, having provided a negative critique of the link between, on the one hand, the prevailing structures of liberal political thinking, with its associated democratic-liberal institutions and, on the other, consumer culture and kitsch as that which provides this culture with its ideals, it remains to move to an attempt to articulate a positive conception of the political, the political beyond liberal democracy understood as the legacy and practical embodiment of the Enlightenment project.

3
A Hermeneutic Approach to the Political

> The first task of the church is not to make the world just. The first task of the church is to make the world the world.
>
> Stanley Hauerwas (*In Good Company*, p. 21)

> To those for whom thinking is a delight
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche (*The Will to Power*, p. XXII)

Two conflicting accounts of hermeneutics: Ricoeur *versus* Gadamer

Paul Ricoeur in his book *Freud and Philosophy* provides two different and competing models of hermeneutics. The first is grounded in the phenomenology of the sacred, the second is hermeneutics as the exercise of suspicion. Despite their opposed natures both of them, according to Ricoeur, belong to the same 'hermeneutic field' because both are dealing with the interpretation of various symbols and signs. Thus the most general definition of hermeneutics is 'the theory of the rules that preside over an exegesis – that is, over the interpretation of a particular text, or of a group of signs that may be viewed as a text'.[1] A short exposition of Ricoeur's distinction will provide a helpful preliminary to my argument concerning the hermeneutic approach to the political as it may be seen in terms of MacIntyre's philosophy. This confrontation will also help to form an alternative understanding of hermeneutics.

The opposition of two different hermeneutics is the conceptual background against which Ricoeur's analysis and interpretation of Freud takes place. In this sense it is at the centre of the wider argument about

the nature of hermeneutics to which Ricoeur pays attention in some of his later work.[2] What does this distinction involve?

The hermeneutics of faith is interpretation that seeks to recollect the meaning of a text. Its preoccupation always is the care and concern for the object whose meaning it seeks to interpret. It is an attempt to capture the meaning of an object without any reduction; that is, without reducing it to a causal or functional description.[3] What is important here is not the exterior of meaning, i.e. a cause or effect, but the revelation of its interior through careful listening. In this sense hermeneutics is an art or *technē* of careful listening, presupposed by the *willingness* to reveal something that pertains only to *that* narrative, which requires rational faith and respect for its object. An example of this hermeneutic, according to Ricoeur, is the phenomenology of religion or the exegesis of canonical 'sacred' texts. However, hermeneutics as recollection of meaning should not be narrowly seen only as the exegesis of 'sacred' texts. Rather it is based on belief, belief not in the sense of personal disposition but as the necessary part of the *ontological* structure of hermeneutics, that from the beginning there is something valuable hidden in the meaning of a particular text. Thus such interpretation is the process of opening which in itself is an ontological event precisely because the meaning of a text, as it were, reveals itself in its height and authority. To understand, as Gadamer puts it, is already a kind of happening.[4]

The hermeneutics of suspicion is rather different. Its gesture is opposite to an attempt at the recollection of meaning – it seeks to demystify 'the illusions and lies of consciousness'. The school of suspicion, according to Ricoeur, is best represented by three thinkers: Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. Their thought, in different ways, is led by the suspicion that appearances are lying and that consciousness is primarily false consciousness. Hermeneutics understood this way is not about the opening of meaning, rather it seeks to decipher the *expressions* of the consciousness of meaning.[5] If Descartes, so Ricoeur argues, started to doubt things, Nietzsche, Marx and Freud started to doubt consciousness itself. But on what ground can Ricoeur claim that these three intellectual practices of suspicion can still be grouped within the same field of hermeneutics? This issue is important because it is directly related to my earlier discussion on Nietzsche and Foucault. What is at stake here is the question whether Nietzschean genealogy can be understood as hermeneutics.

Ricoeur, as mentioned above, understands hermeneutics as the interpretation of signs and symbols. The symbol is a linguistic expression

that has a double or multiple meaning. Precisely because the meaning of a sign is never exhausted by its immediate (first) designation, it can be understood only through interpretative mediation. It is because of this double-meaning characteristic of symbolic expression that interpretation is needed. In this sense interpretation and symbol are complementary phenomena.[6]

Despite the fact that Marx, Nietzsche and Freud are led by suspicion, which seeks to demystify the content of false consciousness, the process of demystification in all three cases, according to Ricoeur, is none the less a process of interpretation. For Marx the deciphering of illusions takes the form of the critique of ideology, for Nietzsche it is the unmasking of the prevailing values of 'the weak', and for Freud it is the critique of the superego as 'censorship' or 'watchman'. Demystification, so Ricoeur claims, does not end with the negative destruction of tradition but attempts to create new meaning. The deciphering of our alienated consciousness (Marx), false ascetic ideals (Nietzsche) and the repression of desires (Freud) serves as the *mediation* for the creation of new meaning. Thus the reduction of illusions of consciousness aims at its extension.[7] What is important is that for all of them the exercise of suspicion has to lead to a deeper conscious insight which serves in each case a different purpose. Marx seeks deeper understanding revealing the awareness of necessity so that the liberation of *praxis* or revolutionary change can be possible. Nietzsche through the mediation of the meaning of '*Übermensch'* and 'eternal return' seeks to increase the will to power. Finally, Freud, through the psychoanalysis of dreams and interpretation of the unconscious, seeks the healing of neurosis. Thus in each case, according to Ricoeur, what we are dealing with is hermeneutics. That is to say, even though it has the negative or reductive gesture, it is still an art of interpretation because the hermeneutic process of mediation for the sake of grasping new meaning is present.

At this point a critical interrogation is necessary. My task, however, will not be to refute Ricoeur's argument that 'the school of suspicion' can be seen as hermeneutics, but to confront it with an alternative understanding of hermeneutics through the questioning of Ricoeur's argument. Thus the nature of my argument will be hermeneutic rather than analytic – its full justification, so I hope, will become apparent only with reference to the whole argument and its unity.

Any discourse about another discourse, whose meaning is not immediately given, is already interpretation. In this sense philosophy is always interpretation since references to other texts or discourses are unavoidable. This, however, does not mean that every philosophical

discourse, which in one way or another poses the question of language, is hermeneutic. Marx's critique of ideology can hardly be seen as hermeneutics because what he is primarily concerned with is not meaning and language, but the critical theory of economic relations and of the antagonism between opposing social classes which appear as a result of different economic interests. Only understanding the laws of dialectical materialism (which he considered to be 'objective') enables him to pose the question of ideology as false discourse. Thus what Marx is concerned with is not 'symbol' but 'objective reality', reality which has to come about through revolutionary *praxis*. That is to say, the deciphering of ideology is led by the primordial suspicion that it is not true reality and that it is disguised by false consciousness. Once this is realised through the critique of ideological false consciousness, and once the 'objective' laws of history and reality are understood through the rigours of scientific enquiry, revolutionary *praxis* in order to bring about 'the true reality' should follow. Hence the critique of ideology is not a *mediation* to the new extended meaning. Rather it serves as a function of the revolutionary *praxis*. This is summed up in the famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach that so far philosophy sought only to *interpret* the world, while what we need is to *change* it. Thus even the creation of new meaning is secondary since what is really important is *praxis*, not meaning. Hermeneutics on the other hand is concerned only with meaning as already given, not in the sense of immediate understanding but as confronting us and thus calling for interpretation. Hermeneutics starts when this proximity of meaning, which reaches us through our cultural tradition, is recognised and affirmed. Precisely this recognition of the horizon of meaning makes hermeneutics a primarily linguistic philosophy, rather than a philosophy of power such as we find in Marx and Nietzsche. Having said that, it is crucial to emphases that the linguisticality of hermeneutics is not only of a semantic nature. Interpretation and understanding, as we will see, have the status of ontological event.[8] Opening of the meaning, which we confront within our tradition, fulfils and changes our existence and *vice versa* – to understand the meaning of a certain narrative one has to be able to change oneself or, as MacIntyre puts it, to understand a certain canonical text one has to be able to acquire certain virtues. It is this that makes hermeneutics so different from what we find in Nietzsche and Marx. From the hermeneutic point of view, forgotten meaning calling us to actualise it through its interpretation is always present and thus beyond just the arbitrary will – it confronts us in its authority. For Nietzsche and Marx the linguistic enterprise of demystification reduces the authority of such

meaning in order that the energetic to power can be freed, and 'later' the will to power creates new meaning, which ultimately serves as the justification of the energetic of power. Precisely because Nietzschean genealogy, on the one hand, and Marx's critique of ideology, on the other, are what can be called the linguistics of power, rather than the linguistics of meaning as is the case with hermeneutics, their nature is always *revolutionary*. That is to say, the energetic of power can be freed only through the revolutionary act which breaks the prevailing structure of meanings. In a certain respect this is very much the legacy of the Enlightenment, even though Marx's theory of revolution differs considerably from Nietzsche's genealogy. But it is not only Marx who represents the philosophical inclination to revolution in the midst of the Enlightenment project. The Cartesian doubt, which initially gives birth to the revolutionary spirit of Enlightenment, does so not only in the sense that it breaks with the continuity of tradition, but first of all because it seeks to *establish the foundation* of knowledge enabling us to see being in the light of absolute certainty and transparency in *this* instance – the single instance of presence. However, if for Marx emancipated consciousness can once and for all be realised through the singular historical revolutionary event, Nietzsche goes beyond this logic of modern emancipation and writes about the rupture of traditional meaning as the constant attempt of self-overcoming. Thus Nietzschean genealogy – the art of reductive 'interpretation' – is, as we have seen, the intellectual tool of the will to power which constantly seeks its realisation through the suspension of old and creation of new values. Furthermore, the intention of genealogy is not an attentive interpretation of given meanings but rather misinterpretation. Nietzsche in the *Genealogy of Morality* denies the concept of truth as another ascetic ideal and spells out some of, what he calls, the essential attributes of interpretation: 'forcing, doctoring, abridging, omitting, suppressing, inventing, falsifying'.[9] What is important is that these two aspects – the denial of truth *and* his insistence that everything is interpretation (or misinterpretation) – are closely related to each other. The link between them is precisely the Nietzschean concept of power: the intention of interpretation is not meaning *itself*, as it is for hermeneutics, but power. But if this is so, then Ricoeur is wrong in suggesting that Nietzschean interpretative philosophy can be called *hermeneutics*. The concept of 'hermeneutics' at least in Nietzsche's case is misleading not only because Nietzsche has his own specific concept of 'genealogy', but because genealogy, an interpretative philosophy, does not see its aim as to arrive, through a negative detour of suspicion, at a new and more enlightened

meaning. In other words, precisely because Nietzschean genealogy is concerned not with meaning itself, but with its effects, in particular with power, and because its dynamics is not based on continuity of meaning but on constant break from existing meaning, it is essentially different from hermeneutics. This essential difference between hermeneutics and genealogy – the difference between such characteristics as belonging to tradition, and continuity of meaning (hermeneutics) *and* distantiation from meaning and break from tradition (genealogy) – will hopefully become clearer when I have discussed Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutics.

That continuity, belonging, and the affirmation of tradition are the distinctive features of hermeneutics is clear from Gadamer's understanding of historical hermeneutics. Commenting on Heidegger's understanding of the temporality of being, Gadamer writes:

> 'Belonging' is a condition of the original meaning of historical interest not because the choice of theme and inquiry is subject to extrascientific, subjective motivation …, but because belonging to traditions belongs just as originally and essentially to the historical finitude of Dasein as does its projectedness towards future possibilities of itself.[10]

This is the conceptual starting point where Gadamer opens his project of historical hermeneutics: human existence discloses itself in its historical finitude. It is a Heideggerian insight that the structure of temporality constitutes our subjectivity. With this insight Gadamer seeks to oppose the subjectivism of modern philosophy which postulates the self-determining consciousness detached from (Descartes) or absolutely aware of (Hegel) its historicality. However, Gadamer's question is not what this structure of temporality means ontologically, but how it conditions our understanding. That is to say, if one questions the modern claims for scientific objectivity, what do temporality and historicity mean for our understanding? It is important to consider, so far as it is relevant to the overall discussion, several elements of Gadamer's argument in *Truth and Method*. The questions that one has to bear in mind are: how does Gadamer understand the concept of tradition, and how does it relate to hermeneutics?

Writing about the hermeneutical circle of understanding Gadamer invokes Heidegger's concept of fore-structure. The understanding of any discourse that we encounter, either reading a text or in conversation with a person, moves from the whole to the part and from the

part to the whole. Gadamer calls this movement centrifugal since our understanding always moves from the primordial anticipation of meaning as a whole to its re-articulation and re-confirmation through the more detailed comprehension of the parts. Thus understood understanding always works as the constant attempt to foresee the meaning of a text. It is the process during which new projections of meaning are corrected or/and confirmed as we go along. The fore-structure of understanding, then, is this ability to project the meaning of a text as soon as some of its initial meaning appears.[11] What this hermeneutical circle implies is that the only 'objectivity' of our understanding is confirmation (or otherwise) of the fore-meanings through the text itself. That is, the fore-meanings are confirmed, as Gadamer says, in their being worked out, contrary to coming to nothing which is always the case in arbitrary interpretation.

At this point Gadamer asks what this fore-structure is and where it comes from. Is it a merely subjective psychological capacity of intuition? Or it is a methodologically worked out cognitive procedure constituting our understanding? Gadamer accepts neither of these positions insisting that the fore-meaning is neither objective, nor merely subjective. Rather, it is formed and inherited through our linguistic and cultural world-view. That is where the structure of temporality and historicity, as it was called following Heidegger, comes with all its importance. Our cognitive ability to understand is formed through the half-hidden preconceptions, prejudgements and prejudices which are not arbitrarily subjective precisely because they are inherited from the past through our linguistic and cultural traditions. In other words, precisely because the fore-structure comes from tradition, to which we all consciously or unconsciously belong, it has the initial aspect of communality as something which is other than mere subjectivity.

The fore-meaning then, according to Gadamer, has the nature of prejudice. The retrieval of prejudices is the move which puts Gadamer at odds with the Enlightement's belief that all prejudices are the source of error. Gadamer attempts to show that the Enlightenment's denial of prejudice and tradition is itself an unrecognised prejudice. Prejudice lies in the structure of temporality which determines that our understanding and self-knowledge are always shaped and limited by our historical situation. Thus the concept of reason free from all traditions and prejudices is itself a historical construction. Accordingly, to work within this paradigm is to have the Enlightenment prejudice against prejudice.

The fundamental claim of the Enlightenment was the Kantian call to have courage to use one's own reason together with the Cartesian celebration of doubt and methodical reasoning. What this meant was that things could be considered as having a certain validity only when they had undergone the scrutiny of critical reason, which alone was able to prove or disprove their certainty. Thus reason becomes the only authority which establishes itself sharply at odds with tradition. Hence the Enlightenment's radical break between reason and tradition, *logos* and *mythos*. This is closely linked to the Enlightenment's idea of progress understood as the human ability to overcome tradition and prejudice through scientific enlightened reason. It is remarkable that Romanticism in setting itself against this logic of progress has, according to Gadamer, the similar premise as the Enlightenment. Reversing the Enlightenment distinction between reason and myth and privileging the past (the Middle Ages, non-reflective Christianity, organic community with its permanent structures), Romanticism takes this abstract distinction for granted and hence shares the same presuppositions as the Enlightenment.[12] For Gadamer and MacIntyre this distinction is false: not only does tradition, as the actualised past in the present, require reason, but also reason is itself historically situated and thus is within a certain tradition. What then is important, according to Gadamer, is not to deny this ontological dimension of our situatedness, but to be affirmative and open towards it. We have to admit that our understanding is unavoidably shaped by prejudice and that absolute self-consciousness is impossible:

> Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and the state in which we live. … The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgement, constitute the historical reality of his being.[13]

The Enlightenment's denial of prejudice was closely related to the denial of authority. It is precisely authority which enables the perception that certain prejudices are legitimate ones. Authority, contrary to the Enlightenment's belief, is not blind obedience but has to be seen as based on acknowledgement and knowledge. It is not simply given or usurped but is earned. Authority is based on acknowledgement that others can have better insight because they know more and are more experienced. Thus it is based on reason and knowledge rather than

blind obedience. Prejudices are legitimised by the person who presents them in as much as he/she has authoritative knowledge and insight. However, the source of authority pertains not to the person but to what is said. Thus the authority of prejudice comes not from the person but from the content of what is thought.

Legitimate prejudice thus comes from authority as the recognition of someone else's insight as better. Gadamer's hermeneutical recognition of authority and prejudgement has the perspective of time. Reason cannot be authoritative as such because it has to start its exercise somewhere and this could be only with certain of our prejudgements which we inherit from the past. On the other hand, Gadamer's emphasis on authority implies that our understanding, being preconditioned by the fore-structure, cannot achieve its full validity in a single instance of methodologically established certainty because to gain authority in insight and knowledge cultivation is required. But cultivation, as the development of our knowledge to higher maturity, takes time. Thus hermeneutics has the dimension of temporality in yet another sense – to disclose the truth of things is possible only in time. Our understanding does not start from methodologically established first principles but has to be seen as the dynamic process of movement between the whole and the parts where time is its necessary condition. And this is so because to judge the validity of our knowledge is possible only if the process of our understanding is seen as a whole. What is meant here by the 'whole', especially in the case of MacIntyre, is that even a complete theory can become fully meaningful only within the wider historical perspective. This is a notion of knowledge that has not only a narrative structure but also is seen as a co-operative activity calling for its renewal and continuation in time. All of this will be more fully developed in our discussion of MacIntyre's philosophy.

The abstract distinction between freedom and tradition/authority implied that tradition was something given and natural. This was the same mistake shared by both the Enlightenment and Romanticism. What Gadamer tries to show is that our understanding is not only preconditioned by our prejudices, which come from tradition as something, as it were, static and naturally given. Rather, tradition requires cultivation and is actively produced through understanding and interpreting. For Gadamer tradition is open to the possibilities of change and thus the supposed contradiction between tradition and freedom is yet another prejudice of Enlightenment. Tradition then has a twofold structure: tradition is the condition of our understanding, but at the same time it is something which is produced by our interpretative

engagement with a historical text. This notion – tradition is open to change since it not only conditions our understanding but is also produced/continued through understanding – becomes clear when Gadamer develops his concept of human understanding in terms of application and the fusion of horizons.

The aim of our understanding in the process of interpretation of a historical text is not to recapture the author's original intentions. The hermeneutical circle should not be seen as a framework enabling us rigidly to repeat what is in a text. A mere repetition of the text's meaning, seen as the objective reflection of what is in the text and which is consequently detached from our present projections, according to Gadamer, represents a failure of understanding. Understanding of a historical text then has no, what may be called, teleological dynamics towards ever more objective and accurate an interpretation. Gadamer insists that if we want to achieve productive understanding we need something more than a mere capturing of original meaning, meaning in which our own projections deriving from our present horizon are dissolved. What is it that is needed?

Gadamer, as mentioned above, believes that we cannot transcend our historical situatedness. To illustrate the historical situatedness of our understanding he uses the analogy of the horizon of vision. Our historical situation in which we presently find ourselves unavoidably limits our understanding to a certain horizon of vision. However, the fact that we cannot transcend our present horizon does not mean that in interpreting a historical text we arbitrarily judge it only by the standards of the present. To read a text only from the present point of view while forgetting about its alterity and temporal distance is to fail to understand it as well. What one needs then is not only hermeneutic sensitivity towards the alterity of a historical text, but also the ability to see the significance of the text within our present situation. The latter Gadamer links to the concept of application. Using two examples, from legal and theological hermeneutics, Gadamer insists that understanding should be seen as application. As any religious preaching is the active application of the Scriptures, and as any legal interpretation of law gets its full significance when it is applied in a particular legal case, so it is with every understanding. It is the ability to recapture the significance of, i.e. to apply, a historical text within the present situation. It is the creative act of actualisation of a historical narrative. This ability to find significance, however, is not a formal or methodical procedure, but is rather seen by Gadamer as a virtue, virtue which is not governed by some universal rule and which cannot be easily taught or

prescribed. Gadamer uses Aristotle's concept of *phronesis*: it is not possible to give universal rules how to act justly and wisely since it depends on a concrete situation which will often require different decisions from different people. So it is equally with the application of a text's meaning – to enlighten a text with a new significance is always a particular reading of it.

At this point we come back to the concept of tradition. Against subjective arbitrariness, on the one hand, and quasi-scientific objectivity Gadamer postulates tradition as something which not only constitutes (pre-conditions) our understanding, but which is actively *continued* through our engagement to interpret historical texts. This active element of tradition is a peculiar one. It is the fusion of the horizons of the past and the present though the hermeneutic interpretation of the historical text enabling us to share with it common meaning. It is within this context that Gadamer understands the task of hermeneutic philosophy – to re-articulate the historical text so that we should be able to share common meaning with it. Through such an engagement we not only realise that we are situated within tradition but that in being able to share the significance of its meaning we actively continue it. In developing this set up, namely that our understanding as application is bound *to* and *is itself* an event of tradition, Gadamer insists that a text cannot be neutrally approached, but that it should be seen as that which poses the question of truth and hence goes beyond its mere 'original' meaning. It requires attentive listening and openness to be questioned by the text. To allow oneself to be questioned enables authentic interpretation. For Gadamer:

> Questioning opens up possibilities of meaning, and thus what is meaningful passes into one's own thinking on the subject. Only in an inauthentic sense can we talk about understanding questions that one does not pose oneself – e.g., the questions that are outdated and empty.[14]

This draws our attention to the wider problem which goes beyond the narrow understanding of hermeneutics as the interpretation of historical texts. It touches the problem of the nature of philosophical thinking as such. Authentic thinking always requires our genuine engagement with the subject matter, engagement which is primarily a moral one. Developing this argument Gadamer draws the parallel between hermeneutics and Platonic dialogue, insisting that the hermeneutical experience, our relation to tradition and philosophical thinking

in general, have to be seen as having the form of Platonic dialogue between I and Thou.[15] It is a dialogue where interlocutors are constantly put to the question and where a condition of the dialogue is everyone's openness towards each other's claims.[16] Such an ethos of listening implies that what is truly important is not someone's 'subjective' position, but an ability to be freely led by the meaning of the dialogue and change, if necessary, our positions as we go along. To share the common meaning in such dialogue is a form of communality, which is created through engagement in interpretative-dialogic activity and is led by its subject matter.[17] It is the same with our relation to tradition. The highest type of hermeneutic experience is openness to tradition.[18] What this means is that hermeneutics necessarily requires an affirmative relation to tradition – to let it say something to us. This accordingly constitutes our active belonging to tradition, which means that the sharing of common meaning is actively produced through our engagement in the interpretation of the written artefacts of tradition. In this sense hermeneutics itself presupposes belonging to tradition.

To the extent that it is possible to summarise Gadamer's conception of tradition, *tradition is continuity of meaning in history through its re-articulation* and re-actualisation. In this sense hermeneutics is the intellectual enterprise of re-articulation and re-enactment of tradition. The essential element of such enterprise is its conceptual presupposition that the meaning of tradition is already here and thus what is needed is an *attentive* and careful listening. However, the proximity of meaning within tradition is a peculiar one: it is like the forgotten notes of a beautiful symphony that comes into being only when it is being played. Tradition constitutes our understanding but nonetheless comes to being only through the interpretation of its discourses and their meanings. Thus tradition is both the condition and the *process* of our understanding. What is important is that subjectivity, i.e. the self, in this process freely subordinates itself to the movement of meaning within tradition, which enables the formation of the structure of communality. This is one of the crucial ontological implications of hermeneutics for political philosophy: the hermeneutic affirmation of tradition restores authority as based on acknowledgement, which freely joins individuals forming the ground for communality. This will be further explored in our discussion of MacIntyre. What is important to note at the moment, and this is related to Ricoeur's analysis, is that the continuity and affirmation of tradition, being a necessary and constitutive part of hermeneutics, does not mean that hermeneutics as an intellectual enterprise loses its critical character. Nevertheless this is precisely what concerns

Ricoeur: for him the Gadamerian 'hermeneutics of faith' is not enough in the age of linguistico-ideological manipulations. Hence Ricoeur's attempt to combine Gadamerian hermeneutics with the critique of ideology as seen in Habermas's critical theory.[19] That hermeneutics implies continuity and belonging to tradition does not exclude its critical character. The interpretative process of re-actualisation is an enterprise which requires rigorous and critical reasoning. Furthermore, it has nothing to do with uncritical adoration of the past as in the case of Romanticism. Gadamer, as we saw, very clearly warns us against both the Enlightenment's and Romanticism's proclivity to 'understand' the concept of tradition as opposite to reason and freedom. To find the significance of a historical text, i.e. to actualise it in the present, is to be able to address certain problems of the present through the articulation of the inadequacies of certain canonical texts of our tradition. That is to say, hermeneutics can be seen in terms of application only if it is able to articulate and correct the inadequacies of our tradition. To be open to internal criticism of one's own inadequacies is the critical exercise of reason *par excellence*. The nature of hermeneutics has nothing to do with the conservative affirmation of tradition. Rather, there is something futuristic in the nature of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics, enabling us to articulate the inadequacies of tradition and to address the problems of the present, through the continuity of tradition is open to its future possibilities and changes.

MacIntyre's contribution to hermeneutics

Nonetheless the Habermasian question that Ricoeur indirectly poses to the Gadamerian hermeneutics of tradition remains open.[20] For the issue that one has to address in order to justify this conception of hermeneutics, as both constituted by and constituting tradition without falling into conservative affirmation of the authority of tradition, is what the content of tradition is. Why do we have to be open, furthermore, to actively affirm our belonging to tradition, claiming, as Gadamer does, that openness to tradition is the highest hermeneutic experience, without specifying what is transmitted via tradition? Where does rational justification of knowledge, passed through and continued within tradition, come from? Without answering these challenges Gadamer's conception of tradition becomes problematic and, consequently, so does his philosophical conception of hermeneutics. For if Gadamer is not able to convince us why hermeneutics necessarily presupposes belonging to and affirmation of tradition, then Ricoeur's

account of hermeneutics gains its force. If affirmation of tradition is not *the* constitutive part of hermeneutic, then Nietzsche's genealogy can be seen as a *hermeneutics* of suspicion. After all maybe Nietzsche and many others influenced by him were right in rejecting tradition? I want to argue that MacIntyre's philosophical account of enquiry informed by tradition and his attempt to provide a detailed historico-philosophical account of what these traditions are provide us with a conceptual basis to answer these questions.

An important similarity between Gadamer and MacIntyre is the shared, what I would like to call, hermeneutic premise that understanding, rational enquiry and rationality as such are embodied in tradition. In the opening chapter of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre writes:

> What we now need to recover is, so I shall argue, a conception of rational enquiry as embodied in a tradition, a conception according to which the standards of rational justification themselves emerge from and are part of a history in which they are vindicated by the way in which they transcend the limitations of and provide remedies for the defects of their predecessors within the history of that same tradition.[21]

Even from this opening remark it is plausible to claim (to articulate this claim will indeed be one of the tasks of this chapter) that MacIntyre provides a new significance for hermeneutical thinking. His conception of, what he calls, tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry, which is similar to Gadamer's hermeneutical conception of understanding, suggests that the standards of rational enquiry can be justified only if they are seen within a wider historical perspective that would reveal how the argument has developed and how it was able (or not able) to address and solve certain problems. The justification of the standards of rationality, according to MacIntyre, has a narrative structure which, enabling us to see the continuity of the argument, implies that the superiority of a certain argument, or rather of a certain moment within its development, can be seen only if it is superior to its predecessors, i.e. in its being the best so far.[22] But how are we to understand tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry, on the one hand, and the concept of tradition, on the other? Both of them, i.e. enquiry/rationality and tradition, for MacIntyre are seemingly linked and can be defined only together.

When Gadamer writes about tradition he hardly specifies it in terms of its content. Tradition, as we have seen, is a continuity/flow of meaning within history which constitutes and is constituted by our understanding. Thus tradition in one sense is a quasi-methodological concept which is utilised to explain the ontological structure of understanding in general. This rather general understanding helps explain the fact that Gadamer uses the word 'tradition' in almost exclusively singular form: the question whether there might be different *traditions*, which require not only specification but also an account of what the relations between them might be, is never explicitly raised. In this sense MacIntyre's thought is rather different. MacIntyre provides not only a relatively clear and straightforward definition of tradition. One can also say that a considerable part of his philosophy is precisely an attempt to write the history of how specific traditions have developed and been transformed and how the relations between them have to be understood. At this point it is worth quoting MacIntyre's definition of tradition:

> A tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflicts: those with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key parts of those fundamental agreements, and those internal, interpretative debates through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by whose progress a tradition is constituted.[23]

For MacIntyre then tradition is an argumentative debate extended in time. Tradition requires of its adherents critical allegiance to the fundamental agreements that constitute that particular tradition. To accept the fundamental agreements is to assent to the core premises of a tradition and to assent to its premises means to belong to that tradition. Fundamental dissent, accordingly, has to be excluded. Thus there is the moment of commitment and allegiance, which is the necessary element of one's belonging to a tradition. Now what is important in this context is precisely the nature of this commitment. The agreement with fundamental premises, through which the commitment and allegiance are realised, should not be understood in the spirit of Cartesianism. To accept the premises of the extended argument of tradition does not mean that the agreement is based on Cartesian certainty as the result of absolute comprehension of their correctness. Premises here are not universally established methodological starting

points – some sort of universal principle equally immediately accessible to every rational human being. Acceptance of the premises of tradition has a rather different nature. Let us consider this in more detail.

Opposing his account of enquiry to the prevailing modern one, MacIntyre, alongside Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, what he calls the Thomist tradition, insists that rational enquiry has to be seen as a craft. To see philosophical enquiry as a craft is to acknowledge the necessity of the virtues internal to that craft or practice. Any craft, since it aims at a particular internal good, requires acknowledging some standards of excellence. To see philosophical enquiry as a craft with its particular standards of excellence is to insist that someone who enters it has to develop certain intellectual and moral qualities that are necessary if he or she wants to achieve some of its excellence. These craft oriented qualities are skills *and* virtues. Furthermore, to excel in the craft of philosophical enquiry, as in any other craft, one needs to be able to distinguish and move between two types of distinctions: what *seems* to be good and what is good here and now, on the one hand, and what is good in these particular circumstances with one's particular level of training and the ultimate excellence which furnishes the craft with its *telos*, on the other hand.[24] It is here that the importance not only of skills, internal to that practice, but also of virtues (both intellectual and moral) become evident. Virtues are needed in order to be able to see the present limitations of one's evaluations and judgements, which are always rooted not only in different inadequacies but also in the corruptions of desire, habit and taste.[25] In short, the craft of philosophical enquiry requires of its participants the cultivation of both intellectual *and* moral virtues in order to excel in the craft.

From here we can already see how much MacIntyre's position is different from that of Descartes and his modern successors. For MacIntyre it is not the universally established certainty of some starting point which is important, but intellectual and moral transition, which from the beginning requires accepting and conforming to the authority of already existing standards even before being able fully to understand their validity. Thus it is only after one has been formed and educated through these standards and virtues that one will be able fully to comprehend their validity. That is why it is not every rational person as he/she is is able to recognise universally established fundamental premises, but only those who are able to transform themselves through acquiring intellectual and moral virtues. Hence it is not rationality as such which can comprehend the universal truths, but only the mind

which is educated through appropriate virtues. That is why it is plausible to suggest that for MacIntyre philosophical and moral enquiry starts not from the postulation of universal truths but rather with the cultivation of virtues. For this the authority of a teacher is crucial since it is only from the teacher and other members of the community of the craft that the moral and intellectual habits are shaped. But this already presupposes the proximity of a certain intellectual and moral tradition, since the cultivation of intellectual and moral virtues of this sort is possible only within a tradition. Thus the commitment to tradition has already some sort of circular or even paradoxical nature. Within the context of our argument it can be put like this: one can understand the standards of excellence of the craft only if one has already been formed through these standards and these standards' corresponding virtues. Or to put it in other words – to be able correctly to judge and evaluate a tradition of intellectual enquiry, one must have been formed through that tradition. To study theoretically moral and intellectual virtues and the corresponding good, one needs to acquire these virtues at the same time, but to acquire them one already has to have within oneself the potentiality for that.[26] According to MacIntyre, this hermeneutical circularity is apparent in Augustine's thought. Reading the key texts (the Bible, for example) and understanding them only are possible if a reader is able to be transformed by these texts. Hence not only the reader interprets the text, but also the text interprets the reader and only the ability to undertake this transformation enables the reader to read the text aright.[27] Thus faith is the constitutive element in reading the canonical texts. Let us call this circularity the hermeneutical condition of the commitment to a tradition.

But how are the standards of excellence of a moral and intellectual tradition justified? MacIntyre's answer is that the standards of excellence, through which the telos of the craft is formulated, can be realised and justified only historically. This means recognising the temporality of enquiry. It is to insist that enquiry is an ongoing argument with its predecessors in the past, from whose intellectual work one not only needs to learn, but also whose argument serves as the starting point for our own engagement with that argument. Entering the craft we find its standards and have to accept them not because they are unquestionably the best and their validity is universal, but because in order to be able to judge and re-evaluate them we have to be formed and educated through them. In other words, in order to see the limitations of the present standards of excellence we have to accept them as our own and be able to see them within the wider history. This

requires us to learn from our predecessors since only the perspective of temporality enables us to see whether the standards elaborated by our predecessors were productive and high-yielding in the long run. This is what MacIntyre's thesis – that only the history of the craft of philosophical enquiry so far justifies its standards – means. Thus their justification lies not in their universal a-temporal certainty, but in their being the best *so far*. Now, what is important at this point is that tradition, understood as an ongoing argument which has its own history and its possibilities for a future development, has a narrative structure:

> [T]o share in the rationality of a craft requires sharing in the contingencies of its history, understanding its story as one's own, and finding a place for oneself as a character in the enacted dramatic narrative which is that story so far.[28]

Here a parallel between MacIntyre and Gadamer may be drawn. What this quotation suggests is that history, and hence tradition, having a narrative structure is not simply given, even though we may 'find a place' in it. Finding a place in the narrative is already to see or rather to *tell* that story. The history of tradition comes into being only through it being narrated. Accordingly, tradition, as the 'dramatic' narrative of the history of an argument, is constituted and continued only through our active engagement in it, i.e. only through our ability to see some coherent narrative in its development. What is significant here is that the nature of this narrative telling is not that of simple history writing, i.e. historical science, but is essentially philosophical. And this is what hermeneutics, as seen by Gadamer and in this sense by MacIntyre, is about. It is the philosophical enterprise which recognises the temporality of any philosophical argument and insists that the further fruitful development of that argument is possible only through our ability to tell a coherent story enabling continuation between the past and the present, between my predecessors and my own argument. In this respect philosophy can be seen as a co-operative activity in the sense that it enables us to see one's own philosophy as the continuation, further development or even correction of the work of certain other philosophers. And this, once again, relates to the hermeneutic logic of continuation – someone starts his/her philosophy not from the negation of one's opponents, which would, as it were, enable one to create one's own 'original' philosophy, but from understanding the significance of one's predecessors and hence acknowledgement of the neces-

sity to continue their work. It is precisely in this sense that MacIntyre interprets Aristotle as Plato's heir.

The purpose of such hermeneutic engagement, enabling us to see philosophy as having narrative structure, is very clear in MacIntyre's account. Since rationality is essentially historical and thus there is no universal rationality *as such*, but only rationality (or rather rationalities) as embodied in different traditions, the progress of embodied rationality can be realised only through this narrative structure. The historic narrative structure of philosophical argument is needed in order to see and move beyond the limitations of one's own tradition, hence enabling progress. How is this possible? The historical engagement in narrative telling, through which a tradition is constituted and continued, is an essentially philosophical enterprise because it takes the form of philosophical debate with, what are considered to be, the predecessors in that tradition. So it is not retelling their philosophical arguments that constitutes the form of this narrative, but the philosophical debate that always poses the question of truth about the subject matter. This is precisely what MacIntyre calls the internal interpretative debates and conflicts of a tradition, through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be realised.[29] It is the critical internal debate which re-articulates and if necessary corrects the fundamental agreements in the present situation. This debate with the predecessors also formulates and re-formulates the fundamental questions which have to be answered and it does this in a way that already presupposes a certain way of answering them, hence forming the directedness of the whole argument and thus tradition. The progress of an intellectual and moral tradition is constituted through this interpretative debate in as much as it is able to solve its problems, threatening to the coherence of that tradition. But it is not only that. The progress of tradition is also constituted through the correction of the fundamental agreements which enable the further development of that tradition. Precisely here our claim, formulated at the end of our account of Gadamer – there is something fundamentally futuristic in hermeneutics – becomes clearer. Hermeneutics is not only re-enactment of the past through the interpretation of historical texts, but is also fundamentally open for future development:

> [A]n adequate sense of tradition manifests itself in a grasp of those future possibilities which the past has made available for the present.[30]

We can say even more – openness to the future is the criterion for the maturity of a tradition. That is, the more a tradition is open to further development by being able to provide further conceptual and moral implications while at the same time being able to secure its coherence, the more mature that tradition is. Thus the internal debate serves for its rationalisation, enabling it to withstand future challenges and changes.

The future development of a tradition also depends on the ability to enter into external debate with its critics. This, according to MacIntyre, is the second type of conflict, which is fundamental in the development of traditions. Tradition, as a continued argument, which has its coherence, its fundamental agreements, and intellectual and moral allegiance to them, necessarily enters into external conflicts with its rivals from other traditions. What characterises these argumentative conflicts is that their nature is seen not as simply conceptual conflicts between two or more *individual* intellectual positions, but that they are understood, at least from the hermeneutic point of view, as conflicts between traditions. Hence these conflicts are much more fundamental since they involve not only certain conceptual positions, but also what lies behind them, namely certain intellectual-moral commitments to the deeper beliefs inherent in these traditions. These shared beliefs within a tradition are structured through the identification and recognition of common ends and through shared understanding of how to progress towards achieving those ends.[31] Now, because rationality in MacIntyre's account is only internal and unfolds itself only within a tradition, and thus there are no external standards of rationality as such, the conflicts between different traditions cannot be resolved by having recourse to supposed neutral and universal rational standards. How it is possible to resolve them and what the nature of these conflicts between traditions is will be more fully considered later. At the moment it is enough to say that the ability to withstand the conceptual critique of rival traditions, which requires intellectual openness and fairness towards this critique, enables the further successful development, and in this sense progress, of a tradition. Thus the internal and external debates and conflicts are closely related. That is, only internal rationalisation, rationalisation characterised as the ability, first, to reach more conclusive and sophisticated fundamental agreements, and, second, to see more clearly the direction – *telos* – for future development, enables a successful debate with the rival traditions.

At this point some provisional conclusions may be drawn. Ricoeur's objection to Gadamer can be seen as related to the fact that Gadamer's

understanding of tradition is inadequate in the sense that it has an essentially singular character. Tradition as the continuous re-articulation of the past within the present has no clear way of discriminating between the different discourses of the past. That is why Ricoeur and Habermas are partly right in claiming that the Gadamerian 'hermeneutics of faith' is not sufficiently critical of past discourses, and that is why it has to be amended with the dimension of suspicion and critical reflection. MacIntyre's account of tradition goes beyond this criticism. He sees tradition as a localised development of an intellectual and moral argument, which is closely linked to and initially derived from a particular local community. MacIntyre argues that there are at least several fundamentally different traditions. These traditions have different histories, they enter into conflicts with each other, and as a consequence they can be transformed into one another forming new traditions; some of them can even cease to exist. However, whatever this process may be, traditions are culturally, intellectually and morally distinct entities. To be a part of a tradition is to find one's own story within the wider history of that particular tradition and hence to share its beliefs, values, habits and moral commitments. But if this is so, and if hermeneutics is precisely this ability to see the continuity between my own story and the wider story of a tradition, then there are as many different hermeneutics as there are different traditions. Accordingly, there are different hermeneutics not because some of them are the hermeneutics of faith whereas others are hermeneutics of suspicion, as Ricoeur argued, but because there are different traditions, each of which requires of their adherents different hermeneutics. Thus an alternative definition of hermeneutics can be put in the following terms. Hermeneutics is an individualised historico-philosophical narrative which enables me not only to see continuity between my own philosophical argument and the argument(s) of my predecessors, but also to situate my own philosophical endeavour within this narrative continuity of philosophical argument that constitutes an intellectual and moral tradition. Thus understood hermeneutics is not only an interpretative activity, an activity which, as Gadamer indicated, through the structure of fore-meaning, is preconditioned by and further continues tradition as an abstract cultural-linguistic horizon, but also a *reflective* and *critical* thinking due to which our initial premises are further elaborated to the status of philosophically scrutinised and dialectically tested arguments which form a narrative continuity enabling the further directness of tradition. In this sense such characteristics as continuity, belonging and commitment to tradition are fundamental features of

hermeneutics. Furthermore, such a conception of hermeneutics presupposes that hermeneutics is always a hermeneutics of a certain tradition. In this sense hermeneutics and tradition become complementary phenomena. The implications and significance of such an understanding of hermeneutics will be discussed in the following sections.

The case of Enlightenment: MacIntyre against Kant

It is already evident from the above how different MacIntyre's conception of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rationality is from that of the Enlightenment. This alternative hermeneutic account of rationality is closely linked with his critique of the project of the Enlightenment and its contemporary transition towards the condition of advanced modernity. It is therefore important briefly to discuss this here.

It will be instructive to open the discussion with Kant's – the paradigmatically modern thinker's – understanding of the Enlightenment. In his famous essay *Was ist Aufklärung?* Kant argues that Enlightenment is first of all our ability to use our own reason without being guided by others. To be guided by others is thus a sign of immaturity, which has to be overcome if enlightened understanding in human and scientific matters is to be reached. Two main reasons for this unenlightened immaturity, according to Kant, are cowardice and laziness. In this sense Enlightenment is directly linked with the unrestricted and free exercise of reason which requires courage and determination. Further in the text Kant provides an important distinction between the public and private use of reason. It is linked to the question as to where the exercise of reason unrestricted by any authority is desirable and necessary. The answer is that it is only in *Publikum* that reason has to be unconditionally free from the authority of others. The public use of reason is when someone makes use of it as a scholar, i.e. 'before the entire reading world'.[32] Accordingly, the public is the entire reading world where arguments and contra-arguments are given and elaborated. Here external authority should not restrict reason, since the only authority is reason itself. The private use of reason, i.e. where its exercise can and should be restricted, is in a certain civil post or office. That is to say, a soldier, for example, cannot argue whether to obey an order or not, since his duty requires him always to obey it. Thus privately (since any civil office is local it can only be private) the ability to exercise one's reason should be limited by the requirements, orders and regulations of a particular civil office. Now what is significant is the

argument as to why the unrestricted *public* use of reason is necessary. Kant's answer is quite straightforward: unrestricted use of reason within the public debate leads to the progress of mankind. It leads to progress because it enables us to resolve the current problems by reaching a more comprehensive consensus. That is, free public debate can provide 'insight into the nature of … things' so that they will become 'so public and reliable that through uniting their voices … they could bring a resolution before the throne'.[33] Thus Kant believes that free public debate *as such*, even in such matters as faith and religion, can lead to resolution, reasonable consensus and hence progress.

What is important here is this paradigmatic Enlightenment notion about the universal (public) reason *as such*, which, given that it is unrestricted by any external authority, will lead us to resolution and thus progress. This postulates the belief in free public debate – it will lead us to an enlightened condition, where the possibilities for resolution and consensus in moral and scientific matters will be much higher. Thus it is enough to allow things to be openly discussed by scholars and progress and improvement will be inevitable. Obviously, the educated public today – the Kantian *Publikum* – does not have the eighteenth century's belief in progress but, nonetheless, this does not discredit the concept of free public debate. And this is what MacIntyre's claim is about, namely: so far as the public debate, unrestricted by any external authority, is affirmed and promoted (for whatever reasons), it is essentially the continuation of the Enlightenment project. Thus liberal democracy in advanced modernity, with its concept of the free public sphere and its corresponding virtue of tolerance, is a continuation of this initial project too. Now the reason it is important to emphasis this modern notion of free public debate, which initially starts from thinkers like Locke and Kant, is in order to see how our conception of hermeneutics is different from it. And it is different both from the initial Kantian project and that of its late-modern embodiment. Following Aristotle and his own logic of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rationality MacIntyre implicitly claims that there is not and cannot be free public debate *as such*, a debate which would lead us, as Kant thought, to improvement and progress, but only debate and rationality educated through certain virtues which are always *situated* and hence local virtues. But rationality educated through certain moral and intellectual virtues is always a rationality of a certain tradition. Thus from a Thomist's point of view open and free debate where people dare to express their opinions and arguments would not lead to any progress unless its participants are educated

through certain virtues, authority and hence given guidance. In fact, according to MacIntyre, the initial project of the Enlightenment failed precisely because its claim to establish rationally justified universal morality by means of unrestricted public debate was not, and could never have been, realised. The outcome of this failure is the contemporary emotivist moral culture that we have today.[34]

I have taken Kant's understanding of Enlightenment to illustrate its difference from MacIntyre's Aristotelian understanding of moral debate, which has to be formed through certain 'localised' virtues. Now this opposition between MacIntyre and Kant mirrors MacIntyre's own claims about the Enlightenment project. What MacIntyre means by the Enlightenment project in *After Virtue* is first of all a set of philosophical attempts, which starts roughly in the late 17th century, to establish autonomous morality, morality seen as rules of conduct freed from theological, legal and aesthetic contexts. Furthermore, and more importantly, morality has ceased to be a teleological phenomenon ever since the dawn of Enlightenment. And it was precisely here, so MacIntyre argues, that lay the reason for its failure. The Enlightenment thinkers such as Hume, Diderot or Kant failed to provide what they thought they were able to provide. They were unable to establish rational justification of morality. One of the reasons for this failure was the Enlightenment's abandonment of the teleological conception of essential human nature (man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realised-his-*telos*). The latter was a fundamental part of pre-modern morality. If in pre-modern morality, best exemplified in Aristotle's thought, well functioning moral norms and precepts in a society were seen more as an end rather than a starting point, a social condition which was sought to be achieved through moral education, in the thought of the Enlightenment philosophers they were made universal by linking them to human nature *as such* (Hume, Diderot, Rousseau) or deriving them from self-determining *a priori* reason (Kant). Instead of seeing morality as a functional and teleological phenomenon, i.e. moral laws and virtues served to direct man from his present state (as he *is*) to his essential state (could-be-if-he-achieved-his-*telos*), the Enlightenment's philosophy tried to link already existing moral laws, inherited from pre-modern morality, to the universalised conception of human nature *as such*. Thus from the very beginning it entered into a contradictory and impossible task: now moral laws, stripped of their teleological functionality, contradicted what was descriptively perceived as the universal human nature.[35]

MacIntyre's criticism of the Enlightenment project is developed first of all from the perspective of contemporary moral culture. Instead of achieving moral progress, so he argues, contemporary moral debate has become fatally inconclusive and interminable. This in turn resulted from the failure of the Enlightenment's moral philosophy. It is in this sense that MacIntyre can suggest that the Enlightenment failed in its own terms: instead of arriving at a more comprehensive moral agreement, it has led us into the contemporary moral impasse. It is an impasse where any significant moral resolution, and hence moral progress in practical rationality, has become hardly possible:

> The distinctively modern standpoint … envisages moral debate in terms of a confrontation between incompatible and incommensurable moral premises and moral commitment as the expression of a criterionless choice between such premises, a type of choice for which no rational justification can be given.[36]

This claim, however, can be misleading if it is understood in terms of the sphere of jurisprudence. The disorder of moral debate, which presupposes and embodies emotivist culture, opens up in the sphere of morality of personal good. That is to say, the conception of good, which is fundamental in the formation of the individual self, becomes the matter of personal choice and 'personal morality'. On the other hand, as explored in the introduction, the Enlightenment project laid the conceptual background for the creation of the modern state: the postulation of ontological primacy of free and equal individuals who, through rational consent, establish political community. Such a conception of the state, whose major role is seen in securing the universal liberties and rights of its individuals, gives birth to the modern conception of the political and organisational. This dualism between the political, which represents universal human rights, and the sphere of morality of personal good, where individuals choose their own individual good enables us to see the split between the political and the ethical.[37] The ethical in modern times ceases to be subordinated to the political, as was the case in the Aristotelian tradition when ethics was seen as that which helped in cultivating individuals into virtuous citizens. This is not the case with the politics of modern society, which oscillate between individual freedom and collective regulation 'to limit the anarchy of the self-interest'.[38] The social context for the emotivist or desiring self, the self which is determined not through rational deliberation and story telling, but through arbitrary choice and the set

of commodities it consumes, is the antagonism and co-presence of individualism and bureaucracy. MacIntyre's claim is that this social context largely displaces morality (morality as linked to structures of common good and thus to the political) and thus creates the possibility for and enforces the emergence of the emotivist self. Hence what MacIntyre implicitly suggests is that in order to have the non-emotivist self, i.e. the self which is created through rational narrative deliberation, there have to be certain social structures fundamentally different from the modern bureaucratic institution of the nation state and from economic structures based purely on instrumental rationality, which is the case in capitalist societies.

However, the problem is not only with displacement of teleological morality and the advent of emotivist or desiring self. There is also an issue with regard to the political legitimacy of the modern state. This again is partly related to the oscillation between the political and the ethical, or the organisational and the personal. The civil government of the modern state has to represent autonomous and equal individuals – its rules and laws have to be agreed through people's rational consensus. These rules and fundamental laws are the concern of justice. So the question is which conception of justice a society has to choose and enforce through the institutions of the modern state. According to MacIntyre, contemporary late-modern society is not able to sustain a shared understanding of justice, because although there is a set of rival and incompatible conceptions of justice, there are no moral resources to mediate between them rationally. This unsettled moral argument both in philosophical discourse and daily public debate implies that the nature of contemporary modern politics is not based on consensus, but on conflict: 'modern politics is civil war carried on by other means' and that laws show the degree to which conflict has to be suppressed.[39] Thus the rhetoric of pluralism is used to disguise the depth of contemporary conflicts. Accordingly any modern government cannot be fully legitimate since it does not represent the moral consensus of the community. That is why MacIntyre can claim that loyalty to one's community becomes detached from obedience to the government which rules us.[40] Now precisely because of the fact that the local community for MacIntyre is the locus of the virtues, including the virtue of justice, he rejects the claim that the modern state is a legitimate form of government. Thus MacIntyre's critique of the Enlightenment project concludes with his rejection both of the modern economic order together with its individualism, and of the modern political order. What alternative he has to offer and how they are

related to our overall argument on hermeneutics and the political will be discussed in succeeding subchapters.

Conflicts between traditions

As mentioned above, the modern attempt to establish autonomous morality denied the narrative-teleological structure of classical morality, resulting in fragmentation and conflicts between incompatible and rival moral claims. This has resulted in the late-modern condition as a space of interminable conflicts which are disguised and 'smoothed' by the rhetoric of pluralism and toleration. MacIntyre implicitly maintains that these conflicts are shallow ones (they are the outcome of arbitrary choices of the desiring/emotivist self and there is no rational way to solve them) precisely because the contemporary moral culture does not have the depth of historical self-awareness. But on the other hand, the nature of these conflicts is that of power relations: the entire social life appears in terms of the Foucualtian peace as another form of war. It is not surprising that MacIntyre claims that the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative relations disappears in such social context.[41]

To oppose such a conception of social relations – relations which lack narrative depth and whose nature is that of power conflicts – alongside MacIntyre's argument I shall suggest that we need to retrieve the culture of dialectics through the narrative conception of tradition. At one point in his argument MacIntyre claims that the Enlightenment lacked self-knowledge in that it was not aware of its own historical premises.[42] This lack of self-awareness of its own historicity and situatedness implied that the Enlightenment's different philosophical attempts provided rival and incompatible accounts of justice and morality, between which rational resolution became hardly possible. And this is because all of them lacked narrative structure which would have enabled them to see continuity with the past and hence share with it some common premises. Of course, this could not have been otherwise because of the revolutionary spirit of the Enlightenment eagerly seeking to break from tradition. Thus to share a narrative continuity with the past of the *Ancien Régime* was simply impossible. However, the Enlightenment's denial of narrative and teleological structure resulted at the same time in the gradual loss of dialectical culture. To oppose this MacIntyre's claim is that rational enquiry and practical rationality should be seen as having an essentially narrative and historical structure. That is to say, it has beginning, culmination

and a certain end; thus time, development and cultivation are essential. This narrative structure not only enables one to see one's life as a continuous story but also, and more importantly, it enables one to situate one's own story within a wider narrative, i.e. tradition. Now alongside my argument so far it is possible to suggest that it is tradition or rather *the conflicts between traditions* that MacIntyre confronts with modernity. Where there is no rational way to solve the conflicts between both philosophical and moral rival positions, to choose and support them becomes a matter of arbitrary will. Thus the structure of modern conflict within the contemporary culture of consumerism, on the one hand, and with economic and political individualism, on the other, is that between arbitrary wills to power. In this sense MacIntyre, starting from different premises and providing different arguments, arrives at a rather similar conclusion about contemporary society as Foucault, who saw social reality and its discursive practices in terms of power relations. *Thus the nature of modernity is that of conflict where conflicts are not between arguments but between arbitrary wills and power structures*. Now what I would like to suggests is that to confront the power conflicts of modernity we need to retrieve the concept of tradition through linking it to an enriched conception of hermeneutics. But since there are several fundamentally different traditions, the contemporary cultural situation, as it is seen from the hermeneutic point of view outlined above, appears as the conflicts between traditions. Thus to summarise the argument so far: an alternative to the power conflicts of modernity is not the peace of tradition, but the conflicts between different traditions and hence different hermeneutics. Thus the distinction to which my discussion of Gadamer and MacIntyre has led is: the power conflicts of modernity *versus* the conflicts between different traditions.

We need, therefore, to explore how one may give an account of different traditions, to whose analysis and philosophical description MacIntyre devotes his sequel to *After Virtue, Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* If *After Virtue* can be read as the statement of MacIntyre's own critical position towards the Enlightenment project and its political and cultural embodiment in late-modernity – an attempt to argue for Aristotelian ethics and practical rationality as it has been formed through tradition – *Whose Justice?* can be understood as a further step in developing this initial project. Thus the book can be read as a history of the development of different moral and intellectual traditions in which the conceptions of practical rationality and justice are different and often incompatible. Hence the claim that there is no

single all encompassing rationality but rather different rationalities and accordingly many justices. Now the immediate question, which many of MacIntyre's critics ask and to which MacIntyre himself tries to provide a response, is the question of relativism.[43] That is to say, if there is no universal rationality but different and competing rationalities situated in different and competing traditions, how is rational debate between them after all possible knowing that there are no objective standards to appeal to? Does not this conception of competing traditions imply radical relativism, something which MacIntyre himself criticises. Does not, then, MacIntyre arrive at a similar impasse – the impasse of the relativism of the post-Enlightenment intellectual moral culture where the different conceptions of good are of equal value and thus relative? These questions have to be taken seriously not only because they are just, but first of all because the novelty of MacIntyrean hermeneutics will become more apparent precisely in the light of his response to them.

As was noted above Gadamer never explicitly specified and described what tradition and its content are, or explored the consequences of the claim that there could be different and rival traditions. MacIntyre in this respect is rather different. His philosophico-historical narrative is constructed precisely through the description of these different traditions. This is understandable not only because MacIntyre writes his philosophy from a particular tradition's point of view, i.e. Thomism, but also, and more importantly, because his claim about the necessity of seeing social and intellectual reality as conflicts between traditions requires him to provide some historical description of what these traditions are. Having said this, the answer that MacIntyre provides in his philosophy is not a straightforward one. In three major books – *After Virtue, Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* – the problem of describing traditions is addressed in different ways. A matter to which I now turn.

The narrative structure of *After Virtue* is constructed in such a way that the Aristotelian account of morality and moral enquiry is presented both as a philosophical standpoint from which the malaise of the Enlightenment's moral philosophy can be intelligible and as the only alternative to Nietzsche's radical but honest nihilism. However, Aristotle is discussed not simply as one more philosopher who can correct the mistakes both of the Enlightenment thinkers and of Nietzsche but as a philosopher who represents and is the central thinker of an entire moral tradition. In other words, MacIntyre posits Aristotle in the midst of the pre-modern moral tradition which was based on the

teleological understanding of human nature, strong emphasis on virtues, and morality as having a narrative structure. Thus the structure of the book presupposes and indeed implies that MacIntyre talks about one tradition – the moral tradition of virtue ethics, which starts from Homeric times, culminates in Aristotle's philosophy, and declines by the time of Reformation.[44]

The story in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* is rather different. Here MacIntyre elaborates his historico-philosophical position and writes about several different and competing traditions of rationality and justice. He starts the book analysing the Homeric moral imagination as the context for the conceptual conflicts of fifth century Athens between sophists and Thucydides, on the one hand, and Socrates and then Plato, on the other. It is precisely the latter who give birth to the intellectual tradition that MacIntyre himself identifies with and seek to continue. As in *After Virtue* Aristotle is seen as its culminating point. MacIntyre's narrative presents Aristotle as one who corrects and continues Plato's unfinished philosophical project. Here the conceptual interruption of this tradition and the beginning of a new tradition starts from Christianity and its biblical sources and reaches its intellectual maturity in the patristic philosophy of Augustine. The radical novelty of this tradition is that the scope of justice, despite the stoics' ideas of humanity within the *cosmo-polis*, for the first time becomes the whole of humanity: God's covenant with his chosen people becomes extended to the Christian *Ekklēsia* whose members can include anyone who accepts God's ultimate sacrifice in Jesus Christ. Thus these two distinct traditions, i.e. Aristotle transmitted through Arabic and Jewish writers to Albertus Magnus, on the one hand, and the patristic philosophy of Augustine, on the other hand, reach, so the narrative goes on, thirteenth century Europe. It is Aquinas who inherits both of these traditions and who, due to his philosophical genius, is able to reconcile them. Thus Aquinas, incorporating Biblical tradition, extends Aristotle's thought to a new and more comprehensive level. The new tradition that MacIntyre turns to discuss after Aquinas starts from Calvinist Aristotelianism in the Scottish moral tradition, which, passing through thinkers like Hutcheson, forms the tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment. The culminating point in the development of this Scottish tradition is Hume who, shifting and subverting its core premises, contributes the conceptual possibilities for the emergence of liberalism. It is at this point that MacIntyre introduces his controversial claim that contemporary liberalism turns out to be another tradition. Thus the traditions that are broadly discussed in *Whose Justice?* are

four: 1) Homer / Plato / Aristotle, 2) the Bible / Augustine *and* Aquinas, 3) Scottish Enlightenment / Hume, 4) liberalism.

Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry, which originally appeared as the series of Gifford lectures delivered in the University of Edinburgh in 1988, the year when *Whose Justice?* was published, is written from the perspective of one tradition – the Thomist tradition. What may seem confusing here is the fact that the other two rival versions of moral enquiry, i.e. encyclopaedia and genealogy, are not considered to be traditions. What may seem even more confusing is that the argument is presented as if there were only one tradition: there are two polemical chapters where encyclopaedia and genealogy are contra-posed to tradition. Hence the titles of these chapters: Tradition against Encyclopaedia and Tradition against Genealogy. In other words the general term 'tradition' becomes the equivalent of Thomism.

From this we can already see some ambiguity between *After Virtue* and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, on the one hand, and *Whose Justice?*, on the other. The former are written not only from the perspective of one tradition, they implicitly suggest that there is only one tradition, namely Aristotelianism. Here the general term 'tradition' is understood in terms of Thomism – Aristotle's thought with all his predecessors and successors is tradition. It is from such an understanding that MacIntyre opposes tradition to the project of Enlightenment in *After Virtue* and to encyclopaedia and genealogy in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*. The structure of the argument here is that tradition is contra-posed to that which is not tradition – the Enlightenment, encyclopaedia and genealogy. Now the structure of *Whose Justice?* is different. Here there are different traditions, which enter into conceptual conflicts between each other. One of these possible conflicts is between two live traditions, Thomism and liberalism.

What is at stake then is MacIntyre's understanding of tradition and the external conflicts between different traditions. The question that might be posed is the following: are these external conflicts between different traditions or between tradition and non-traditions? Why are the Enlightenment project, encyclopaedia and genealogy not traditions whereas liberalism in *Whose Justice?* turns to be another tradition? And finally, how is this ambiguity – speaking about only one tradition and about many traditions – to be explained?

One way to explain this ambiguity is through understanding the different tasks in which MacIntyre engages in his three major books. What MacIntyre provides in *Whose Justice?* is the development of a meta-theory of traditions. It is here that MacIntyre develops his

philosophical understanding of what tradition is and what tradition-constitutive and tradition-constituted enquiry means and how the conflicts between different traditions should be understood. Whereas in *After Virtue* he formulates his own philosophical position in terms of the necessity to retrieve Aristotle's philosophy as representing the wider pre-modern tradition which he opposes to the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophy. Now in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* MacIntyre writes from his own Thomist tradition: he re-defines this tradition through the correction of its internal incoherences and then engages in external conflicts with its rivals – encyclopaedia (which in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* represents the Enlightenment) and genealogy. In other words, in *Whose Justice?* MacIntyre, through the description of different traditions, develops the meta-theory of tradition dependent rationality and justice, whereas in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* he applies this theory within his own tradition entering into external philosophical conflicts with its rivals.

To this however there can be an objection. How can MacIntyre without contradicting himself speak about tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive philosophical enquiry, insisting that there is no rationality beyond a particular tradition, and at the same time develop an abstract meta-theory about traditions? Does not his theoretical description of different traditions contradict his own claim about the impossibility of rationality apart from a tradition? Or how can he narrate the general history of different traditions without telling it from a specific tradition's point of view?

MacIntyre does not try to provide a detached history of different traditions. Thus the historical narrative in *Whose Justice?*, I believe, is not from an abstract point of view. The theory of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rationality is not an abstract and disembodied meta-theory but itself a theory from the Thomist point of view. This means that his general theory with all its conceptual apparatus is itself formed through the Aristotelian categories and concepts. And this should not be surprising. Through reading Aristotle and Thomas MacIntyre gains the general insight about what tradition-constituted rationality might be. Similarly it is with the historical narrative. The history of different traditions is a narrative from the point of view of Aristotelian tradition. That is why there is no contradiction in the fact that MacIntyre in *Whose Justice?* develops a general meta-hermeneutics or a theory of hermeneutics, which is written at the same time from the hermeneutics of a particular tradition's point of view. It is here that

we come back to the epistemological problem of relativism. How can a theory, one may ask, claim to have any validity if it is developed from the point of view of a particular tradition? How can different claims for truth from different and rival traditions be evaluated and judged if there are no neutral standards?

What relativism implies, according to MacIntyre, are the following claims. First, that there are a number of culturally embodied systems of thought which are incompatible and different in such a way that from one's own system's reasoning the reasoning with all its principles and values of the others (the rivals) are unsound; second, the fact that there are at least several conflicting systems of thought, which all claim truth, makes one question one's own position/system (for if there are many systems of thought, which claim to be true, how can I maintain that only one of them, i.e. my system, is true?); third, the impossibility of answering this question leads to the conclusion that there cannot be any substantive claims for truth, accordingly, all truths are relative.[45] Now what MacIntyre states is that even despite the fact that he agrees with the first claim about the different and often incompatible systems of thought, he does not accept the conclusion that there cannot be substantive claims for truth. Thus we come to a very important point which captures the novelty of MacIntyre's epistemological position: namely, that claims from a particular tradition, a tradition which is always historical and thus whose claims are historical too, are 'indeed the claims for truth'.[46]

This conception of rationality in terms of tradition – a conception for which not only rationality as such is internal to a tradition but also the substantive claims for truth can be articulated only from a particular tradition – is sharply at odds with both Enlightenment universalism (Descartes and Kant) and post-Enlightenment relativism and perspectivism (Nietzsche and Foucault). MacIntyre disagrees both with the claim that reason is universal and unified, that is to say, one and the same for all rational human beings despite their beliefs and cultural particularities, and with the conclusion that once the fragmentation of reason into a multiplicity of cultural traditions has been recognised, substantial claims to truth from any of them are ruled out. It is within this context that MacIntyre develops his conception of rational enquiry in which the concepts of temporality and historicity are needed so that substantial claims for truth can be sustained.

According to MacIntyre, every tradition that constitutes an intellectual and moral enquiry has three basic stages within its development. The beginning of a tradition is conditioned by historical

contingency.[47] It can start from the establishing of a local community, from the beliefs, practices or certain institutions within that community. Very often there are certain authoritative texts at the centre of a tradition, around which the utterances and discourses of members of such a community are structured. Thus the first stage of this development is when the authority of such texts, beliefs and discourse on them are not yet put to question. This is a naïve stage when reflectivity of beliefs is not yet realised and when their authority is natural and unproblematic. The second stage, according to MacIntyre, is when some incoherence of the system of established beliefs within a tradition becomes apparent. In other words it is the stage when the problems are posed and when the authority of established practices and beliefs needs new justification. This is the critical moment of higher self-awareness within a tradition during which nonetheless a resolution has not yet been provided and elaborated. It is during this stage that the epistemological crisis may arise. It happens when tradition-constituted enquiry ceases to progress by being able rationally to solve incoherence, disagreement and conflicts over rival answers to fundamental questions. The third stage in the development of a tradition is precisely when these problems and incoherences are solved through innovation and conceptual enrichment. It is only those traditions which successfully pass through the latter stage that can be called mature traditions.

It is only from the perspective gained by comparing beliefs before their correction and re-articulation, stage one, and after, stage three, that it is possible to say what false beliefs and true beliefs about reality might be. Thus the true comprehension and representation of reality can be achieved through the perspective gained by comparing the old statements with the new ones. This is so because the falsity of primary beliefs – the radical discrepancy between the world and these beliefs – can be understood only from the perspective of the corrected beliefs. Thus the discrepancy is realised from the perspective of time: it is through comparing old beliefs with their representation of reality and new more advanced beliefs that the truth can be realised.

So claims arising from a tradition constituted enquiry may be claims for truth. These claims are justified through the internal rationalisation of tradition – through the ability to achieve progress by overcoming internal conceptual inadequacies that bring traditions to the epistemological crisis. Thus the vindication of the claims for truth of a tradition constituted enquiry is provided through its development and growth. The growth of a tradition can be realised only if its adherents openly enter into dialogue with their rivals.

So if there are no neutral standards by reference to which it would be possible to mediate between two or more conflicting intellectual traditions, how is rational dialogue possible at all? To answer this let us first recall the conceptual basis on which MacIntyre answers the relativists' challenge. It is based on the concept of logical incompatibility between two or more different responses to the same subject matter. It involves disbelief that there can be two or more logically incompatible but at the same time correct answers on the same subject matter. In short it can be formulated as follows: despite the fact that there are different and rival traditions, providing different accounts of what justice and rationality are, it does not follow that I have to doubt the correctness of the position of my tradition. Note that this claim is not a moral one but purely logical. If X holds that A equals B and Y holds that A is C and both X and Y agree that B and C are logically distinct the fact that Y's position is different should not in principle cause doubts for X unless X is rationally convinced that his/her own position is wrong. It is exactly the same with MacIntyre's epistemological position. The only good reason for my commitment to this particular tradition is my rational belief that its claims on practical rationality and justice are the best and most correct so far. It is precisely this position that enables MacIntyre to hold to the dialectic argument between different intellectual and moral traditions without compromising the integrity of his own position. That is to say, to be rationally convinced that, say, Thomism is the best tradition of enquiry so far is possible only if its adherent, say MacIntyre, is able openly and successfully to enter into rationally heuristic dialogue with the rival traditions. What are the conditions for such dialectical conflict with the rivals, a conflict where there are no neutral-external rational standards to mediate?

The crux of the answer that MacIntyre provides is this. The condition of entering into an argumentative conflict with a rival tradition of enquiry is to understand this tradition from inside, i.e. as if it is your own tradition. This intellectual sensitivity to a rival tradition, which requires the full command of its standards as if it were your own, is needed in order to be able to judge them from inside so as to see whether they are coherent or not and how they are able to solve/address the problems that the adherents of that tradition seek to solve.[48] Thus this sort of hermeneutic dialogue is based on the intellectual honesty to really understand one's rivals and not to engage only in a superficial argument with the other when the only goal is to defend one's own position without properly understanding the rival

philosophical position. On the other hand, such intellectual openness should not lead to the loss of coherence of one's own argument and tradition. What one seeks within such conceptual conflict is to win it through the deep understanding of a rival tradition by seeing its limitations, thus demonstrating that one's own tradition has better conceptual resources. One of the possible ways to do this, according to MacIntyre, is not simply by overcoming a rival tradition but by incorporating it within one's own resources, thus making the latter intellectually stronger and richer. However, far from every conflict between two rival traditions finishes in such overcoming and incorporating of a rival tradition into one's own. Very often the conceptual conflict between traditions cannot be resolved in such a way because none of the rival traditions have the intellectual resources. Thus for a considerable time it might be simply impossible not only to solve but even proceed in solving radical discrepancy and misunderstanding between two or more rival traditions. There can also be even a third way, namely that two different traditions, being radically different and having radically incompatible rational standards, through some philosophical genius, who commands both of them, become reconciled through conceptual innovation by the establishing of a new tradition. This, according to MacIntyre, was the case with Aquinas, who was able to reconcile two different traditions – Aristotle as embodied in Averroists' thought, on the one hand, and Augustine together with the Biblical tradition, on the other.

The radical discrepancy between these two intellectual traditions was obvious within thirteen-century Europe's philosophical culture as it developed and advanced in Paris University. Augustinian thought appeared in conflict with Aristotelian thought, so MacIntyre argues, on the following philosophical issues. First, the scope of justice for Aristotle was the *polis*, whereas for Augustine it was the *Civitas Dei*, that is, all humanity, since God revealed his law and standards of justice to every human being. Second, the catalogues of virtues for Aristotle and Augustine are different as well: for Augustine the highest virtues were humility and charity, without which the virtue of justice was not possible, whereas for Aristotle the highest virtues were those that enabled one to become the magnanimous man. Third, there is only the psychology of reason, passions, and appetites in the Aristotelian conception of motivation for a right action, hence such a concept as the Augustinian will, namely bad will, which keeps people from the good, was not needed and would be incomprehensible. And finally, for Augustine justice was revealed by God through active obedience to

him, whereas for Aristotle there was no place for a divine creator or a divine law-giver within the ethical domain and thus there was no other *telos* beyond that which can be attained by mortals before death.[49]

This conceptual conflict between Averroists and Augustinians, according to MacIntyre, was clearly expressed by Siger of Brabant and his theory that a particular thesis may be true in philosophy, while a logically incompatible thesis can be true in theology.[50] This was the consequence of incoherence in the philosophical-theological culture. Now the significance of Aquinas was that he was able to overcome this conceptual discrepancy, incorporating within Augustinian philosophy the Aristotelian schema. From the perspective of Aquinas' philosophy the natural law is the law given by God but revealed by human reason. This double move is the consequence of the merging of Augustinian and Aristotelian traditions. For Aquinas the divine law is of two kinds: natural, i.e. revealed by reason and hence accessible to every human being, and revealed directly by God in the form of Ten Commandments. In this sense Aquinas reconciled the Aristotelian conception of practical reason, being able to comprehend law and thus direct human action towards the good, and Augustine's concept of revelation as the grace of God. Thus Aquinas, reconciling Aristotelian rational teleology with Augustinian Christian theology from the perspective of both thirteenth century Aristotelianism and Augustinianism, established a new tradition which was Aristotelian in its conceptual schema but Augustinian in its content. His answer to the challenge of the thirteenth century discrepancy between the Augustinian theology of predestination and Aristotelian teleology concerning the role of practical reason, education and responsibility was that we need moral education in order to understand virtues, vices and passions which need to be directed and discriminated so that higher moral excellence in pursuing one's good can be achieved. This concept of human life as a journey towards a certain good comes from Aristotle. On the other hand, according to Aquinas, every human being has the potentiality of formulating those principles of justice which are revealed by God; it is precisely due to this potentiality that every human becomes responsible. The difference from Aristotle is that the highest *telos* for Aquinas is far beyond Aristotle's conception, that is to say, the highest good is not theoretical contemplation here in this world but can be only eternity.[51]

What MacIntyre suggests with this example is first of all an argument against relativism. The claims for truth are intelligible only

within the conflicts between traditions: a theory can become the warranted assertion of truth only if it is seen within a wider narrative of a particular tradition and only if it is able not only to solve its internal conflicts but also withstand the critique from rival traditions by being able to understand them from inside and incorporate their claims within one's own tradition. The claims for truth can be realised only if they are able to withstand all dialectical scrutiny of the rival claims of different traditions. In this MacIntyre seeks to retrieve what can be called the hermeneutico-dialectical culture which has been lost in today's culture of advanced modernity. One can chose almost any philosophical position and argue in favour of it without really entering dialectical dialogue with the rivals, where the refutation of one of the positions is essential. In this context MacIntyre quotes David Lewis:

> [T]heory survives its refutation – at a price. Our 'intuitions' are simply opinions, our philosophical theories are the same. … Once the menu of well-worked out theories is before us, philosophy is a matter of opinions…[52]

From this point of view the loss of dialectical culture is not only because of the loss of rational refutation. It is also because the contemporary philosophical culture lacks hermeneutic historicity – a belief that theoretical claims for truth are justified historically and that philosophical enquiry is a co-operative activity which requires us to correct and continue the work of our predecessors. What is important, however, is that such a logic of continuation is realised not merely in continuing the project of one's predecessors, but necessitates allegiance to certain fundamental agreements. It is precisely in this respect that genealogy is not considered to be a tradition in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*.[53]

At this point it is worth posing to MacIntyre a critical question which will bring our discussion to a new stage, where we will discuss MacIntyre's own position on politics and justice. If emphasis on the conflict of traditions is necessary in order to retrieve the dialectical culture where the claims for truth could be realised, where are the resources of MacIntyre's own tradition and philosophy which would allow them to become superior to liberalism as 'another tradition' and genealogy as 'pseudo-tradition'? It is within this challenge that discussion of the Thomistic understanding of politics will be pursued.

MacIntyre's Thomism: the politics of common good

Our discussion of hermeneutics has led us to suggest that today's social reality and the corresponding structures of rationality within it have to be seen from the perspective of different and rival traditions. Thus within this context the concept of hermeneutics is much wider than just that of textual analysis. Here hermeneutics is seen as an alternative both to the Enlightenment philosophy and to genealogy. Precisely because of this hermeneutics can be seen as a post-modern (i.e. contra Enlightenment) epistemological approach. Its post-modern character rests on two interrelated characteristics: first, the thesis that rationality is local and situated and, second, that it is historical and hence temporal. Both of these characteristics – locality and temporality – are apparent, as we saw, within Nietzschean genealogy where they are expressed in different terminology, has a different ontological disposition (it seeks to break from and oppose the already existing structures of meaning), and has a tendency towards relativism. The logic of hermeneutics, on the contrary, requires intellectual-moral commitment and affirmation of one's own tradition, which is possible only through being rationally convinced that this particular tradition is the best so far. It is from this hermeneutical logic that derives MacIntyre's implicit belief that Thomism is the most powerful tradition of enquiry in the social sciences. However, this tradition within the moral-political sphere presupposes not simply a critique of contemporary politics. MacIntyre's claim is more fundamental. His philosophical position on politics requires the rejection of contemporary large-scale politics as barren. The scale of this rejection is radical since it refuses to enter any collaborative or reformative debate with it:

> Attempts to reform *the political systems of modernity* from within are always transformed into collaboration with them. Attempts to overthrow them always degenerate into terrorism or quasi terrorism. What is not thus barren is the politics involved in constructing and sustaining small-scale local communities, at the level of the family, the neighbourhood, the work place, the parish, the school, or clinic, communities within which the needs of the hungry and the homeless can be met.[54] (My italics).

This stress on local communities is no doubt influenced by the Aristotelian understanding of the politics of small-scale community which is centred on the shared understanding of common good. In

order to understand the novelty of this Aristotelian position within contemporary philosophical culture, we need to take into account the whole range of MacIntyre's moral and political concepts. It is by means of these philosophical concepts that MacIntyre re-interprets Aristotelian concepts within the contemporary anti-Aristotelian context of social reality. In this sense MacIntyre's development of the moral and political dimension of the Thomistic tradition may be truly conceived as hermeneutics.

MacIntyre claims that politics should be seen as that public activity where the realisation of common good is possible. Politics from this point of view is the public deliberation about the common good. Only this shared understanding of common good enables the true legitimacy of political authority. From such a point of view each individual not merely sees his/her individual good as part of the common good, but understands that one's own good is possible only through learning what the common good is. It is this link between individual good and public good that can justify public authority since people would willingly obey a government which embodies people's shared understanding of common good.

At this point MacIntyre can be criticised for possible collectivist tendencies. The homogeneity between common good and individual good has been one of the core elements within the variety of modern collectivist doctrines starting from Rousseau, Marx or Lukács, on the one hand, to different forms of nationalism, on the other, where individual freedom is swamped by the 'higher order' of collective/common good. To this MacIntyre can answer, first of all, that he cannot be accused of promoting any form of patriotism/nationalism. In one of his articles MacIntyre defines modern patriotism not only in opposition to liberal universalistic morality, but also to his own Aristotelian position.[55] Nationalism, as loyalty to one's nation as a linguistic-cultural unit, was theorised in the 18th and 19th centuries through the Romantic notion of belonging: such loyalty is pre-rational and sometimes non-rational. The philosophers of *das Volk*, as MacIntyre sees it, are Herder and Heidegger, not Aristotle.[56] First, the distinction between the Aristotelian *polis* and *das Volk* is in their scale. The *polis* is essentially a local and small scale political community, whereas the latter is always bigger than just a city or a local rural community (the formation of nations, so far as Europe is concerned, was through the political unification of local regional unities). On the other hand, loyalty to the *polis* was not realised through pre-rational quasi-Romantic belonging but through *rational deliberation* concerning common good. For a sim-

ilar reason MacIntyre refuses to accept the logic of Marxism because it sees political community in global large-scale terms as well. Thus MacIntyre's attempt to distinguish his Aristotelian politics of common good from both nationalistic patriotism and Marxism is once again a sign that his political vision has nothing to do with prevailing modern structures of the nation-state and its ideologies (whether on right or left), and for this very reason can contribute to the post-modern understanding of politics.

This hostility to the structures and institutions of modern political culture enables MacIntyre to deny the affinity of his thought with even contemporary communitarians. The reason for this rests in his belief that the communitarian critique of liberalism is primarily the critique of liberalism as political theory (first of all of Rawls's thought) which does not involve enough critical distance from liberal politics. Thus MacIntyre distinguishes between liberal politics (including neo-conservatism in America and European social democracy) and liberalism as theory in order to suggest that communitarians theoretically criticising the individualistic presuppositions of liberalism do not question and reject liberal politics together with its modern institutions:

> It is therefore not at all impossible to elaborate positions that are plainly incompatible with at least some versions of liberal theory, but nonetheless quite at home in the realities of contemporary liberal politics. Just this, I want to suggest, is the case with … 'communitarianism'.[57]

Here MacIntyre is right. None of the main three Anglo-American 'communitarian' thinkers – Charles Taylor, Michael Sandel and Michael Walzer, arguing from a similar prioritisation of good over right as MacIntyre – have his determination to reject liberal democratic institutions. That these communitarian diagnoses of the weaknesses of liberalism are poor in positing alternative political implications capable of suggesting substantially new accounts of politics may be seen from Taylor's and Sandel's writings. Taylor's critique of atomistic individualism is based on the philosophical thesis that Nozickean free-market libertarianism (which sees society consisting of free atomised individuals who enter into co-operation in order to fulfil their individual interests) cannot be sustained. It is so because autonomy, praised by liberals, is not a natural faculty that everyone is born with but requires cultivation and hence commitment. That is why, according to Taylor, liberty and autonomy are positive values and thus require people's commit-

ment, which is possible only if people acknowledge their belonging to a community. This is so because we inherit certain values, e.g. liberty and autonomy, and understand that they are desirable only in the light of community and its culture. To sustain them there have to be people's active commitment and moral support of that culture. Accordingly, liberals, who build their theories on the primacy of rights, on the self-sufficiency of individuals, and on the intrinsic value of freedom of choice, cannot afford their minimalistic account of society which does not require loyalty and moral support apart from that which derives from co-operation for the sake of individual interest. Thus what Taylor suggests is that liberalism cannot sustain its core concept of autonomy without an ontological account of human nature and a certain substantive understanding of good.[58] Similar objections are elaborated by Sandel who argues for a strong conception of community and solidarity and writes about liberty not in terms of individual freedom of choice but in terms of public or political freedom, which has to be maintained through civic republican institutions where deliberation about common goods is central. Now what critical commentators such as Will Kymlicka and Jeffry Friedman have suggested, and what MacIntyre himself claims, is that this sort of critique not only lacks sharp political alternatives to liberalism but can easily be incorporated into liberal politics.[59] What Taylor, Sandel and partly Walzer are doing is reversing the primacy of the rights of individuals by making the substantive good more important. However, the goods that communitarians want to promote are not incompatible with liberalism especially in the case of Taylor, for whom two of the highest goods are autonomy and liberty which, however, can be reached only through the strong affirmation of a particular community. Thus communitarians, by prioritising the good of civic autonomy and patriotic loyalty to a community within which alone it can be achieved, give a new direction to liberalism and in this way bring closer politics and culture. Hence, seeing civic autonomy as some sort of *telos*, communitarians hope to arrive at that which liberals take to be their premise.

It is unsurprising then that MacIntyre denies his philosophical affinity to communitarian thought. First of all it is questionable whether the hopes of such communitarians can be fulfilled. 'A strong identification with the fate of community', as Taylor puts it,[60] is hardly possible within today's highly commercialised culture and it is especially so within the whole heterogeneous multi-cultural society. And this is because contemporary society on the level of the nation-state does not have and cannot have, as we have seen in the introduction, a shared

substantive conception of common good. Thus the required minimum of political unity within liberal nation-states is achieved through conflicting and contradictory political rhetoric such as appealing to patriotism, cost-and-benefit analysis, commitment to minority rights and the like. Such political rhetoric, according to MacIntyre, renders large-scale politics irrational not only because it is strengthened and achieved through contemporary techno-visual manipulations, but also because it does not have shared fundamental agreements, achieved through rational scrutiny. It is in this sense that MacIntyre claims that contemporary political debate at the level of decision making has completely excluded questioning about first principles.[61] This is an important thesis which puts it at odds with contemporary liberal politics and its theoretical perception. For MacIntyre politics is essentially a critical enterprise which is able to question its own premises – what is the good of the goods of particular practices and how are they to be ordered within this particular community? – through public debate.

A hint concerning such rational political deliberation can be found in *Whose Justice?* where MacIntyre writes about the Greek conception of rhetoric as it was embodied in Periclean Athens. Periclean rhetoric was of two types. On the one hand, it was based on the presupposition that a good orator is one who is able to convince others about his own conclusions starting not from his, but from his audience's premises. Thus the core of rational rhetoric was an art of arriving at some desirable conclusions arguing from common premises. The rationality of this rhetoric lay precisely in this shared background of beliefs, which themselves would be achieved through rational deliberation and which would furnish the audience with the commonly agreed premises. However, when shared premises were not available, other non-rational, techniques would have been used. This was the case with emotional manipulation by appealing to fear or pride.[62] The latter was the second type of Periclean rhetoric sharply criticised by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and MacIntyre himself. Thus only common premises embodied in shared beliefs and critical questioning about them, on this account, make public deliberation and its rhetoric rational.

Such an account of rational political rhetoric links it to hermeneutics and our overall argument. It is impossible to have shared common beliefs within large-scale politics today because there is not, and cannot be, a single meta-narrative or single system of beliefs which could serve it with the shared premises for contemporary public debate. But since today the predominant public debate cannot provide an agreement on fundamental premises of what the good communal life might

be, and hence cannot discuss it coherently, the public debate is not rational. Of course, it is important not to misunderstand this claim. The lack of rationality here does not mean that there is no public debate, or that it is illogical, or that it completely lacks argumentative consistency. The irrationality rests in its purely instrumental character and its inability to discuss the shared common ends other than in terms of calculations of their effectiveness. That is why, if rational deliberation about shared beliefs is not possible within large-scale advanced modern politics, public deliberation on shared beliefs and common goods can be sustained only within a particular tradition. Truly rational and systemic political enquiry about the goods, activities, and values that furnish the possibility of establishing common premises is possible only within a certain intellectual and moral tradition. This should not be surprising since today the only loci where we can find some shared beliefs are particular traditions. This brings hermeneutics with all its significance and conceptual concreteness to the centre of political philosophy. It is a theoretical approach which not merely sees that the sources of justice and morality can be found only within tradition but also that only tradition can furnish politics with the conceptual background where the substantive or 'thick', using communitarian terminology, discussion about common goods and shared ends can take place. Reformulating Georgia Warnke's definition of hermeneutic political theory, we may say that such political philosophy can be called hermeneutic because it takes a tradition with all its historical practices and norms as a text whose meanings seek constant interpretation.[63] How it is possible to see politics through a particular tradition in a way that could furnish a community, or even communities, with shared common premises for public debate will be the concern of the rest of this chapter.

The core of such an understanding of politics lies in active enquiry and learning about both the individual and common goods. Its presupposition is that one's own individual good is directly related to common good in a way that it can be realised only through engagement with public rational deliberation and learning with others. It is this that eventually forms the space of common good (hence the difference, once again, from *das Volk* where it is realised through prerational belonging). Such an understanding of the politics of common good has strong affinities with the Greek vision of politics embodied in the *polis*. For the Athenians politics was the public deliberation about common good and thus could be realised not through a quasi-romantic notion of patriotic loyalty to their tribe but only through all

citizens' active participation in public debate. Analogously, the politics of common good for MacIntyre is rational activity too. A legitimate loyalty to that community can be realised only through the process of rational enquiry where everyone has opportunity to raise critical issues and to require that they be publicly addressed. That is why even though such politics of common good requires shared culture it nonetheless is not limited by such shared culture as is the case with the politics of modern nationalism:

> [T]hese requirements [i.e. shared inherited culture] have to serve the ends of a society in which individuals are always able to put in question through communal deliberation what has hitherto by custom and tradition been taken for granted both about their own good and the good of the community. A *polis* is always, potentially or actually, a society of rational enquiry, of self-scrutiny.[64]

Politics for MacIntyre is an activity which enables people to exercise their rational powers. Politics is essentially related to learning on both individual and communal levels. Individual good for MacIntyre is closely linked to the particular practice in which one is engaged. But practice is already a co-operative phenomenon which requires individuals, entering that practice, to learn its standards of excellence which would be impossible without certain moral virtues such as honesty, courage, and justice. In this sense the Aristotelian conception of practice, as the co-operative activity with its specific internal goods, allows MacIntyre to see political community not as consisting of abstract individuals but as individuals who are engaged in certain practices that contribute to the overall common good. Furthermore, the notion of practice bounds individuals within certain structures of communal good and thus allows us see the political in terms of the link between individual and common goods. Thus understood politics is public deliberation about the *ordering* of the goods of different practices in such a way that each individual in one way or another will benefit from this ordering. It has to be open for critical discussion, where each individual has to have an opportunity to express criticism which must be addressed publicly. It is through this public rational scrutiny that the learning and creating of common good is possible.

Thus MacIntyre's conception of the political is based on the possibility of realising common good and the Aristotelian understanding of human being as *politikon zōon*. That is to say, we become a mature independent rational agent only due to others: due to previous, current

and future dependence on particular others. This thesis that human beings are political animals is central to his book *Dependent Rational Animals*. However, MacIntyre develops this philosophical thesis further than it is developed by Aristotle. The most virtuous man as portrayed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is a magnanimous man who is able to give and is proud to confer benefits but is ashamed to receive any benefits from others for the first 'is the mark of a superior, the other of an inferior'.[65] MacIntyre sharply criticises this, claiming that it is necessary to correct Aristotle by developing a genuine understanding of our acknowledged dependence.

The central thesis of *Dependent Rational Animals* that we have to acknowledge our vulnerability and animality. Our rationality functions within our bodies and humans like any other, non-human, animals are vulnerable to harm, pain and different disabilities. The reason MacIntyre stresses the natural fact of our vulnerability is in order to provide the conceptual background for his claim that the virtues needed to become an independent rational agent are the same virtues of acknowledged dependence, the virtues that will help us to confront our vulnerability but also which will help us to know our good. To acknowledge our vulnerability is important, since without understanding the conditions of our vulnerability we will not be able to know what is it that enables us to flourish. The most important condition of specific human flourishing is practical rationality enabling us to become independent moral agents. Why is it important and how is it related to our dependence on others? The argument that MacIntyre provides is an Aristotelian one.

Any human activity, as that of non-human animals, is always directed towards some good. As dolphins through activities of play, hunting or sexual activity achieve their specific goods of joyful interaction, nourishment, and reproduction, so humans too through different co-operative practices achieve the specific internal and external goods that contribute to the satisfying of our physical, mental, and social needs, and in so doing contribute in our general flourishing. All of these activities involve co-operation since it is impossible to achieve their goods only through individual efforts. The core of these co-operative activities is learning. The latter, with all its significance for human moral and social development, starts from infancy and early childhood. It is this emphasis on the early stage of human dependence that enables MacIntyre to link intelligent nonhuman animals with human infants: their reasons and actions upon them are directed by immediate desires and expectations. What is different, however, is that non-

human animals do not go through the stage during which children and young human adults learn to distance themselves from their immediate desires, recognising goods other than those that satisfy mere bodily wants.[66] It is this transition alone that enables humans to become independent practical reasoners, able to discriminate independently between different goods, and hence direct their lives toward more stable good. It is a moral transition which requires acquiring certain virtues, *and* it is only due to particular others – our parents, guardians, teachers and mentors – that we become or fail to become successful *independent* rational agents. In this respect MacIntyre criticises contemporary moral philosophy which takes moral autonomy not only for granted but also as its main premise. MacIntyre in this respect is different. He begins from the fact of our dependence. It is only due to particular others' care, unconditional love, and teaching that we become independent practical reasoners. What is this moral transition during which we move from infant dependence to mature independence and what does this conceptual link between the state of our vulnerability and dependence and that of rational maturity involve?

There are at least three dimensions to this transition. The first involves a movement from having pre-reflective reasons for immediate desires to having the rational ability to evaluate our reasons as good or bad and through that process of evaluation to change, if necessary, the initial reasons. This involves learning how to step back from certain immediate desires and drives in order to evaluate them. It is through this that children and young adults are able to recognise the wider range of different goods learning to engage in sound reasoning and evaluation. That is why any history of the self, which gives identity and unity to our own life, is not only our own but that of the particular others whose care, love, nourishment, clothing, teaching provide us with the range of resources due to which we can become successful independent rational agents. Thus our moral life already starts in our dependent infancy because our future moral and intellectual successes and failures are partly the successes and failures of our particular others. The second dimension is that we can become successful practical reasoners if gradually we come to understand and learn how to co-operate with others in order to be able to contribute in forming and sustaining the network of relationships that enable us to achieve common goods. And thirdly, this transition involves learning how to be able to imagine different possible futures for our life. This partly involves the ability to imagine rightly what practice I want to pursue and what the future will be once I have chosen that particular practice.

This requires not only learning how to see one's own abilities and oneself in general realistically, but also being able to judge rightly about the social setting of different practices, about the internal requirements of what it is to be good in them, and how they are valued within a community. This once again depends on education by, first of all, our teachers, parents and mentors.[67]

MacIntyre's argument then illustrates Aristotelian notion of *politikon zōon* in a very fundamental and concrete sense. There is already the structure of common good inscribed in an individual becoming an independent practical reasoner, who is able to know and achieve his/her *own* good. Thus I can only know and achieve my own good through understanding and knowing common good. That is why the central thesis of the book is that the virtues of the independent practical reasoner, the virtues that are needed in order for us to become successful practical reasoners, are the same virtues as those involved in acknowledged dependence.[68] It is from this claim that we can trace MacIntyre's understanding of justice, which links individual virtue with that of communal virtue.

Implicitly we can read that justice is the gratitude and hence acknowledgement that I owe to the others for what I have received. This gratitude and wilful acknowledgement of moral debt is a peculiar one since it has no bureaucratic structure of symmetry, that is to say the structure that has the logic of 'I owe only to those who gave me, and as much as I received'. It is based on the asymmetric understanding that I owe to others unconditionally and hence have to give to others unconditionally when there is need, as my particular others unconditionally gave to me. In this respect MacIntyre speaks about the virtue of just generosity, which involves 1) the ability to give more than someone owes to another, 2) it is an affectionate response to those who are in need (to have pity and to respond towards that pity) and 3.) extension of just generosity to the strangers who do not belong to one's own community. In this MacIntyre wants to show that justice as both the virtue of character and of community is closely related to and thus cannot be understood separately from other virtues like generosity, charity, *misericordia* (pity and sorrow for someone else's distress as if it was your own). It is through these different virtues that MacIntyre seeks to emphasise the asymmetric nature of justice and the network of giving and receiving through which justice is realised. The asymmetry lies in the unconditional duty to give to the other not according my calculation and my resources but according to the need of the other, to give more than maybe I received.

Such a conception of generosity should not be understood in terms of old-fashioned benevolence or altruism towards the generalised Other. The virtue of justice and just generosity has little to do with Adam Smith's distinction between egoism and altruism. In order to oppose this distinction MacIntyre introduces his conception of the network of giving and receiving. Thus unconditional giving to others when I am called to do that is not only in the interest of the other but it is related to my good as well. This is so because, first of all, through unconditional giving and care one is able to learn about human needs and through that about one's own possible needs, and from this the non-demanding and yet hoping expectation that when I am in need or disabled I will receive similar care from others. That is why MacIntyre speaks not only about the virtues of giving (just generosity, charity, sorrow for the distress of others), but also about the virtues of receiving. The latter are related to knowing how to exercise gratitude without allowing it to become a burden, courtesy or forbearance towards those whose giving is either graceless or inadequate:

> The exercise of these latter virtues always involves a truthful acknowledgement of dependence. And they are therefore virtues bound to be lacking in those whose forgetfulness of their dependence is expressed in an unwillingness to remember benefits conferred by others. … For like virtues of giving, those of receiving are needed in order to sustain just those types of communal relationship through which the exercise of these virtues first have to be learned.[69]

That is why forgetting what we owe to others and thus not being able to acknowledge our dependence is in conflict with the virtue of justice. We cannot sustain the virtues needed for the network of giving and receiving without being able to acknowledge what we received from the others. This is so for at least two reasons. First, we are unable to learn the virtues of giving without first being in a position of dependence on the care of others. We can start learning virtues only from the others who exercised those virtues through their care for us. This aspect of learning is emphasised by Aristotle in a slightly different context too: to learn how to rule the free citizens, one can learn only through being ruled before. Second, the virtues of receiving are important because they require both courage and humility to articulate one's need and then ask for support. It also requires refusing pride because it generates the illusion of

self-sufficiency which is contrary to such an understanding of justice.

What are the political conditions required in order to sustain such a network of giving and receiving? First of all MacIntyre emphasises that there can hardly be a single set of rules for all possible just relationships. However, using Marx's formulations he draws our attention to two different principles of justice. One is the concept of desert which can be applied only by those who are fully independent practical reasoners: each receives proportionately to what he/she contributes. Whereas the principle of need is applied among those who are most dependent – children, the old, and the disabled. It is the principle of 'from each according to her or his ability, to each, so far as is possible, according to her or his needs'.[70] Being perfectly aware of the tension between the two MacIntyre emphasises that both of them (especially the second) could be realised only imperfectly because of limited economic and social resources, hence it could be seen as *telos*. It is important briefly to mention that although these two formulas are taken from Marx, their function and context are not Marxian. Its teleological aspect is different from Marx's global teleology which culminates with the creation of the global communist state. The network of giving and receiving and the principles of justice and just generosity can be sustained only within local communities. This, however, does not mean that all possible political authority and power have to concentrate *only* within the local communities. Rather, what this suggests is that neither within the nation-state nor the modern family – the two main social nuclei of contemporary society – can the communal life of common good be fully realised. But since public deliberation and decision making concerning the common goods are the activity of politics, then the locus of politics of common good thus understood should be a political community other than the nation-state.

At this point it is important to point out that MacIntyre with his alternative vision of the politics of common good does not deny the existence of the nation-state – he has acknowledged its inevitability in different ways and in many contexts.[71] Thus his position does not have any affinity to anarchism, which radically denies the institution of the modern state and argues for its full abandonment. His position is that of a different type: even though he acknowledges that the modern state can occasionally remove obstacles to human goals, the modern nation-state with its bureaucracy is 'in general irrational'[72] and thus local communities have to be under as little of its influence as possible.

Hermeneutic politics: *Ekklesia* as the locus of post-modern politics

Why Christian *Ekklesia*?

Before we turn to discuss the implications of such a conception of the political, it will be helpful to return to the issue of MacIntyre's supposed hermeneutics. His hermeneutics is far from being straightforward and therefore, contribution to hermeneutics is more implicit than explicit. Of course, the affinity of his thought with Gadamer's hermeneutics is obvious and MacIntyre himself admits that:

> From Gadamer I have learned a great deal about intellectual and moral tradition. I am very close to all in Gadamer that comes from Aristotle; that which comes from Heidegger I reject.[73]

This is not the place to discuss the issue of why MacIntyre denies Heidegger and what Heideggerian part of Gadamer MacIntyre rejects. What I want, however, to suggest is that it is hermeneutics as the ultimate horizon of philosophical *qua* ontological thinking that MacIntyre does not accept[74]. The centre of philosophical thinking for MacIntyre is not mere textual interpretative analysis, which is undoubtedly the case for Gadamer even though hermeneutics for him is not a mere textual interpretation but is raised to the ontological status of philosophical thinking as such. For MacIntyre one of the most essential aspects of philosophy is rational enquiry into the human good. In this sense it is moral philosophy which is nonetheless developed to the level of metaphysics through his Thomism. Thus to say that MacIntyre is developing a hermeneutics of Thomism is to read MacIntyre in a specifically Gadamerian way. That such a Gadamerian reading of MacIntyre is plausible, I hope, has been shown during the analysis of MacIntyre's notion of tradition. However, a specific reading of a particular philosopher is important only if it is philosophically justified. The latter is not merely a plausible and scholarly interpretation, but one that shows its ability to have further philosophical implications. Where does the philosophical justification of such a reading of MacIntyre rest? It is in an attempt to locate MacIntyre's understanding of the politics of common good within a very concrete – both actual and hermeneutic – body, the Christian *Ekklesia*. It is here, so I shall argue, that Gadamer's hermeneutics – ontological textual interpretation – and MacIntyre's Aristotelianism – a realist's teleological enquiry into the human good – are capable of being reconciled. Thus in the

rest of this chapter I shall attempt to develop that conception of politics whose locus would be a local Christian community but whose mode of political deliberation would be that of open enquiry into common, and through this, individual good.

At this point a question arises. One may ask why it needs to be the Christian tradition rather than any other. How can this be philosophically justified? The answer rests on our philosophical understanding of hermeneutics which has been developed in this chapter. My main reason for entering into the philosophical argument about the nature of hermeneutics with Ricoeur was to show that hermeneutics is necessarily linked to tradition. Accordingly, this means that Nietzsche's genealogy cannot be seen as hermeneutics in the way Ricoeur understood it. To counter Ricoeur I chose Gadamer's understanding of philosophical hermeneutics for which belonging to tradition is an internal and essential part of hermeneutics. Furthermore, our specifically Gadamerian reading of MacIntyre was constructed in order to re-affirm this position in a new light. That is to say, there is no rationality and rational enquiry apart from a tradition, but since there are different traditions then what one has to do is to question one's own premises in order to understand what tradition one belongs to. It is only through this essentially philosophical enterprise of questioning the premises of one's own rationality, that tradition can be *consciously* realised. In this sense tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rationality is post-naïve rationality and thus is essentially reflective. However, tradition for MacIntyre is 'thicker' than it is for Gadamer since it is both a moral and an intellectual-linguistic phenomenon. For MacIntyre tradition is the locus where rational enquiry requires moral commitment, and where certain virtues, moral values, and beliefs are an essential part of theoretical enquiry. Now if we agree with this, namely that there is no mature rational enquiry apart from a moral and intellectual tradition which requires moral commitment, then every rational enquiry understood in this way is 'biased' precisely because it is from a certain moral point of view, which is, however, rooted in the wider background of tradition and thus is not arbitrary. Thus a historical narrative can be developed only from the point of view of a certain tradition. That is why MacIntyre's historical meta-narrative of different traditions found in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* can be meta-narrative insofar as it is a Thomistic narrative. Now, since such an understanding of hermeneutics, as was suggested earlier, involves both its futuristic and co-operative aspects, then it is more than plausible to see my own contribution as the hermeneutic continuation of *this* tradi-

tion as well. And in saying this I accept both its conceptual and moral premises and thus acknowledge my belonging to it. Accordingly, if MacIntyre sees his philosophy as a part of Thomistic tradition, then my own attempt to locate post-modern politics within a certain localised community may be within the context of that tradition as well. One of the possibilities of seeing a local political body driven by public deliberation about common good is within the Christian *Ekklesia*.[75]

Why we need an alternative *polis*

We saw from our discussion of MacIntyre's critique of emotivist moral culture that one of the problems of contemporary society is not only that there is no rational means to mediate between the different conceptions of good but that contemporary society oscillates between the sphere of the 'personal', when the values and moral attitudes are 'under open debate but where the resolution is not possible', and the realm of the organisational (i.e. first of all institutions of the nation-state), where 'the ends are given and thus are not under rational scrutiny'.[76] As a result morality becomes displaced: it becomes a merely personal matter which could be arbitrarily chosen. It is not surprising that within such a context the only available conception of the self is an emotivist or desiring one. Alongside this MacIntyrean insight I want to suggest that there has to be a certain communal structure between the personal and the organisational, and that in order to sustain non-emotivist morality, morality as it is understood by Aristotle and MacIntyre, there has to be an alternative *polis* which would function very differently from that of the modern liberal nation-state. To restore an Aristotelian understanding of morality, morality based not on arbitrary choice or decision theory whose only concern is to maximise one's preferences but on narrative deliberation, we have to look for the alternative conception of the political beyond the modern nation-state structured through the prevailing narrative of liberal humanism. Such an alternative conception of the political would be different from that of modern politics, at least in so far as it would go beyond the modern assumption that politics can be separated from ethics and thus would have more similarity with the classical (or Aristotelian) conception of the political, according to which its primary role was seen in its ability to realise the common good and cultivate its citizens into becoming virtuous individuals. Now if such a politics is hardly possible within the modern nation-state, the state which, as we have seen from our previous discussions, not only cannot oppose corporate business but which adopts and further reinforces its manipulative marketing

techniques, then it is plausible to suggest that the community of a local Christian church or parish could be seen as such a political agency within which an Aristotelian conception of the political could be located. However, before discussing such an alternative conception of the political, it is important briefly to sketch Aristotle's understanding of political community and politics.

Aristotle's conception of political community and politics

We read in the first pages of the *Politics* that it is only through political community that self-sufficiency in human life can be reached, and that even if 'the state came about as a means of securing life itself, it continues in being to secure the *good* life'.[77] What Aristotle means by this is that even though political community is formed through the growth from the household to the village and then to the state, the political community is *essentially* primary to the individual, the household or the village. The primacy of the political community over the individual is an ontological one. It is expressed in Aristotle's saying that the state exists by nature. This claim however should not be misunderstood as something that is merely empirically given. Rather nature is seen as teleological. That is to say, nature for Aristotle is not a certain primary factual state but is itself an end: 'whatever is the end-product of the coming into existence of any object, that is what we call its nature'.[78] Accordingly, to say that political community exists by nature means that it is an end of human existence and hence the highest good, for 'the end is perfection; and self-sufficiency is both end and perfection'.[79]

It is already evident how different this teleological understanding of the political is from the modern one. We have seen from the introduction that the conceptual premises of modern political thought were built on precisely the opposite notion – the primacy of free and equal individuals. Furthermore, modern political theory, at least as it was embodied in classical liberalism, has formulated the minimal/thin conception of the state/political community (i.e. it is an outcome of social contract and its primary task is to secure individual liberties), a conception which appears sharply at odds with the classical conception of the political. What is important to note, however, is that the ontological primacy of the *polis* in Aristotle's account should not be misunderstood in terms of modern collectivism as it is embodied in thinkers such as J. J. Rousseau, Karl Marx, Oswald Spengler, Georg Lukács or Georges Sorel.[80] This is not only because Aristotle criticises Plato's *Republic* for putting too much emphasis on the unity of the state and thus rejects

Plato's idea that private property should not be allowed to the rulers and guardians,[81] but first of all because Aristotle does not subordinate the individual will/good to the 'higher' collective good of the state. Instead, Aristotle's conception of the ontological primacy of the *polis* means that the political community is the highest form of human development and that the good which individuals can achieve living politically will always be higher than that which individuals achieve on their own or within such communal structures as family or village.

The latter claim is exemplified in Aristotle's discussion of the functionality of the household, the village and the state. These three communal forms are put in a hierarchical order according to their importance. The function of the household is reproduction and satisfaction of other *daily needs*; whereas the function of the village is something *more* than daily needs and is seen by Aristotle as both the quantitative (in number) and qualitative (in needs/goods) extension of the household. The good of the political community is higher than the goods of both the household and the village in that it is driven not by the *necessity* of daily needs, but by *freedom* when its members can freely and fully exercise their human faculties and in doing so achieve happiness. Hence Aristotle's definition of the state:

> A state is an association of similar persons whose aim is *the best* life possible. What is best is happiness, and to be happy is an active exercise of virtue and a complete employment of it (my italics).[82]

The *polis* for Aristotle is then the space of freedom where its members are able to exercise their virtues in ruling each other and in exercising their intellectual endowments. Political community is the locus where the cardinal virtues of courage (*andreia*), self-control/temperance (*sophrosune*), justice (*dikaosune*) and wisdom (*phronesis*) can be fully exercised. This is so because the *polis* consists, according to Aristotle, of free and equal citizens, and since a citizen is someone who actively participates in giving judgement and holding political office, the virtues such as justice and wisdom are needed. Aristotle distinguishes the rule over the household from the rule of the statesmen over free citizens in that the former is the rule of slaves, that is, unequals, and thus requires neither practical wisdom nor justice to the extent that they are required in ruling free citizens. That is why tyranny is a bad constitution and cannot be considered as political. The ruler treats the subjects as slaves and in doing so not only deprives them of their potentialities but also is unable to put fully into practice his own

virtues and faculties. It is in this sense that we can say that the political community is the surplus of the ordinary life of necessities. Its cause is the *best* life, since it is only the community of free and virtuous men that enables citizens, who rule and are ruled in turns, to be happy. Thus politics for Aristotle is more an activity of 'leisure' than of necessity and we see this in his urging that citizens should be properly educated.

Such a conception of the political is quite 'elitist'. However, the reason it is important to stress the aspect of leisure allowing individuals to cultivate themselves into virtuous men of good taste, is in order to emphasise Aristotle's original idea that political community is the highest good due to which and only in which its citizens can live the *best* life possible. Accordingly, it is plausible to argue that such an in principle perfectionist conception of the political has a strong utopian element in it, and that even though political community, as Aristotle states, is constituted by nature, it is also the aim of our existence. Therefore the *polis* is not something given but is a dynamic and teleological phenomenon – it requires our cultivation in order to reach its further and more perfected state. That such an interpretation of Aristotle's political community is credible can be seen in Aristotle's philosophical attempt to formulate the best possible political constitution. The aim of the *Politics* was to arrive, though rigorous analysis of already existing political communities and their constitutions, at the conception of the best possible constitution and political community which would be judged not by its military might or economic growth, but by its ability to cultivate its citizens into virtuous men, men who could fully realise their talents through (political) co-operation and in so doing achieve *eudaimonia*. It is in this context that Joachim Ritter could say that 'the *polis* has the vocation of bringing man to the condition of human existence' and that '[i]t is actualisation, *actualitas*, of his nature'.[83]

For Aristotle then the *polis* was based on a substantive conception of the good – its aim is to secure not only 'life, liberty and estate', as it was for John Locke, but the best possible life which would be unattainable without the virtues. It is 'a community in which everything is brought to perfection'.[84] Furthermore, the Aristotelian conception of *polis*, as MacIntyre has suggested, was the exemplification of a deeper metaphysical and theological belief about a perfective universe.[85] That is to say, the *Cosmos* was hierarchically structured (the lower formations (material and biological) were subordinated to higher, i.e. human, formation) and thus seen as meaningful and harmonious.

This was further exemplified in the Aristotelian philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas's natural theology not only attempted to prove rationally the existence of God. It also severed as the foundation of the entire body of his philosophy enabling Aquinas to claim that, for example, 'the best ordering of a state or of any nation is to be ruled by a king: because this kind of government approaches nearest in resemblance to the Divine government, whereby God rules the world from the beginning'.[86] It was precisely this metaphysical conception of the perfective universe that, as was argued in chapter one, was questioned at the dawn of modernity by thinkers such as Descartes and Hobbes and finally refuted through 19th and 20th century science. It was Nietzsche who first saw his philosophical task in *completely* getting rid of this traditional metaphysical structure, and who claimed that to 'regard nature as though it were a proof of God's goodness and providence' is a sign of weakness, dishonesty and bad taste.[87] Now what I want to suggest is that the only way to restore the traditional metaphysical structure after Nietzsche is by turning it upside down. That is, the traditional belief that the world and nature are part of the harmonious ethical universe created by God, who gives us reasons to act morally and to believe in the moral God, is unsustainable because the world and human existence *as such* are neither moral nor can they testify to 'God's goodness and providence'. This is especially the case in the contemporary post-modern condition. Rather, to see the universe in terms of a perfective *Cosmos* is possible if our understanding of the world is formed through the education of certain intellectual and moral virtues. This means that our *episteme* about the world should not be seen *as such* and as *neutral* but that its premises should be based on the fact that we start from the cultivation of moral and intellectual virtues.[88] Now the cultivation of virtues is always an act of will for, as Aristotle argued, the virtues are voluntary.[89] This claim will become less surprising if we recall our discussion of MacIntyre's account of tradition in philosophical enquiry: in order to excel in theoretical enquiry into the human good it is necessary to have acquired certain virtues which require that one should be already educated within a certain moral tradition. Accordingly, rational enquiry starts not from the establishment of universal truths but through the cultivation of intellectual and moral virtues. That is why seeing God's providence in the world is impossible without having a certain moral character and without being able to undergo further transformation. To understand a canonical text, as Augustine teaches us, is impossible without allowing oneself to be transformed by the text. It is in this sense that we can say that the

emphasis on the cultivation of moral and intellectual virtues as opposed to the 'objective' metaphysical moral structure of the universe is a reversal of traditional metaphysical belief. Thus we believe in God not because He 'objectively' *is* and thus His providence is seen in a perfective universe, but that our belief in God, which is possible only through our ability to be morally transformed, allows us to see His providence in the world as a perfective universe. It is only in this sense that we can say that the real is ethical. It is our faith, which is always partly constituted and shaped through our moral and intellectual education and hence is due to the act of our will, that enables us to see God's providence and that the world is a perfective universe, not *vice versa*. In other words, it is our faith that creates the real which is ethical, not that we believe because the moral God exists 'objectively'. Hence the world as a perfective universe is not simply given but is *telos* and it is through faith, which is essential for both our daily practices and our *episteme*, faith shaped through intellectual and moral virtues, that it can be realised.

How is this related to the Aristotelian conception of the political? If we reverse the traditional metaphysical structure – we act morally because there is a moral and judging God at the top of hierarchically structured being – and instead suggest that it is our faith and us being moral characters that allows us to see the world in terms of a perfective universe where the real can become ethical, then the notion of the *polis* – whose primary aim is not a mere satisfaction of daily needs by securing 'life, liberty and estate' but cultivation of civic and moral virtues without which the *best* life would be impossible – becomes essential. We need an alternative *polis* which would provide us with such education in order to sustain this reversed metaphysical structure. If the condition of sustaining such metaphysical structure is our ability to have moral character, then the *polis* becomes essential since it is within the *polis* that we are able to learn how to be virtuous individuals. If then the liberal nation-state cannot be such a *polis* for the reasons already discussed, it can be the Christian *Ekklesia*. What still remains to discuss is that conception of *Ekklesia* which can be seen as an example of the embodiment of Aristotelian teleological politics thus understood.

Two conflicting accounts of hermeneutical politics: Moltmann *versus* Hauerwas

The contemporary theological debate about the role and the place of the church in the modern world has undergone a significant transfor-

mation. Arne Rasmusson in his illuminating book on the recent developments of contemporary theology provides a sharp conceptual distinction between, what he calls, political theology and theological politics.[90] It is important briefly to discuss this transformation from political theology to theological politics because it will allow us to provide a conceptual context for our own claim that the Aristotelian politics can be located within the Christian *Ekklesia*.

However, before doing so one issue needs to be clarified. My discussion here will be restricted primarily to Moltmann and Hauerwas and the way Arne Rasmusson interprets them for two reasons. First of all, their thought provides us with two conflicting conceptions of the relationship between hermeneutics, theology and politics, conceptions which represent the philosophical shift from the modern/modernity to the post-modern/post-modernity. In this sense the two thinkers are important here in as much as they reinforce the overall argument of the book. Namely, we need to move beyond the modern understanding of the political and see the politics of the Christian *Ekklesia* as an alternative to the modern politics of the liberal nation-state. Politics thus understood is the communal activity of the church whose primary aim is not to change or liberate the world, as Moltmann and much of the tradition of liberation theology suggest, but to create that type of political body which is faithful, as Hauerwas has argued, to its own principles and Biblical narrative. Secondly, partly because of my approach and because of the limited scope of this book, the vast tradition of liberation theology will not be discussed here. And this is for at least one important reason.

The fact that the approach developed in this book necessitates moving beyond the Hegelian–Marxist paradigm of liberation does not mean that liberation, as it has been understood by the proponents of liberation theology from Gustavo Gutierrez, Enrique Dussel, the Boff brothers to Jon Sobrino, Juan Luis Segundo and many others, is not important. Any vibrant church, if it wants to be truthful to Christianity, has to be fully committed to the liberation of the oppressed, the poor and to promoting social justice. This, however, does not mean that liberation thus understood is the main and the only aim of the church. Furthermore, liberation of the oppressed is important not because the Church has a universal mandate to advance the world's history, a mandate similar to Marx's proletariat. The Church is not and cannot be a vanguard community advancing universal human history not least because we live in a post-religious, secular and multicultural society. In such a society there are many cultural and religious tradi-

tions and thus the politics of the Church cannot be seen as an alternative and yet vanguard agency in leading the course of universal history. Otherwise, despite its commitment to non-violence, the Church might face a similar fate to the Lukacsian Bolshevik party which believed in its historical mission of advancing the socialist liberation of nations and through which it created yet another ideology ready to justify any, even the most violent, means to its end. The main scope of the politics of the Church then is not universal history and its objective is not to make the world just. Rather, its primary goal is to build that type of political community which is faithful to its own narrative and Christian *ethos*. Therefore the directedness of the Church needs to be towards itself rather than towards the world and its liberation. The Church needs to advance its own, alternative history. It is only through this that the Church can contribute to making the world more just and liberated. In this sense liberation theology, important as it may be, through its attempt to reconcile Marxism and other modern philosophical paradigms, on the one hand, and Christianity, on the other, considered in the light of the dominance of the liberalism of the affluent world, is potentially limited. In losing sight of its directedness towards itself rather than towards the world, there is a danger of Christianity either becoming another of the world's ideologies or else condemning itself to permanent identification with the oppressed, the poor and the weak.[91]

Political theology, an influential branch of contemporary theology, was developed by two of its proponents Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann in the 1960s. It was an attempt to respond to modernity and its challenges of industrialisation, increasing secularisation, and the emergence of revisionist Marxism of the post-war Frankfurt school.[92] The challenge that Christian theology faced was how to respond positively to the common trend of the Western societies becoming increasingly post-religious societies when matters of faith became localised within the realm of the private. The political theology of Metz and especially Moltmann responded to this social and intellectual milieu through an attempt to mediate the Christian tradition to the modern world as well as to mediate modernity to Christianity. In doing so it accepted and internalised the predominant philosophical narratives of modernity as they were developed by Kant, Hegel, Marx and others.[93] What is important is that Moltmann understood such mediation not simply as a theoretical attempt to justify Christian dogmatic. Instead he sought to show the practical relevance of Christian faith in everyday struggle against domination and oppression.[94] It is in

this sense that Moltmann saw his theology as essentially political. The first task of theology is not an abstract theorizing of Christian dogma but practical day to day struggle for justice and peace in the modern world. The aspect of translation/mediation allowed Moltmann to describe his theology as political hermeneutics. It seeks to translate the Christian tradition to modern society through the day to day struggle to make the world more just and peaceful. Thus understood politics was seen as 'the inclusive horizon of the life of mankind' when the historical nature of humanity is realised and thus is seen as a human activity to consciously form its own future.[95]

Moltmann's conception of history then is understood in terms of the Hegelian-Marxian paradigm which is quintessentially modern. It calls for freedom and autonomy which, despite the fact that they are seen in terms of Christian eschatology (freedom and autonomy is the result of the God's Redemption), are nonetheless understood within the language of the Enlightenment. Furthermore, accepting the initially Hegelian notion that Christianity is the religion of freedom, Moltmann, especially in his earlier work, accepts the process of secularisation as its further development and growth.[96] He also thinks, similarly to a recent argument developed by Gianni Vattimo,[97] that there is a fundamental continuity between the Enlightenment and the Christian faith. The continuity rests not merely in the fact that the Enlightenment was influenced by Christianity (hence the sharp distinction between the two is a misunderstanding of both as exemplified in dogmatic reactionary Christianity, on the one hand, and revolutionary Jacobinism, on the other), but that the Enlightenment's ideals of emancipation and freedom are seen as 'a secularised messianic hope for building the kingdom of God on earth'.[98]

Such a conception of political theology seen as an inclusive horizon understands politics as human activity whose primary concern is to make the world more just. The horizon of politics is humanity itself. Furthermore, accepting the heritage of the Enlightenment, Moltmann sees the locus of politics as universal humanity and its history. Thus Moltmann in his earlier work does not try to localise the political within the Church, which he nonetheless sees as the essential agent in advancing the politics of liberation (he calls the church a 'contrast society'). However such an approach, Rasmusson argues, has led Moltmann to serious contradictions and inconsistencies. Later in his writings Moltmann moved not only towards a more critical approach to modernity and the Enlightenment but also towards an attempt to formulate a conception of the church as an alternative community within

the contemporary consumer society rather than a vanguard agent of history. Already by the mid-1970s Moltmann had become increasingly critical towards the modern belief in progress, towards unlimited economic growth and the exploitation of nature and its resources through scientific and technological manipulation. However, Moltmann's deep theological commitment to the ecological movement, which resulted from his increasing criticism of modernity and capitalism, often conflicted with his own in principle modern faith in human emancipation which Moltmann linked to the notion of spontaneous life freed from spiritual and material pressures and expressed through 'playful self-realisation', the quintessentially modern ideal of contemporary individualistic society *par excellence* and which can, indeed, foster consumerism.[99] Moltmann's conception of the political as an inclusive human activity directed towards the fulfilment of the Enlightenment's ideals of autonomy appears in a conceptual tension with his own increasing attempt to emphasise the importance of an alternative community, a community with such moral character that in order to sustain it, it would need to abandon modern humanism itself. However, these conceptual tensions between his political hermeneutics to mediate/(re)interpret Christianity to the modern world, and his later and increasing criticism of modern society has never been fully addressed: similarly to Habermas, Moltmann believes that the fact that there is a distinction between 'imperfect bourgeois modernity' and 'the hope of the fulfilment of the promises of modernity' does not discredit modernity and its ideals.[100]

Now what I would like to suggest is that such hopes, and such faith in modernity, are highly questionable today. This is so for several reasons. First of all, we (at least those who live in the contemporary affluent Western societies) have already achieved these ideals as much as it is possible (the ideals and rights to the major liberties such as the right to self-expression, to free-speech, to conscience, to have basic (and for the most of us not only basic) opportunities, income and wealth). Second, some of these ideals, especially those which Moltmann wants to reconcile (ecological commitment to sustainable use of nature and its resources emphasising the fact that nature is God's creation; his commitment to Christian socialism and struggle against exploitation (especially of the Third world); his liberalism of self-expression and spontaneity), can hardly be reconciled because they are too conflicting and even irreconcilable. Thirdly, modernity has achieved its new phase in which to talk about further 'human emancipation and freedom' is to arrive at abandonment/destruction of humanity itself. And finally,

even if it is true that the Enlightenment was built on essentially Christian precepts, which were autonomously rationalised, the present situation of post-modernity has very little in common with Christianity. Max Weber's prophecy in the closing pages of his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* has already happened. We already live in the iron cage where the production of material goods and the 'tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order' rests on 'mechanical foundations', and where the pursuit of wealth has 'the character of sport', the cage of 'specialist without spirit, sensualists without heart' those who imagine they have 'attained a level of civilization never before achieved'.[101]

It was Stanley Hauerwas, a leading American theologian, who moved away from political theology and instead developed theological politics which ceases to see its primary concern as mediating the Christian faith to the modern world. Hauerwas, strongly influenced by MacIntyre's critique of the Enlightenment, has developed the conception of the church as an alternative *polis* and community to that of the liberal democratic nation-state and consumer post-modern society. It is by this position that my own conception of the Aristotelian politics within the Christian *Ekklesia* has been inspired. I shall therefore briefly discuss Hauerwas's conception of the church as an alternative *polis* and then conclude with some of my own remarks concerning the matter.

One of the essential assertions of Stanley Hauerwas's theology, most recently exemplified in his *With the Grain of the Universe,* the material originally given in the form of Gifford lectures in 2001, is his claim that Christianity and the church are at their best if they see themselves in a sharp contrast to the world. Thus from the very start Hauerwas's position is different to that of Moltmann and other modern theologians, who from the early 19th century saw their primary task as to mediate Christianity to the modern world. Hauerwas picks up the general New Testament's theme of being 'not of this world' and reinterprets it in terms of the contrast with the *modern* world of consumer capitalism and liberal democracy. As the starting point for developing such a position Hauerwas adopts John Howard Yoder's theology which claimed not only that Christianity does not depend on the world in order to form the church but also that the Christian faith presupposes the radically non-violent way of life which puts those who live and follow it sharply at odds with the world of power and domination. The church, according to Hauerwas, then should be seen as an alternative polity whose individuals are able to form an opposition to the world through its commitment to non-violence. Paradigmatic to

such commitment is the concept of trust: the church is a community where 'trust rules', when individuals do not fear one another and thus are able to withstand the general threats of violence, through faith in God and his promises. An implicit Hauerwas's insight is that to practise peace and trust in our daily lives in the Foucaultian world of manipulative discursive wars, competition, and ever-increasing striving for self-expression would be impossible alone and without an alternative narrative that would promise that the truly *best* life is possible to those who dare and have courage to live their lives in peaceful co-operation and sharing rather than competition. That is why the church as *polis* is needed, for without edifying and educating its members in virtues of courage, charity and hope through an alternative story of God's ultimate love, it would be impossible to live the life of radical non-violence. It is here that the hermeneutic character of such a polity is evident which, however, is different from Moltmann's hermeneutics. The narrative character rests not in an attempt to mediate Christianity to the modern world but in the *polis* itself. Thus Hauerwas states that 'politics is nothing else but a community's internal conversation with itself concerning the various possibilities of understanding and extending its life'.[102]

Such a conception of the church as an alternative polity allows Hauerwas to contrast it to the predominant politics of the liberal democratic nation-state. The problem with the contemporary politics of liberal democracy, according to Hauerwas, is that the more traditional or classical thinking has been excluded from the horizon of contemporary politics, and consequently the idea that politics should be linked to ethics and moral virtues has ceased to exist. As we have explored above, the development of modern political thought implied that politics have become divorced from culture, ethics and substantial moral values, and that today multicultural society cannot have a common culture that would provide the basis for politics of common good. In a similar way Hauerwas claims that today politics, as understood in terms of contemporary liberalism, cannot be seen as a function 'to direct people individually and collectively towards the good'.[103] Using Solzhenitsyn's reflections on the Western democratic societies Hauerwas criticises contemporary politics for being based on the drive for individual happiness and the fact that its only task is seen in providing opportunities for individuals to achieve their own conceptions of freedom and happiness without any attempt to question what these conceptions are. Hauerwas claims that contemporary society seeking only individual happiness and freedom has nonetheless become an

entirely 'legalistic society'.[104] In contrast to such an understanding of politics Hauerwas adopts the classical notion of the political which he locates within the church. The primary task of such an alternative polity would be directing individuals towards the good through providing the means to cultivate virtues and moral character.[105] It would then be tested by the kind of moral character it allows its citizens to develop. Thus Hauerwas promotes an Aristotelian claim which contributes to our previous discussion: the neglect of morality and virtues within the politics of modern liberal democracies is a symptom of the lack of proper moral/political community. Thus, as we saw from the above discussion of MacIntyre, we need moral virtues to flourish but we cannot fully cultivate them without moral/political community.

The means for such moral development is provided in the narrative character of *Ekklesia*. The Christian story, according to Hauerwas, is essentially different from that of the Enlightenment's humanism in that it teaches that life is a gift and not something that manifests itself and is understood in terms of autonomy and independence. It is the story that true freedom comes by learning to be dependent and 'to trust the one who wills to have us as his own and who wills the final good of all'.[106] However, what is peculiar about the Biblical narrative in Hauerwas's theology is not that it allows us to derive the Christian ethics from it but that the Biblical narrative itself is ethics. The novelty of Hauerwas theology is that he links the Bible as the main (but not the only) source of the Christian narrative to the church as political community and insists that the first significance of the Bible is not epistemological, i.e. what it 'objectively' says about reality, but political, i.e. what community it forms. In other words, what is important is that the Bible, as the narrative of God's people Israel and the church, is fully intelligible in relation to what kind of community it is able to form. It is in this sense that Hauerwas can claim that narrative telling is essentially political: it edifies and cultivates individuals into moral characters who can form an alternative community of non-violence. This claim, nevertheless, does not preclude Hauerwas from insisting that the 'ethical task of the church, therefore, is to be the kind of community that tells and tells rightly the story of Jesus' and '[t]hat story requires the formation of a corresponding community which has learned to live in a way that makes it possible for them to hear that story'.[107] Hence the relationship between narrative and a people is reciprocal: the narrative telling (through liturgy, prayer, preaching, corporal and individual testimonies, conversations, and deliberations about communal good) builds a (political) community of a certain moral

character but, on the other hand, a community can hear and tell the story rightly only if it is able to undergo a moral transformation. Such deliberate refusal to treat text (the Bible) and practice (the communal life of the church) separately makes Hauerwas's theological politics peculiarly hermeneutic (indeed, Hauerwas claims that the Christian faith is practice itself and that it requires both linguistic and moral cultivation). We saw from our discussion of Gadamer that the interpretation of a text presupposes communality in that the fore-structure of meaning is always to a certain extent embodied within tradition as the linguistic practices of a community. On the other hand, because the task of interpretation rests not in the deciphering of objective or original meaning of a text, an interpretative engagement with such a text further continues its meaning and tradition within the present. Hauerwas goes a step further with his conception of hermeneutics and claims that Christianity is not just a doctrine or 'set of ideas about God, the world, and humanity, but a people'.[108] Hence Haeurwas can claim that without the church as a political community Christianity would not and could not be intelligible and that the church itself embodies and continues the Biblical narrative:

> It is my thesis that questions of the truth or falsity of Christian conviction cannot even be addressed until Christians recover the church as a political community necessary for our salvation. What Christians believe about the universe, the nature of human existence, or even God does not, cannot, and should not save. Our beliefs, or better our convictions, only make sense as they are embodied in a political community we call church. [Charles] Taylor is quite correct that our sense of God, our very understanding of God, is correlative to moral sources, or as I would prefer, practices. For Christians, without the church there is no possibility of salvation and even less of morality and politics.[109]

Some conceptual implications

Such a conception of the political located within a local Christian *Ekklesia* enables us to revive the classical conception of the political which from Socrates to the civic humanism of the Italian Renaissance saw its primary task in directing its citizens towards the good and to which the cultivation of virtues was essential. Furthermore, Stanley Hauerwas's conception of hermeneutic politics put together with our reading of Aristotle's teleological conception of political community allows us to interpret the *polis* as the dynamic and open ended com-

munal development in which the attainment of the best life would be possible. This claim, however, should not be misunderstood as either an empirical or a dogmatic claim suggesting that only within a specific empirical local church is the self-sufficiency of the best human life possible. Rather it is a conceptual and utopian (teleological) claim – the best life is not only *yet* to be attained but that it is the business of our daily life to strive towards the best communal life possible. What is also important to stress is that politics thus conceptualised should not be understood in the modern sense of this word when politics, as Quentin Skinner has argued, is seen exclusively in relation to the modern concept of the state.[110] One of the implications of our enquiry into the nature of the political is that we have arrived at the dawn of a new era when the necessity to question the modern notion of the political as exclusively embodied in and linked to the state is increasing. We have seen this in Foucault's attempt to develop a political philosophy which would not be erected around the modern notion of the state and sovereignty, a political philosophy which developed the conception of the political in terms of the genealogical micro-politics of resistance. It has been the task of this chapter to go further in the direction Foucault suggested. However, this conception of the political, as one not governed by the Nietzschean logic of power which leads only to solitude and isolation in the fashion of Foucaultian micro-politics, seeks to restore the substantial conception of moral and political community. Such a conception of the political is modest in that its primary concern is not the power games of the politics of the modern nation-state, but an attempt to sustain everyday mundane communal life within which the virtues of giving and receiving can be developed and practised. Thus to conceptualise such an alternative approach to the political in terms of the predominant understanding of politics is to misunderstand it. One of the aspects of such misunderstanding is to suggest that its proponents want to expand the political power of the church. It is this last issue that needs to be briefly addressed.

To suggest that the church can be seen as an alternative polity does not in any way imply that the church should be given more power and influence within the realm of politics of liberal democracy. In fact, one of the most important tasks of Stanley Hauerwas's theology is to argue that the only way the church can live as an alternative polity is if it distances from the state and ceases to act as the state religion. To seek influence within the political domain of the state's coercive power would mean that the church as an independent agent would lose its integrity by accepting standards that are foreign to it as an alternative

community of non-violence. Thus allegiance to the church as an alternative *polis*, i.e. to claim that my first allegiance is within *Ekklesia*, is possible if and only if the church sees itself as independent and different from the modern nation-state. In this sense MacIntyre's claim that the libral nation-state is an *inevitable* landscape of our world and that those who practise the politics of common good and the virtues of giving and receiving will not despise its resources is instructive. We are all liberals not by choice (of course, without denying the fact that there are plenty of liberals by choice) but by belonging to the contemporary political world which is predominantly liberal. Now what I mean by this is that today conservative moralising in the name of 'the Country, the Family, and the Church', for better or worse, is impossible: the conservative notion of the state religion, One-Nation Toryism of 19th century England, Orthodoxy of the Byzantine Empire of the 13th century or of 17th century Russia has gone for good.[111] To moralise in the name of God or Family on the level of a multicultural society and require introducing universal legislation accordingly is impossible because it would turn the politics of the nation-state into collectivistic paternalism, something that contemporary post-modern consumer society, a society of ever more emancipated individuals, cannot accept. One of the roles of an authentic Christian church is to understand and accept this. That is why the only way for it to have influence is through being faithful to its own Biblical story and creating that sort of political and moral community which through self-scrutiny and self-criticism achieves a level of culture, character and aesthetic greatness that will speak for itself. That is the only criterion by which to judge the validity of such politics. No doubt the contemporary church is far from even being close to achieving this.

4
Hermeneutics Beyond Genealogy

> I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man, who walks to direct his steps.
>
> *Jeremiah* 10: 23

Genealogy *versus* hermeneutics: power over meaning against meaning over power

This interpretation of genealogy and hermeneutics has been developed within a framework at the core of which there are two philosophical concepts – power and meaning. The difference between hermeneutics and genealogy, I have suggested, lies precisely in their different interpretation and prioritization of these concepts.

It was the notion of the void of meaning that was the starting point of my interpretation of Nietzsche's thought. At the centre of it there is an ontological claim about the death of God, a claim more far reaching than the end of Christian theism. Announcing God's death Nietzsche denounced the traditional structures of meaning: the concepts of truth, of morality, of justice, and of metaphysical order. Life and the world have ceased to be meaningful. All traditional metaphysical narratives, which used to provide meaning and direction to our existence in the world, have been denounced by Nietzsche as 'a pack of lies'.[1] This, however, does not mean that genealogy is not concerned with the different structures of meaning; indeed, genealogy's primary concern is the structures of meaning. The notion of the void of meaning implies that meaning loses its autonomy. Genealogy reduces discourse/meaning to its effects and treats meaning in terms of power relations. Language, meaning and discourse are seen as having the nature of tactics and

strategies. It is this characteristic of genealogy – taking meaning and language games seriously – that makes it different from Marx's historical materialism, whose methodological threshold is the priority of material power relations over consciousness and ideology. Genealogy rejects the Marxist paradigm that only material (i.e. primarily economic) power determines our consciousness. From the paradigm of genealogy meaning, language, discourse, and the regimes of truth both *condition* and are conditioned by material reality. For Foucault our bodies, for example, may be shaped and indeed are shaped by predominant regimes of truth, regimes which are always closely interlinked to power relations embodied within different institutional structures.

The originality of Nietzschean-Foucaultian genealogy lies in its ability to move beyond the traditional distinction between consciousness and reality, theory and practice, truth and the world by linking discourse/knowledge to power. What such a methodological move implies is that the battleground now shifts from power relations and wars with real swords and real blood (as the Marxist approach to history presupposes) to the discursive wars between different regimes of truth, different structures of meaning, different language games, and the way they support and are supported by power relations. Genealogy is interested not so much in the pure facts of history as in their interpretations (it is instructive that Foucault's self-designated position at the *Collège de France* was that of the Professor of the History of Systems of Thought) and how these interpretations justify as well as inspire historical events and changes. Thus for genealogy the real battleground is not the material history of events, but language, interpretations, and different discursive regimes. For Nietzsche and Foucault revolution takes place not once, against a concrete political regime within a concrete state at a certain time in history, as it is for Marx and his contemporary followers such as Slavoj Žižek, but is a continuous attempt to deconstruct and break from the predominant discursive regimes which form our subjectivity.[2] If for Marx one has to stop philosophy in order to change the world (that is, once philosophy has understood the laws of history and the working class becomes self-conscious of its revolutionary role, philosophy should cease being discourse and turn into revolutionary event), for Nietzsche and Foucault one has to start philosophy in order to change oneself. What is important, however, is that such writing of the history of ourselves is a political activity because discourse/meaning, being an essential part of the domain of power, has the priority in determining what we are. The essentially political aspect of such genealogical writing lies in the fact that freedom, freedom as a

constant overcoming of oneself through an artistic experimentation with one's own creative powers, is not simply given. That is to say, we are not free as we are as such. Furthermore we are not free even if we are left to ourselves within the negative freedom of non-interference. Freedom thus requires cultivation. An important, indeed the most important, part of this cultivation is understanding that what *we have become* is due to a long historical process in which we have been *forced* into our subjectivity. Without such genealogical self-awareness freedom would be impossible. This is so not only because genealogy allows us to understand how these discursive and power regimes subjugate us into our normalising subjectivities, but because such genealogical understanding itself breaks from these predominant structures of normalisation and in doing so opens up the possibility for change.

It is here that the political aspect of genealogy is evident. Genealogy is not a mere intellectual history but first of all it is a resistance against the predominant *dispositif* which keeps us trapped within the enforced cage of 'truth' concerning what we are and are supposed to be. Without genealogical deconstruction of this discursive cage there would be little possibility of opening a space of freedom enabling the artistic cultivation of oneself. It is in this sense that the genealogical approach to politics has been called the micro-politics of resistance. Through extending power relations to the sphere of discourse/meaning and treating the latter in terms of power, Foucaultian genealogy, insisting that the predominant power relations in modernity transform from the mere juridico-discursive to the normalising subjectivity-producing power, necessarily implies that the subject (or our subjectivity) is the political *par excellence*. Hence the questions of what we are and of which discursive powers shape us are essentially political questions. The logic of such micro-politics of resistance leads to historical awareness that we do not own ourselves because we have been produced through the modern history of normalising regimes. Thus in order to regain some freedom constant micro-revolution (resistance) against our subjectivity is necessary. Such micro-politics of resistance against normalising subjectivity, trying to transgress the boundaries of that which presently constitutes our humanity, is essentially individualistic and a solitary activity. There is no need for a substantial account of community either in the case of Nietzschean grand-politics, which seeks to promote cultural greatness, or in Foucault's micro-politics of resistance, enabling one to open up the possibility for change. Indeed, nowhere in Nietzsche's and Foucault's texts will we find a substantial account of community even though both of them occasionally, more implicitly

than explicitly, refer to it.[3] And this, so I shall argue, is not an accident – it lies at the very heart of genealogy and its specific conception of power, power as always immanent and omnipresent within the entire social body, power enmeshed even in discourse, language and meaning.

In this respect the account of hermeneutics is rather different. I started my discussion of hermeneutics with the analysis of Ricoeur and Gadamer in order to suggest, contrary to Ricoeur, that Nietzsche's interpretative philosophy cannot properly be understood as hermeneutics. One of the aims of this discussion was to arrive at the possibility of sketching a new and more substantial conception of hermeneutics that would exclude such thinkers as Nietzsche and Foucault together with their interpretative practices. Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutics and MacIntyre's conception of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry provide conceptual resources to formulate the core elements of a new understanding of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics, it was suggested, *necessarily* presupposes an affirmative relation to both meaning and tradition. Hermeneutics requires commitment and belonging to a certain intellectual and moral tradition, and thus there can be as many different hermeneutics as there are different traditions. However, the relations between hermeneutics and tradition are not straightforward. It is not that tradition (which from Gadamer's point of view is the continuity of *meaning* in history and for MacIntyre an argument extended through time) is something fixed and given in advance. Rather hermeneutics itself – so long as it is an interpretative attempt to provide a philosophical as well as historical narrative, which would situate my own philosophical enquiry in relation to those past philosophical accounts and thinkers that I consider authoritative and significant – constitutes tradition. Thus tradition embodies a philosophical narrative extended in time, a narrative which needs further philosophical elaborations and which carries through time certain fundamental agreements and their meaning, while hermeneutics is an individualised intellectual 'tool' and attempt enabling tradition's continuity and directedness. What is important, and this is where it is different from genealogy, is that hermeneutics 'approaches' meaning as *it is*. That is to say, meaning requires from us a careful and attentive listening as well as inviting us to treat it as something which has its autonomous logic.

Hermeneutics, according to Gadamer, has the nature of Platonic dialogue when its participants *freely* submit themselves to the meaning of a conversation that carries them forward. It is this attentiveness that

requires us to subordinate ourselves to the movement of meaning, and in doing so we allow ourselves to be moved and changed by it. Thus I argued that in hermeneutics it is meaning – something which is beyond our arbitrary *selves* – that changes and moves us and thus it is meaning rather than power that is important for hermeneutics. It is in this sense that genealogy, not being concerned with meaning *in itself* but its effects, not with understanding meaning but with releasing the energies of power, is not to be classified as another form of hermeneutics. What makes an interpretative philosophy hermeneutics is that its end is meaning, whereas the end of genealogy is not meaning but power, power as pure potentiality. Hence the disagreement with Ricoeur who, in emphasising Nietzsche's claim that everything is interpretation, missed the full force of the important point that interpretations for Nietzsche are nothing but mere expressions of the will to power.

These two distinct logics of genealogy and hermeneutics, which can be characterised the priority of power over meaning (genealogy) *versus* the priority of meaning over power (hermeneutics),[4] accordingly presuppose different logics of time and temporal understanding. Time in genealogy 'progresses'[5] from one rupture/break to another, whereas in the case of hermeneutics the unfolding of time has the logic of continuity.

Through the notion of break genealogy inherits the revolutionary aspect of modernity which goes back to Descartes and other paradigmatically modern thinkers such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Kierkegaard or Marx.[6] However, Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogies go beyond these modern thinkers in that they openly admit that their primary concern is power relations and hence they build their philosophical approaches on the conception of power. Nietzschean genealogy embodies a culmination in the development of modernity and its obsession with power. But at the same time genealogy breaks with modernity and hence contributes to the development of a new philosophical and cultural condition which is commonly called postmodernity. The break with modernity lies in the fact that Nietzschean genealogy openly denounces the myth of modernity. It is the myth that modernity's obsession with power, as its attempt to control the human environment and nature beyond all limits, is conducted in the name of a 'liberated' and constantly progressing humanity. In so doing Nietzschean genealogy announces that the only 'reality' is the cyclical becoming of power and its relations. Thus genealogy unmasks modernity's claim that it seeks power for the sake of liberated humanity and

openly insists that contemporary social reality consists only of manipulative power relations. But it is not only that. Genealogy sees itself as an attempt to resist the dominant power relations as well as actively seeking power in order that the energy of artistic self-cultivation may be constantly released. Furthermore, it is precisely the notion of extended power (i.e. power enmeshed in discourses) that implies both the cyclical and rupture-like conception of time. If there is no meaning in history and if it is intelligible and coherent, as Foucault claimed, precisely because it exemplifies the model of war, strategies, and tactics, then history is a directionless cyclical movement from one domination to another, from one balance of discursive power regimes to resistance and then back to the establishment of another balance of power relations. Nietzsche's notion of the eternal recurrence can be read as signifying precisely such a cycle of power relations.

Power and its relations always function in the situation of either/or which implies that power cannot be shared. The paradigmatic situation of power is that of battle and war where there are in principle only two situations: either I win and my enemy will become submitted to my will, or I will lose and become the subject of my enemy's will. The fact that there is the third option of equal strategic balance between opposing parties does not presuppose that it is outside the power logic of either/or. The strategic balance of equal power relations may be a temporary resolution which can be put in question at any time. Furthermore, strategic balance in no way presupposes the possibility of sharing power. On the contrary, the balance can be sustained only if the opposing parties constantly accumulate their powers and it is the awareness of such accumulation that keeps the *status quo* of power relations. The reason it is important to stress this either/or character of power is that the only way to resist power is through an attempt to *break* (or overthrow) the existing balance of power relations. In other words, if power cannot be shared because of its logic of *either* I you *or* you me, then the move from one power relation to another is possible only through break and rupture. It is in this sense that it was possible to suggest that such dynamics of constant rupture and break are revolutionary. Foucaultian resistance is precisely this ability to achieve the rupture of predominant discursive power relations and thus freedom, which is possible only through the ability to break these relations, is precisely the moment of rupture and void. That is to say, freedom from a genealogical point of view opens up in the moment of brake – the moment of the falling crown of the decapitated king's head, a moment of in-between when the crown is *already* falling but not *yet* on the

ground where it will be picked up by someone stronger. For both Nietzsche and Foucault power and freedom are exercised not in their ability to establish a new set of power relations, but in being able to expand and overcome even one's own creation and establishment of power relations. It is for this reason that Deleuze suggests that the Nietzschean will to power cannot be interpreted in terms of the primitive craving for domination over and oppression of others (even though power relations are the relations of domination and oppression). To seek power as an object or *telos* – to seek to overthrow one set of power relations in order to establish your own relations of domination – is a sign of weakness and thus can only be the vanity of the weak. Once the logic of power as well as the abstract principle of the will to power are made the main principles of life, power ceases to be an object and thus cannot be the static end. This is precisely what the notion of self-overcoming is about: the will to power is different from power as the static end. Thus the paradigmatic moment of the experience of power is the moment of rupture and void. This is the void of all power and meaning structures, the moment before new power structures are established and before the new will to power has began to think how to advance another cycle of self-overcoming.

The logic of continuity in hermeneutics lies precisely in its specific approach to meaning. In the most abstract sense the concept of meaning in any discourse has a threefold structure: utterer (a person who signifies something), recipient or addressee, and signification (something said or the subject matter of discourse). It is this third pillar of meaning – signification – which bounds the participants of discourse in some form of communality. The hermeneutic aspect of this communality rests in the fact that it is signification, i.e. what is said, that governs the relationship between the utterer and the recipient. What is important in the discourse of an authentic communication is that it is the development of meaning as the subject matter that is the primary concern of its participants rather than the egocentric insecurity of craving to preserve one's own opinion. Gadamer's example, illustrating the dialogical nature of hermeneutics, is instructive here. A dialogue can be fruitful only if its interlocutors freely submit themselves to the matter of their discussion and are able to change their opinions as they go along. Critical to this Gadamerian notion of *sharing* in common meaning is that such communality is possible only if there is something which is beyond just our arbitrary subjectivity or my arbitrary will to power. Both Gadamer and MacIntyre invoke the concept of truth. This, however, does not presuppose that there are no significant

differences between their conceptions of truth. For Gadamer the concept of truth is historical and dynamic and thus it cannot be seen as an absolute/metaphysical item. Truth is constantly articulated within the boundaries of our finitude and thus it is always to some degree a reflection and actualisation of our presence, articulation, which, however, is aware of its historicity. In MacIntyre's case the concept of truth is more complicated. The articulation and justification of truth is historical (it is justified within a historical tradition) and foundational (MacIntyre calls his position an 'Aristotelian foundational realism' claiming that truth itself is a-historical).[7] For both truth is something which is beyond our subjectivity not in the traditional metaphysical sense (i.e. truth as an independent entity and as beyond our sensory world) but in that the quest for it presupposes that the participants freely submit themselves to the teleology of this quest and thus are open to changing their positions and themselves. Thus Gadamer insists that a fruitful dialogue with a historical text is possible only if a reader is able to pose an authentic question, a question about truth itself: is this text true at all and if so how can it be true today? The concepts of meaning and truth presuppose a certain ethos, the ethos of commitment to truth, truthfulness and justice, which, in some situations, may require openness and courage to admit that one's initial position was wrong and that someone else's insight is far better.

The paradigmatic example of such an ethos is Socratic philosophising. Socrates compared his own pursuit of truth to the function of midwife. Through questions and answers Socrates was encouraging people not only to express their intellectual and moral positions but also and more importantly assess their correctness. Only those who were able to withstand Socrates' criticism and admit the incorrectness of their position were able to advance in the further pursuit of truth. Within such dialectical culture the notion of authority was essential. Authority here is not oppressive and it is not an expression of dominating power. Rather, authority, as was discussed above, derives from the logic of meaning since it is only in relation to the truth of the subject matter that authority is realised. Only someone whose insight is better and who possesses the ability to argue consistently, being able to withstand possible criticism/refutation, can be an authority to others. Thus from the hermeneutic point of view authority is something positive because it enables others to learn from it. Furthermore, since authority can be justified only in virtue of knowledge of and insight into the subject matter, authority can be shared. Thus authority in hermeneutics appears sharply at odds with the notion of power in

the genealogical paradigm. Authority can be and indeed is shared precisely because it derives from people's commitment to the ethos of truth which allows them to appreciate and learn from those whose insight is better, and in so doing acquire and share knowledge and authority. Genealogy, in denying the notion of autonomous truth, approaches and analyses meaning as signification in terms of its effects and thus reduces meaning to power relations. Hence the question that a genealogist asks is not whether this particular discourse is true. Rather, what interests genealogy is what effects and what power relations the discourse presupposes. Thus for a genealogist the authority of a text turns out to be nothing other than the result of another set of power relations. It is in this sense the affirmative notion of authority, as mentioned above, is impossible within the genealogical paradigm because any authority, looked at it from the either/or logic of power, is a form of domination. Hermeneutics rejects this logic of power within discourse and sees development not in terms of rupture and break but in terms of continuity. That is, the possibility of sharing in common meaning, meaning which is not simply given but which is the result of a creative dialectical engagement, and a form of communality which such sharing constitutes, enables us to share and pass authority to others. It is through such continuity of meaning and authority that tradition is constituted.

Why genealogy cannot form the basis for another tradition

In *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* MacIntyre presents his argument as to why genealogy, one of the possible contemporary projects of moral enquiry, cannot be conceived as an alternative moral and intellectual tradition. It is important to consider this issue since it is closely linked to my specific understanding of hermeneutics. What is at stake is the relationship between Nietzsche's philosophy, on the one hand, and his 20th century French follower Foucault. If Foucault's philosophy can be seen as a continuation of Nietzsche's genealogy, that is, as a philosophical project which inherits not only Nietzsche's genre of philosophising but also the essential parts of his philosophical content and intellectual-moral commitments, then genealogy can be seen as another tradition. But if this were the case, my argument that hermeneutics should be distinguished from genealogy and thus Nietzsche's and Foucault's interpretative practices should be excluded from the domain of hermeneutics would be problematic. It would be so because there are, so I argued, as many different hermeneutics as there

are different moral and intellectual traditions and thus, considering Nietzsche's genealogy as a starting point of the genealogical tradition, Foucault's individual attempt to continue the tradition would then be a form of hermeneutics. In order to clarify this point I shall first briefly present MacIntyre's position on this issue and then consider it within the context of my own argument.

The reason why genealogy cannot be seen as another tradition, according to MacIntyre, is that neither Nietzsche nor Foucault, adopting the perspectival way of philosophical thinking and writing (which considers the fixity of an intellectual and moral position as a mask worn by a philosopher), have any fixed moral and intellectual stance which would allow, for example, their readers to enter critical debate concerning their claims. Nietzsche's philosophy, denying the concept of truth and insisting that there are only different perspectives and metaphors through which thinking has to be advanced, appears in conflict with his own attempt academically (and thus using the same intellectual standards of truth as the academic scholars of his time) to engage in the study of the history of morality in the *Genealogy of Morality*. In other words, on the one hand, genealogy denies that there is a fixed conception of truth, proclaiming that it is nothing but a flux of metaphors uttered from different perspectives. However, on the other hand, Nietzsche in the *Genealogy of Morality* adopts precisely those academic standards of enquiry which presuppose that the claims of such enquiry should be read 'in the light of certain impersonal and timeless standards of truth' which genealogy itself denies.[8] The problem with this is not only the lack of consistency. After all a genealogist, according to MacIntyre, can claim that such academic non-metaphorical engagement is provisional, temporary, and hence advanced from a specific perspective, a mask worn in order to unmask those who believe in academic standards of truth. Rather, the problem lies in the fact that in order for genealogy to be sustained as a more or less coherent intellectual project, it has necessarily to preclude its own perspectivism which denies not only truth but also rejects the concept of the unified self. Without such a unified conception of the self the intellectual engagement into a research project extended in time would be impossible. In short, MacIntyre's main claim is that the intelligibility of a moral and intellectual project – an essentially co-operative activity which extends in time and which forms the basis for a tradition of intellectual enquiry – is itself precluded by genealogical perspectivism and its denial of the unified conception of the self. Thus the fact that both Nietzsche and Foucault, adopting academic standards, lapse to

inconsistency with their own genealogical perspectivism shows that genealogy cannot be sustained as another tradition of intellectual enquiry.

Although MacIntyre's argument is plausible, the argument developed here, in particular the specific reading of Nietzsche's and Foucualt's genealogies, provides a stronger philosophical basis as to why genealogy cannot be seen as another tradition. What one can object to MacIntyre's argument is that someone who genuinely follows genealogical perspectivism, and who avoids strong moral commitments rejecting a unified conception of the self, can still be committed to non-commitment. In other words, it is precisely the shared commitment to perspectivism (which itself does not require strong moral and intellectual commitment to a certain position, a position that would provide a background for the narrative unity of different perspectives expressed by a genealogist) that can provide a basis for the intellectual continuity of genealogy.[9] On such an account the fact that a genealogist jumps from one philosophical perspective to another would illustrate not an internal inconsistency of his or her philosophical project, but would be the result of the conscious commitment to such fragmentation and perspectivism. In this sense the continuity between Nietzsche and Foucault would rest in their shared commitment to non-dialectical and ever changing perspectives from which genealogical philosophising should be advanced. And there are strong reasons to think that the inconsistencies within Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogies are precisely of this nature – they are deliberate and thus it is not simply a deficiency but a mode of philosophical thinking. Therefore it would be still possible to see shared genealogical perspectivism as the necessary basis for the continuity of tradition – the genealogical tradition.[10]

Such a reading, however, would still not come to terms with the apparent self-refutation in which genealogical perspectivism is involved. For the question one may ask is the following. If everything is perspectival and there is no overriding conception of truth, then what is the status of this very claim that there is no truth but only different perspectives? Surely, this claim cannot be another perspective. If it requires conscious commitment to it, then it is the foundation of all possible perspectives rather then another perspective. Hence the conscious commitment to perspectivism presupposes that the belief – there is no truth but only different perspectives – is the methodological assertion on which perspectivism itself is/must be founded. But if it is true, then genealogy refutes itself: the only truth is that there is no truth but only different perspectives.

I want to argue that this reading of both Nietzsche and Foucault provides us with a firm ground to think that genealogy is able to withstand this objection. This however is not to suppose that genealogy can be seen as another intellectual and moral tradition. I have claimed that a genuine genealogist would be consciously committed to perspectivism and fragmentation. Now the only way to argue that Nietzschean genealogy does not refute itself is to link genealogical perspectivism with the concept of the will to power. The commitment to genealogical perspectivism can be justified without inconsistency if the methodological assertion that there is no truth but only different fragmented perspectives is seen not primarily as an epistemological claim, but first of all as the function of power. In other words, for Nietzsche 'truth' can be justified only if it is the focus of a faculty that strengthens the will to power. Thus Nietzsche, without contradicting himself, can claim *the truth* about the erroneousness of the world precisely in this sense.[11] That is, the traditional metaphysical belief in truth, 'truth' which Nietzsche in the *Genealogy of Morality* saw as another transformation of the traditional ascetic ideal, an objective ideal which was beyond our subjectivity and our will, has been always oppressive and disempowering of the will to power as the only instinct of life. Hence Nietzsche's claim that there is no truth but only perspectives can be seen as *truth* in as much as it encourages and strengthens our will to power.

Peter Poellner has argued that there are at least two different conceptions of truth in Nietzsche's philosophy – metaphysical (absolute) and anthropological (conditional).[12] When Nietzsche rejects the belief in truth he first of all means by it the traditional metaphysical, objective conception of truth. This, however, does not mean that Nietzsche denies truth at the historico-anthropological level where he, with his own often rigorous historico-philsophical argument, illustrates and relies on the commonly accepted academic conception of truth. Hence the conflict between rejection of metaphysical truth, on the one hand, and Nietzsche's attempt to *understand* the historical process which brought us where we are now, on the other hand.[13] This tension does not preclude us from the possibility of interpreting it as a Nietzschean attempt to create an alternative *genealogical* conception of truth. The crux of such a genealogical conception of truth can be put as follows. There is no metaphysical, stable, and objective truth, because there is not, and cannot be, such a thing as consciousness in itself – transcendental consciousness as always identical with itself. Such a metaphysical conception of truth, which has been dominant throughout the

history of the West, *is* a fiction precisely because it disempowers the active will to power and makes it a mere reactive will of the weak. The metaphysical conception of truth is weakness. It is another ascetic ideal precisely because it looks suspiciously towards interpretation through which and only through which, in the sphere of cognitive discourse, the active will to power can creatively express itself. Accordingly, genealogical perspectivism, insisting on the necessity of interpretation, *is* true because, so a genealogist would claim, it serves and thus strengthens our will to power. Now the fact that Nietzsche throughout his texts calls for and praises honesty, the sense of truthfulness, and sharp insight and thus in this sense restores the concept of truth as intellectual virtue at the historico-anthropological level, is precisely because the only instinct of life – the will to power – is *rational* and thus is able rationally to foresee and understand what oppresses it. Thus understood truth as an activity is the cognitive and rational faculty of the will to power because it is able to detect those discursive regimes which disempower and subdue us. In this sense truth together with its ability to acquire knowledge, being a cognitive faculty of the will to power, is linked to freedom, freedom as ability to break from existing meaning/power structures. Knowledge, as Foucault wrote, is not made only for understanding but also 'made for cutting'.[14]

This helps us to explain why genealogy, although it is not self-refuting, cannot be seen as another intellectual tradition. Genealogy cannot form a basis for an intellectual tradition because its aim is not to recover meaning, but to serve and actively seek power. If discourse is reduced to power (which is not to say that truth becomes disconnected from logic and correspondence) and if language and logic are judged through the perspective of power, then meaning and discourse become 'secondary' in relation to power. It is in this sense that we, in our initial discussion of Nietzsche's genealogy, were able to claim that the will to power is the maximally abstract principle which does not require seeing meaning, purpose or even content, i.e. everything through which the active will to power expresses itself, as the *telos* of the will to power, an object which is more important than the will to power itself. Thus if genealogy can be seen as an intellectual tool due to which it is possible to deconstruct a variety of ascetic ideals and predominant discursive regimes, an intellectual tool which serves in freeing the will to power, then it is possible to suggest that genealogy itself can also be understood as an abstract intellectual instrument for which content and allegiance to certain values are secondary. In other words, if the will to power is an abstract willing for potentiality, a willing which is

more important than that what it wills, and if genealogy presupposes the logic of break rather than continuity, then genealogy cannot be another tradition because the will to power itself does not require any specific set of values and beliefs which are fundamental to sustaining any intellectual and moral tradition. Thus there may be no continuity between one genealogical attempt to deconstruct the predominant regimes of values and another. This is so because the value-stance from which such genealogical critiques are advanced and which presuppose their specific content can be arbitrarily chosen. Furthermore, these values and tastes can be different or even incommensurable within different genealogical projects advanced by different genealogists. This is not the case with hermeneutics as an individualised philosophical attempt to develop certain given beliefs and shared values of an intellectual tradition, because any tradition is constituted precisely through shared fundamental agreements, values, and beliefs.

It is within such an understanding of genealogy – an intellectual project which, however, does not require the continuity of shared beliefs, values and tastes – that my interpretation of the Nietzschean concept of good taste was developed within the analysis of kitsch. One of the tensions between the more traditional *versus* genealogical understandings of kitsch was between the initial attempt to define kitsch by juxtaposing it to art and good taste, on the one hand, and the genealogical attempt to avoid or suspend such aesthetic distinctions, on the other. In my discussion of the more traditional definition of kitsch I used such thinkers as Aristotle and Kant to define aesthetically what kitsch and bad taste were. Although this material was utilised in the discussion of the genealogy of kitsch, I also suggested that the genealogy of kitsch would be interested not so much in the aesthetic quality (or lack of it) of a particular artefact of kitsch but rather in the effects kitsch as another discursive regime has in shaping our identities and serving or being utilised by certain power institutions. This was especially evident in the would-be-Foucaultian genealogy of kitsch, when the more dualistic Nietzschean approach (based on the distinction between the noble and the base) was transformed into a more 'neutral' Foucaultian analysis of how kitsch as inverted ascetic ideal is utilised by such discursive regimes as Hollywood cinematography or advertising. On the other hand, even Nietzsche's far more dualistic (and in this sense more traditional) approach does not presuppose a certain single conception of what good taste is. When Nietzsche writes about the noble taste as opposed to the plebeian/bad taste he does so within the context of his far more important distinction between the strong and the

weak. Thus noble/good taste is an attribute of the active will to power, the quality of the strong will which is able to affirm itself as well as the fact that the world is nothing but a multiplicity of conflicting forces. Furthermore, when Nietzsche writes about the stylisation of one's character, he insists that what is important is not so much whether such style is of good or bad taste as the fact that it would be a single taste.[15] Now if even Nietzsche, who was never short of praises for nobility and good taste, saw ethical importance not so much in good taste as in the ability to have a *single* taste (be it good or bad), and if we accept Foucault's contribution in thinking the Nietzschean stylisation of life in terms of different aesthetic techniques of the self, then it is more than plausible to conclude that genealogy sees reality as a war between different styles and aesthetic attempts to stylise one's life and environment. This conclusion will be less surprising if we consider the following. If what is important is not to achieve the standards of *the* good taste, but the ability and strength to create one's own single and unified style, and that consequently there is a multiplicity of different forces and thus different styles and traditions of taste, then what is important is to advance a genealogical critique from the perspective of my own style and taste. But if this is so, then genealogy does not require any single and shared conception of taste from which a genealogical critique of the predominant discursive regimes and power practices may be advanced. It is within this context that one can suggest that Foucault did not share certain of Nietzsche's beliefs and tastes. For example, he did not share Nietzsche's attack on 'Jewish' values, the distinction between the slaves and the masters, and more importantly, the stylisation of one's character for Nietzsche was far more directed towards the nobility of one's character, whereas Foucault saw such *ascesis* as a means to creating a new culture of experiencing intense pleasures. And it is here that I can reinforce my claim that the genealogy of kitsch represents an *inversion* of Nietzsche's philosophy and its original intentions.

If genealogy is an abstract intellectual instrument, which in principle does not require shared commitment to certain fundamental agreements and for which the content of one's interpretation is secondary to the exercise of the will to power, and if genealogy sees discursive reality as the war between different interpretations advanced from different tastes as individualised attempts to stylise one's life, then genealogy can be intellectually utilised by diverse intellectual traditions, traditions which have different or even opposite sets of beliefs. Thus genealogy can be used in order to deconstruct one's rivals. It is in this

sense that we can say that the genealogy of kitsch, as an attempt to deconstruct the values of secularised consumer society, is an inversion of Nietzsche's philosophical intentions to get rid of metaphysics and transcendence. It is an inversion in that it seeks to deconstruct precisely those secularised values that are partly an outcome of the decline of the metaphysical tension between the transcendental and the secular. That is to say, kitsch – the 'beautiful' humanist ideal of meaningless consumer happiness *here* and *now* – is the ultimate horizon for a society in which any higher meaning, which would be beyond our arbitrary will to manipulate the world and ourselves, has been lost. Such genealogical critique of kitsch then can be advanced from a particular intellectual tradition that sees the world in rather different terms and that tries to preserve at least *locally* that which has been lost on the global level, namely a teleological account of reality (i.e. the world as a perfective universe) in which transcendence (understanding it in Levinas's terms) is its essential mark. Such an intellectual tradition can be Thomism. Now if a genealogy of kitsch from the Thomist tradition's point of view is possible, then it proves in yet another way my claim that genealogy cannot form the basis for another intellectual and moral tradition since it can be utilised by and be directed against any tradition. Seen in this way genealogy is nothing more but a series of subversions *independent* of both Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogical projects. Indeed my engagement with genealogy – an the attempt to write the political genealogy of kitsch – is an independent subversion of both Nietzsche's and Foucault's projects.

Hermeneutics, metaphysics, and the political

Thus understood genealogy becomes part of hermeneutics. It enables us to deconstruct rival intellectual and moral traditions. Indeed, the genealogy of kitsch should be understood as an attempt to write a genealogical critique of liberalism and its culture from a Thomist point of view.[16] The core of this genealogical criticism is the link between the 'minimal' conception of political community, community which is seen as artificial and secondary (that is, as the outcome of the social contract of free and equal individuals) and whose basis cannot be a substantive conception of the good, on the one hand, and contemporary consumer culture produced and dominated by corporate business, on the other. The account of kitsch and then its re-articulation within the genealogical paradigm enabled us to apply it within the analysis of consumer democracy and the conception of the desiring self. Contem-

porary liberalism, both as theory and as social practice, being deprived of the moral and intellectual resources to distinguish between different conceptions of the good, between the noble and the base, contributes to the production of the desiring/emotivist self, the self which now sees corporate business not as a potential threat of exploitation but as the source of its identity. What is significant is that such a critique of the desiring self and consumer democracy would have been hardly possible if it had been approached from the currently dominant political philosophy, as it is focused on the modern conception of the political exclusively linked to the liberal conception of the state and its institutions. It was Foucault's genealogical approach, which deliberately refused to see power and the political 'erected around the problem of sovereignty', and which fused power and discourse, that enabled us to link liberalism with the contemporary culture of humanism and kitsch. Thus the political significance and strength of the genealogy of kitsch rests in its negative critique.

However, it can hardly provide an alternative conception of the political. And this is so, as noted above, because neither Nietzsche nor Foucault has a substantive philosophical account of (political) community. This is not only because both Nietzsche and Foucault were thinkers who refused to accept the foundational thinking which since the 17th century, so far as political philosophy is concerned, tried to provide theoretical foundations for political community and its institutions. The lack of any more explicit affirmative account of community rests far deeper, that is to say, in the very nature of their ontology of power. Despite the considerable differences between Nietzsche's and Foucault's conceptions of power, both of them provide critiques of prevailing power structures as well as promoting the genealogical idea that reality – natural and social – is dominated by different forces and different wills to power. Thus their genealogical projects, although in different ways, agree upon the fundamental ontological idea that social reality should be seen as the battleground of different forces, powers and structures of struggles. Furthermore, they agree that it is not possible, nor it is desirable, to get rid of power relations or imagine a society beyond them. Hence their immanence is inevitable. But if this is so and if there is no conceptual difference between legitimate authority and power/domination, and neither Nietzsche nor Foucault provides such a distinction, then the notion of community, a community which is affirmed and contra-posed to that which is criticised, is hardly possible. If there are only power relations, a positive account of community is impossible. It is in this sense that I could claim that despite

the importance of the genealogical critique of liberal institutions and its culture, there is a need for a much more substantive conception of the political. However, without such a genealogical critique the importance of our attempt to develop the hermeneutic account of the political from a Thomist point of view would be less evident. Hence the genealogy of kitsch becomes a fundamental part of hermeneutics in a very concrete sense. The genealogical critique of liberalism makes the reasons as to why we need an alternative community structured through an alternative narrative more intelligible. However, such a conception of an alternative political community is possible only if the original Nietzschean and Foucaultean ontology of power is refused. There can be, and indeed are, communities that are structured by an alternative narrative to that of modern humanism and modern liberalism, and whose social relations are not seen as simply relations of power.

I suggested at the beginning of this book that humanism could fully develop only in modernity. The core of humanist culture is the modern notion of self-determination which developed alongside the disenchantment of the world. The Cartesian self-determining thinking *ego* both symbolised and contributed to the gradual establishment of the mechanistic conception of the world. In this sense, as we argued, the emancipation of the individual/subject in modernity, which has had two of its guises in epistemology (modern science) and in the moral/political sphere (liberalism), went hand in hand with the gradual decline of the traditional Cosmic order. The core of the traditional *Weltanschauung*, at least so far as it was embodied in pre-modern philosophical discourse from Socrates to Thomas, was based on the notion of a perfective teleological universe, the world whose philosophical reflection was at the same time linked to the reflection of the Good. Human being was part of such a perfective Cosmic order and thus to live a good life was to subordinate oneself to and accept the metaphysical principles and standards which were outside human life itself. For the Greeks it was the idea of the Good, while to their successors of Medieval Europe it was God. There was something profoundly antihumanist in such an ontological Cosmic order. Man was far from being at the centre of the world, nor was he the ultimate law-giver able to determine both the world and his own nature. The standards of human conduct and the principles of human rationality were not in 'human nature' but in things, which formed a harmonious Cosmic order, themselves. There was something profoundly undemocratic about it as well. A hierarchical teleological structure of the world was embodied within

the hierarchically structured male-dominated and slavery-based society of the Greek city-states, and the aristocracy and clergy dominated Mediaeval Europe. That is why John Gray's claim – it is impossible to undo the disenchantment of the traditional world and thus we need to learn how to live with this disenchanted world – is right not only because the refusal to accept the world as it is will cause frustration leading to the rise of violent fundamentalism, but also because it is not desirable. Indeed, my attempt to develop both an alternative conception of hermeneutics as well as a hermeneutic approach to the political was driven not only by the necessity to accept such disenchantment of the world as inevitable. It was also driven by the fundamental question of how to think the contemporary world in different terms to that of modern mechanism, instrumental rationality, and humanism once the inevitable loss of the traditional metaphysical structure of the world has been accepted. It is in this sense that Nietzsche's genealogy, this time not as the subversion of his philosophy, is essential in yet another way. It provides us with the critique of traditional metaphysics which, as Emmanuel Levinas argued, always lacked true transcendence which would be more than the ontological postulates *rationally* proving the divine nature and origin of the universe:

> There was a time when a god intervened in human history by force, sovereign to be sure, … supernatural … or transcendental; but this intervention occurred in a system of reciprocities and exchanges … The god transcending the world remained united to the world through the unity of an economy. His effects would end up among the effects of all the other forces, get shuffled in with them and form miracles. God was a god of miracles … The status of his transcendence … was never established.[17]

In this sense Levinas's critique of traditional metaphysics, when in *Totality and Infinity* he called it the tradition of Western ontology and described it as being based on the adequacy between knowledge and being, could be seen as Nietzschean in as much as it denies that the metaphysical structure could be 'proved' or exhausted through our rational ability to know the world. Hence, according to Levinas, the nature of the relationship between the *ego* and transcendence, i.e. the metaphysical structure, is not of knowledge but of desire, not *episteme* but *agape*. My own metaphysical claim – that restoration of the metaphysical structure is possible only by turning the traditional metaphysical structure upside down – should be and was understood within this

context as well. That is to say, to see the world as a perfective universe created by God is possible only if we can be morally transformed, and if we have a moral character able to have an *agape* relationship with someone who is more than and is beyond our arbitrary selves. Thus it is our faith that enables us to see the world through the providence of God, not that we believe in God because he 'objectively' exists and thus his providence could be universally 'proved'.

Now what is significant here is the relationship between such a reversed traditional structure of metaphysics and hermeneutics. If today it is impossible to prove God's existence in terms of traditional metaphysics (and this is so because of the loss of the traditional ontological order due to the historical process of disenchantment), then the only way to experience his trace of providence is through moral obedience to the fundamental moral precepts as well as through forming an alternative community structured through an alternative narrative. Both of these are impossible without or outside *tradition*. It is in this sense that the local (a historical tradition and/or a local *Ekklesia*) becomes the locus of metaphysical transcendence – the historical and the local become the condition for transcendence. Furthermore, as Staley Hauerwas has argued, it is only a certain type of political community, whose relationships are shaped through moral and other virtues, that is able to tell God's story rightly and to see the world and reality as ethical. However, faith in such metaphysical transcendence requires that we see transcendence (God) as part of the ontological order. It is impossible to believe in God without the promise of His deliverance and salvation. Furthermore, it is impossible to have faith in God without hope that His intervention, when it is most needed, intervention which can take and indeed takes place in this world, and hence which is always ontological, is possible.

This claim is in fundamental disagreement with Emmanuel Levinas's claim that the transcendental is only ethical and hence is always beyond ontology.[18] Transcendence is indeed ethical but it is also ontological, and it is ontological not only as the result of the ethical, i.e. due to our moral choices which shape the world and being, but because transcendence *has always been* part of the structure of being. What this means is that there is already a breach of transcendence within the world itself and it is this breach of the ontological – the Infinity of transcendence and the impossibility of explaining it in finite ontological categories – that gives us the basis to suggest that the world is a perfective universe. However, the nature of this knowledge is that of faith rather than scientific knowledge, *doxa* rather than *episteme*

(to use Plato's words). Such prioritisation of *doxa* over *episteme* constitutes the fundamental feature of post-modern metaphysics, namely its epistemological modesty. The perfective universe created by the all powerful and loving God can only be seen through faith and thus cannot be the subject of absolute certainty. It was my task to articulate Gadamer's and MacIntyre's conceptions of hermeneutics as embodying such (similar) post-modern epistemological modesty. Philosophical enquiry is essentially historical and thus its rationality and its claims for truth can be justified only historically, namely through solving the problems posed by one's predecessors and through successful engagement with one's rivals. Furthermore, the notion of conflicts between traditions, which allows us to see contemporary cultural reality not in terms of discursive power conflicts between different power structures and/or different stylisations of life, as Foucault's genealogy suggests, but as dialectical conflicts between rival intellectual traditions, already presupposes that there are and always will be different traditions which will have incompatible and radically different values and beliefs. None of them will be able dogmatically to claim to have the monopoly of truth without philosophical engagement with each other.

It is in a similarly post-modern manner that I claimed that the only way to see the church as an alternative polity is through the deliberate acceptance of its locality. That is to say, it is only possible to develop an alternative *polis* within the church if its life is structured through an alternative narrative which necessarily has to distance itself from the prevailing post-Enlightenment/humanist narrative, as it is now 'most pervasively' embodied in liberalism, and also accept that we live today in the post-Christendom era.[19] Christianity, although still the dominant religious tradition of the West, cannot be seen as the only tradition and hence claim exceptional rights *vis-à-vis* the state's legislation and/or its support. This, however, does not presuppose that weak conviction is a function of religious or cultural pluralism seen as logically following once the post-Christendom thesis is accepted. Of course, such weakening is to a certain extent inevitable and understandable. It is indeed very difficult to show allegiance to and have strong conviction within one particular tradition or community in an age of pluralism and multiculturalism. However, such weakening, being partly the result of the disenchantment, would be seen as a sign that the church itself lacks the moral character and culture due to which and only by means of which allegiance and strong conviction can be desirable, not only to those who see themselves as part of that culture but also to those who have nothing to do to it. The only criteria to judge such an

alternative polity would be the good life itself and how it is embodied in its cultural forms, its practices, and the moral character that it is able to foster in its individuals. In this sense it is possible to claim that the notion of conflict between traditions can be to a certain extent applied in comparing different culturally embodied communal conceptions of the good.

One of the most fundamental implicit questions that inspired this book was how it is that the advent of modern humanism goes hand in hand with developing philosophical attempts to see the world through the concept of power. The more humanity becomes emancipated the more it becomes obsessed with power. We may have approached an era in our history when to live and see the world according to the predominant liberal narrative of ever increasing human/individual emancipation will be to arrive at the abandonment of humanity itself. The commodification and commercialisation of instrumental rationality embodied in a variety of scientific techniques, enabling us to manipulate even our own biology within the context of our consumer economy, the culture of kitsch, and the dominant liberal discourse of having 'equal rights to be happy', can lead to the creation of new species different from that which we are today. Modern humanism, as it is embodied in science, technology and the socio-political order of liberalism, unable to place any limits to human emancipation, can lead to the destruction of humanity itself. That is why an alternative polity that is structured by a post-humanist narrative is essential to the preservation of humanity itself. A theistic narrative as it is embodied in Christianity can be seen or, to be more precise, can be philosophically redeveloped as such a post-humanist narrative. Fundamental to it would be the idea that the source of all meaning – something which is beyond our arbitrary *selves* and desires – could come only from God. Thus the source of meaning is not the self-determining human being itself, or something which derives from our will to power, but the transcendent God. Such a post-humanist narrative would be based on the idea there is something in us that is beyond us, that limits us and thereby defines our humanity. On such an account we need a transcendental limit in order to fulfil our own humanity.

Notes

1 Introduction: Moving beyond Liberalism

1. See his *The Ethics of Authenticity*, p. 3.
2. For John Gray's discussion on the Enlightenment project, modernity, and humanism see his *Enlightenment's Wake*, especially ch. 10, p. 144–84.
3. Ibid., p. 152.
4. *After Christianity*, p. 14
5. My interpretation of the modern epistemological shift and the notion of self-determination has been influenced by Algis Mickūnas's conception of modernity and instrumental rationality. See, for example, his 'Post-modernity and Democracy' (in *Post Modernism*, pp. 60–85), 'Technological Culture' (in *The Underside of High-Tech*, pp. 1–15), and 'The Public Domain', pp. 177–91.
6. 'Oration on the Dignity of Man' in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, p. 224.
7. See *The Sources of the Self*, pp. 200 & 547, endnote 3.
8. *Discourse on Method*, p. 54.
9. See his discussion on Descartes's disengaged reason in *The Sources of the Self,* pp. 143–58.
10. *The Advancement of Learning. New Atlantis*, p. 288.
11. It is instructive to note that Aristotle considered philosophical contemplative life as closest to divine life and the happiest (see *Nicomachean Ethics*, X, 1177a–1178b).
12. We see this in Plato's *Phaedo* as well as at the end of *Republic* where Plato's Socrates argues that the true lover of wisdom is not afraid of death and that philosophical contemplation is remembering what our souls already saw before our birth. Thus through philosophical contemplation we not only remember, but also become closer to the true being of ideas.
13. The concept '*praxis*' here is not Aristotelian, i.e. as signifying human practice (practical life) within the *polis*, life which requires the virtue of *phronesis*. Rather it signifies the paradigmatically modern conception of science whose purpose and meaning lie in its ability to apply its formal calculative method to reshape the world. In other words, *praxis* here is the practical application of science through the creation of modern technology which reshapes the world on a purely instrumental basis.
14. Algis Mickunas, 'Post-modernity and Democracy', pp. 62–3.
15. See his *Enlightenment's Wake*, p. 155.
16. Charles Taylor, *The Sources of the Self* , p. 156.
17. See *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, esp. chs 3 & 4.
18. *Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 128.
19. See John Gray, *Enlightenment's Wake*, p. 150.
20. It is worth mentioning that the conception of the divine right of kings, which appealed to St Paul's claim that all (political) authorities are instituted by God (Rom 13) thus demanding unconditional obedience from

those who are subject to it, was a similarly modern idea as was the claim that political authority should be the result of people's contract. And it was modern not only because it was the result of and was used by the emerging unified absolutist monarchies. It was also because the idea of the divine nature of authority in the political thought of the Medieval Europe was not seen as requiring unconditional obedience. Thus the belief in the divine nature of any authority was perfectly compatible with the medieval conception of natural rights and constitutional theory in general. Furthermore, as Quentin Skinner has shown, it was precisely the spread of Lutheranism during the Reformation that encouraged and provided legitimacy for the emergence of absolutist monarchies and the unified modern state. See Quentin Skinner, *The Foundation of Modern Political Thought* (*Vol. II*), pp. 113–14, and George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, chs 20–2.

21. Such a conception of twofold social contract was exemplified in one of the most influential political tracts of the late 16th century *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannicos* (see *A History of Political Thought*, pp. 352–3).
22. We shall see in our discussion of Aristotle's conception of political community (Chapter 3) that for Aristotle it was precisely opposite – it was political community that had the ontological primacy over the individual not *vice versa*. We shall also see, however, that the Aristotelian ontological primacy of the political community has nothing to do with modern collectivism which subordinates individuals and their rights to the collective will and/or the collectivist state (as in Rousseau and Marx).
23. Locke and Kant are more familiarly aligned with classical liberalism because their political thought fully developed the idea that social contract not only ought to defend the equal rights of individuals but also that political authority, being established through the rational consent of free and equal individuals, should be a limited government. Despite the fact that Rousseau aimed to criticize Hobbes's and Locke's individualism, a form of individualism was a characteristic feature of his conception of social contract. That is to say, the general will is established through the surrender of individuals' rights and liberties and their subordination to the unified 'general will'. Thus the conception of collectivist politics formulated in the *Social Contract*, which Rousseau employed to combat Hobessian and Lockean individualism, at least negatively was dependent on the very individualism it tried to overcome. The collectivistic general will is created when individuals, initially autonomous and equal, unconditionally 'alienate' themselves to the highest authority of the general will (see Rousseau's *The Social Contract,* ch. 6, pp. 62–1).
24. Of course the classical account of contract theory and the key founding liberal text is Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* where for the first time was formulated the distinctly liberal idea that both political community and limited civil government are the result of the rational consent of autonomous individuals. Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, far from being a text of classical liberalism, is even more radical in its individualism – here the state of nature is the state of war where free but selfish individuals fight each other to secure their private interest. However, being unable to achieve it, they surrender their individual sovereignty to absolutist polit-

ical authority. Immanuel Kant's conceptions of the state of nature and civil society were more advanced. He saw them less as historico-empirical states or facts of human existence than as the ideas of reason (especially that of just civil society), which he in *The Metaphysics of Morals* derived from the doctrine of rights. However, what is important is not only that his conception of the state of nature is much more similar to the Hobbesian than to the Lockean state of nature. (For example, Kant in his *Perpetual Peace* famously claimed that even devils would have entered civil society to prevent the chaos and conflicts of the state of nature thus adverting the fundamental selfishness and 'wickedness in human nature'.) He also believed that the primary aim of the civil state, into which individuals enter through being able to contract with each other and which could be best secured by a republican government, should see its primary aim as securing the individuals' equal rights to freedom. This individualism of classical liberalism in different ways is continued not only by far right liberal thinkers such as Robert Nozick, whose *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, starting from the Lockean notion of the state of nature and radical individualism, argues that the state/political community should be seen as a necessary evil to protect individual freedom. It is apparent in the thought of far more left-wing liberals such as Ronald Dworkin. In *Sovereign Virtue* we find the same individualism with some aspects of contract theory (e.g. the notion of free and equal individuals on an uninhabited island after a shipwreck establishing the institution of a free-market). Here Dworkin argues for a far more extensive equality than Rawls, namely the equality of resources to the extent that even luck (talents, wealth, background) could be redistributed.

25. Inverted commas signify the fact that the term 'minimal' is potentially misleading. First, because the Hobbesian conception of the state is not minimal, and, secondly, because strictly speaking the 'minimal state' is characteristic only of one branch of right-wing liberalism best exemplified by the libertarian ideal of the state as 'night-watchman'. Furthermore, it is misleading in yet another sense. The tendency of the modern nation-state, as the primary and only object of 'the political' and 'politics', has been the enormous extension of its bureaucratic mechanism especially after the Second World War and the creation of the welfare state. Nonetheless, the term 'minimal' will be used in our context and it will primarily indicate an understanding according to which the state/political community cannot be built on a single substantive conception of the good. Political community is minimal in this sense, if it is seen as the result of individuals' co-operation in which they seek to realize their individual interests. Thus understood (political) co-operation cannot be seen as a good in itself. This 'minimal' conception of the political community is in sharp opposition to the Aristotelian conception of political community which sees political co-operation not only as based on a substantive conception of common good. It also understands that political co-operation and the ability to have common ends are goods in themselves, and that it is only through the ability to realize the common good that the individual good and individual happiness are fully possible.

26. This historical phenomenon has been extensively discussed by Alasdair MacIntyre (see *After Virtue*, ch. 5 as well as *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, ch. 12).
27. See John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, p. 24.
28. John Rawls himself understood his theoretical task in a very similar way. See *A Theory of Justice*, p. 11 and *Political Liberalism*, pp. xix and xx.
29. Discussing the conceptions of the good he uses the term 'reasonable but incompatible comprehensive doctrines' (i.e. religious, philosophical or moral doctrines) insisting that a plurality of such doctrines is the natural result of the exercise of reason in a democratic society (see *Political Liberalism*, p. xviii.).
30. See *A Theory of Justice*, p. 60.
31. See *Political Liberalism*, p. xxii.
32. See ibid., pp. xxiii–xxx.
33. That is why there is an agnostic element in, for example, Locke's argument for religious toleration – all Christian religious practices are orthodox in their truthfulness and 'purity of worship' because there are no universal rational standards to mediate between them. Thus what one has to do is to focus on one's own tradition of worship and community of believers.
34. Rawls himself admits this stressing that 'given the fact of reasonable pluralism, a public and shared basis of justification that applied to comprehensive doctrines is lacking in the public of a democratic society' (ibid., p. 61).
35. See *The Foundation of Modern Political Thought (The Age of Reformation, Vol. II),* pp. 349–58. What follows in this paragraph is a short summary of his argument.
36. *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 244.
37. *On Bentham and Coleridge*, pp. 86–7.
38. See *On Liberty and Other Essays*, pp. 338–9.
39. On the philosophical inconsistencies and the conflict between the principle of utility and the principle of liberty in Mill's thought see, for example, John Gray's *Liberalism*, ch. 6.
40. The difference between the two types of liberalism was extensively discussed by a Lithuanian political philosopher Alvydas Jokubaitis in his illuminating book *Liberalizmo tapatumo problemos* (*The Identity Problems of Liberalism*).
41. Although Dworkin is against, what he calls, the strategy of discontinuity between politics and ethics and argues for a 'structural and philosophical liberal ethics', he still believes that politics should be neutral between the *substantive* conceptions of good life. For the full argument on the differences between his and Rawls's position see Stephen Mulhall's and Adam Swift's *Liberals and Communitarians*, ch. 9.
42. *Political Liberalism*, p. xxii.
43. Andrius Bielskis 'Ar liberalizmo išplitimas – grėsmė liberalizmo tapatumui?'.
44. Charles Taylor has criticized individualism in a similar manner. This is briefly discussed in ch. 3, pp. 135–6.
45. *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 139.

46. For Alasdair MacIntyre's discussion on emotivist culture see ch. 3.
47. Kelvin Knight 'The Ethical Post-Marxism of Alasdair MacIntyre', p. 74.
48. Of course, the notion of human alienation is far more central to the early writings (for example, in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*) than in the later Marx. Nevertheless, it is still implicit and sometimes even explicit in his later writings (e.g. in the first volume of *Das Kapital* where, as Alasdair MacIntyre pointed out, Marx writes about commodity fetishism). In this sense it is possible to claim that the notions of alienation and historical materialism are those philosophico-normative concepts which inform the entirety of Marx's thought.
49. A vivid expression of this statement can be found in Marx's correspondence with Joseph Weydemeyer in 1852 when he writes that his aim was to demonstrate '1) that the existence of classes is merely linked to particular historical phases in the development of the production, 2) that class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society'. Quoted from D. Bensaïd's *Marx for Our Times*, p. 115.
50. Quoted from Daniel Brudney's *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy*, p. 152.
51. Robert T. Tucker (ed.) *The Marx–Engels Reader*, pp. 120–1.
52. See Peter Wagner's *A Sociology of Modernity*, esp. ch. 2.
53. See his *Marx for Our Times*, chapter 4.
54. See his 'Theses of Resistance'.
55. See T. Ball & R. Bellamy's *The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century*, pp. 602–26.
56. *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 22.

2 A Genealogical Approach to the Political

1. See e.g. Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, pp. 199–206.
2. *Ecce Homo*, Preface 2.
3. See his *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 11.
4. *Ecce Homo*, Preface 2.
5. *The Will to Power*, §7. Later in the paragraph Nietzsche adds that this meaninglessness is only a 'transitional stage'. It will be one of the main challenges of this chapter to show that the void of meaning is not merely transitional, but that it is essential to genealogy in as much as it is linked to the conception of the will to power.
6. *After Christianity,* p. 3.
7. See *The Will to Power*, § 12.
8. We can distinguish at least two different 'schools' of reading Nietzsche's genealogy within contemporary Nietzsche scholarship and interpretation: anthropological and ontological. An anthropological reading, as it is first of all embodied in, e.g., Walter Kaufmann (*Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*), Peter Poellner (*Nietzsche and Metaphysics*), Maudemarie Clark (*Nietzsche on Truth*), and recently in Brian Leiter (*Nietzsche on Morality*), understands genealogy as an intellectual interpretative critique

enabling us to deconstruct our prejudice, predominant value structures and discursive practices in order to achieve deeper self-understanding. It sees genealogy as a critical historical analysis designed to enable us to understand what value structures and moral practices have shaped our identities. Emphasising Nietzsche's anthropological and historical sensibility it interprets the link between genealogy and the ontological conception of the will to power as dubious or weak. Furthermore, it interprets Nietzsche's perspectivism in less than radical terms. It claims that perspectivism does not presuppose the radical rejection of the more traditional conception of truth. Thus what Nietzsche's perspectivism amounts to is the decentering of the self-conscious knowing subject in order to enrich our ability to know the world through different perspectives. An anthropological reading sees the primary importance of Nietzsche's genealogy in its insight and ability to understand our culture, morality, and its different forms, and thus sees the metaphysical aspects of Nietzsche's thought (e.g. the eternal recurrence, the will to power, etc.) as secondary. As Brian Leiter in his naturalistic reading of Nietzsche states, 'Nietzsche belongs not in the company of postmodernists like Foucault and Derrida, but rather in the company of naturalists like Hume and Freud – that is among, broadly speaking, *philosophers of human nature*' (see his *Nietzsche on Morality*, pp. 2–3). The reading provided in this chapter is ontological and thus is closer to the interpretations of Foucault, Deleuze, and (in part) Heidegger. The reason for this 'post-modern reading' is not only in that it is an ontological interpretation, which takes Nietzsche's ontological conception of the will to power seriously and thus strongly links it to genealogy, which in turn will allow us to confront Paul Ricoeur's twofold conception of hermeneutics. It is also because only the ontological reading of Nietzsche's thought, developed through the philosophy of French post-structuralists such as Deleuze and Foucault, enables us to read Nietzsche's philosophy in general and his genealogy in particular as an alternative/independent philosophical 'paradigm', different from both the post-Kantian tradition and from Hegelian/Marxian historicism and humanism. Furthermore, it is only within the context of such an ontological reading of genealogy that it will be possible seriously to pose the question of the relationship between genealogy and hermeneutics.

9. See Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, pp. 80–1.
10. Ibid., p. 80.
11. Ibid., p. 81.
12. The formulation of the will to power as the will that wills itself is Heidegger's (see Heidegger's 'Nietzsche's Word "God is dead"' in *Off the Beaten Track*, p. 175). What is meant by it is that willing is not a simple desire for power but an ability to command first of all oneself. Through an ability to command and will something the will to power is able to overcome itself. Although Nietzsche writes that there is 'no such a thing as 'willing', but only the willing *something*: One must not remove the aim from the total condition' (*The Will to Power*, § 668), it is nonetheless plausible to suggest that this *something* is secondary. On this account Nietzsche writes that '[a]ll "purposes", "aims", "meaning" are only modes

of expression and metamorphosis of one will that is inherent in all events: the will to power' (ibid., § 675).

13. See K. Ansell-Pearson's 'Nietzsche and the problem of the will in modernity' in *Nietzsche and Modern German Thought*, p. 176.
14. Foucault defines limit-experience in the following way: such 'experience has the function of wrenching the subject from itself, of seeing to it that the subject is no longer itself, or that it is brought to its annihilation or its dissolution. This is the project of desubjectivisation', see his *Power*, p. 241.
15. See *On the Genealogy of Morality*, II 2.
16. *The Will to Power*, § 1.
17. See Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 51.
18. Ibid., p. 61.
19. Ibid., p. 87.
20. *On the Genealogy of Morality,* Preface 8.
21. See his 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress' in *Ethics*, p. 262. To be sure Nietzsche himself does not define genealogy this way – he does not speak about an ontology of ourselves. However, as we shall see, this account captures the essence of Nietzsche's genealogy.
22. Foucault, commenting on Nietzsche's conception of genealogy and history insists: '[k]nowledge, even under the banner of history, does not depend on "rediscovery", and it emphatically excludes the "rediscovery of ourselves"'. See his 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' in *Aesthetics*, p. 380.
23. See Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political*, p. 22.
24. See *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 46–8.
25. Ibid.
26. It is worth mentioning that Nietzsche refers to the etymology of 'bad' and 'good' arguing that in many languages 'good' refers to nobility, to the 'aristocratic soul', whereas 'bad' to the 'low', 'plebeian' and 'vulgar'. Interestingly this is not only the case with German itself ('schlecht' Nietzsche puts together with 'schlicht') but, say, with Lithuanian as well, where 'schlecht' is rightly translated as 'prasta', where 'prasta' means plain, simple and bad taste. In this respect the distinction between good and bad has a very strong aesthetic sense.
27. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, II 24.
28. See *The Gay Science*, § 290, p. 232.
29. See *The Birth of Tragedy*, section 3.
30. Ibid.
31. This is not to say that the death of the subject cannot be found in Nietzsche's thought (see, for example, the *Genealogy of Morality* I, 13).
32. See Thomas L. Dumm, *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom*, p. 3.
33. The differences between hermeneutics and genealogy will be one of the most important issues of our discussion and will be discussed at length later.
34. Michael Mahon, *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy*, p. 158.
35. Despite the fact that such comparison between the Oriental *ars erotica* and the Greek experience of sexual pleasures is implicitly suggested in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault himself later denounced this comparison as misleading, claiming that the Greeks did not have anything like *ars erotica* but instead had a *tekhnē tou biou* when in 'such art of

life' the economy of pleasure played an important role (see his *Ethics*, p. 259).

36. In presenting Foucault's philosophy I shall primarily have in mind his work as it developed from the seventies and onwards, i.e. his genealogical thought. Thus his earlier, archaeological method will not be our concern. Such a limitation is not only due to the fact that it is only after his intellectual transformation from archaeological to genealogical thought that he openly admitted Nietzsche's influence or rather re-discovered him for a second time, but also due to the fact that it is his genealogical rather than archaeological method which is richer with ethico-political implications. Furthermore, in his later studies such as *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* archaeological analysis, i.e. the 'neutral' description of scientific discourses with their internal rules and structures due to which they are perceived as intelligible, is not opposed to that of genealogical analysis but is rather adapted and subordinated to it (see *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, Preface, p. 12 as well as H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, p.117).
37. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 114.
38. See Foucault, *Aesthetics*, pp. 376–9.
39. Quoted from ibid., p. 372.
40. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 199.
41. Foucault's translators translate '*dispositif*' as 'apparatus', while Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinaw translate it as 'grid of intelligibility'. I prefer to use 'regime of intelligibility' since '*dispositif*' refers to a certain *strategic* disposition of a system's elements and 'regime' expresses this much better than 'grid'. On the other hand, 'apparatus' does not fully reflect that *dispositif* is also a *discursive* apparatus, i.e. an apparatus supported by a variety of types of knowledge.
42. See *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 194–5.
43. Ibid., p. 196.
44. See Foucault's *Power/Knowledge*, p. 210.
45. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, p. 43.
46. *Power/Knowledge*, p. 142.
47. Foucault himself does not say explicitly that power relations are relations of domination. This conclusion, however, can be read implicitly in a number of Foucault texts (see, for example, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' in *Aesthetics,* pp. 369–91).
48. *Power*, p. 346.
49. Ibid., p. 329.
50. See Hubert L Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, p. 132.
51. Foucault, *Aesthetics*, p. 378.
52. This ontological claim can be seen as both premise and conclusion since it is both a methodological threshold of Foucault's thought from which he starts his genealogical analytic of punishment and sexuality and the conclusion at which it arrives.
53. Foucault, *Ethics*, p. 262.
54. Foucault, *Power*, p. 336.
55. See his *Ethics*, p. 164.

56. Ibid., p. 137.
57. Foucault admits this himself; see for example, ibid., p. 262.
58. See *Power*, p. 241.
59. K. Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, p. 103.
60. The term 'work of art', as Cyril Barrett has argued, is essentially an honorific term. It necessarily requires value judgement and thus any statement that a particular piece of work is art by definition presupposes a certain quality of (aesthetic) goodness. However, it is still possible to talk about 'bad art' without logical contradiction partly because the characterisation of art is always open-ended and thus difficult to define (for the full argument see Cyril Barrett's 'Are bad works of art "works of art"?' in *Philosophy and the Arts*, pp. 183–93).
61. See Plato's *Republic*, book III, 400–403, where he writes about certain rhythms which should be avoided in the ideal polis.
62. Inverted commas here advert to the difference between, on the one hand, the general concept of art as imitation and, on the other hand, the narrow nineteenth century aesthetic movement of realist art, which through its aesthetic expression was trying to be as realistic as possible. Thus even abstract art, embodied in abstract painting and seen as a complete opposition to figurative art, i.e. an art which traditionally is considered to be much more 'realistic', depending on its aesthetic quality is truthful because in some way or another it says something to a viewer.
63. See Aristotle's *Poetics*, ch. xiv, 1453b–1454a. It is important to note that Aristotle defines *katharsis* only within the context of dramatic and epic art. Thus such definition should not be seen as valid for all genres of art, in particular in relation to visual arts which do not have a strictly narrative nature. However, this is useful in our case because in discussing kitsch we will primarily focus on items of which narrative is a constitutive part (cinematographic kitsch, advertising, etc.).
64. Ibid., 1453b.
65. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, §2 & 3.
66. The concept of the imitation of reality, as mentioned above, is problematic within contemporary culture when a variety of different genres of art has nothing to do with imitation or representation of reality. This has foregrounded such concepts as 'drawing out' and 'contextualising'. That is to say, art is a creative ability to draw out ordinary things into a context which makes these things beautiful or in some way actual. For example, an ordinary cup in itself is not a work of art, but it will become art if someone 'places' it in a certain context which, bracketing its ordinary functionality, will draw out its beauty or in some other way actualize it. Thus art not so much imitates reality as extends it – art itself is reality as other human artefacts such as buildings, books, cars, etc. are.
67. Adorno defines kitsch as the parody of *katharsis* (see Adorno's 'Veblen's Attack on Culture').
68. The link between consumerism and the widespread diffusion of bad taste and art was widely discussed by the Frankfurt School (first of all T. W. Adorno, M. Horkheimer and H. Marcuse), but long before that by Alexis de Tocqueville, who in his *Democracy in America* was one of the first social thinkers to consider the effect of democracy in lowering standards in both

the production and consumption of art. According to him, numerical increase in the production of artists fosters a decline in the merit of each artistic production; art is produced more efficiently but its quality becomes lower (see his *Democracy in America*, pp. 59–60).

69. See Matei Calinescu's *Five Faces of Modernity*, p. 240.
70. See ibid., p. 243.
71. See Max Horkheimer's 'Art and Popular Culture' and T. W. Adorno's *The Culture Industry*, esp. ch. 3.
72. Calinescu, Matei 1987. *Five Faces of Modernity*. Durham: Duke University Press, p. 242, 244.
73. Such a position, namely, that kitsch as popular *art* was born as an opposition to high or academic art, was developed by some exponents of popular art (this was especially the case with the proponents of camp in the seventies in America who consciously accepted kitsch and low taste as the way to express themselves through their alternative (often gay) culture). I want to argue against such an understanding of kitsch suggesting that a consciously chosen kitsch as a certain *artistic style* ceases to be kitsch because the fundamental characteristic of kitsch is the lack of reflectivity, which is present to anything which has certain style. This is so because the notion of style already presupposes integrity which is never natural (given) but needs to be created. In other words, consciously chosen kitsch as a certain aesthetic style ceases to be kitsch precisely because kitsch lacks any aesthetic style.
74. Discussing the culture industry's impact on the masses, Adorno claims: 'The culture industry misuses its concern for the masses in order to duplicate, reinforce and strengthen their mentality, which it presumes is given and unchangeable. How this mentality might be changed is excluded throughout. The masses are not the measure but the ideology of the culture industry, even though the culture industry itself could scarcely exist without adopting to the masses'. See his *The Culture Industry*, p. 99.
75. See *On the Genealogy of Morality,* II, 13.
76. See ibid. III: sections 3, 10, 26, 12.
77. Ibid., III, 27.
78. See *On the Genealogy of Morality*, III, 17.
79. This notion is reaffirmed in Nietzsche's affirmation of pain and cruelty as a positive and necessary aspect of life. He claims that 'back then, when humanity was not yet ashamed of its cruelty, life on earth was more light-hearted than it is now that there are pessimists' and 'perhaps back then – to the comfort of delicate souls – pain didn't hurt as much as it does today', *On the Genealogy of Morality*, II, 7.
80. Ibid., III, 15.
81. The liberation from the predominant values of the reactive will to power can be used to describe the Nietzschean genealogy only if it is seen in terms of constant self-overcoming. Hence the process of liberation is not a singular act but a constant process. Furthermore, it is not a negative act, i.e. the liberation from certain obstacles, but a creative experience, to put it in Foucault's terms, to be otherwise: 'for Nietzsche … experience is trying to reach a certain point in life that is as close as possible to the

'unlivable', to that which can't be lived through' (see Foucault's *Power*, p. 241).

82. It is worth recalling that Freud understood culture in similar terms, namely as the methodical repression and sublimation of libidinal forces. For example in *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud writes that 'sublimation of instincts is an essential conspicuous feature of cultural development' (see Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 97).
83. See Kant's *Anthropology*, pp. 20–2, 70–3.
84. It is such reflectivity, which through the false reflective analysis of the content of one's own activity or consciousness, functions as a self-justification. Although *Notting Hill* is a British film and thus has nothing to do with Hollywood, it has, despite the elements of British humour, exactly the same narrative structure as those of Hollywood films. It is not surprising that it became the most popular and successful British fill in America easily breaking the 100 million dollar barrier. In this sense it is possible to say that the film perfectly embodies Hollywood aesthetic values and ideals.
85. See *On the Genealogy of Morality*, III, 28.
86. Ibid.
87. A truly genealogical understanding of 'reality' would be of something which is historically constructed by the multiplicity of discursive power relations (science, media, advertising, power institutions such as school, university, church, family, prison, etc.). In this sense, so long as scientific discourse and practices such as genetic engineering, psychoanalysis, psychiatry, medicine, etc. influence our sexuality and our biological condition (and it would be naïve to deny that they do), human sexuality and even biology, looked at from a genealogical point of view, are historical constructions as well. Thus, as was noted in our discussion of the concept of reality in Nietzsche's thought, neither Nietzsche nor Foucault should be understood as committed to realism in the traditional sense of this term.
88. K. Marx & F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 64.
89. For an excellent discussion of Marx's Hegelian legacy see Alasdair MacIntyre's *Marxism and Christianity*, pp. 7–45.
90. Nietzsche was against not only Hegelian but classical Socratic dialectics as well, claiming that the best way to 'criticise' Socrates is to mock him for his lack of taste. For him Socratic dialectics was both the sign of the exhaustion of the 'noble spirit' of Sophoclean tragedy (see *The Birth of Tragedy*, I, 1 & II, 12). This initially Nietzschean intuition was further philosophically elaborated by Gilles Deleuze, who in rejecting dialectics opposed it with the Nietzschean conceptions of difference and tragedy. Negation as one of the conceptual pillars of the Hegelian three-fold structure of thesis/anti-thesis/synthesis, according to Deleuze, is changed into *difference* in Nietzsche thought. Accordingly, Nietzsche affirms difference without incorporating and later overcoming it in the higher form of the move to absolute spirit. Thus for Deleuze dialectics is an exhausted force which does not have strength to affirm true difference (see Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*). Similarly, Foucault was anti-Hegelian, seeing his

philosophical work as an attempt to go beyond Marxian humanism (see D. Trombadori's interview with Michel Foucault in *Power,* pp. 239–97).

91. It is worth mentioning that the consumption of soap operas in East European societies such as Russia especially by elderly people, who as a rule are extremely poor, is very high. One can even argue that it is precisely kitsch which prevented these socially and economically worst-off groups from social unrest. It has done that through the atomisation of the individuals by providing a false catharsis, false ideals of happy love, of comfortable consumer life which they do not live and about which they can only dream. In other words kitsch embodied in soap operas and Hollywood films functions among these impoverished people not as ideology in the Marxian paradigm, i.e. through deception and oppression, but through occupation of their attention, through the forgetfulness of their reality, through comforting, through giving them something to desire and dream about. Thus kitsch has a similar impact to sausages delivered to the protesting people in Red Square had (once an anti-Soviet protest was calmed down not by the violent action of Soviet police but by delivering what ordinary people cannot easily buy in the shops).
92. See Marx, *A Reader*, p. 71.
93. *One-Dimensional Man*, p. 5.
94. Ibid., pp. 11–12.
95. Ibid., p. 57.
96. See *Power*, p. 119.
97. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 57.
98. This four part documentary was shown on BBC2 in March and April 2002. For a short summary of each of the four parts of the film see www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/documentaries/ features/century_of the self.shtml.
99. *The Century of the Self*, part I.
100. Ibid.
101. One of the first to provide the distinction between needs and wants (desires) in discussing the development of capitalism was Werner Sombart, who in his *Luxury and Capitalism* (originally published in 1913 as *Luxus und Kapitalismus*) argued that the rise of capitalism was possible only due to the emergence of new patterns of modern consumption based on luxury rather than necessity. More recently this distinction has been developed by Colin Campbell in his *The Romantic Ethics and the Spirit of Consumerism*. Here, following Max Weber's sociological approach, Campbell seeks to provide a theoretical account of modern consumerism. He argues that economic and sociological theories so far have been unable to explain the emergence of modern consumption as being based on the notion of open-ended wants when individuals endlessly desire to purchase new goods and services. Instead of adopting the traditional economic theory of marginal utility or attempting to link increasing consumption with a manifestation of competitive striving to achieve higher status in society, Campbell re-works Sombart's distinction between luxury and necessity, claiming that the nature of modern consumerism lies in the specifically modern ability to create desires not through stimulation of natural pleasures, but through controlling and producing their meanings and imagery. Thus this account contributes to our distinction between

the culture and economy of needs and of desires. It is important to emphasise that this distinction rests not on the intrinsic difference between need and desire as such, but in the cultural changes in portraying commodities, changes which started with modern advertising and the birth of PR in the late 1920s and its further advancements in the 1970s. That is to say, advertising of goods and services in a needs culture emphasises the utility and practicality of commodities, while a desires culture through powerful imagery stresses these commodities' social meaning linking them to how we see and feel about ourselves.

102. See Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* which was originally published in 1922 causing a considerable controversy. Distancing himself from his early socialism he became more and more disillusioned with modern democracy. In *Public Opinion* he argued that modern democracy, being dependent on the public opinion of the masses which can be easily manipulated by the variety of powerful interest groups through mass media, needs a body of experts. In this he was close to John Stuart Mill, who also was in favour of well educated experts enjoying more political influence than other fellow citizens.
103. See, for example, Larry Tye's *The Father of Spin* and Adam Curtis's documentary *The Century of the Self*.
104. *The Century of the Self*, part II.
105. The main source here is the BBC documentary *Sex on TV* (2002).
106. The report and study on Sex on TV by The Henry Kaiser Family Foundation, 1999 (see its website www.kff.org).
107. Foucault, *Ethics*, pp. 166–7.
108. For a more detailed account of the 1996 and 1997 national elections in Britain and the US see *The Century of the Self* (part IV) and *Political Communication: Why Labour Won the General Election of 1997* (ed. Ivor Crewe). Also the changes in electoral campaigning through adopting marketing techniques have been discussed in Dennis Kavanagh's *Election Campaigning: the New Marketing of Politics*.
109. *The Century of the Self*, IV.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid.
112. In this respect Marcuse's critique of 'totalitarian' one-dimensional culture, as it was developed in his *One-Dimensional Man*, can hardly provide a valid means to criticise our contemporary extremely individualistic culture, a culture which is based on the notions of atomism and the ideal of 'expressing one's individuality'.

3 A Hermeneutic Approach to the Political

1. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 8.
2. See his 'Ethics and Culture: Habermas and Gadamer in Dialogue' where Ricoeur elaborates the distinction between the hermeneutics of faith and the critique of ideology within the debate between Gadamer and Habermas.
3. *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 28.

4. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 29.
5. *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 33.
6. Ricoeur, *Egzistencija ir hermeneutika: Interpretacijų konfliktas*, p. 16.
7. *Freud and Philosophy*, p. 34.
8. It is in this sense that hermeneutics, stressing the ontological aspect of understanding and interpretation (i.e. interpretation as event), is different from the Marxian conception of philosophy and consciousness in general. For Marx philosophy and understanding not only have to lead to revolutionary *praxis* (i.e. what is important is to *change* rather than merely to *understand* the world, hence the distinction between consciousness and matter, theory and practice) but also are seen as secondary. In Marx's account consciousness (with its different embodiments in religion, philosophy, science or ideology) is a mere determinate function of material reality. Hermeneutics, as it will be understood through Gadamer's and MacIntyre's philosophy, goes beyond this logic and sees interpretation and understanding as closely linked to practice. That is, hermeneutics is ontological in so much as understanding and interpretation of meaning form and structure our lives and thus determine reality. In this sense hermeneutics is similar to genealogy: both of them seek to go beyond the modern distinction between theory and practice, or understanding and reality, thus both of them are, what may be called, ontological epistemologies. However, their ontological dispositions are different. On the one hand, there is a constant attempt to oppose and break from tradition and the structures of meaning in order to affirm life as self-overcoming (genealogy), while on the other hand, there is an affirmation of meaning and tradition which is seen as enabling us to give purpose and structure to our life (hermeneutics).
9. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, III, 24.
10. *Truth and Method*, p. 262.
11. Ibid., p. 267.
12. Ibid., p. 273.
13. Ibid., p. 276.
14. Ibid., p. 375.
15. See ibid., pp. 357–69.
16. It is worth comparing Gadamer's notion of openness in the dialogue to MacIntyre's conception of toleration. Gadamer does not distinguishes between openness towards one's own tradition and rival traditions as MacIntyre does. On the other hand, Aristotelian teleology and the ethics of flourishing are less vivid in Gadamer's thought than in Macintyre's. It is precisely from the point of view of the ethics of flourishing that MacIntyre's claim – openness in the dialogue should be limited if it does not prevent certain abusive and destructive utterances – has to be understood. That is, toleration should be judged in the light of the virtues which enable a community to flourish. See his 'Toleration and the Goods of Conflict'.
17. Gadamer opposes the structure of communality in sharing common meaning to, what he calls, a mere communication of souls. What is important is not the state of mind, a mere openness or benevolence, but the subject matter of the dialogue. Dialogue for Gadamer has essentially

the structure of the game. Using the example of two men using the saw together Gadamer says: 'the game is not so much the subjective attitude of two men confronting each other as it is the formation of the movement as such which, as in unconscious teleology, subordinates the attitude of the individuals to itself'. See Gadamer's *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p. 54.

18. *Truth and Method*, p. 361.
19. See Ricoeur's 'Ethics and Culture: Habermas and Gadamer in Dialoge'.
20. Jürgen Habermas in his *On the Logic of the Social Science* (originally published in 1967) has criticised Gadamer because of his potentially conservative account of tradition which plays a pivotal role in Gadamer's conception of hermeneutics. Some of his claims (e.g. the alignment of Gadamer's notion of tradition with Edmund Burke's and consequently interpreting it in sharp opposition to reflective reason which, according to Habermas, 'proves itself in its ability to reject the claims of tradition' (p. 170)) are poorly grounded especially in the light of Gadamer's explicit attempt to provide a conception of tradition that would be opposite to that of Romanticism including Burke (see *Truth and Method*, p. 273). However, the more fundamental issue relates to Habermas's concern not to link knowledge too closely with authority and tradition. Habermas admits that all human knowledge is rooted in historical tradition but he believes that social sciences through reflective reason can and should break from the authority of tradition so that it can be 'dissolved into the less coercive force of insight and rational decision' (*On the Logic of the Social Science,* p. 170). Thus through such reflective ability to make our knowledge, which was passed on us through the authority of tradition, transparent, it should cease to function as prejudice and tradition. Otherwise, so Habermas believes, Gadamer's account of human knowledge as rooted in tradition and which functions as the authority of tradition makes tradition infallible because the challenge to tradition, which has its authority in knowledge, can come only from non-knowledge and thus surrender itself to irrational arbitrariness (for a concise version of Habermas's argument see Alan How's *The Habermas–Gadamer Debate and the Nature of the Social*, pp. 139–53). If tradition is articulated in singular terms and if knowledge is seen as internal to tradition, then there is no way to question the rational validity of that tradition.
21. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 7.
22. Ibid., p. 8.
23. Ibid., p. 12.
24. MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, pp. 61–2.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 63
27. Ibid., p. 82.
28. Ibid., p. 65.
29. See the definition of tradition on p. 109.
30. *After Virtue*, p. 223.
31. *The MacIntyre Reader*, p. 270.
32. See Kant's 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?', p. 58.

33. Ibid., p. 61.
34. MacIntyre's claim is that the fundamental problem of contemporary moral culture is that it cannot provide any rational means to decide between different moral positions and arguments. This is so not because taken separately each of these arguments is not logical or valid, but that there is no rational way to decide/mediate between their premises. Accordingly, to choose between these incompatible premises and arguments becomes an arbitrary matter. As a result contemporary moral debate becomes inconclusive and hence interminable. MacIntyre links such inconclusiveness to emotivism, a theory which he claims to be the representative moral theory of contemporary consumer society *par excellence*. Emotivism claims that all moral evaluative judgements such as 'this is good' are nothing but expressions of our emotions, preferences or feelings. They have nothing to do with facts and thus, since only fact-based discourses can be true or false, ethical judgements can be neither correct nor wrong. MacIntyre claims that emotivism has become embodied within our sociocultural reality – moral positions and even arguments have indeed become nothing else but expressions of personal preferences which are arbitrarily chosen. For the full argument see *After Virtue*, chs. 2 & 3.
35. For full argument see *After Virtue*, ch. 5.
36. *After Virtue*, p. 39.
37. MacIntyre describes this dualism in terms of the bifurcation between 'a realm of the organisational in which the ends are given and thus are not under rational scrutiny' and 'a realm of the personal where values are under open debate but where resolution is not possible', ibid., p. 34.
38. Ibid., p. 35.
39. Ibid., pp. 253–4.
40. Ibid., p. 254.
41. Ibid., p. 23.
42. Ibid., p. 81.
43. See, for example, John Haldane's 'MacIntyre's Thomist Revival: What Next?' in *After MacIntyre*.
44. According to MacIntyre, it is since the Reformation, with Pascal and Descartes, that the split between reason and faith, fact and value starts. It is both in Calvinist theology and in Pascal that reason ceases to have power to correct passions and direct the human will from potentiality to actuality, since it is only due to faith, understood as the grace given by God, that man can reach salvation. Hence the contrast to Thomism where ethics is essentially rational and has to direct man from the nature-as-one-is to the nature-as-one-could-be-if-he/she-realised-his/her-telos (see *After Virtue*, p. 54).
45. *The MacIntyre Reader*, p. 264.
46. Ibid.
47. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 354.
48. In order to do this MacIntyre emphasises that it is necessary to learn the language of the rival tradition as a second native language. This is so because allegiance to every intellectual tradition 'requires the living out of some more or less systemically embodied form of human life, each with its own specific modes of social relationship', see ibid., p. 391.

49. For a more detailed explanation of this conceptual conflict see *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, pp. 166–70, and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, pp. 112–18.
50. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 170.
51. For the full argument see *Whose Justice?*, ch. X.
52. Quoted from *Whose Justice?*, p. 335.
53. I shall discuss this in the concluding chapter.
54. *The MacIntyre Reader*, p. 265.
55. See MacIntyre's 'Is Patriotism a Virtue?', pp. 3–20.
56. *The MacIntyre Reader*, p. 241.
57. Ibid., p. 244.
58. See Taylor, Charles articles 'Atomism' and 'Cross-Purposes: The Liberal–Communitarian Debate' in *Human Agency and Language* and *Philosophical Arguments*.
59. See Will Kymlicka's *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*, chs 7–14 and Jeffrey Friedman's 'Politics of Communitarianism', pp. 297–339.
60. Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, p. 165.
61. *The MacIntyre Reader*, p. 237.
62. *Whose Justice?* pp. 55–6.
63. Georgia Warnke, *Justice and Interpretation*, p. 5.
64. See MacIntyre's 'Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good', first published in English in *The MacIntyre Reader*, p. 241.
65. One can argue that this Aristotelian claim (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1124b) about the magnanimous man as the most virtuous one presupposes some ambivalence in the context of his thought developed in the *Politics* (I, 1253a) that human being is essentially *politikon zōon*: the magnanimous man, being superior to others, can become self-sufficient, hence will not need political community.
66. *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 68.
67. Ibid., pp. 72–77.
68. Ibid., p. 5.
69. Ibid., pp. 126–7.
70. Ibid., p. 130.
71. E.g. 'They [the participants of politics of common good] will recognise that it [the modern nation-state] is an ineliminable feature of the contemporary landscape and they will not despise the resources that it affords', see ibid., p. 133.
72. One of the reasons for its irrationality is, according to MacIntyre, that the politics of the nation state is the bargaining between different social and economic interests where money plays the key factor in this process.
73. *The MacIntyre Reader*, p. 265.
74. In a recent essay on Gadamer MacIntyre clarifies his philosophical position vis-à-vis Gadamer's hermeneutics. One of the differences between him and Gadamer is that Gadamer rejected the tradition of neo-Thomist Aristotelianism as dogmatic, the tradition within which MacIntyre claims to advance his philosophical work (see his 'On Not Having the Last Word: Thoughts on our Debts to Gadamer' in J. Malpas's (eds), *Gadamer's Century*, p. 157). Another difference is that MacIntyre believes that, despite the fact that it is impossible to escape the historical situatedness

of any rational enquiry, it is still possible to go beyond and appeal against such historical limitations. Thus MacIntyre believes that to acknowledge the fundamental truth of Gadamer's hermeneutics – rationality's historical situatedness – an appeal to standards of rationality and truth that would transcend those historical limitations is still possible. An appeal to such standards is possible only through engaging and learning from the history of philosophy which allows us to distinguish between better and worse philosophical standpoints. It is this ability to see the qualitative difference of different philosophical standpoints, from which richer or more impoverished interpretations of certain texts are advanced, that enables MacIntyre to disagree with what he takes to be Gadamer's claim that philosophy remains the same and that there is no progress in it (see Gadamer's *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy,* p. 6). Furthermore there is a fundamental difference between their understandings of Aristotelian *phronesis*. Gadamer links the hermeneutic conception of application to Aristotle's *phronesis* but never sufficiently questions, according to MacIntyre, its relationship to theoretical knowledge. MacIntyre, on the other hand, following Aristotle links *phronesis* to theoretical knowledge and claims that there can be situations when in order to be practically wise, one will need to be able to engage theoretically in reflection on what the human good in general is. Thus Gadamer's distinction between the ethical and the theoretical, on the one hand, and his attempt to link hermeneutic practice only to the ethical, thus dismissing the Aristotelian theoretical domain from hermeneutics, on the other, is a result of Gadamer's suspicion of Aristotle's metaphysics which is so fundamental to MacIntyre. In MacIntyre's view hermeneutic enquiry informed by Aristotelian practical philosophy will be incomplete if it does not move beyond itself into metaphysics (see *Gadamer's Century*, pp. 162–71).

75. This is not to say, however, that a local Christian parish is the only local community which embodies an Aristotelian conception of the political. There could be other examples of local communities where such a conception of the political can be located. However, to paraphrase MacIntyre, these would be other philosophical narratives from other intellectual traditions which could best be written by their own adherents (*Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 10).
76. See *After Virtue*, p. 34.
77. *Politics*, I, 1252b.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid. As Scott Meikle, commenting on Aristotle's conception of politics in relation to economics, wrote: 'The master art is *politikē*, because its end is the good for man, and so it includes all the other arts and their ends, and while they are pursued for its sake, it is not pursued for the sake of anything else' (see his 'Aristotle on Business', p. 145).
80. A well known example of such an interpretation of classical political thought, especially Plato's, and an attempt to align it with modern collectivism and its totalitarian tendencies is K. R. Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*.
81. See *Politics*, I, 1260b–1264b.

82. Ibid., VII., 1328a.
83. See his 'On the Foundations of Practical Philosophy in Aristotle', p. 54. in *Contemporary German Philosophy*
84. *Politics*, I, 1252 b.
85. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 101.
86. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Q 105, Art. 1.
87. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, III, 27.
88. This is the lesson that we learn not only from MacIntyre but also from Emmanuel Levinas. In a similar manner to Nietzsche Levinas asks 'what is the meaning of knowledge?', the question which, arguably, is one of the most fundamental questions in his philosophy. The answer he provides is different to the Nietzschean will to power: philosophy, according to Levinas, is no longer the love of wisdom, but rather 'the wisdom of love at the service of love' (see his *Otherwise than Being*, p. 162).
89. *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 1114b.
90. Arne Rasmusson, *The Church as Polis*.
91. This, however, is not to suggest that liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez or the Boff brothers are succumb to these dangers.
92. *The Church as Polis*, p. 12.
93. This was particularly the case with Jürgen Moltmann who was greatly influenced by thinkers such as Hegel, Ernst Bloch, and others. Probably the best exemplification of his affirmative position towards modernity and its conception of history can be found in his *Theology of Hope*: 'We cannot turn our backs on the open horizons of modern history and return to perpetual orders and everlasting traditions, but we must take these horizons up into the eschatological horizon of the resurrection and thereby disclose to modern history its true historic character' (see *Theology of Hope*, p. 89).
94. See *The Church as Polis*, p. 43. For example, Moltmann saw liberated humanity in paradigmatically Marxian terms to the extent that Arne Rassmusson, commenting on it, could claim: 'in Moltmann's theology the Christian eschatology takes the place of the Marxist metanarrative, the poor and oppressed takes the place of the proletariat, and "the orthopraxis of discipleship of Christ" takes the place of the praxis of the party', ibid., p. 59.
95. See Moltmann's *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, p. 98. This, however, does not mean that Moltmann wanted to include the politics of the nation-state within the horizon of Christian faith and provide a doctrine which would allow the modern state to advance 'the Christian politics'. He was against 'Constantinian turn' which, for the first time, made Christianity the state religion (see his discussion of the impossibility of civil religion in his article 'Christian Theology and Political Religion').
96. See *The Church as Polis*, p. 95.
97. See Vattimo's *After Christianity*, esp. ch. 5, pp. 69–82.
98. *The Church as Polis*, p. 90.
99. Ibid., p. 102.
100. Ibid., p. 99.
101. See *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp. 181–2.

102. Hauerwas, Stanley 1981. *A Community of Character*. Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, p. 61.
103. Ibid., p. 75.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid., p. 121.
106. Ibid., p. 131.
107. See ibid., p. 52 and his *Christian Existence Today*, p. 101.
108. See *The Church as Polis*, p. 208.
109. *After Christendom?*, p. 26.
110. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Vol. II), p. 349.
111. Failure to recognise this constitutes a key weakness in contemporary Leo Strauss influenced neo-conservatism.

4 Hermeneutics beyond Genealogy

1. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, III, 27.
2. In the commentary on Georg Lukács's defence of his *magnus opus History and Class Consciousness*, Žižek writes: 'So the point is not to "develop further" Lukács in accordance with the "demands of new time" (the great motto of all opportunistic revisionism up to New Labour), but to *repeat* the Event [i.e. the October Revolution] in new conditions' (see Slavoj Žižek's postface to Georg Lukács's *A Defence of History and Class Consciousness: Tailism and the Dialectic*, p. 177).
3. Nietzsche writes about his unknown friends who share the same noble taste. This could be interpreted as a community of creative artists who do not even know each other and who do not need to share their lives with each other. Hence it is a community which does not require any commitment and thus could be seen as a subversion of the notion of real community and friendship.
4. The aspect of power in hermeneutics can be seen in the fact that meaning (whether it is the meaning of a historical text (Gadamer) or the meaning of a moral and intellectual argument extended in time (MacIntyre)), through the process of hermeneutic interpretation, has power to change us. An instructive example is MacIntyre's interpretation of Augustine: to understand the meaning of a canonical text (e.g. the Bible) one has to be able to undergo internal moral transformation; thus a text is understood if it transforms us (see ch. 3, 'MacIntyre's contribution to hermeneutics').
5. Inverted commas indicate that time is not progressive and linear as it is in the Hegelian–Marxian paradigm, but rather cyclical in the sense that it has no apparent directedness.
6. Their revolutionary aspect lies in the fact that all of them in one way or another break from traditional structures of meaning.
7. MacIntyre claims that he is a foundational realist and believes that truth itself is not historical, only its rational justification is (from a personal conversation at MacIntyre's lectures 'The insoluble problems of contemporary ethics', Essex University, 9 May, 2003).
8. *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, p. 54.

9. Nietzsche's perspectivism is probably best embodied in his *Genealogy of Morality*, III, 12.
10. There is a textual evidence to believe in such conscious commitment to non-commitment. For example, Nietzsche claims that '[w]hen one moves towards a goal it seems impossible that "goal-lessness as such" is the principle of our faith' (*The Will to Power*, § 25).
11. An example of radical scepticism towards 'truth' can be found in *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche writes that 'it is no more than a moral prejudice that truth is worth more than appearance' and that 'even the world that surrounds us – why could not it be a fiction?' See *The Gay Science*, pp. 46–7.
12. See Poellner's *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, pp. 11–12.
13. The fact that Nietzsche himself mocks those 'free-spirit' intellectuals – intellectuals who still believe in the very ideal of truth because they justify and ground their research in 'objective facts' instead of emphasising the importance of interpretation – should not be overestimated here. We should not understand it as a Nietzschean attempt to get rid of all possible facts. Nietzsche's genealogical research has itself proved to rely on historical facts. This tension between Nietzsche's conception of interpretation and the dictum concerning facts, at least as it appears in the *Genealogy of Morals*, ch. III, § 24, should be understood as an attempt to question the meaning of 'scientific, objective facts': facts themselves are pointless; what is important is what we do and how we use them.
14. Foucault, *Aesthetics*, p. 380. Such a reading of the genealogical conception of truth – truth is a rational faculty and function of the will to power – has an apparent similarity to Rüdiger Grimm's interpretation in his *Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge*. Grimm claims that something is 'true' for Nietzsche if it increases power and thus 'false' is everything which decreases it, and that accordingly the same belief can be true and false to different individuals or/and to the same individual at different times (see *Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 19–28). Peter Poellner has justly criticised Grimm's reading, claiming not only that it is bound to involve serious contradiction (two people simultaneously can have radically different 'true' beliefs about external reality) but also that such interpretation renders Nietzsche's philosophy uninteresting (i.e. there is more to Nietzsche's philosophy than its capability to increase his will to power) (see his *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, pp. 19–22). However, this apparent similarity is misleading for one important reason. For Grimm the Nietzschean conception of truth is opposed to the traditional conception of truth as based on correspondence theory and thus the world is seen as in principle unintelligible. Furthermore, Grimm seems to juxtapose the traditional correspondence theory of truth to Nietzschean truth as a mere empowering 'subjective' feeling of power. This distinction is wrong and it is Foucault's reading of Nietzsche that allows us to go beyond it. On our interpretation both Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogical projects are based on an essential thesis about the fusion of power with discourse/knowledge/truth (hence the epistemological rules of discourse/truth are essential) and it is in the light of this interpretation that our claim – that genealogical truth is the function and rational faculty of the will to power – should be understood. Truth is not a mere subjective feeling of my increas-

ing power, a feeling which has no basis in external reality or facts, but an ability to resist those intellectual power discourses and practices which oppress us. For Nietzsche, for example, traditional metaphysics and its attempt to see the universe in moral terms through categories such as 'goal', 'unity', 'truth' was both fiction (i.e. the world *is not* this way) and the sign of our weakness, and it was precisely such a 'discursive regime' against which genealogical truth as 'cutting' was needed. It was in a similar context that Foucault claimed that history is intelligible precisely because it has the form of strategies, tactics and power. Thus the genealogical conception of truth should not be understood as that which radically rejects correspondence as a fundamental aspect of any knowledge. Indeed, such an analysis of cultural-historical facts, which would be impossible without some notion of truth as correspondence, is a constitutive part of genealogy as well. Therefore this claim should be understood within the context of Nietzsche's critique of the ascetic ideal: it is not that Nietzsche denies our ability to know the socio-historical reality but that the meaning of such knowledge cannot be of value in itself but only if it serves our specific interests and hence power. Thus a truly Nietzschean juxtaposition is not genealogical truth *versus* the correspondence theory of truth but truth as a rational faculty and function of the will to power *versus* truth as ascetic ideal. For textual evidence of such a conception of truth see, for example, Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*: §418, §515, §534, & §677.

15. See *The Gay Science*, § 290.
16. Note that this claim does not contradict my previous claim that the genealogy of kitsch is an independent subversion of Nietzsche's and Foucault's projects. The genealogy of kitsch as an independent subversion of Nietzschean philosophy enables us to utilise genealogy within the Thomist tradition, a tradition which is radically at odds with Nietzsche's philosophy which sees God as the ascetic ideal of the weak. Thus the genealogy of kitsch – the philosophical critique of the values and beliefs of contemporary secular society, society which has lost the tension between the transcendental and the secular and which at least negatively allows us to appreciate the cultural importance of this tension – is *both* a critique of Nietzsche's and Foucault's ontology of power, i.e. the ontology of immanence (there is nothing transcendental to power relations, thus the idea of God is the result of a historical discursive regime) and of liberalism.
17. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, p. 47.
18. This philosophical claim – the transcendental is ethical and thus is prior to and beyond ontology – is already apparent in his *Totality and Infinity* but most explicitly articulated in *Otherwise than Being*. Because of the limited scope of the book I cannot fully explore this point.
19. This claim then appears in profound disagreement with Gianni Vattimo's claim that Christianity, as the cultural predecessor of the Enlightenment, has to admit its bond with the post-Enlightenment secularised culture and 'embrace the destiny of modernity' in general (see his *After Christianity*, pp. 97–8). Once again this disagreement cannot be articulated here.

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