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THE AESTHETIC DRIFT IN POLITICAL THEORY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTERPRETIVE AND LITERARY DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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THE AESTHETIC DRIFT IN POLITICAL THEORY:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTERPRETIVE AND LITERARY DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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To

Tom and Gumi

and Pat

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation focuses on the shift in contemporary political theory towards a more interpretive and literary perspective. It tries to show how this shift has consequences for the self-understanding of political science as a discipline and for the way we perceive both theory and political discourse in general.

I utilize and discuss some of the ideas that have emerged from the traditions of hermeneutics, critical theory, and post-structuralism. Although very different from each other, there is within these three general perspectives a common concern both with the style or aesthetics of discourse and with the presuppositions underlying social inquiry. I try to treat political theory as an ambiguous tradition, containing several different genres, and then analyze some of the interpretive commitments of these various styles of theorizing.

The primary argument of the dissertation is that once we become aware of political inquiry as interpretive and committed in its very foundation, political discourse--including the most "descriptive" political

science--should be viewed as forms of linguistic constructions that constitute political reality rather than describe it. It then becomes pertinent to understand how these constructions produce meaning, what normative commitments they adhere to, what kinds of interpretive and rhetorical strategies they use, and what tropes and models they are based on. To raise these types of problems is to move, I argue, towards an aesthetics of political interpretation--an aesthetics which is also a form of politics; a politics of interpretation.

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PART I

THE AESTHETIC DRIFT

> The smugness, the academism, the pedantry experienced in that room, weighed more heavily on me than I had first thought. It was not just the stale smoke that had made the atmosphere stifling but the smell of the discourse, something about the way language had been used.
> (Joel Kovel)

The political scientists have only described the world in different ways; the point is to interpret it.

With due respect to Marx--the world might still need change--we could thus reformulate his 11th thesis on Feuerbach from the viewpoint of the conflict between an empirical and an interpretive orientation in the social and human sciences. The world has changed since Marx, but not according to the dictates of his theory. Praxis, political action informed by theory, remains a theoretical concept, an idea(1). "Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed."[1] By a similar token: logical empiricism, the ultimate cure for philosophy and metaphysics, is dying because the world is not what it appears to be. So called pure description is at best systematic construction.

Contemporary Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian social thought is witnessing the undermining and disillusionment of two theoretical systems or idioms; one predominant and overwhelming, the other oppositional but in the past no less confident. The two forms of thought, positivism and Marxism, have become a main current and undercurrent respectively in twentieth century social science. Each paradigm, to use a tired category, has produced its own metatheory, its own methods and concepts, and its own body of social knowledge. In short, each perspective has generated a distinct discourse, an idiom. And both have now also entered a period of theoretical if not practical decline and defensiveness.

But the crisis and disillusionment are far from total and unqualified. Positivism remains the dominant style and the implicit framework for the majority of practicing social scientists. Most empirical social research is still cloaked in positivistic/scientistic garb with a predisposition towards quantitative and objectifiable methods.[2] This type of research, heavily anti-philosophical and anti-theoretical in both form and content, has by virtue of its dominance (not its 'truth') relegated social and political philosophy to an anachronistic and secondary role within the disciplines of sociology and political science. If the orthodox Marxist looks upon philosophy as something to be 'realized' by changing the world, the scientific positivist

ignores philosophy on the grounds that it is irrelevant, metaphysical and unscientific. This latter assessment of theory and philosophy is, in my opinion, still typical in social science.[3]

Similarly, in spite of its precarious and marginal existence in the academic world, Marxism survives and persists in its traditional form. Its practitioners are on the whole reluctant to deviate from what has loosely become known as 'orthodox Marxism.'[4] The tendency is to stress the scientific, anti-idealist nature of Marxist theory and to develop an approach to history, consciousness, and society which has been labelled, somewhat derogatorily, 'deterministic materialism.' The concomitant proneness to epistemological rigidity has excluded a priori an interest in and concern for social philosophy as a fruitful dimension to political thinking and action.

One shared commitment of orthodox Marxism and mainstream positivism is the emphatic faith in the possibility of a <u>science</u> of society and politics. In positivism the goal is often formulated in terms of the establishment of law-like generalizations, testable hypotheses, relationships between variables, predictability, et cetera. A characteristic example: "Science is a way of checking on the formulation of concepts and testing the possible linkages between them through references to observable phenomena." And: "Once relationships between

variables have been established through hypothesis formation and testing, these relationships can be expressed as generalizations. Generalizations based on tested relationships are the object of science."[5] The orthodox Marxist conceptions are equally 'hard': "Marxism aspires in principle to be a universal science--no more amenable to merely national or continental ascriptions than any other objective cognition of reality....Lack of universality is an index of deficiency of truth."[6] Lucio Colletti: "...Marxism also needs to be a science: if not there would be no scientific socialism, only messianic aspirations or religious hopes. In short, if Marx is a scientist, he has to measure his ideas and those of others against the facts, to test hypotheses experimentally against reality."[7] Objectivity, universality, facts, laws, and testing are central markers for Marxists and positivists alike.

Whatever the historical and psychological reasons for this will to science, this urge towards final solutions, and whatever the significance of Roland Barthes' dictum, echoing Nietzsche, "we are scientific because we lack subtlety,"[8] it is precisely the scientific commitment that has come under increasing theoretical attack in recent decades. It is the explicit and perhaps more frequently implicit assumption that an objective scientific understanding of the social and political world is possible and desirable that is being discredited.[9] The critique has several points of departure.

II

One blow has been dealt by the developments within the neo-positivist tradition itself. Most familiar, and in no need of repetition, is the position formulated by the later Wittgenstein with respect to the nature and role of language.[10] The empiricistic view of language as a descriptive tool combined with its correspondence theory of truth is questioned by Wittgenstein. In Philosophical Investigations he demonstrates how language cannot be isolated from the context in which it is used and of which it forms a part. To know a language is to know a "form of life." ("And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life."[11]) By speaking and writing we participate in a "language-game," an activity which is endlessly flexible and ultimately grounded in convention. We learn what words and sentences (and social theories and discourses) mean by understanding how they are being used, as part of this form of life. In Wittgenstein's words: "But how many kinds of sentences are there? ... --There are countless kinds: countless different kinds of use of what we call 'symbols,' 'words,' 'sentences.' And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten...the speaking of

language is part of an activity, or of a form of life."[12]

Although accepted within part of the neo-positivist philosophical tradition, and here there are several advanced positions, Wittgenstein's insights have not penetrated much of empirical social sciences. The continued emphasis of fixed definitions, objective measurements, hypothesis testing, correlations and logical consistency within the disciplines of political science and sociology, testifies to the anti-theoretical (and insulated) atmosphere of much empirical social research. (This is, of course, not to imply that empirical and descriptive narratives are by definition "false" or "wrong" or shallow. Needless to say, the depth or quality of any social study--theoretical, empirical, journalisitic, whatever the genre--has to be understood and evaluated on its own merits. What is problematic and often ideological, however, are the strict truth claims and validity tests of conventional empiricism. For one thing, Wittgenstein's stress on how a language receives meaning through its context of "form of life" points towards a different self-understanding of the "scientific" status of social science.)

Friedrich Waismann, another Viennese Oxford philosopher, reaches conclusions similar to Wittgenstein's, and argues that all "truths" rest on convention, including mathematics. There is no absolute foundation for knowledge: "Only the convention is ultimate."[13] All attempts to fix

and define terms and concepts once and for all are futile according to Waismann, since a concept or a word has, what he calls, an "open texture." Not only can we never give a complete description of an empirical object--there might always be hidden and unexpected qualities to it--but, in addition, we can never verify or falsify an empirical proposition. At best, all we can say "...is that an experience 'speaks for' or 'speaks against', 'strengthens' or 'weakens' a proposition, never that it proves or disproves it."[14]

Waismann even regards the openness and uncertainty of language as a strength and virtue, because it allows for the formulation or the unexpected and the unconventional. Reminiscent of Nietzsche, and for an Oxford philosopher with an unusual flair for the rhetorical, Waismann goes against the grain of most of his truth- and rule-oriented colleagues: "I have always suspected that correctness is the last refuge of those who have nothing to say."[15] Consequently, and anticipating a theme of this essay, to ask whether a philosophy is true or false is for Waismann a misunderstanding of the peculiar texture of philosophical narrative: "To ask whether some metaphysical vision of the world is right or wrong is almost like asking whether, e.g., Gothic art is true or false. What <u>can</u> be asked--and I am not even quite sure of that--is perhaps whether a certain work of that style 'fits' into a given scenery, surrounding, or a time; ...True, a philosophy is made of thoughts, and arguments are used to support it. But that they can prove

anything is a myth which is just disappearing."[16]

I have dropped the names of Wittgenstein and Waismann merely as two examples of philosophers who, from within the analytical tradition, have questioned its most cherished and fundamental assumptions. There are others, such as Austin, Quine and Cavell, who perhaps can be said to write within a post-positivist discourse, maintaining the style and tone of Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophy, but who are not willing to defend a strict scientific goal and foundation.[17]

For now, I merely wanted to intimate an argument which constitutes one dimension of this paper, namely the role and function of convention and context in our understanding of language and in what we call knowledge. If what passes for scientific products in social science rests on conventions and contexts, what can be said against a strict adherence to these conventions? And what can be said in favor of a conscious breaking and subversion of these very same conventions? Both questions strike at the heart of the empiricists' attempt to establish a unified, objective terminology--a scientifically valid language--and their preoccupation with laws or generalizations concerning sociopolitical phenomena and concerning relationships between categories or systems.

III

The focusing on conventions and contexts as the foundation for "truth" and meaning leads to another question which further weakens the positivistic-empiricistic perspective. If discourse--in our case political discourse--gains its meaning through (breakable) rules and, as I will argue, elusive and shifty contexts, then layers of historical or diachronical (two words with obvious "open texture") problems become apparent. Conventions and discourse change over time, as do their indistinguishable contexts. They are all in flux, and the various attempts to freeze one or the other permanently are not only bound to fail but carry with them normative and, at least in social science, political implications. To define meaning and truth in ahistorical and universal terms is itself a perspective, a position, grounded in implicit norms and "forms of life." This "perspectivism" should not be treated as an obstacle to science or knowledge; norms and conventions are the very conditions for meaning, including social scientific meanings.[18]

Among the alternative traditions that have challenged the ahistorical and frozen understanding of social science are philosophical hermeneutics and critical theory, both of which can be said to treat language and meaning as contextually constituted social practices: knowledge of

society is neither neutral nor ahistorical. (Nor, of course, is knowledge necessarily historical; the writings, for example, in the post-structuralist vein have repeatedly demonstrated the value and validity of structural--or synchronical--investigations.) Without merging these very different theories into one, they appear to have some general tenets in common. They claim, for example, that social understanding and its intellectual products involve perspectives, or points of view; that the human sciences are interpretive and normative; and that all interpretations take place within a contextual flux or flow. There are no facts or data "out there" to be found and recorded; what empiricists call facts are, according to hermeneutics, frozen or reified interpretations. Not only are facts normative or negotiated and "theory-impregnated" or "theory-laden"--which some empiricists concede--but they gain their meaning as part of historically constituted practices and cannot be said (except within negotiated contexts) to neutrally describe an external reality.[19]

From the perspectives of hermeneutics, critical theory and post-structuralism, it is impossible to separate "reality" from discourse "about" that reality. We are the tool of language, rather than the other way around. We do not control the meaning of 'language-games' any more than, e.g., tennis players determine the rules of the game of tennis. But, how well we play the game is not exactly a matter of the rules. Still, a perfect forehand twenty feet

beyond the baseline is an absurdity. Political reality independent of language is non-sense. It is one purpose of this essay to illustrate and discuss a few characteristics of these alternative and interpretive perspectives.[20] It will be my argument that they offer, in contrast to the orthodox Marxist and empiricist-positivist perspectives, a more inclusive self-understanding of what political discourse "is" and what it is "about." I will also argue that the emphasis on problems of discourse, interpretation, convention, meaning and style takes us in the direction of an aesthetics of social and political discourse, and that this aesthetic shift is itself noticeably present in these alternative theoretical traditions.

Their opposition to some attributes of strict empiricism and orthodox Marxism might serve as an initial approach to the issue. The antagonism is twofold: on the one hand, an undermining and problematization of basic premises, above all centered on the implicit scientism of both Marxism and empiricism; on the other hand, an opposition to the <u>style</u> or the <u>form</u> of the two traditions. Regardless of the degree of theoretical awareness, most empiricist political science, I contend, has a typical form of expression or style which is bound to its scientistic foundation. Coupled with a critique of the latter is thus a critique of its stylistic consequences (without implying a cause-and-effect relationship). I will try to show that a

study of politics understood within a broad critical-interpretive mode is a break with the entire genre of positivistic social science. A similar opposition also holds in the relation between orthodox Marxism and critical hermeneutics. Both the former's scientistic assumption and its stylistic or linguistic "master code" must be rejected if we accept an interpretive base for political theory.

It should be stressed that the positivistic style can hold within its boundaries a wide range of different and, on the surface, opposing positions both on empiricism as a theory of social science and on "empirical reality." A critique would here have to illustrate how an explicitly anti-positivist or anti-scientistic method can remain positivistic in narrative style and conceptualization. One could perhaps even argue that there is a "form of life" associated with the positivistic tradition. In the extension of this reasoning we find the more ideological or political dimension of empiricism; although a hornet's nest, the question should at least be raised: is there a connection between a positivistic social science as a form of thinking--as a form of life--and a technocratic late capitalist (or, for that matter, late socialist) socio-economic formation? The sociology of positivist discourse is still to be written, although attempts in this direction have been made.[21] Is there a hidden or implicit structural (meta)politics of empiricism? Is there a "political unconscious" beneath mainstream political science? To even

begin to answer these questions is beyond the scope of this essay, but, as I hope to show convincingly, there is no unadulterated political knowledge; there are only political interpretations from various perspectives, and therefore a hidden bias in methods and approaches is an unavoidable dimension of political inquiry.

That the relationship between form of expression and its sociohistorical context is far from mechanistic and simplistic, however, is a safe conclusion. Nor should the issue be seen as a reductive search for the political position of each and every empiricist; it is not a matter of nailing empiricists on an ideological left-right axis. The ideological commitments of a style or form of expression are broader and far more complex than that. At the same time, the system-maintaining or politically stabilizing effect of mainstream positivist social science should not be underestimated. Nor is a quantitatively oriented political science an innocent bystander in an increasingly administered and technologically rationalized social life-world.[22] Be that as it may, my intent is simply to state the issue, to mark its inevitable presence in the human and social sciences.

IV

The problem broached in the brief discussion above might be illustrated by a quotation from Robert Dahl. He represents, I hope it is fair to say, a soft empiricist position. His scientism is qualified, his truth-claims tentative; he uses both quantitative and qualitative styles of analysis - but his form of expression, his style of discourse, is firmly grounded in the empiricist-positivist tradition. Towards the end of a discussion of "patterns of severe conflicts" in his Democracy of the United States, Dahl makes the following statement:

> The conflict between labor and capital--to use two vague labels--led to the alienation of one group or the other in many countries. Nearly everywhere in Europe the rapid expansion of the working classes posed a severe problem of political integration. Yet in following another route, the American working classes were politically integrated into the American polyarchy; and in the process their economic antagonists, the business interests, were not permanently alienated. This development took a long time, however, and was often disturbed by sharp conflict.[23]

And in a concluding paragraph:

> Conflicts and rejection of polyarchy ebb and flow in American political life. For a time moderate conflicts prevail. Then the tides of antagonism begin to surge, and political conflicts grow more deadly. When by one means or another the antagonisms diminish, the pattern of moderate conflict reappears. But it, too, is impermanent. The high tide in of conflict has almost always risen within the span of about one generation.[24]

A serious evaluation of Dahl's commitments would of course have to involve the entire text, but a few questions can be raised on the basis of these quotes alone. (I should also point out that Dahl himself does not claim that these statements are objective or free from what he would call normative elements. But he does, in general, maintain a belief in the distinction between empiricism as science, on the one hand, and normative political theory, on the other.[25])

The rather striking vacuity and flatness of the conclusion is indicative of a widespread positivist dilemma. In the name of objectivity and descriptive neutrality, the common-sensical and noncontroversial gain priority. The conventional, however, is not neutral; neither is it free from built-in commitments. The stoic, detached tone of Dahl's prose hides and strengthens an ideological bias. Conflicts no doubt come and go in American politics, and they surely diminish "by one means or another"--presumably through "conflict resolution"--and they will, everyone would agree, intensify again in the near future. These self-evident "truths" prevent or exclude a confrontation with the important political question of what determines the structure and outcome of these "deadly conflicts." And when they diminish, is their structure altered? Can the resulting equilibrium ever be interpreted in apolitical or noncontroversial categories?[26] Dahl searches for "severe

conflicts" in American society and discovers several (thus criticizing the consensus theorists), but even though he is investigating patterns of conflict, the long-term pattern of (class?) domination is not one of them--and this in spite of his emphasis on the antagonism between labor and business interests.

The labor-capital conflict (certainly a potentially potent political dichotomy) is viewed from the perspective of "integration," thereby structuring the analysis in another neutralized (i.e., biased) direction. For whom, one would like to know, did the working classes pose "a severe problem of political integration"? In what sense and with what assumption can we talk about the American working class as "politically integrated into the American polyarchy"? Even empirically speaking, is it not equally "correct" to ask how the working class was socially and politically disintegrated?[27] The thrust of the quote is also that somehow this labor-capital conflict is by now once and for all resolved. If so, in whose interest? One wonders when and how the business interests in America were--if only temporarily--alienated?

Anyway, the polyarchy survived and historical progress --another common empiricist guiding principle--ensued. The problem-solving or social-engineering model is evident in Dahl's characterization of the growth of the working classes in Europe. They "posed a problem" of integration, as did

the American working classes (note the plural). Both problems were solved in the name of progress and integration.

The impression of social progress from the first quotation is, however, partially undermined by the recurrent tide metaphor in the second. Here, we are faced with a cyclical approach to history, creating the image of a predictable never-ending political process. The metaphor lends an air of objective necessity to political conflicts, simultaneously promising each generation a stab at the old polyarchy.

All in all, the specific content of the "severe conflicts" is secondary to their (technical) function. Politics takes place in an impartial context: the groups clash, alienate each other, and finally integrate into a new order, as if they were elements in an experiment or a mechanical process. The historical generalizations, abstract and apolitical, are revealing in their mixture of common sense and self-conscious neutrality. These are all familiar conventions of empiricism, rules of the game, prejudiced ways of seeing; together they make up a style and form of discourse and expression.

Again, this detour--itself interpretive--was merely to moot the problem of the relationship between form of expression, normative commitments, and rules of the tradition and genre. There is in political narratives no objective, scientific point of departure. What we are

dealing with in Dahl's account is an interpretation, a political construction from a perspective. Loaded categories, interpretive metaphors, theoretical commitments, stylistic tone, and much more "structure" Dahls's discourse. What the paragraphs are "about" disappear behind the form, or rather, appear through the interpretive style. No necessary politics--on the conventional left-right spectrum--can be deduced from this. At the same time, does not Dahl's very language imply a "political reality" which in a significant sense can be said to be both ideological and committed?

V

If the normative commitments of an empiricist-oriented political science are often a vague and unconscious support of the status quo due to the indirect acceptance of "the political system" as given or already constituted, and therefore treated as necessary and inevitable, the commitments of scientific Marxism are of a different and more explicit order. Where positivism is ruled by the social engineering model of incremental change and by a firm dedication to technical means and instrumental rationality, leaving the end to be determined by the "nonscientific" community, orthodox Marxism is loudly and explicitly devoted

to revolutionary praxis (in various forms) and an overthrow (by various means) of the capitalist system, usually in the name of socialism and the working-class. That the revolutionary commitment can cause a dilemma for a science of society is not surprising. "Scientific socialism" is, no doubt, a troublesome concept. To insist upon objectivity and science in combination with a call for Revolution is to invite tension, if not antinomy. To derive a political praxis from a scientific study of society involves a metaphysical leap unexplainable by recourse to scientific discourse alone. This familiar predicament is as old as Marxism itself.[28]

In addition to this obvious and articulated commitment to a revolutionary transformation of capitalism, there are other interpretive and normative dimensions to Marxism, causing further problems for a science of society. They, too, are related to the political goal but must be seen as separate, since no abandoning of the revolutionary project in Marxism would remove these value-loaded currents. Unlike the problem of revolutionary praxis, which can be summarized as a conflict between, in Marxist terms, "bourgeois science" and "socialist science," this issue can be expressed through the juxtaposition of concepts like science and philosophy, science and critique, science and interpretation, and is present in Marx's own works.

It is not, as is so often alleged, a matter of a

"break" between the young and the old Marx; even the so-called scientific later works contain the tension. Edmund Wilson, in To the Finland Station, quotes two letters to Engels written by Marx when he was finishing the first volume of Das Kapital. Marx talks about the book as "a work of art," his writing as having "the merit of an artistic whole," and the delay in finishing the volume being due to "artistic considerations."[29] Wilson reflects:

> Certainly there went into the creation of Das Kapital as much of art as of science. The book is a welding-together of several quite diverse points of view, of several quite distinct techniques of thought. It contains a treatise on economics, a history of industrial development and an inspired tract for the times; and the morality, which is part of the time suspended in the interests of scientific objectivity, is no more self-consistent than the economics is consistently scientific or the history undistracted by the exaltation of apocalyptic vision. And outside the whole immense structure, dark and strong like the old Trier basilica, built by the Romans with brick walls and granite columns, swim the mists and the septentrional lights of German metaphysics and mysticism, always ready to leak in through the crevices.[30]

Throughout Wilson's modernist reading of Marx, aesthetic categories are employed to illuminate the power and form of his theories. Rhetorical and polemical strategies are at the base of Marx's language. For Wilson, Das Kapital is a gigantic, interpretive historical drama, and his first reflection on the work is a discussion of its effect on the reader: "...it is the power of imagination as well as the cogency of argument which makes Das Kapital so compelling." After an initial confusion, the reader is inside a story:

"Once we have worked through the abstractions of the opening, the book has the momentum of an epic."[31]

Marx's vision of the workings of capitalism fascinates Wilson for its awesome and grand ambition: a project of reinterpreting the history of Western civilization. Mechanical production, accumulation of capital and technological achievements take on significance as "remorseless non-human force," but never quite severed from "the furies of personal interest." There is in Marx, according to Wilson, "a peculiar psychological insight: no one has ever had so deadly a sense of the infinite capacity of human nature for remaining oblivious or indifferent to the pains we inflict on others when we have a chance to get something out of them for ourselves."[32] Marx uses sarcasm and irony to express this theme, and Wilson ranks him with Swift as one of "the great masters of satire."

> Compare the logic of Swift's "modest proposal" for curing the misery of Ireland by inducing the starving people to eat their surplus babies with the argument in defense of crime which Marx urges on the bourgeois philosophers (...): crime, he suggests, is produced by the criminal just as "the philosopher produces ideas, the poet verses, the professor manuals," and practicing it is useful to society because it takes care of the superfluous population at the same time that putting it down gives employment to many worthy citizens.[33]

There is in Marx, then, beyond the obvious problem of linking a scientific theory to a revolutionary praxis, a presence of polemical tropes and stylistic operations which

further weaken the scientific claims of orthodox Marxism. This rhetorical and aesthetic dimension forms part of the very fabric of Marx's writing, including his most scientific works.

But this should not lead us to underestimate the opposite tendency in Marx's style of thought: a passion for formal, logical and metaphysical concepts, and an almost mystical belief in the possibility of a science of history and society, a science so conceived that it also contains a moral imperative and a proof for a "necessary" praxis. A teleological commitment and a unified notion of natural and social science underlie not only Das Kapital but the early manuscripts as well: "The whole of history is a preparation for 'man' to become an object of sense perception, and for the development of human needs (the needs of man as such). History itself is a real part of natural history, of the development of nature into man. Natural science will one day incorporate the science of man, just as the science of man will incorporate natural science; there will be a single science."[34] This cult of science which is part of the staple of 19th century social thought--we find it, for example, in utopian socialists like Saint-Simon and Fourier, as well as in "the father of positivism," Auguste Comte--could be seen as a historical peculiarity, or time-bound convention, were it not for the fact that it remains a cornerstone in Marxist theories. It is an explicit ingredient in most varieties of orthodox Western Marxism

(not to mention the Soviet branch), from Della Volpe and Colletti in Italy, to Althusser and Poulantzas in France, to Perry Anderson and Robin Blackburn in England, and Göran Therborn in Sweden.[35]

Apart from the dogmatism and rigidity built into the mere idea of a Marxist science with all its totalitarian connotations, real and imaginary, there are other unacceptable consequences of this self-understanding. The urge to elaborate and maintain a strict science of society has served the same tendency within Marxism as it has within positivism: the attempt to monopolize the sphere of knowledge, to develop a criterion for what is knowledge in such a rigid manner that alternative theories of knowledge are excluded by definition. Habermas's description of positivistic scientism can be extended to scientific Marxism: "...the conviction that we can no longer understand science as <u>one</u> form of possible knowledge, but rather must identify knowledge with science."[36] Or, as Russell Jacoby puts it in the context of "conformist Marxism": "Against the dirty words--romanticism, subjectivism, aestheticism, utopianism--the clean ones are invoked: science, objectivity, rigor, structure."[37]

Since Kautsky at least, if not since Engels' <u>Anti-Dühring</u>, the determinist, scientistic and evolutionist stand has formed the core of orthodoxy in the Marxist tradition.[38] On this score, there is again a similarity between

positivism and Marxism. The ethical, subjective and romantic aspects of social life have been outlawed--forced outside the acceptable and conventional discourse--and the style and rules of scientific language have dominated the production of "knowledge." Marx himself, however, did not make a problem out of "the dichotomy between facts and values, or knowledge and duty."[39] Knowing, understanding, judgment and commitment are for him part of the very same (social) act of pursuing knowledge of society. Reality is not "out there" to be observed and measured by a detached scientist; "reality" has no meaning in that sense. Epistemologically, Marx is not an empiricist, even if his form of expression and idiom sometimes belong within the scientistic-positivist tradition of social theory. "For Marx there is no problem of the world being 'reflected' in the mind, except in the sense of his repeated statement that consciousness signifies people's awareness of the nature of their lives. Questions of the correspondence between thought and reality-in-itself are meaningless, as is the opposition of subject and object considered as two independent entities, one absorbing images produced by the other."[40] In support of this reading of Marx, Kolakowski quotes from the Theses on Feuerbach: "The whole problem of the transition from thought to reality, and thus from language to life, exists only to the philosophical mind, puzzling over the origin and nature of its supposed detachment from real life."[41] We need not carry this

argument any further to see its affinity with my previous comments on the committed and contextual nature of language.

As I shall try to show, the diverse traditions of critical theory, hermeneutics and post-structuralism have this view of language in common. However, these traditions do not give Marx or Marxism a privileged position as a qualitatively different type of thinking or theoretical system. The Marxist code is not a "master code" that explains all mysteries. Its power lies in its abilities to interpret, be part of, make interesting, criticize and open up some aspect or other of what we think of as the object and subject of social and political knowledge. Marxism, like empiricism, exists as one perspective among many others.

VI

Whatever the hermeneutic and aesthetic possibilities built into Marx's own writings, they are not realized through the orthodox discourse; the Marxist scientistic tradition moves in the opposite direction. Here, the separation of fact and value becomes an issue, and reality turns observable and objectifiable. The problems are those of truth vs. falsehood, science vs. ideology and correct position vs. wrong position--in short, a policing of

knowledge. There is truth out there--whether in the form of a theory "serving the people," as in one of Althusser's worst moments: "Philosophy represents the people's class struggle in theory. In return it helps the people to distinguish in theory and in all ideas (political, ethical, aesthetic, etc.) between true ideas and false ideas. In principle, true ideas always serve the people; false ideas always serve the enemies of the people."[42]--or, as in Coletti, where "truth" takes on a more conventional empiricist tone: "As a scientific doctrine, Marxism essentially consists of the discovery of objective causal relationships. It discovers and analyzes the laws which make the system work, describes the contradictions which undermine it from within and signal its destiny. But insofar as it is a work of science and not ideology, Capital will not allow this analysis to be tainted with 'value judgements' or subjective choices: instead it makes only 'judgements of fact', objective judgements, affirmations which in the last analysis are universally valid."[43]

As in positivism, the very style of scientific Marxism contains a practice, or, even better, is a practice--a form of life. It is the dogmatic insistence that Marxism is a science that needs to be interrogated. Is there what Foucault calls a "politics of the scientific statement"?[44] He opposes any attempt to make knowledge a science, and his questions apply to any form of scientism:

> What types of knowledge do you want to disqualify in the very instant of your demand: 'Is it a science'? Which speaking, discoursing subjects - which subjects of experience and knowledge - do you then want to 'diminish' when you say: 'I who conduct this discourse am conducting a scientific discourse, and I am a scientist'? Which theoretical-political avant-garde do you want to enthrone in order to isolate it from all the discontinuous forms of knowledge that circulate about it? When I see you straining to establish the scientificity of Marxism I do not really think that you are demonstrating once and for all that Marxism has a rational structure and that therefore its propositions are the outcome of verifiable procedures; for me you are doing something altogether different, you are investing Marxist discourse and those who uphold them with the effects of a power which the West since Medieval times has attributed to science and has reserved for those engaged in scientific discourse.[45]

The focus on discourse as a power-permeated world-view. I interpret as a politicized version of Wittgenstein's understanding of language as gaining its meaning through a "form of life." If "truth" is a context-ridden and value-loaded concept, grounded in solidified conventions, then it can be scrutinized as a political and controversial issue. From this angle, epistemology is also political theory.

The Marxist master code, including its scientistic prejudices, is now under attack from several vantage points. Jean Baudrillard, for example, argues that the entire Marxist edifice with its "mirror of production" and its "form of political economy" must be questioned. There are two elements of the Marxist system which this radical criticism is especially directed against. For Baudrillard, these two principles form the contours of the marxist discursive

frame; they determine, as it were, in the last instance, the complete model of political economy, and they themselves are never questioned within this model. First of all, Marx operates under the spell of the notion of production, a concept without which Marx's critique of political economy is inconceivable. The "objective" world emerges through the concept of production and it is assumed that "production," and, for that matter, "labor," "value," and a host of other political economy categories together make up a representation of reality. The view that representation is the appropriate characterization of the relationship between the Marxist discourse and what it is about, is Baudrillard's second object of attack. He maintains that both the concept of production and the idea of representation are imaginary and should be treated as metaphysical in nature.[46] (His assault on the idea of representation can be extended to include any empiricist correspondence theory of truth.)

Baudrillard's critique reveals how the Marxist code--its concepts and interpretive conventions--(over)determines the type of knowledge that can be "produced" within the code. What passes for universal categories and scientific explanations inside the code are, from Baudrillard's perspective, polemical interpretations, not without decisive fictional qualities. "The proposition that a concept is not merely an interpretive hypothesis but a translation of universal movement depends upon pure metaphysics."[47] The universalization of a category is the termination of an

interpretive self-understanding and the beginning of "the religion of meaning." The concepts move from the realm of mere concepts to "...the imaginary of the sign, or the sphere of truth. They are no longer in the sphere of interpretation but enter that of repressive simulation." And here Baudrillard echoes Foucault: "This scientific and universalist discourse (code) immediately becomes imperialistic."[48]

To situate oneself within the orthodox Marxist discourse is to subscribe to a set of conventions and rules which define and set the framework for the subsequent investigation or analysis. The rules of the Marxist "language-game" shape and structure the narrative, as well as prejudice its meaning. As a response to this tyranny of the code, contemporary critics emphasize the need to expose and break the Marxist conventions. Though one conclusion of a critical interpretive perspective is that the distinction between the form and the content of a theory is itself a convention and cannot be strictly maintained, one might still argue that this type of criticism, Baudrillard's included, is primarily aimed at the form of the Marxist discourse, not its content. As with Edmund Wilson's reflections, the important question is how the Marxist text is constituted; how it "works," and how its concepts and categories are woven together. What the text means, what is being said, what it is "about," are problems which can only

be approached through an investigation of the structure and style of the code.

The interdependence between how language means and what it says is illustrated by a quote from Therborn's recent work on ideology:

> The three fundamental types of [ideological] contradiction are not independent, but are all interrelated. Marxism asserts that the political contradiction of domination-execution and the ideological contradictions of subjection-qualification are largely governed by, though not reducible to, the economic correspondence or contradiction between the relations and forces of production. Any given combination of forces and relations of production of course requires a particular form of ideological subjection-qualification of the economic subjects, and tends to insure it through such sanctions as starvation, unemployment, bankruptcy - and their opposites, which affirm the correctness of the corresponding subjection-qualification. But if a contradiction develops between the relations and forces of production, no ideological formation can adequately and harmoniously subject-qualify the new economic subjects for the contradictory economic order. The old matrix of economic affirmations and sanctions then tends to crack.[49]

To suggest that the form of this paragraph determines its meaning is an understatement. In any case, whatever the relationship between form and content, it breaks down in the experience of reading the passage. To accuse Therborn of expounding mechanistic and orthodox Marxist ideas would be fruitless--there is no way of telling "what" he is writing "about"--and possibly unfair. It is the style, rhythm, tropes and underlying categories that are mechanical and even robot-like. Judging from the style and use of code-words something akin to an intricate mechanical process

seems to be the object under consideration. The human subject is not just problematized, he is annihilated; only "relationships," "forces" and "contradictions" are involved and they all move within a "matrix." The mode of production, of course, provides the subterranean grid, whose rules, boundaries and movements "govern" the various contradictions. If the production relations are forced to change in relation to the production forces, the matrix is shaken and sanctions are set in motion. Starvation, or absence thereof, is a "strategy," presumably imposed by the forces and relations of production. An objective system, consisting of economical energies and forces, generates elaborate conflicts and contradictions, and maybe, one day, even cause a crack in the matrix itself.

Whether Therborn's scenario is true or false is not at issue. (How could it be?) As in the case of Robert Dahl, the interesting point for my purpose is that this style of analysis inevitably constructs a certain image or picture of "society," with hidden and not-so-hidden political and discursive commitments. The narrative belongs, from this perspective, to an easily recognized genre which, depending on the specific text, contains both limits and possibilities. A discourse creates and destroys meaning. The rules and conventions constitute a form of interpretation and a reification.[50]

VII

The already mentioned internal undermining of the positivist tradition has a parallel in Marxist theory which further illuminates not only the problem of dogma and scientism, but the aesthetic drift as well. As familiar as the role of Wittgenstein for positivism is the story of the marxist crack-up. Even a superficial knowledge of the history of Marxist thinking in the 20th century reveals a diversification that, on this score alone, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to understand how and why an orthodoxy is being so rigidly maintained in certain quarters. Aside from the Soviet branches--Leninism, Trotskyism and Stalinism, all of which I would label orthodox--there developed in Western Europe a theoretical discussion inside the Marxist tradition which, eventually, led to such a heterogeneous variety of perspectives that it appears as wishful thinking to today claim a monopoly on a unified Marxist theory.

It should be added that, unlike empiricism which prides itself on having little or no involvement in the "practical" political conflicts of the day, Marxist theories--even the more eclectic formulations--consider themselves inescapably tied to political action. Therefore, to discuss theoretical developments apart from material and historical conditions in Europe at the time, must seem suspect and, to some

readers, illegitimate. (The stress on praxis is of course one reason why the Marxist discourse is so often a highly politicized discourse.) And certainly, without the failure of "socialism-in-one-country," Marxism in the West might have taken a different course.

It was thus the concern with political practice that gave the initial and continuing impetus to the critique of orthodox Marxism. Two important "prejudices" of this criticism were, on the one hand, a growing disillusionment with the Soviet Union which led to an exodus from the Leninist/Stalinist versions, and, on the other, a desire to thoroughly revise and reevaluate Marxist theory in the light of the political developments in Europe in the 1920s and 30s, including the rise of fascism and the relative success of liberal capitalism and social democracy. It is in this sociohistorical context that most interpretations view the breakdown of the Marxist dogma and the rise of more interpretive and critical Marxisms. (In the various accounts of what is called Western Marxism, the early theories of Lukacs and Korsch and the writings of Gramsci are treated as the intellectual origins of this development.)[51]

The so-called failure of the Western European working class to develop a revolutionary consciousness was an obvious Marxist dilemma, and it provoked several theorists to focus their attention on psychological and ideological - "superstructural" - issues. This is sometimes referred to

as a shift towards the "subjective" aspects of theory and politics. The material conditions alone could not convincingly account for the new developments. The deterministic reading of Marx was, in other words, weakened by the unpredictable turn of events. In the face of this situation, to insist on a scientific Marxism appeared obsolete; instead the contextual and historical nature of "truth" was discovered, and, with that, the urgent need to disentangle theory from the straightjacket of Comintern and official CP chatter.

Simultaneously, new theories were formulated within the tradition of what mainstream Marxists label "bourgeois theory" (another code word). These theories, of which psychoanalysis and phenomenology are obvious examples, were critically discussed and incorporated into the core of what we now can refer to as a critical Western tradition of (Marxist-inspired) political theory. This expansion of what constituted legitimate discourse further weakened the Marxist orthodoxy, and the split between a "critical theory" (by no means limited to the Frankfurt School) and scientific Marxism was more of a "break" than an internal disagreement.

Another, and from my perspective more important trend is clearly discernible in this critical tradition: an intensive interest in and preoccupation with the artistic and cultural realms. Literature, art, aesthetics, high and low culture became not only the subject matter for individual investigations and various interpretive essays,

but increasingly determined the entire mode and style of the theories. This aesthetic orientation constitutes the epistemological commitments of, for example, Benjamin, Bloch, Marcuse, Adorno and Lowenthal within one discourse, and, in other contexts, the theories of Bachelard, Barthes, Gadamer, Heidegger and Derrida, just to mention a few. What Susan Buck-Morss succinctly states about the writings of Benjamin and Adorno, can be said, mutatis mutandis, of the others as well:

> Perhaps their most important contribution was to redeem aesthetics as a central cognitive discipline, a form of secular revelation, and to insist on the structural convergence of scientific and aesthetic experience. They thereby challenged a fundamental dualism of bourgeois thought, the binary opposition between scientific "truth" and art as "illusion," which had characterized bourgeois thinking since the seventeenth century.[52]

Taken together, these theories represent an aesthetic drift in the underpinnings of contemporary social and political theory. As I shall try to show below, the previous brief comments on the code and form of a theory, on the style as a conglomerate of conventions and tropes, and on the normative commitments of any social science narrative, point towards a similar aesthetic mode or drift. It is in the nature of an interpretive understanding of social science, with its emphasis on how meaning is constructed, to encourage an aesthetic orientation. It is quite plausible to argue that there is in both positivism and Marxism an interpretive,

stylistic base, supporting and indeed determining a scientistic, objectivistic superstructure.

With this shift in orientation, other previously secondary issues move to the forefront of social theorizing. If meaning is produced through stylistic and interpretive strategies and through diverse "meta-commitments" (e.g., metaphorical, metatheoretical and metaphysical), to focus on the form of discourse also raises the question of how we, as readers and researchers, come to understand a text, or even an event. As Buck-Morss' quotation indicates, the experience of understanding a text or a work of art is of primary interest. To focus our attention on the experiential dimension of understanding is also to raise aesthetic questions. As readers, what do we mean when we claim to understand a text? If to know and understand a discourse is to know its tradition, what occurs when we no longer can maintain or discern a tradition? How is the experience of understanding, for example a Marxist text, related to its form of expression, and how is it related to the reader's own commitments and pre-understanding? As writers or social scientists, how do we construct or produce a communicable meaning? What codes do we employ, and what genres do we choose to commit ourselves to? What conventions do we choose to follow and which ones do we reject?

These questions refer primarily to problems of style and interpretations. They also point to the active and productive role of the writer, the reader and the interpreter.

In other words, they destabilize the social scientist as subject and originator of interpretations. The form of the narrative, or how something means, becomes a focal point, as does the reader of the text. It is above all through the discourses of hermeneutics, critical theory and post-structuralism that these questions have been addressed, but there are several other theoretical "positions" which can be invoked to support this interpretive and aesthetic tendency.[53]

VIII

The aesthetic and interpretive turn in political theory is also encouraged by the present lack of consensus among political scientists concerning the scope and character of their discipline. The confusion makes for peculiar pluralism built not so much on academic freedom and tolerance as on a widespread disorientation which by default allows for intellectual innovations and reformulations. If what the discipline presents as science is periodically exposed (by other interpretations) as ideology--which, empirically speaking, appears to be the case--then the objectivistic or scientistic claim will lose its authority and, at best, be reduced to one interpretation among many.

In an essay titled "Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of

Social Thought," Clifford Geertz discusses this theoretical development--both the lack of consensus and the interpretive emphasis--in the social sciences. He sees a large number of new tropes and "images of imagination" and an increasing "amount of genre mixing" in social science narratives. Forms of thought are being created that imply a different self-understanding and a new politics of explanation: "...the casting of social theory in terms more familiar to gamesters and aestheticians than to plumbers and engineers is clearly well under way. The recourse to the humanities for explanatory analogies in the social sciences is at once evidence of the destabilization of genres and of the rise of 'the interpretive turn,' and their most visible outcome is a revised style of discourse in social studies."[54] It would be a mistake to call this "revised style" a change of approach or method; even "paradigm shift" does not accurately capture the implications of an interpretive orientation in social theory. A hermeneutically grounded social science transcends both method and paradigm in its attempt to make sense of not only how we come to understand something, whether a social institution, a political event or a philosophical text, but also how this sense is synchronically and diachronically (structurally and historically) constituted in discourse. To put it slightly differently: interpretive theory, or philosophical hermeneutics, tries to expose and analyze what is usually

assumed to be given and unproblematic in a situation or text. We always arrive at a problem or issue with, or within, a pre-understanding, and with an implicit bias or perspective. (This holds for hermeneutics and interpretive theory as well.) The subject matter contains its own pre-understanding, its own "horizon," which is normally not made explicit or treated as a problem. In short, what we study or try to understand is "always already" constituted and interpreted. And so are we as social scientists, readers and interpreters.

An interpretive social theory thus attempts to investigate the inevitable commitments underlying and constituting all paradigms, approaches and methods. This focus on pre-understanding and what we take for granted in political inquiry places interpretive theory "outside" (but not above) political science as a discipline. Disciplines, as well as methodologies and paradigms, are rooted in conventions, and once they are revealed as conventional, they lose part of their assumed force and validity, and we can no longer concur that the disciplinary boundaries are the most appropriate organizing regulations for social and political discourse.

With this opening up of the various social science disciplines, the interpretive understanding reveals its affinity with art, literature and drama. For Geertz it is not a coincidence that "social reality" from an interpretive perspective is so often viewed as a text to be read,

experienced and understood, rather than as a physical machine to be observed, described and manipulated.

> The great virtue of the extension of the notion of text beyond things written on paper or carved into stone is that it trains attention on precisely this phenomenon: on how the inscription of action is brought about, what its vehicles are and how they work, and on what the fixation of meaning from the flow of events--history from what happened, thought from thinking, culture from behavior--implies for sociological interpretation. To see social institutions, social customs, social changes as in some sense "readable" is to alter our whole sense of what such interpretation is toward modes of thought rather more familiar to the translator, the exegete, or the iconographer than to the test giver, the factor analyst, or the pollster.[55]

The social scientist as much as the artist is involved, albeit with different tools and materials, in creating, constructing, expressing and judging. And as the artist, he can choose his style, genre and subject. Writing becomes, among other things, a matter of upholding and perfecting conventions, or undermining and breaking them. Or, which is more to the point, upholding some and breaking others. The choice is, if not political, contextual and temperamental.

Given these conditions and given the lack of consensus on what constitutes social science, to make room for as many styles and modes of expression as possible seems to be the only viable conclusion. Relativism and nihilism beckon, but each work, style and discourse contain its own criteria. Often enough, however, the criterion itself is questioned and changed by what it tries to judge, and should not be

conceived as formalistic or static. The very act of interpretation involves evaluation--an evaluation that must be open to that which it interprets, and which should be viewed more as an integral element of the process of understanding than as a final verdict as to the "correctness" and "scientific status" of the work under scrutiny.[56] No universal principles or rules can be formulated and applied in this context. The space between a particular interpretation and its subject matter, and the tension between the two, are ambiguous and should be treated as issues rather than formalized according to rules.

Let me stress again that by granting a creative and interpretive role for the social scientist we do not invite subjectivism and arbitrariness. The so-called purely subjective element (whatever that might mean) is, for all practical purposes, the least interesting aspect of works of art and social science literature. The "interpretive turn" moves in the opposite direction of subjectivism. The attempt to understand a social event or a text can be seen as a form of dialogue or "dialectic" which inspires a logic of its own, very different from a subjective or whimsical attitude. The images of game and play are often invoked to describe what occurs in this process. The rules of a game are independent of the players, and set the limits for their actions and moves. The players become secondary to the game itself; they are in a sense "lost" in the game. Gadamer: "...the very fascination of the game for the playing

consciousness roots precisely in its being taken up into a movement that has its own dynamic. The game is underway when the individual player participates in full earnest, that is, when he no longer holds himself back as one who is merely playing, for whom it is not serious."[57] "Play is more than consciousness of the player; and so it is more than a subjective attitude. Language is more than the consciousness of the speaker; so it, too, is more than a subjective attitude."[58] The same can thus be said of the personal dialogue: "When one enters into dialogue with another person and then is carried along further by the dialogue, it is no longer the will of the individual person, holding itself back or exposing itself, that is determinative. Rather, the law of the subject matter is at issue in dialogue and elicits statement and counterstatement and in the end plays them into each other."[59] The game, the dialogue and the interpretive situation are all three analogous in that they carry the participants beyond subjectivity and personal whim. And it is also within these configurations that we identify errors, deceptions, manipulations and misunderstandings and hence, in the process, "judge" the various performances.

More important for my purpose, however, is the questioning and discrediting of established ways of seeing that follow in the wake of the interpretive shift. To be aware that knowledge can never be free from commitments and

prejudices is to expose "the objectivistic illusion" - "that there can be perception without a perspective from which perception takes place" - underlying so much of mainstream social science. The faith in the value-neutrality of one's approach only means that one has not problematized or questioned one's own pre-understanding and assumptions, or, in other words, that "one has no categories with which to recognize that perspective."[60]

When Geertz, in his Negara, uses the metaphors of theatre and drama in order to interpret politics in nineteenth-century Bali, one purpose is to undermine our conventional understandings of power and politics, and show how limited and partial an objectivistic perspective is. In the concluding chapter he argues that our accepted view of politics is just that: "...a view, and, like all views, it is partial and grows out of a specific tradition of interpretation of historical experience. It is not given in the sheer nature of things (...), a brute fact brutely apprehended, but it is extended, socially constructed gloss, a collective representation. Other traditions of interpretation, usually less self-conscious, produce other glosses, different representations."[61] The code determines what we will discover in "reality"; ideas and reality are inseparable. "A structure of action, now bloody, now ceremonious, the negara was also, and as such, a structure of thought. To describe it is to describe a constellation of enshrined ideas."[62]

Images and ideas are for Geertz not "unobservable mental stuff"; they are as "real" as facts, and are embedded in a form of life, and, like facts, can only be grasped contextually. He calls ideas "envehicled meanings"--symbols and signs that signify something--and the meanings can be understood and communicated. "Arguments, melodies, formulas, maps, and pictures are not idealities to be stared at but texts to be read; so are rituals, palaces, technologies, and social formations."[63] Once again we return to the inevitability of interpretive and creative understanding. Social and political inquiry is, to continue the metaphor, a reading, whose product usually is a writing that we can call a determined construction--determined, for example, by the purpose of the study, by what it studies and how, and by the unavoidable prejudices and idiom of the interpreter's context and discourse. It is a construction for similar reasons, paradoxical as it may seem: with the tools of his craft--code, style, methods, etc.--the social scientist constructs a communicable meaning.[64] (The emphasis on "communicable" and "determined" should prevent us from confusing construction with subjectivity.)[65] From this perspective, the conventional distinctions between facts and values, explanation and understanding, data and interpretation of data, if not break down, at least lose their significance and interest. As Geertz concludes: "The real is as imagined as the imaginary."[66]

There are then, from an interpretive angle, no solid or absolute boundaries between social science, philosophy and art. Boundaries are all interpretations and creations in themselves, and need to be interpreted and understood in their turn. Not that this common grounding makes every political science treatise a work of art, or each painting a political statement--far from it--(although there might be more truth in this than is apparent). Each discipline, or mode of thought, has its own internal development, history and rationale, and each genre contains its own body of knowledge. Nevertheless, the interpretive foundation has important consequences for the self-understanding and orientation of the social sciences. For now, we just want to keep in mind that the differences between the disciplines are conventional, rooted of course in history, tradition and "institutions of learning," but nevertheless based on rather arbitrary and breakable rules and commitments--rules without any epistemological justification other than another set of rules and conventions. Interpretation is, so to speak, prior to epistemology; and the latter often translates into a deeply entrenched, institutionalized (hence political) practice.

The persistent efforts to define loudly and rigidly the legitimate methods and scope of a discipline must therefore be regarded as attempts to monopolize knowledge according to one set of rules and exclude all others. This is also why the self-understanding of the human sciences is not just an

academic question. The politics of knowledge concerns and reflects the community as a whole, and should not be treated as merely a disagreement over methodologies or "scientific approaches."

IX

If hermeneutics reveals the committed character of all knowledge, then the nature of this commitment in political discourse becomes an issue worthy of the attention of political science. It turns out that an investigation into the philosophical or theoretical prejudices of a political inquiry is itself always an interpretation. Even what the terms "theoretical" and "philosophical" mean are ambiguous and contextual. They can, for example, mean the "metatheoretical" and epistemological underpinnings implicit in a text. If we very briefly return to Robert Dahl's already quoted study, there seems to emerge a bias in favor of an empirical correspondence theory of truth: the "facts" are not interrogated; they are not treated as particularly problematical or ambiguous. It is more a question of how to get to the data, and what we can generalize from them, not how they are constituted or created. Correlations and predictions are characteristic expressions in Dahl's narrative. In fact, often the reader gets the impression

that the entire purpose of political analysis is to predict and to correlate. A typical paragraph:

> Thus the political conflicts of the turbulent decade beginning in 1964 coincided with a rapid increase in the average voter's level of education. The combined effect was to increase the prevalence of ideological thinking among the electorate. Although the intensity of conflict temporarily declined after the resignation of President Nixon in 1974, the level of education continued to rise. Thus there is ground for believing that American political life will continue to display more ideological thinking in the future than it did before 1964.[67]

Whatever the "truth" of these assertions, objective they are not, nor can they in any meaningful sense be said to "correspond" to "reality." However we interpret Dahl's epistemology, our investigation would have to confront the code that underlies the narrative. Which categories are frozen, and therefore give the impression of being "descriptive"? Which ones are treated as controversial and politicized? How do these categories operate within the text as a whole? What metaphorical social science "model" is assumed in Dahl's prose? In the above passage, the discussion of "ideological thinking," for example, indicates that Dahl is committed to the belief that the electorate can (and does) actually display non-ideological thinking about politics; an assumption which, from a hermeneutical standpoint, is questionalbe and in itself an ideological problem. And what is presupposed in the correlation between "levels of education," a "turbulent decade" and "ideological

thinking"? Even if supported by "opinion polls"--which themselves involve presuppositions and contextual commitments--can something as interpretive and, yes, fictional as a turbulent decade ever be "validated" or "verified" or "correlated" without introducing a whole range of "essentially contestable" problems? And how can we decide whether "the electorate" displayed more or less "ideological thinking" under the Nixon administration as compared with the Carter reign? Are people more ideological under Reagan than they were under Johnson? Dahl expounds correlations and predictions that are only meaningful as part of his own narrative and can only be verified within the genre and model to which he is committed. Seen from a different perspective and discussed within a different genre, Dahl's findings can easily be shown to be both trivial and ideological, and based on highly dubious commitments to very narrow conceptions of, for example, "turbulence," "education," and "thinking." Are we better educated because we attain higher levels of institutionalized education? The Ivan Illiches and Paolo Freires of the world would not think so.

We can of course also take "philosophical" to mean the "worldview" or the political philosophy implied in the analysis. In Dahl's case then, perhaps it is possible to argue that there is an acceptance of "the given." The rules of the established game of politics are not politicized, nor

seen as containing a built-in bias in favor of specific interests controlling or manipulating political "reality." That this might end up as a "philosophical" pledge to the status quo might be true, but not very significant. The political commitments of a political theorist are often the most obvious, and therefore the least interesting.

Instead, more important for my purpose, and pertaining to the problem of style, is the fact that it is easy to draw the conclusion that Dahl's neutralized, elaborately non-committal prose obscures and trivializes as much as it explains and describes. This problem, however, can hardly be called political or philosophical, but should rather be seen as having to do with the aesthetic dimension. At the same time, it illustrates the difficulty in separating aesthetic questions from the more philosophical or political ones. Also: an investigation into the philosophical or theoretical prejudices of a political inquiry is itself always an interpretation. Whether one should label an interpretation aesthetic, philosophical or political is a matter of orientation and emphasis within the discourse, and often enough--I think to an increasing degree--the genres do blur.

What "goes on" in, for example, Edmund Wilson's study of the revolutionary and socialist tradition in Europe, To the Finland Station, is worth contemplating. Its first paragraph reads:

> One day in the January of 1824, a young French professor named Jules Michelet, who was teaching philosophy and history, found the name Giovanni Vico in a translator's note to a book he was reading. The reference to Vico interested him so much that he immediately set out to learn Italian.[68]

And a subsequent page:

> From the collision of Michelet's mind with Vico's, it is hardly too much to say that a whole new philosophical-artistic world was born: the world of re-created social history.[69]

This is the stage setting of Wilson's political and historical drama; a drama that combines several genres and takes us through numerous strategies of interpretation. Beyond the most common-sensical accuracy, this work of biography, history and political theory is unverifiable, empirically speaking. But even if we can imagine the idea of "empirical reality" is there much to be gained by using "it" as criterion for an evaluation of Wilson's "story"? For a story it is, and as such, a construction, a work of fiction (within a genre we sometimes refer to as "non-fiction"). Perhaps it would be misleading to say that the characters are fictitious; they are the well-known entourage of the historical figures of socialism. But how Wilson uses them, i.e., how he interprets and makes use of their so-called "lives" and their writings, is a "determined construction." There is no doubt that he imposes his chosen form on every chapter and on each character in the book. His "collision" of Vico's and Michelet's minds is typical.

It is, of course, true that Michelet read Vico, and was influenced by the latter's writings on history, but that is merely background material for Wilson's narrative.

As the subtitle--"A Study in the Writing and Acting of History"--indicates, his primary concern (one could maybe call it "structural plot"), is how we produce and are reproduced by history. How history creates man, and how man can shape his own destiny are the central questions throughout the book and also the monumental issues for the protagonists themselves. Of Michelet, Wilson writes: "he worked at night, and made the centuries of the dead keep him company and lend him their strength and their faith that he might wake strength and faith in the living."[70] And he concludes with the following remark on Michelet's History of France: "There is no book that makes us feel when we have finished it that we have lived through and known with such intimacy so many generations of men. And it makes us feel something more: that we ourselves are the last chapter of the story and that the next chapter is for us to create."[71] Wilson's interest in the writing of history also leads to the problem of the reading of history, and he repeatedly reflects on the impact of the books on the readers. Sometimes he comments on the social and political influence of a writer and the problem of the latter's dependency upon a "reading public," as in the case of Marx and Engels:

> There are several reasons why Marx and Engels have been inadequately appreciated as writers. Certainly one is that their conclusions ran counter to the interests of the classes who read most and who create the reputations of writers. The tendency to boycott Marx and Engels on the part of literary historians as well as on the part of economists has given a striking corroboration of their theory of the influence of class upon culture.[72]

At other times, Wilson emphasizes the stylistic dimension: "Renan's style, so much admired in its day, shows certain definite signs of decadence. ...Compared to the language of Michelet, with its tightness, its vigor, its vibrations of excitement, Renan's prose is pale; it lacks relief. If we read him for long at a sitting, the sense blurs and he puts us to sleep."[73] Wilson gives Hippolyte-Adolphe Taine a modern characterization: "By Taine's time, the amassment of facts for their own sake was coming to be regarded as one of the proper functions of history; and Taine was always emphasizing the scientific value of the 'little significant fact.'"[74]

> Taine had perfected one of the great modern mechanical styles. His books have the indefatigable exactitude, the monotonous force, of machinery; and, for all his gifts of sympathetic intelligence and the doubts with which he was sometimes troubled on certain tendencies of his contemporary world, he is rarely shaken out of the cocksure and priggish tone, the comfortable conviction of solidity, of the bourgeois whom the machine is making rich.[75]

Even the Dialectic itself receives an aesthetic treatment in Wilson's hands:

> One's attitude toward this sort of thinking is naturally determined by one's appetite for pure metaphysics. To anyone who has always found it difficult to feel the inevitability of any metaphysical system and who tends to regard metaphysics in general as the poetry of imaginative people who think in abstractions instead of in images, the conceptions of the dialectical materialists recommend themselves only moderately. They do provide a dramatic formula for the dynamics of certain social changes; but they are obviously impossible to apply to others.[76]

All these quotes illustrate Wilson's various uses of matters of style, but they also show how his concern has implications beyond aesthetics. The very terms "style" and "aesthetics" are insufficient to capture what is at issue here. As with genres, substance and style blur. But the aesthetic dimension does more than blend with the content; it structures the latter, and is, from hermeneutical and structuralist viewpoints, the crucial link in any theory of knowledge and meaning. Wilson's orientation towards style does not remove us from content; on the contrary, it penetrates the content in a way that an empirical analysis of "the facts" could not. To try to distinguish what is empirical and what is normative in these quotes (or in the book) is to impoverish their meaning. Such an attempt fails to see how the empirical is already normative; it does not recognize or worry about its own commitments.

Wilson is not writing an objective analysis of socialist thought (the very expression contains a scientistic prejudice), nor a description of the different prose styles of socialist writings, nor a collection of brief

biographies. His biographical segments are constructed to support his structural theme--the human writing and acting of history. The stylistic focus--the modernist reading of the works--is never a purely aesthetic concern; it is always related to politics and history. Taine's scientism, for example, is "mirrored" in his mechanical style, which for Wilson reveals a "middle-class moral flatness" and he views this as being the product of a self-confident, so far unchallenged, bourgeois class. And we have earlier seen how Marx's Das Kapital owes its power to stylistic strategies, and how the endeavor to sort out what is "scientific" in Marx is itself determined by interpretive strategies which are stylistic and rhetorical in nature, with political undertones.

It is Wilson's theme of historical writing and acting that provides the organizing metaphor for the entire study, and it gives the larger meaning even to the aesthetic arguments. As history progresses in Wilson's interpretation, as the reader works through the dramatis personae, he becomes aware that Wilson is taking his story to the point where the acting and writing of history merge, i.e., to Lenin's arrival at the Finland station in the then St. Petersburg, and that the narrative is structured to logically lead up to this situation. Lenin and Trotsky are the concluding actors of history in Wilson's book, written as it was in the late thirties, and they are the ones to

"act out" the Marxist principles. As political actor, Lenin is concerned with results and to Wilson this is reflected in the former's writings which "show to what degree he is indifferent to literary form. He is simply a man who wants to convince. His expression has an aspect of austerity: he detested all kinds of rhetoric and used to castigate the jargon of the Left... What renders his writings impressive is simply the staunchness, the sincerity, the force, that make themselves felt behind them."[77] This strength through force and simplicity, however, has theoretical implications, as have Lenin's practical goals: "...his real aim is not to justify theoretically the policy that he feels is the right one, but simply to make people pursue it. The theoretical side of Lenin is, in a sense, not serious; it is the instinct for dealing with the reality of the definite political situation which attains in him the point of genius."[78] To be, in Hegel's phrase, an "historical individual" has its price, at least according to Wilson. Theory and practice do not coincide without tension: political activism, theory subordinated to action, seems to invite deception and manipulation. The writing and acting of history--although rarely completely distinguishable: writing is a form of action; action involves speech and writing--at the moment when it appears as if they could join forces through Lenin and Trotsky, remain in conflict. Wilson objects to Trotsky's failure to develop an adequate ethics; that is, Trotsky fails to show to what extent our

notion of good and evil are universal and to what extent they are determined by class: "But it could perhaps never really be developed by anyone who, as Trotsky is, was trying to fight the class struggle himself. The shell of party polemics, that convention which is in itself an abrogation of peacetime relations and an obstacle to serious discussion, interposes itself here between Trotsky and the real problems at issue."[79] Here, an argument over "substance" contains a stylistic core, and simultaneously ties in with Wilson's overall historical theme.

Regardless of how we finally judge the quality of Wilson's interpretation of the revolutionary tradition, it is debatable whether much would be gained by adjudicating its "correctness" or by evaluating its "empirical content" apart from its "normative" aspects. Nor is it particularly relevant to ask to what extent the study corresponds to some notion or other of Marxist orthodoxy. An interpretive understanding of a work such as Wilson's does not involve questions of correspondence, whether to "reality" or to other theories. Hermeneutics teaches us instead to inquire whether the work as a whole (or, for that matter, any of its parts) has impoverished or enriched our understanding of the subject matter;[80] or simply, what kind of meaning and interpretation the book produces in the reader. Being already a minor classic both in the American literary tradition and in the large genre of critical socialist literature, To the

Finland Station, one would assume, adds to and enriches our understanding of the two traditions. Beyond that, it depends on the context or purpose of the reader (critic, social scientist) how it will be used. The book is not a copy of reality, "a second version"; it is an addition to the world. Like a work of art or literature, it, too, has a "clear cognitive function" beyond imitation; it claims a "truth," a meaning, which is multifaceted and irreducible.[81]

X

In hermeneutics, a text "speaks" to the reader and draws him or her into a dialogue, an interpretive situation; an event which for the reader can hardly be described as the comprehending of a fixed meaning between the covers of the book. The meaning overflows. The event-like character of interpretation--understanding as an episode--is often emphasized in hermeneutics and critical theory, and has a practical consequence: we are partially "taken in" by the work; it affects us and it has significance for us. Simultaneously, we only understand from within our previous experience, knowledge and perspective. Two open "horizons" fuse, to use an expression from hermeneutical discourse. Interpretation is in effect a form of practice, a process which is context-bound but which also puts this context in a new light. A text, a political event and a work of art are

not qualitatively different in this respect: they are interpreted when they are understood (or vice versa), they are only understood from a (partial and prejudiced) perspective, and they do not leave the interpreter/reader unaffected.

The interpretation that is the outcome of such a process can obviously not be designated objective or disinterested. What we see and hear, and what we open ourselves up to, depend upon a host of factors, some of which are, e.g., the purpose of the investigation or study, our presuppositions and pre-understanding, our previous experience, what we accept as given and unproblematic (what we "freeze"), and which aspects we want to interrogate--all manifesting themselves in and through the style and idiom that express the interpretation. These commitments prejudice the interpretation in specific directions, and make understanding an active, event-like process. "We cannot understand without wanting to understand, that is, without wanting to let something be said."[82] The act of interpretation is for hermeneutics a form of self-understanding and contains an important "experiential" component, not through self-contemplation or "introspection," but through the encounter with that which confronts us in what we try to come to terms with. Often, and especially with regard to works of art, this meeting of perspectives is characterized as a contrast between

familiarity and strangeness, similarity and difference. Philosophical hermeneutics places this encounter at the very foundation of all understanding.[83]

The tension and potential conflict inherent in this clash with the unfamiliar is the hub of the interpretive wheel, and gives us a clue to why "event" is an acceptable trope to use. There is nothing neutral or unambiguous about this event. We select what we "need"--we ask specific questions from the object or topic under consideration[84]--and we only let certain aspects of what we study speak to us (as I have done throughout these pages). Commitments are everywhere; there is, for example, an ideological foundation to how we constitute the very activities of reading and writing. To problematize our assumptions concerning these practices is to politicize an otherwise neutralized convention. Or as Barthes formulates it: "Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between its author and its reader."[85] Simply by raising the issue in these terms, Barthes is political. But only to the reader already accustomed to considering categories such as "producer," "institution" and "owner" as politically implicated. This depends on which conventions the reader adheres to, or is familiar with (or better: what conventions hold the reader). A reading (or interpretation) can be brought into any number of situations and contexts. What we

refer to as "an objective reading" only means that the reader follows well established, institutionalized conventions and chooses not to scrutinize his own perspective. Consequently, a "subjective" reading is meaningful only within a frame of reference that includes objectivity as a category, and there "subjective" usually implies personal, free, open, loose, or arbitrary--all of which are questionable terms once we step outside the conventional opposition between objectivity and subjectivity. "Reading involves risks of objectivity and subjectivity (both are imaginary) only insofar as we define the text as an expressive object (presented for our own expression), sublimated under a morality of truth, in one instance laxist; in the other, ascetic."[86]

Whether a conventional commitment of this kind (to objectivity and subjectivity) should be called ideological, normative, cultural, or whatever is also a problem of context. In political discourse, which is our main concern here, "ideological" is often used to describe both conventions with hidden or neutralized political content, as well as "truths" whose conventional or political foundation has been forgotten or ignored. Since from an interpretive perspective there can be be no such thing as a strict non-ideological discourse about politics, to "hermeneutically" understand political discourse is not so much a matter of turning ideological into nonideological discourse, as it is

a question of exposing, discussing and appreciating how ideological discourse works and affects the reader-interpreter, and the ways and means of producing such discourse. There are of course limitless alternative ways to perform such an analysis or type of interpretation, and no one set of rules or one method can be formulated to include the wide range of possible choices.

We can, for example, speak of "critique of ideology" as being one possible general practice of "the interpretive act." This rather inclusive attitude or approach makes interpretation "an exercise of suspicion," and it has been said that the three great masters of this activity are Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.[87] From this vantage point things are not what they appear to be: language hides meaning, desires distort, and the present status quo is a cover-up underneath which lurks injustice and domination. Discourse, in other words, needs to be deciphered, demythologized and de-mystified. Perhaps one can summarize this common interpretive strategy as one of iconoclasm; it is an attack on established beliefs and generally accepted doctrines.

The goal of ideology critique is to uncover illusions, expose gullibility and naivete, draw attention to conventions and codes, reveal "inadequacies" in the established state of affairs, and so on. All of these attitudes can be seen as part of the interpretive act and are particularly relevant for social and political theory, where criticism is an integral moment of the discourse, and, from what I have

argued previously, these critical activities can be said to expose ideological commitments and frozen conventions. The reason why this interpretive posture--it is more of an attitude or posture than a methodology--should not be called objective or neutral is that the product of this attitude is also a code; it, too, is a perspective with its own (ideological) conventions and structures. For one thing, the "suspicious" and "iconoclastic" approach of ideology critique assumes that there is something to be discovered "behind" appearances; a presupposition which itself can be scrutinized and called into question, as, for example, Foucault and Barthes have done rather convincingly. Notwithstanding that a critical perspective can reflect on its own commitments, it can never free itself from entanglements in discursive practices, forms of life and contexts. But at the same time, and as I will argue below, a critical political theory can invite its own decoding and encourage a "deconstructive" attitude.

Criticism can therefore never claim to be merely criticizing; it is also asserting a position and creating a "positive" meaning, even if the style, tone and content are "negative." A critique is based on a prior understanding, whether superficial or profound, of what is being criticized, and this pre-understanding underlies and structures the critique. A critical superstructure always rests upon and is, in the last instance, determined by an interpretive base.

There is at the opposite pole from a critical posture another sentiment, equally common and necessary for an interpretive social theory. Instead of an "exercise of suspicion," interpretation is here a (re)discovery and restoration of meaning. Instead of iconoclasm we have an appreciation of the icon, and in the interpretive product what we, with Francois Dagognet, can call "an iconic augmentation."[88] Here we attempt to understand in order, not to criticize and undermine, but to learn and see more, to gain a new and different understanding. This attitude acknowledges that to understand a text the reader needs to change and adjust his values; the text demands that the reader listen to what it says, and judgment and criticism of the work become secondary. It is actually the reader who is being scrutinized. Can I as interpreter (or social scientist) understand what is being said or what is happening; can I "open up" sufficiently to let the text or the event speak to me?

Within political theory this attitude is often operating with regard to "the tradition" or "the classics." The past masters, it is alleged, are authorities who stand on their own, and it is our loss if we choose not to understand. Hence, we have to make the effort to restore their "timeless" meaning and significance. Recognized works of art have a similar relationship to the interpreter: it is on the latter's shoulders that the burden lies. Art demands

something from us; if we cannot understand, we must change our perspective. "The intimacy with which the work of art touches us is at the same time, in enigmatic fashion, a shattering and a demolition of the familiar. It is not only the 'this art thou!' disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us; 'Thou must alter thy life!'"[89] An art work, a classical philosophical text and a historical narrative assert themselves over and above our own values. "It is part of the elementary experience of philosophy that when we try to understand the classics of philosophical thought, they posit, of themselves, a claim to truth that the contemporary consciousness can neither reject nor transcend. ... That truth is experienced through a work of art that we cannot attain in any other way constitutes the philosophical importance of art, which asserts itself against all reasoning."[90]

In principle, all human expressions (including social and political events) that hold our attention and interest can be said to demand this willingness to understand what is not within our own context or "horizon"--what is not familiar. Nevertheless, even this seemingly self-effacing procedure contains a perspective and occurs within a context. Even the most open-minded understanding is, in Gadamer's term, prejudiced, and therefore we find, as in the case of the critical posture, an interpretive base at the heart of every restoration of meaning. For hermeneutics

there can be neither "pure" understanding nor "pure" criticism. Neither a critical nor an appreciative procedure can do without normative (ideological) commitments and implicit judgments.

Let us return briefly to Wilson's To the Finland Station. In the following passage Wilson is discussing Marx's relation to the working-class and the polemical portrayal of the bourgeoisie in so much of his writings.

> Marx was not among those working-class leaders who have merged themselves with working-class life. He himself had had no experience of modern industry; it was from Engels and the parliamentary blue-books that he had accumulated his mountains of data. And if he exposes the dark depths of the industrial system, it is less to move us to fellow-feeling with the workers than to destroy the human aspect of their masters. The bourgeoisie, in Karl Marx's writings, are created mainly in caricature; and the proletariat figure mainly as their crimes. There is in Marx an irreducible discrepancy between the good which he proposes for humanity and the ruthlessness and hatred he inculcates as a means of arriving at this - a discrepancy which, in the history of Marxism, has given rise to much moral confusion.[91]

Beyond doubt a controversial and ambiguous statement. It would be impossible "neutrally" to evaluate and decipher what Wilson is saying here. What we take the passage to mean is dependent on our previous commitments and interests, and a whole range of possibilities is available. For the moment, however, we are interested in its interpretive mode.

Above, I tried to illustrate how the empirical and the normative dimensions of political narratives become indistinguishable once we pay attention to the aesthetic and

stylistic use of codes or idioms, and how the code itself structures the meaning of the text. Now we can see how a critical posture blurs with a restoration of meaning, and how both these interpretive modes are grounded in a perspective. (What Barthes said of literature, "...once the explanation is fixed in a work, it immediately becomes an ambiguous product of the real, to which it is linked by perspective;..."[92] is true of political writings as well.) In these quoted sentences, Wilson is restoring or recovering an element of Marx's writings--the rhetorical use of the protagonists in the class struggle--and he is (implicitly or explicitly?) criticizing Marxists for their use of this polemical strategy. The passage has an unmistakable ideological edge, and it is a comment on the ideological use of an interpretive trick--the caricaturing and the use of extreme opposites--by Marx and his followers.

Restoration of meaning and criticism function as normative, interpretive devices--commitments--within the same sentences. There is no point (and no way) to try to separate the critique from the appreciation; they are both part of the same polemical meaning. Why polemical? Because it is a question of perspective: we can only restore meaning from a position, and we cannot criticize without a platform; platform here meaning something to stand on, not a program.

XI

In most social science literature, the writer's commitments are not articulated or made problematic by the writer himself, and where they are stated, there is no guarantee that this declaration is actually the most appropriate formulation of the perspective that informs the text itself. Only an investigation into the structure and aesthetics of the text's interpretive mode and strategies can decide whether a writer has carried out his intentions and succeeded within the stated purpose and approach, and more importantly, whether the text "works" regardless of the writer's claims. With respect to this problem of a text's perspective, I want to make three tentative and general observations that are compatible with both hermeneutics and so-called post-structuralism.

First, a multiplicity of interpretations is possible: there are always several available meanings of a text's structure and interpretive mode, if for no other reason than that the text can be put into numerous contexts, each of which will furnish a different meaning. This is of course not to argue that we can read any perspective or meaning we like into (or out of) a text or political event; on the contrary, we are ourselves restricted by the text's conventions and structures, and by our own expectations and

context--whether this context is a scientific or interpretive community, or a firmly held political ideology. Whatever conventions and commitments hold us, they will determine how we designate a text's meaning, including its interpretive mode.[93]

Second, the "prejudiced" foundation of any interpretive understanding is not limited to a narrow political commitment. If it was only a question of conventional left-right politics, the argument concerning interpretive commitments would be too obvious and not particularly penetrating. In Edmund Wilson's case, then, we would only have to determine where he stands politically in relation to various Marxisms, which might be difficult enough, but this would tell us nothing about the quality of his work, nor inform us of its interpretive and stylistic strategies. A more promising course is to turn instead to aesthetic and linguistic issues, and attempt to uncover the use of codes, the structure of the narrative, organizing metaphors or tropes, and so on. In other words, to expose the way the story is told, how the narrative unfolds. How is the meaning constructed? What narrative conventions does the work adhere to, and in which genre and discourse is it located? What conventions are undermined and which genre is destabilized? These questions have political implications without being concerned with political "positions." For example, by viewing Marx's writings from a stylistic perspective, by showing how Marx employs aesthetic and

rhetorical means to constitute his case, Wilson places himself outside orthodox and scientific Marxism, since this tradition does not regard style as a legitimate issue. By treating Das Kapital as an epic, Wilson is breaking a taboo of the Marxist purist: the politics of the scientistic Marxist code excludes aesthetic discourse.[94]

Third, the interpretive commitments structuring and determining an analysis or investigation cannot be convincingly separated from what we conventionally refer to as content. There is, however, a tendency to misunderstand the interest in form, style and language as having little to do with what a theory or narrative is about. It is alleged that a concern with the aesthetic dimension of social and political knowledge does not touch the primary tasks of social science: namely, to describe social reality empirically, to predict future events accurately, to solve problems instrumentally, and to develop laws and generalizations of social and political behavior. Marxists, on the other hand, sometimes assert that an aesthetic concern is not sufficiently practice-oriented, that it is a typical bourgeois interest, if not downright decadent. Nevertheless, it is the thrust of a critical hermeneutics (and of post-structuralism) that an aesthetics of social theory has implications beyond our conventional notions of style and form, and that an analysis of codes and interpretive commitments does not leave "the content" intact.

Above, I tried to show how Edmund Wilson's form of analysis--his aesthetics--makes the reader aware of this interdependency between the form (the how) and the content (the what) of a political theory. I also suggested that the Marxist code is a basic clue to a critique of orthodox Marxism, and that Robert Dahl's style is part of his epistemological position. The claim being made here is not just that the code, or the style, is one factor amongst many contributing to the content, but that the code <u>is</u> the structure of the content. The assertion is that the style and the interpretive commitments demonstrate how a text or an event is constituted. Only through an awareness of how and in what direction the style prejudices the meaning can we know "what" is being said. In this process it is the conventional and interpretive foundation of understanding that is at the center of our analysis. Ricoeur: "It is necessary to have gone as far as possible along the route of objectification, to the point whare structural analysis discloses the <u>depth semantics</u> of a text, before one can claim to 'understand' the text in terms of the 'matter' which speaks therefrom. The <u>matter</u> of the text is not what a naive reading of the text reveals, but what the formal arrangement of the text mediates."[95] All meaning, from this angle, is structural and "formal." We can only understand a content or a matter through a structure of conventions. Even the most inspired and unconventional content gains its meaning through a form or structure.[96] But it is also true,

and most familiar in art and literature, that established forms and genres are perpetually being questioned and made to transform themselves--in the 20th century often by self-consciously drawing attention to the work's own conventions --and that there is in original art a dimension that seems to elude a structural treatment. And certainly, the experience of understanding--again, maybe most familiar in relation to works of art--has something much more integrated about it (integrated with regard to the senses) than an exclusive preoccupation with style and language. But, in whatever manner this experience should be characterized--a paradoxical task: it, too, would have to be constituted in and through language--it can only be approached once the code has been thoroughly penetrated.

When we reflect on the interpretive commitments and the style of, let us say, a political theory, it is difficult not to draw the conclusion that the distinction between form and content is another conventional rule that an aesthetic analysis will undermine. Without underestimating the historical and theoretical reasons for the analytical opposition between form and content, once the latter disappears into a concern with style and aesthetics, then the meaning of form dissolves as well. It is not easy to decide, for example, whether terms like plot, theme, pre-supposition, interpretive structure and rhetorical device refer to form or content, style or matter. All these

categories are ambiguous in their reference to both stylistic and substantive qualities. What seems to be true of essence and appearance--that once we stop believing in essences, appearances are equally implausible[97]--is also true of form and content: when the content is shown to be "grounded" in conventions and dependent on codes with a rhetorical prejudice, then the notion of form disintegrates, and we are left with various discourses or, what we can call, genres of interpretation. There is within each discourse a "politics of interpretation" which is simultaneously an "aesthetics of interpretation." In the tradition of political theory (and political science) we might label this a politics of political interpretation, or an aesthetics of political discourse.

PART II

INTERPRETING THE TRADITION

> When we seek to make sense of such problematical topics as human nature, culture, society, and history, we never say precisely what we wish to say or mean precisely what we say. Our discourse always tends to slip away from our data towards the structures of consciousness with which we are trying to grasp them; or, what amounts to the same thing, the data always resist the coherency of the image which we are trying to fashion of them.
>
> (Hayden White)

To try to spell out what the aesthetics and politics of political discourse amount to is a confusing and elusive task. The strategy employed here will be to illustrate, through a discussion of specific political theorists, a few of the issues involved. It turns out that the question of what constitutes the appropriate subject matter of political theory looms large in the literature of this quite diffuse field, and it shows no signs of diminishing. Therefore, one dimension of political theory is given from the outset: political theory, today, is, among several other things, a struggle over the meaning of political science as a form of knowledge or discourse. More than professional in-fighting

or narrow academism is at stake in this politics of demarcation.

As I will try to show, at issue is the self-understanding of political theory, and the role of theory in the social sciences in general, including the constitution of what we loosely refer to as "political reality"--the supposed object and subject-matter of the discipline of political science. Even if the question of how political theory should be defined is futile and unanswerable, there is of course interesting knowledge and politics in the attempts themselves. Political theory certainly has an "open texture," or is, what has been called, "an essentially centested concept." What appears at first glance to be the crisis of political theory as a genre, becomes within the contemporary debate a problem of how to interpret social and political discourse as such. "Since the discourse of politics helps to set the terms within which that politics proceeds, one who seeks to understand and to assess the structure of political life must deliberately probe the conventions governing those concepts. To examine and accept, or to examine and revise, the prevailing terms of political discourse is not a prelude to politics but a dimension of politics itself."[1] "Terms," in this passage from William Connolly, refers both to the conditions for and the concepts of political discourse.

This section of the essay will take as its point of departure examples of political theorists who, in their

writings, are primarily oriented towards the "tradition" of political philosophy, and who more or less self-consciously view political theory as inherently interpretive. There are two main purposes underlying my own discussion and (ab)use of these theorists. One is to outline what they have to say about the discourse of political theory--how they view the role of interpretation, and what they claim to be the interpretive and stylistic commitments of this form of political discourse. The second purpose is to give an account of some of the interpretive strategies and aesthetic/literary constructions utilized in the theorists' own texts--how they themselves construct their theories. The over-all aim is to show how "literary" political discourse is, and to illustrate the difficulty in maintaining clear distinctions between the various genres once we are aware of the interpretive and aesthetic "base" in the politics of political discourse.

II

Of contemporary political theorists writing within and about the so-called classical tradition of political philosophy, Sheldon Wolin has consciously utilized an interpretive perspective and he perceives political theory in such a broad sense that it explicitly becomes the basis

both for an evaluation of political science as a scientific discourse and for a "normative" and polemical discourse in and on contemporary politics. He has also characterized the classics of the genre as belonging to "the epic tradition of political theory," implying that the writings of theorists express elements common to the epic as a literary genre; political theory has its own heroes, dramas, and epical aims, and "...is inspired mainly by the hope of achieving a great and memorable deed through the medium of thought."[2] ("Thought" here meaning, from my perspective, writing.) These various and wide uses of political theory are for Wolin part of the very meaning of the discursive tradition called political philosophy and its vocational practice. To "do" political theory is thus a political activity dedicated to exposing, expounding, and discussing the ethical and normative commitments--the politics--of political discourse, whether the latter is perceived as science, theory, commentary, or politics. The distinctions are largely a question of purpose, emphasis and genre; there are no absolute boundaries, only interrelated and overlapping "discursive practices."[3]

Not surprisingly, we discern within Wolin's texts themselves the different purposes of theory and their interrelation. In Politics and Vision, for example, the concern is political philosophy as a "special tradition of discourse," and as the subtitle--"Continuity and Innovation in Western

Political Thought"--indicates, we are, on the surface, faced with a text in the field of history of political thought.[4] We can, however, designate the work more specifically as interpreting and utilizing the tradition with a practical intent; i.e., although partly conceived and executed as an investigation into the history of political theory, it is simultaneously a contribution, not just to the tradition, but to contemporary political discourse as well. For this and other reasons, Politics and Vision can also be read as an interpretive and rhetorical political narrative, albeit in the genre of history of political thought. It is the interpretive and rhetorical elements which are of primary interest in the context of my own investigation.

From the argument concerning language, outlined in part I of this essay, we have to view the very idea of "the tradition of Western political thought" as a rather contestable and ambiguous construction with its own interpretive conventions and belonging to a genre. Wolin identifies the tradition of political philosophy in several generally accepted terms. There are, e.g., "certain problem-topics" that recur in "the masterpieces of political literature"; these topics, although numerous and heterogeneous, form a "continuity of preoccupations" in spite of the lack of "unanimity of response."[5] This continuity of subject-matter is, to be sure, part of the self-identification of political theory as it has come to be vaguely understood both as a subfield of political science

and as a more general heritage of Occidental culture. Although as reasonable as this delineation seems, we must treat it as a trope-of-the-trade; the continuity is as much created as it is already there, and should not be assumed to have anything but an open-ended and constructed status. (This is of course not to trivialize or make any claims as to the quality and depth of the body of knowledge produced within this constructed tradition. The point is merely to stress one of its conventional assumptions. As John Gunnell has it: "What is presented as a historical tradition is in fact basically a retrospective analytical construction which constitutes a rationalized version of the past."[6])

Wolin also defines the tradition in a conflictual frame: as a never-ending struggle over the meaning and the boundaries of "the political." That this argument over what constitutes the political is another organizing theme of the political theory tradition is perhaps self-evident; for Wolin, however, the conflict concerning the nature and definition of the political is "the basic theme" of his book. And, as I will discuss below, it remains one of Wolin's most persistent topics throughout his writings, and forms a fundamental interpretive strategy which generates interesting political insights and a productive theoretical distance in a variety of discursive contexts. The politics of the political is, I would surmise, a leit-motif in Wolin's own theory.

The concerns with the tradition of the discourse and how the boundaries of its main object are drawn, and what it includes and excludes, indicate, I think, an important kinship with some aspects of the hermeneutic perspective discussed in the previous section. To focus attention on how an object or discourse--in this case the political and its theoretical tradition--is constituted, is to bring to light (to use a controversial metaphor) that already interpreted and taken-for-granted dimension which is so often treated as either given and unproblematic, or not treated at all, whether concealed, lost or repressed. (See pp. 38-39.)

One can elaborate on this problem of what is pre-understood or assumed through a host of figurative concepts depending on the theoretical context and purpose. We remember, for example, Gadamer's stress on the "prejudiced" nature of knowledge: understanding for him is inconceivable without a prejudiced perspective. The latter is part of the very conditions for understanding and meaning, and this "bias" is present both in what we investigate (it is already interpreted or constituted) and in ourselves as investigators (we always perceive from a perspective). Not only does a notion like "the political" exist within a prejudiced "foreunderstanding" wherever it appears in the classical texts or in today's discourse, it is also repeatedly being revised both as part of the tradition and as a contemporary concept; these revisions do not occur arbitrarily but

through the different discursive practices, all of which contain prejudices and commitments. (Several of Foucault's works are obvious examples of how a focus on these practices can yield unconventional knowledge.[7])

The dynamic between interpreter and that which is being interpreted has been articulated as taking place within "the hermeneutical circle"; a trope used by Gadamer and Heidegger to capture both the anticipatory quality of understanding and its dependency on foreunderstanding.

> The circle, then, is not formal in nature, it is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the communality that binds us to the tradition. But this is contained in our relation to tradition, in the constant process of education. Tradition is not simply a precondition into which we come, but we produce it ourselves, inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition and hence further determine it ourselves. Thus the circle of understanding is not a 'methodological' circle, but describes an ontological structural element in understanding.[8]

The open-ended and changing characteristic of understanding and interpretation is also expressed by Gadamer through the well-known metaphor of horizon. We begin to understand that which is unfamiliar and strange, or belongs to a different epoch or culture, when we can see the contours of its horizon--the context which forms the necessary "background" for something to be comprehensible. It is the floating and fleeting atmosphere in which we move and breathe.

> Just as the individual is never simply an individual, because he is always involved with others, so too the closed horizon that is supposed to enclose a culture is an abstraction. The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never utterly bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion.[9]

Both tropes - the hermeneutical circle and horizon - should remind us of another earlier point in our discussion: that Gadamer's conception of interpretation is not subjective or arbitrary. On the contrary, the metaphors indicate the opposite: we do not "personally" decide the meaning of what we try to understand; "it"--whether a tradition, a discourse, or a problematic--controls, holds and changes us. Nevertheless, there are commitments, perspectives and strategies--in short, politics--involved in any discursive practice, something which perhaps has been more analyzed and appreciated within critical theory as well as in the post-structuralist debate, rather than in Gadamer or Heidegger.

III

Although Politics and Vision appears to both accept and contribute to what has critically been labelled "the myth of the tradition,"[10] Wolin makes no definitive claims concerning its "objective" existence; instead he emphasizes the interpretive and constituted character of both politics and its theoretical tradition: "What I should like to insist upon, however, is that the field of politics is and has been, in a significant and radical sense, a created one." And: "It is true, too, that many of the subjects treated by a theorist owe their inclusion to the simple fact that in existing linguistic conventions such subjects are referred to as political." At the same time, ideas and categories used in political analysis should not be viewed as facts. "They represent, instead, an added element, something created by the political theorist."[11] This added element, however, is not arbitrary, but delimited by the context of the theorist: "the boundaries and substance of the subject-matter of political philosophy are determined to a large extent by the practices of existing societies."[12] The political philosopher confronts an already constituted political world, the phenomena surrounding him are "already endowed with coherence and interrelationships."[13] According to this idea, the classical theorists have been constituted by their

"times," "epochs" or "societies," but they have also in their turn interpreted and created various, and sometimes new, versions of the political; the latter of course, a contestable term with "open texture" and never trivialized within a reified definition--"...the task of defining what is political is a continual one."[14]

Something similar holds for the general vocabulary of political theory; it is an outgrowth of a specific context but not automatically reducible to that context. The theorists add meaning to a common understanding of a concept, usually to give a specific coherence and thrust to their interpretive argument. "The concepts that constitute a theorist's vocabulary are shaped to fit the over-all structure of meanings of his theory."[15] Besides the constructed and rhetorical elements of political concepts, there is then also a comprehensive viewpoint which structures a theory. Wolin calls this organizing perspective the theorist's vision or imagination, and should not be viewed merely as a choice of method or ideological perspective, but as an "architectonic impulse"--another favorite notion of Wolin's--an impulse that often involves a version of a new and superior political order. "Whatever the form manifested by the architectonic impulse, its result has been to lend differing dimensions to the perspectives of political philosophy: dimensions of aesthetic beauty, religious truth, historical time, scientific exactitude, and economic advance. All of these dimensions possess a

futurist quality, a projection of the political order into a time that is yet to be."[16] The classics of the tradition are thus described by Wolin as having epical ambitions and architectonic urges, two features which pertain to the very base of the genre.

The theorist as architect is a recurrent metaphor for Wolin to indicate how he understands and enters into the politics of demarcation, that is, how he draws the line between political philosophy and other political discursive practices. In several writings, he defines the distinct form of classical political theory as being concerned with the architectonic dimensions in political discourse: a political theorist in the classical tradition is involved in "laying foundations"; he is, in short, "an author of political presuppositions."[17] This tenet of political theory is of importance, not only in order to understand what uniquely belongs to political theory as a form of writing or style of discourse, but also to make sense out of Wolin's own use of theory for the purpose of criticizing contemporary political science and politics.

That political theory is "normative," i.e., concerned with what ought to be, is a convention over which there is little controversy; it is the claim of "laying foundations" and of being originator of "presuppositions" that lends a highly productive edge to Wolin's definition of theory. This claim, as we shall see, is decisive in separating

theory as a form of political discourse from contemporary empirical political science, methodology and commentary; the three latter operating within more stable and unquestioned assumptions with regard to the political--they presuppose an unproblematic foundation.

However, even the philosopher's vision, the architectonic impulse, evolves, not in a vacuum, but as a response to particular problems and in specific contexts. A political theory, no matter how comprehensive and architectonic, is by necessity partial and selective in its understanding of the political, a claim which holds for the categories generated "inside" the theory as well as for the foundational concepts that delineate its boundaries and make up its most precious and central argument. The code, as it were, is selective and exclusive; it focuses on and constitutes one set of issues and ignores others. "The concepts and categories of a political philosophy may be likened to a net that is cast out to capture political phenomena, which are then drawn in and sorted in a way that seems meaningful and relevant to the particular thinker. But in the whole procedure, he has selected a particular net and he has cast it in a chosen place."[18] Nevertheless, what net the theorist uses and where he throws it is only in a very limited sense a matter of choice; he has to throw it where the problem is located and, depending on the issue, it has to be the appropriate net. In other and ambiguous words, the problems of the era and the concerns of the community

are structuring factors in the theorist's "choice" of both form and substance (conventionally speaking). "A philosopher's thought is influenced to a great extent by the problems agitating his society. If he wishes to gain the attention of his contemporaries, he must address himself to their problems and accept the terms of debate imposed by those concerns."[19] Again we see why the problem of relativism and subjectivism is not a significant issue for an interpretive political theory; there are plainly too many discursive and contextual constraints for relativism to enter into the equation.

IV

One such constraint--at least according to conventional wisdom--is the political theory tradition itself. The agenda is to some extent already set, and most classical theorists have, to various degrees, participated in an ongoing debate with previous thinkers on the subject, as well as addressed the pressing political issues of their own time and thereby furthered and expanded what has become "an inherited body of knowledge." On this point Wolin is most explicit in stressing the constraints of the tradition. He also emphasizes the continuity in perceiving the tradition as "one of meanings extended over time."[20] Innovations

occur and "new" theories develop within these constraints and make for slow drifts and subtle shifts in the history of political thought.

Whether one is inclined to accentuate the continuities or the breaks in the tradition is a matter of, among several other factors, one's own net or perspective, and the question of how to characterize the political theory tradition is becoming increasingly controversial. That both the "breaks" and the "continuities" are modern constructions for purposes other than a disinterested pursuit of "truth" is a fair hypothesis. When we define political theory as a gigantic conversation or debate on politics, spanning centuries, we are buying into a master narrative whose presuppositions are as constructed as each individual narrative, and whose validity is largely an internal question; viz., internal to the genre. The type of story theorists tell about (the history of) political theory--a tale of rise and decline, a linear progressive story, or a fragmented chaotic saga, just to mention three possibilities--is thus directly related to this master narrative. The intellectual authority, however, that both the master narrative and the specific stories finally possess, seems more to be a matter of their contribution to political discourse as a whole than to their status within the more limited notion of "the tradition."

Wolin's construction of the role and nature of the

tradition of political philosophy is not unlike Gadamer's characterization, in the passage quoted previously, of the function of the cultural tradition in general. In Wolin's view, as in Gadamer's, the inherited tradition is a continuous process, the meaning of the past is never finalized, and the present perspective is neither completey new nor a mere copy of the past. The future is projected on the basis of the past in the present; the interpretive circle is never closed; critique and appropriation are part of the same interpretive act:

> ...when a critical political thinker turns to analyze a persisting idea from the past, he involves himself in a rather complex process. As a thinker, who is himself situated at one point in time-space, he becomes engaged with ideas which are, in turn, reflective of a past time-space situation. Moreover, the ideas in question are similarly related to previous political thought and its situations. In addressing himself to persisting ideas from the past, a political philosopher unavoidably infects his own thought with past ideas and situations that have been similarly implicated with their own precedents. In this sense, the past is never wholly superseded; it is constantly being recaptured at the very moment that human thought is seemingly pre-occupied with the unique problems of its own time.[21]

To define political theory as a tradition of discourse and to stress its innovative and continuous qualities--to treat a body of political knowledge as a tradition--is undoubtedly to be committed to a "prejudiced" conception of political theory; or better, to adhere to a specific set of interpretive conventions and presuppositions concerning political theory whose status as a tradition cannot be

"objectively determined" but has to be approached as a genre with vague and mobile boundaries. In fact, the very use of the tradition as an inherited authority on politics can be viewed as a rhetorical strategy, however convincingly justified and solidly supported by historical and textual evidence. In both Wolin and Gadamer, "the tradition" serves a plurality of ends, one of which is to polemically support a critique of the contemporary preoccupation with scientific methods in the human and social sciences; "the tradition" is invoked to weaken the objectivistic and ahistorical confidence of our scientistic age.

Whatever we think of this use of the tradition, and here there are grounds for deconstruction and criticism, we should be aware that the dice are loaded and that we are dealing with an interpretive commitment of Wolin's--a commitment which also contains a distinct political dimension. The tradition of political theory as understood by Wolin is his--or "his" texts'--source of political knowledge, and it is no surprise that he also makes the tradition the basis of a political education: "...since the history of political philosophy is...an intellectual development wherein successive thinkers have added new dimensions to the analysis and understanding of politics, an inquiry into that development is not so much a venture into antiquarianism as a form of political education."[22] This, too, is a polemical claim with consequences especially for Wolin's perspective on the discipline of political science

which in its contemporary shape has very different notions of political education.

The pedagogical element in the tradition--and its opposition to methodology and scientism--is also explicit in Gadamer, who sees the concept of Bildung as the appropriate one for the process of learning in the human sciences, and he discusses at length the meaning of the concept as part of "the significance of the humanist tradition." He brings out the implied distance from ourselves involved in Bildung and highlights its capacity to remove us from our own unreflective prejudices towards a less limited and more comprehensive and nuanced perspective.

> To seek one's own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of spirit, whose being is only return to itself from what is other. Hence all theoretical Bildung, even the acquisition of foreign languages and conceptual worlds, is merely the continuation of a process of Bildung which begins much earlier.
>
> Bildung embraces a general sense of proportion and distance in relation to itself, and hence is capable of being raised above itself to universality. To distance oneself from oneself and from one's private purposes means to look at these in the way that others see them... The universal viewpoints to which the cultivated man (gebildet) keeps himself open are not a fixed applicable yardstick, but are present to him only as the viewpoints of possible others.[23]

It is part of Gadamer's "prejudiced" view that he, although invoking the strange, the unfamiliar and the foreign, is capable of depicting the interpretive process in such a harmonious and unproblematic tone of voice. There are no

conflicts, no disruptive idiosyncracies, and no irreconcilable struggles over meaning in this quite idyllic learning process.

It is, for Gadamer and Wolin, an indeterminate "the tradition"--for the former, the humanist tradition, and for the latter, the tradition of political philosophy--that provides the interpretive criteria and perspective for understanding and evaluating the present; and education, for both of them, consists of gaining access to and familiarity with this tradition as it speaks to us today, i.e., as we see it from our limited horizon and as it changes us in the process. By becoming conscious of where and how we stand within the tradition--tradition is not an object whose content we learn but a process of which we are a part--it supposedly takes hold of us and turns into a formative force. We become aware of our own "historicity" and thus freer, more open and less limited; all according to Gadamer: "To stand within a tradition does not limit the freedom of knowledge but makes it possible."[24] There is then in Gadamer a claim to awareness of the historical process present in our own epoch--"effective history"--and a more specific understanding of this historical presence in its contemporary manifestation and effect; to "know" the tradition is thus to perceive its presence in us.

We have here both what we can call an "ontological" claim dealing with the conditions for meaning and under-

standing, and a commitment or presupposition utilizing "the humanist tradition" as an interpretive and normative device. If the analysis of the conditions of meaning, in its most general formulation, can be called "universal" and in some provisional sense beyond perspective--although even this aspect has a distinct Gadamerian ring--the use of tradition is certainly an element in Gadamer's own interpretation and should, as we said, be brought out as a strategic or polemical commitment on his part. To refer to "the tradition" as if it exists as some kind of entity, no matter how open-ended, that we can get to know through education and reflection and whose "presence" we can "experience" in ourselves is a leap of faith into a whole range of questionable presuppositions concerning, e.g., "history," "the self," and "experience." This is not to argue that we can easily, if at all, do without such constitutive myths, but to present them as unproblematical or to give them an ontological status is to sweep under the carpet their polemical and mythical qualities.

V

Wolin's parallel "ontological politics" (to perhaps misread his own phrase) is to give <u>politics</u> such a privileged status and specific conception in his discourse that

it comes to function as a criterion for interpreting the entire tradition. Its particular use emerges distinctly already in his treatment of Plato's theory. Wolin criticizes Plato for failing to develop an acceptable relationship between "the political" and "politics." While Plato correctly identified the political as that which pertains to what is public in a society and "...understood political philosophy to mean knowledge pertaining to the good life at the public level and political ruling to be the right management of the public affairs of the community,..." he had, however, no appreciation for politics and did, in fact, attempt to rid his ideal society of the uncertainties of practical politics.[25]

Plato's hostility to politics is of course a well known and often criticized element of his philosophy, but it is Wolin's manner of framing his objection that is our concern. Wolin opposes Plato's use of the art of medicine as analogous to politics: "...the body politic does not experience 'disease,' but conflict; it is beset not by harmful bacteria but individuals with hopes, ambitions, and fears that are often at odds with the plans of other individuals; its end is not 'health,' but the endless search for a foundation that will support the mass of contradictions present in society."[26] It is in opposition to Plato's ideas of order, an order imposed from outside of politics and modelled after a divine order free from conflicts, that Wolin's own definition of politics is shaped.

For Wolin, "the art of ruling" can never become "the art of imposition"; instead he argues for "a politics of conciliation" that takes conflicts, opposing forces, and imperfection as inevitable characteristics of the political domain. Political conflicts should thus neither be viewed as problems to be solved nor as illnesses to be cured.

> Implicit in the politics of conciliation is a notion of order markedly different from that held by Plato. If conciliation is a continuing task for those who govern--and the nature of "politics" would seem to dictate that it is--then order is not a set pattern, but something akin to a precarious equilibrium, a condition that demands a willingness to accept partial solutions. For Plato, however, order was in the nature of a mould shaped after a divine model; a concept to be used for stamping society in a definite image. But what kind of an order could issue from a political science dedicated in large measure to the eradication of conflict; that is, to the elimination of politics?[27]

In the process of criticizing Plato's notion of order, Wolin has begun to articulate his own theory of politics. Although presented as having been generated by Plato's desire to exclude or eradicate politics, the critique presupposes its own horizon and perspective; although formulated in "ontological" terms--"the nature of politics," "a truly political art"--the politics of conciliation, however "classical," is a thinly disguised interpretive commitment which unmistakingly becomes one of the presuppositions of Wolin's own political theory. That the latter is not meant to imply a "personal or "subjective"

theory should be obvious by now. Wolin remains very much within the established conventions of traditional political theory, even when he takes issue against certain aspects of the various theorists. The discourse of political theory takes place on an "essentially contestable" terrain. (But that is something very different from saying that a political theory is "subjective" or "personal.") One reason why "the tradition" is such an elusive and controversial concept is no doubt because its history could be told just as much as a series of attempts to break away from already established and reified conventions within the discourse, as much as a continuous dialogue over time between participants committed to a relative stable notion of what constitutes political theory.

In Politics and Vision the view of politics as a politics of conciliation defines two central features of the text's angle of vision: first of all, an opposition to all political theories that adhere to objective and nonpolitical criteria for judging politics and knowledge of the political, and secondly, a commitment to a notion of politics and political discourse engendered by and judged in relation to the demands of "the community" and its citizenry. Political knowledge can only emerge from within the political community itself; no external, absolute criteria--whether derived from God, the Truth, or the Good--can be applied. For Plato, the eternal Good determined the ideal

community and hence politics was secondary if not absent:

> ...the idea of citizenship was severed from the idea of meaningful participation in the making of political decisions; and the idea of the political community, that is, a community that seeks to resolve its internal conflicts through political methods, is replaced by the idea of the virtuous community devoid of conflicts and, therefore, devoid of "politics."[28]

In Wolin "the political" is thus conceptually and discursively inseparable from two other terms or markers: "the community" and "the public." Political are those problems and issues of the community that are not merely private and particular but public and general.

By tying politics to both the community as a whole and to the opinions of its members, Wolin commits himself to an interpretive strategy that will later reveal itself, I will argue, as located within what could vaguely be labelled a radical democratic horizon; a perspective with its distinct code and organizing tropes. In rejecting any external, Platonic criteria for judging the political, he also denies the possibility of a science of politics, and instead endorses a more Aristotelian version of the form of knowledge appropriate to politics.

For Aristotle, the type and form of knowledge should be congruent with its subject matter or discipline, and it lies in the nature of political phenomena that they do not allow for exact precision, but "...admit of much variety and fluctuation of opinion..."[29] Hence, political knowledge is,

by definition, inexact, tentative and precarious: "Its end was action, but action within a situation fraught with change, accident and contingency. To expect mathematical precision in political theory was foolish, and to arm the practitioners of political science with absolute power was dangerously arrogant."[30] It is this quite contemporary-sounding conceptualization that forms the basis for Wolin's "politics of conciliation" and for his appreciation of the negotiated and public quality of political judgment and decision-making. The pragmatic and contextual aspects of political knowledge are also expressed in the self-understanding of political theory. The latter, which is supposed to explain and interpret politics, is itself a form of politics and, due to the demands of its subject matter, cannot free itself from tentative commitments, political presuppositions, and a complex entanglement in the political context it tries to understand.

Gadamer, too, makes Aristotle's philosophy central and a model for his own hermeneutical theory. As in his politics, Aristotle viewed ethical knowledge as ambiguous and intimately linked to its practical consequences and to specific contexts. This practical philosophy of ethics and politics appeals to Gadamer primarily because it adheres to a notion of practice (praxis) whose relationship to theory is not one of opposition but of reciprocity. To comprehend a political issue or to resolve an ethical dilemma requires not only a general and theoretical knowledge of politics or ethics but

also demands from each person an ability to assess the peculiarity and uniqueness of the concrete situation. This ability is not just a matter of correct application of acquired knowledge but is a form of "practical wisdom" or practical reasonableness--*phronesis*--i.e., a capacity for judging what is appropriate in each specific case. There is an inherent uncertainty in both politics and ethics that entails a practical knowledge that cannot be based on formal rules, but depends on a person's capability to make reasonable decisions in ambiguous situations. For Aristotle, this practice was linked to the community and to the freedom of the citizen of the *polis*; in fact, it defined the responsibility of the citizen in relation to the *polis*. From this perspective then, practice is an inescapable element in the type of knowledge pertaining to politics and ethics in a community.

> But the knowledge that gives direction to action is essentially called for by concrete situations in which we are to choose the thing to be done; and no learned and mastered technique can spare us the task of deliberation and decision. As a result, the practical science directed toward this practical knowledge is neither theoretical science in the style of mathematics nor expert know-how in the sense of a knowledgeable mastery of operational procedures (*poiesis*) but a unique sort of science. It must arise from practice itself and, with all the typical generalizations that it brings to explicit consciousness, be related back to practice. In fact, that constitutes the specific character of Aristotelian ethics and politics.[31]

Thus, we can also say that theory--political and ethical--*is* practice.

For Gadamer, this Aristotelian conception is analogous to "the hermeneutic situation." The incompleteness, ambiguity, and limits to political knowledge which Wolin, also by invoking Aristotle, stresses and places at the very heart of his own theory, these "ontological limits" Gadamer sees operating in the process of interpretation in general. Paralleling Wolin's aversion to any dogmatic, "external" criteria for determining the "correct" politics, Gadamer objects to any notion of a "definitive" interpretation. He too juxtaposes the always incomplete and limited intepretive situation to the scientistic ideal of objectivity and final truths. Defining interpretation as "always on the way," and by making imperfectness the condition for hermeneutics he denies "the legitimacy of objective self-consciousness."

> In a certain way, the very word hermeneutics and its cognate word interpretation furnish a hint, for these words imply a sharp distinction between the claim of being able to explain a fact completely through deriving all its conditions; through calculating it from the givenness of all its conditions; and through learning to produce it by artificial arrangement--the well-known ideal of natural scientific knowledge; and on the other hand, the claim (say, of interpretation), which we always presume to be no more than an approximation: only an attempt, plausible and fruitful, but clearly never definitive.[32]

Again: what is for Gadamer the uncertain condition for interpretation is for Wolin the tentative foundation for political theory, and both use Aristotle's practical philosophy as their classical model. Their common appeal to "the

tradition" turns out to be an argument for an open-ended and context-specific interpretation of politics and ethics. The commitment to the tradition then, does not lead to any specific "correct" politics, nor to the interpretation. That other polemical uses of the tradition are available as well, should be obvious. The point is that an appeal to tradition is a rhetorical and interpretive strategy that in no way can be said to be neutral or without polemical purpose, but can be conjured up in a multiplicity of contexts for a variety of reasons.[33]

VI

In their mutual concern with the unavoidable limits to human knowledge, and in their common scepticism with regard to the possibility of strict objectivity in the human sciences, Gadamer and Wolin differ in tone and premisses from--obviously--the tradition and conventions of modern social science and of orthodox Marxism; they also differentiate themselves, however, from, e.g., Habermas, who utilizes and is guided by a somewhat different and conflicting set of theoretical commitments.

Without entering into the now extensive debate over Habermas' perspective, one can paranthetically note that, although profoundly critical of the scientistic ideals of

empirical social science, Habermas does not invoke "the classical tradition" against modern science; instead he views "the scientization of politics" as posing a serious dilemma for a political theory which desires to be both scientifically rigorous as well as practical with a critical intent. Habermas wants to maintain a commitment to praxis in the classical Aristotelian sense, and, at the same time, adhere to the demands of scientific rationality: "...a scientifically founded social philosophy which reflects on itself in the manner of philosophy of history must be concerned with a methodological approach which, on the one hand, will correspond to a clarification of practical consciousness, but on the other, will not relinquish that methodological rigor which is the irreversible achievement of modern science."[34] This passage, made in reference to the crisis of social theory as viewed by the Scottish philosophers of the late 18th century, captures Habermas' attitude towards classical political theory and its conflict with modern science. Through a "self-reflective" scientific theory joined together with an, as of yet, cryptic "ideal speech situation," Habermas holds out the possibility for a social theory which is universal and simultaneously a framework for an emancipatory practice; in short, a social theory that embodies a universal rationality and is, at the same time, moral-practical.[35]

On this most general level, Habermas expounds a form of

political theory which is practical and prudent in the classical vein but also anchored "outside" of the tradition of political philosophy, in a discourse which is scientific in tone and which explicitly rejects the interpretive ambiguity that is fundamental for Gadamer and Wolin. There is, one could argue, a certain tension in Habermas' writing between a commitment to a political critique, however abstract, of contemporary Western society, very much in the tradition of political theory as understood by, e.g., Wolin, and an urge to ground this critique outside of politics, in a rationalistic and universal, however "self-reflective," philosophy of science.

The political dimension is unequivocally practical in style and intent, and is, besides being explicitly critical of the scientistic and rationalistic tendencies in social science, often concerned with the problematic relationship between science and politics, between specialized technical research and the attitudes of the general public. Like so many modern political theorists, Habermas is alarmed by the decline of the role of the public in contemporary politics. The following passage is perhaps a representative example of the political tone in some of Habermas' writings:

> On the one hand we can no longer reckon with functioning institutions for public discussion among the general public. On the other, the specialization of large-scale research and a bureaucratized apparatus of power reinforce each other only too well while the public is excluded as a political force. The choice that interests us is not between one elite that effectively exploits vital resources

> of knowledge over the heads of a mediatized population and another that is isolated from inputs of scientific information, so that technical knowledge flows inadequately into the process of political decision-making. The question is rather whether a productive body of knowledge is merely transmitted to men engaged in technical manipulation for purposes of control or is simultaneously appropriated as the linguistic possession of communicating individuals. A scientized society could constitute itself as a rational one only to the extent that science and technology are mediated with the conduct of life through the minds of its citizens.[36]

Here the approach is truly hermeneutical-interpretive: science and technology are viewed from the perspective of the social conditions for knowledge, as part of the socio-political reality from which they claim detachment. But while Gadamer would argue that this critical approach to social science is rooted in a necessarily limited or "prejudiced" perspective, and while Wolin would argue that a critique of political science is forced to utilize a criterion that itself is politically implicated and whose judgments and conclusions are, due to the nature of its political subject-matter, always tentative and ambiguous; in clear opposition to this spirit of Gadamer and Wolin, Habermas maintains that the critique can be both "emancipatory" and grounded in a rationalistic and universal epistemology. Truth and rationality are in Habermas' theory constituted "outside" of Gadamer's hermeneutical situation and Wolin's politics of conciliation. Hermeneutically speaking, it is as if Habermas' political theory disappears into a quasi-objectivistic faith in the power of

"communication" and "self-reflection"; as, for example, in the grandiose defense of a universal ethical knowledge, formulated in his fourth thesis in the appendix to Knowledge and Human Interests:

> It is no accident that the standards of self-reflection are exempted from the singular state of suspension in which those of all other cognitive processes require critical evaluation. They possess theoretical certainty. The human interest in autonomy and responsibility is not mere fancy, for it can be apprehended a priori. What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: language. Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility are posited for us. Our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus. Taken together, autonomy and responsibility constitute the only Idea that we possess a priori in the sense of the philosophical tradition. Perhaps that is why the language of German Idealism, according to which "reason" contains both will and consciousness as its elements, is not quite obsolete. Reason also means will to reason. In self-reflection knowledge for the sake of knowledge attains congruence with the interest in autonomy and responsibility. The emancipatory cognitive interest aims at the pursuit of reflection as such. ...in the power of self-reflection, knowledge and interest are one.[37]

But even for Habermas, this seemingly self-evident certainty of self-reflection is not of an objectively scientific quality; it is more in the nature of a strategic recommendation for the practicing social theorist, who is inescapably producing knowledge and meaning within a frame of reference (or preunderstanding) based on presuppositions and interests. These "knowledge-constitutive interests" can only be clarified and reflected upon, not overcome or transcended. "But the mind can always reflect back upon the

interest structure that joins subject and object a priori: this is reserved to self-reflection. If the latter cannot cancel out interest, it can to a certain extent make up for it."[38] Self-reflection thus appears to imply an awareness of the interests underlying a specific science and discourse--a position not too unlike Gadamer's. And the similarity extends to the target of self-reflection: science's illusion of pure theory, i.e., theory claiming neutrality and objectivity with regard to interests.

Habermas parts company with Gadamer's hermeneutics, however, in his assertion that reflection can secure not only a foundation for an emancipatory practical social theory but also provide the basis for a critique of both "distorted communication" and "tradition" as ideology. Habermas' key concepts and master-tropes--reason and self-reflection--are conjured up against Gadamer's equally central trope of tradition. In the name of <u>reflection</u>, Habermas objects to Gadamer's use of <u>tradition</u> as authority for knowledge and understanding. "Gadamer's prejudice for the rights of prejudices certified by tradition denies the power of reflection. The latter proves itself, however, in being able to reject the claim of tradition. Reflection dissolves substantiality because it not only confirms, but also breaks up, dogmatic forces. Authority and knowledge do not converge. ...The right of reflection demands that the hermeneutic approach restrict itself. It calls for a

reference system that goes beyond the framework of tradition as such; only then can tradition also be criticized."[39] Gadamer, of course, does not deny that the authority of tradition can be challenged and criticized, but simply holds the position that this critique too is part of tradition (and the hermeneutical situation), and cannot rest on some supra-traditional notion of a self-reflective rationality. Both thinkers, however, rely on a rather unproblematic acceptance of something called "reason," located within a stable and rational subject, as the medium for knowledge, the difference being that for Gadamer reason expresses itself through tradition and is based on Aristotelian practical wisdom, while Habermas develops his reason more independently of tradition and makes it capable of a reflexivity which can guide us in the direction of an emancipatory knowledge.

Inadvertently, these interpretations of reason are themselves part of a master code that can be criticized as too limited or too narrow. To equate reason with historically and contextually determined types of rationality is to strategically exclude forms of discourse that embody alternative views of both reason and rationality. "Reason" becomes in Gadamer and Habermas a code-word that structures and organizes their theories in specific directions, and, perhaps most obviously, inculcates a sense of order and continuity into their texts. Foucault, for example, is unwilling to accept such a limited use of the concept of

reason: "...I am not prepared to identify reason entirely with the totality of rational forms which have come to dominate--at any given moment, in our own era and even very recently--in types of knowledge, forms of technique and modalities of government or domination: realms where we can see all the major applications of rationality. ...For me, no given form of rationality is actually reason."[40] The same objections that can be raised against the use of tradition as authority for knowledge and judgment can thus be directed against Habermas' excessive dependency on his use of rationality and self-reflection; both are context-specific and interest-laden, and not without their own rhetorical presuppositions or prejudices. If Gadamer's (and Wolin's) use of "tradition" is an interpretive device with polemical implications, so is Habermas' reliance on "reason" and "the ideal speech situation."

Let me sum up this brief Habermasian detour. The strong political impulse, present in so much of Habermas' writings, leads to, on the one hand, an appreciation for and critique of the ideological constraints present in the cultural tradition, especially when the latter serves as a criterion for judging contemporary political and scientific discourse, and his critique draws our attention towards the use of this tradition as a rhetorical and ideological trope. On the other hand, Habermas' desire to find a frame of reference for evaluating political practice (including

theory) that is located outside of the tradition of political theory makes his style of inquiry, at other times, curiously apolitical, if not excessively rationalistic, based as this type of analysis is on the possibility of achieving a rational and self-reflective, non-ideological, discourse of politics. Wolin's critique of Plato's extra-political foundation for a "correct" politics can therefore be extended to Habermas' universal faith in reason and a transparent nondistorted form of communication. (This is not to argue that Habermas' is not aware of his own commitment to a problematic concept of reason and science; on the contrary, he has on several occasions expressed his own view on this matter. It is clear that he is fully conscious of both the commitment itself and the problems it invites.[41]) At the same time, Habermas has a (post-structuralist) point against Wolin: there is nothing unproblematic about a recourse to tradition as a grounding for political theory, and we should recognize the constructed and constrictive (and productive) element in the claim that political theory constitutes a clearly and well-defined tradition of discourse--"an inherited body of knowledge."

In dealing with political theory as a genre there is good reason to carefully analyze how each theorist appropriates and makes use of the tradition for strategical purposes, and to treat a specific political theory as a form of literary production, as a construction of political meaning; a literature in which "the tradition" serves as an

ambiguous structural "plot" and as a conventional frame of reference.

VII

When we view Politics and Vision as a form of narrative, something else, besides a text in the history of political theory, emerges. We have already noted Gadamer's use of tradition as a base for a critique of modern science, but while his appeal to tradition in, for example, his polemic with Habermas, has an apolitical and culturally conservative undertone, Wolin's picture of the political theory tradition is, on the contrary, of a more radical and explicitly political hue. Although historical in content and conception, the function of this historical perspective is not merely to give the reader an interpretation of the tradition of Western political thought; it is that for sure, but it is in addition an interpretive strategy which serves both to criticize contemporary politics and to expound the theoretical perspective that Wolin himself advocates.

In the last chapter of Politics and Vision, Wolin addresses the methodological issue of how to identify a tradition of discourse in relation to the following question: "...to what writers over the past century and a half shall we turn in order to observe the emergence of our

own patterns of thought?"[42] Stated in this way, the ever-present problems of selection and of ambiguity in interpreting the tradition are obvious. How can we at all answer this question in anything but an equivocal manner? Not only can "our own patterns of thought" not be defined other than in controversial and contestable terms, but neither can we isolate a group of writers "over the past century and a half" that can be said to represent our theoretical roots in other than a highly constructed and selective sense. ("We want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutible necessities. But the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference."[43])

Wolin does not raise his question, however, in order to discuss these problems; instead it serves the important and rhetorical purpose of indicating his opposition to sorting out and selecting theorists along conventionally ideological lines. He is critical of using political camps as organizing criteria, and rejects "the fetish of ideological interpretation which compels us to look at past theories through constrictive peepholes." His own perspective is far broader, but nevertheless produced according to traditional conventions.

> My premise is that the ideas which have significantly influenced our political and social world, and shaped the way we interpret it, represent a blend of the theories of a highly diverse group of writers. In the way that we understand the world we

> are partly the debtors of Marx, but also of de Maistre, partly of Lenin, but also of managerialism. There can, however, be no adequate understanding either of ourselves or our world unless we first overthrow the tyranny exercised by ideological categories and return to the notion of a tradition of discourse. The nineteenth-century writers and their successors have been engaged in a continuous discussion in which there has been considerable agreement on the nature of the problems to be faced, the procedures and concepts of analysis, the values to be sought and the evils to be eliminated. This community of preoccupations constitutes a tradition of discourse.[44]

Instead of repeating the problems with such an adherence to the tradition, I want to stress, in this context, the productive dimension of this conception.

By focusing on what the theorists have in common, rather than on how they differ politically, Wolin becomes involved in the constitutive aspects of political discourse; a politics of interpretation rather than an ideological politics; how "the political" is constituted rather than what it is about. In an almost Nietzschean (and post-structuralist) fashion, he tries to identify the most fundamental presuppositions of contemporary political theory and outline the conceptual foundation that frames a variety of political perspectives. He contends, for example, that, with some crucial exceptions, (there are always crucial exceptions in claims of this sort), 19th and 20th century political thinkers were "...in varying degree, animated by the conviction that the study of society could be advanced if its practitioners succeeded in assimilating the spirit and general methods employed in the more 'exact' sciences.

By means of observation, classification of data, and testing, social phenomena could be made to yield 'laws' predicting the future course of events."[45] This is all familiar. For Wolin, however, this positivistic bias is a most important ingredient in the decline of politics (as understood by him), a theme which has farreaching consequences for his entire theoretical corpus.

> The belief that there existed discoverable "laws" governing social phenomena; that the operation of these laws was "necessary" in the sense that to resist them was to invite social calamities; and that consequently, these laws carried prescriptive injunctions to which men ought to conform --all these added up to a view of society which left no room either for politics and the practice of the political art, or for a distinctively political theory. "In the old system," Saint-Simon declared, "society is governed essentially by men; in the new it will no longer be governed except by principles."[46]

Given Wolin's opposition to Plato's "external" criterion for judging politics, we should hardly be surprised by this characterization of a scientistic or positivistic politics. The latter is incompatible with Wolin's definition--his "politics of conciliation." If we find politics to be inherently imperfect, inexact, and controversial, there is little wonder that the positivistic idea of a scientific law-like knowledge of politics appears seriously flawed with its rigid presuppositions and technical-administrative solutions to socio-political conflicts. This dichotomy between a pragmatic imperfect politics of conciliation and

an "objective" political science is an organizing theme and a polemical opposition throughout Wolin's writings.

And it is certainly the case that if we accept Wolin's more classical and open-ended (but still rhetorical) notion of a politics of conciliation we are equipped with an understanding of politics that inevitably undermines and frustrates any attempt to develop a positivistic science of politics. It is also the case that a politics of conciliation does not specify any particular kind of politics as the correct one; it is, on some very important level, a noncommitted perspective, while the search for scientific solutions to political conflicts or the desire for a law-like science of politics implies a final end, however distant, to the idea of politics as an ongoing process that tries to recognize and reconcile the opposing interests and diverse perspectives of a community.

VIII

Another current in contemporary political theory, according to Wolin, is the concern with organization. A self-evident assertion, perhaps, but it is not the identification of the issue as such that is of primary interest; it is, of course, what Wolin does to it and with it that is significant, and then nothing is neutral or apolitical. It

is how Wolin interprets the role organization plays for the different political theorists--from Lenin to de Maistre--that are polemical and productive. And it illustrates his rhetorical use of "the tradition" for the purpose of a critique of contemporary political discourse. The following paragraph can serve as an example:

> Whatever difference there were in diagnosis and prescription, most of the major writers were agreed on the general formula--organization: organization of a socialist commonwealth where competition and private ownership of the instruments of production were abolished and work was administered along more rational lines; organization of society into a vast hierarchy of authority where, as de Maistre would have it, king and pope, assisted by a public-spirited aristocracy, would reinstitute stability and peace (or, substitute Comtes's hierarchy of savant-priests, and the point is the same); organization of society on the basis of professional and producing groups, as Durkheim suggested; or, as many recent writers have urged, organization of society under the control of managerial elites who alone possessed the requisite knowledge for maintaining social equilibrium in an age of successive technological revolutions. The primacy assumed by the idea of organization was not the achievement of any one school but of many. Each of us, as members of societies dominated by organized units, is part socialist, part managerialist, part sociologist. Organizational man is a composite.[47]

The strongly committed tone of this passage makes the reader wonder how much of Wolin's "community of discourse" is a matter of the manner and style in which the analysis itself constitutes this "community," and how much can be said to be present in that discourse prior to the interpretation. The question is, from a hermeneutical perspective, uninteresting, because the dichotomy is in its turn already a

prejudiced way of seeing. Interpretation of the tradition is always a blending of the past and the present into an apparent unity that gives the impression of continuity or, for that matter, innovation.

From a post-structuralist vantage point we must even question if not the use of "the past" is itself so contemporary and such a gigantic construct that what we end up with, in for example Wolin's text, is not a history as much as a story; a story which belongs to the genre of history of political theory, but which perhaps should be more accurately perceived as a form of political fiction (which does not make it any less "real" or less "true"). And this is not to say that Wolin distorts previous thinkers to suit his own fancy--the question addressed here must be seen as situated beyond distortion in the sense of misrepresentation or falsification. (Even Habermas is unambiguous on this score: "I believe that I make the foreign tongues my own in a rather brutal manner, hermeneutically speaking. Even when I quote a good deal and take over other terminologies I am clearly aware that my use of them often has little to do with the authors' original meaning."[48]) Wolin does not really clarify what exactly he does add to the theories that he utilizes. The text is relatively silent on this issue, but nowhere is the claim made that the work is not interpretive and committed; on the contrary, Wolin explicitly calls the inquiry an interpretive one.

In any case, the polemical quality of Politics and

Vision is not political in any obvious left-right manner; the reader would be hard put to position the book ideologically. (This lack of obviousness and predictability in argumentation is no doubt part of the strength and depth of the text and confirms Wolin's own point regarding "the fetish of ideological interpretation.") Nevertheless, Wolin remains within an interpretive "community of discourse," a community that has no strict or visible boundaries but that has as its core, I would assume, an academic constituency of social and political theorists. It is primarily within this discourse that Politics and Vision stands and falls, and it is especiallly to this discursive community that the text adds meaning. This "additional meaning" is by no means a stable notion; it contains, for one thing, what we can call Wolin's own horizon--his political theory--but it is also dependent on the reception by that amorphous "interpretive community" without which the text would literally disappear. The work can only add something to the discourse of political theory if it is perceived as convincing, challenging, interesting, or whatever, by the heterogeneous group of readers that in various ways sets the "standards" of the genre or discipline.

But neither the standards, nor the genre, nor the discipline are without an elusive core, and Politics and Vision enters into several different discursive contexts and contains a multiplicity of polemical purposes, only some of

which fall strictly within political theory as either a tradition or as a sub-discipline of political science. In fact, one recurring purpose of Wolin's writings seems to be to take political theory out of the category of "sub-discipline" and make it central to political discourse--or politics--in general. This often involves Wolin in a double-edged battle: he has to show convincingly, first of all, that political theory as a body of knowledge can contribute to our understanding of contemporary politics, and, secondly, that it leads to a critique of mainstream political science which he perceives as insufficiently theoretical and therefore incapable of understanding both its epistemological underpinnings and the political world it (unseccessfully) tries to analyze. In Wolin's narrative, the politics of the profession is intertwined with the politics of the world, and it is political theory that "understands" the connection. With this in mind, let us return to Wolin's discussion of "organization" in contemporary theory.

The theme of organization is developed in conjunction with the quest for community, another key concept for modern political thought (and for Wolin). After having discussed how the two concepts exist as both opposing and complementary urges in the 19th and 20th century political mind, Wolin returns to Rousseau to illustrate, in Weberian fashion, the "ideal" theory of community and also to lay the foundation for his own theory of "the sublimation of

politics" in contemporary Western society. "In community and in organization modern man has fashioned substitute love-objects for the political. The quest for community has sought refuge from the notion of man as a political animal; the adoration of organization has been partially inspired by the hope of finding a new form of civility."[49]

On the one side of the argument, Wolin interprets Rousseau as having formulated a radical defense for "the tradition of close community"; a tradition containing "writers who have been appalled at the consequences of large-scale, impersonal aggregates, who prefer the pulsating life of the small group to the cold, exterior unity of massive institutions....The community must be designed to satisfy man's feelings, to fulfill his emotional needs."[50] Via Fourier's "le groupisme," Wolin then connects Rousseau's theory of community to Durkheim and the origins of modern sociology: "Durkheim has been the medium, so to speak, by which Rousseau has left his mark on modern social science."[51] In Durkheim's version, the virtues of "group life" become the solution for egotism as well as the means to restore and instill a moral sense into the people; self and society were to merge into an indivisible unity. Rousseau's "general will" and Durkheim's "collective conscience" display, in Wolin's inquiry, a significant continuity and, as an idea and central concern, survive and continue to influence today's social science. Both concepts

were designed to have their origin and base in "the community" and also to represent something beyond and higher than the will and values of individuals. This superior and communal status justified their coersive and regulating qualities: "...in being coerced into complying with the command of the general will, the individual was made to do what he would want to do if he were capable of modifying his own egotism...the collective conscience was 'the work of the community,' and coersion employed on its behalf was legitimate because it was coersion at the service of morality, not of wealth or strength."[52]

Wolin then utilizes and extends this aspect of Rousseau's idea of the community in order to further accentuate the presuppositions of modern social science, and in the process draw the parimeter of his own perspective. He argues that Rousseau conceived the sense of community and its general will in impersonal terms because he wished to "approximate...the independence, equality, and freedom of the natural condition," a condition in which "authority and power resided solely in impersonal nature" and where human beings were "subject to the general laws of nature" but independent of each other. This desire to ground the ideal community in nature and "things" rather than in persons, is in Wolin's reading a prophetic element in a much larger schemata; "...it foreshadowed one of modernity's basic articles of faith: that to be dependent on some impersonal force--call it 'history,' 'necessity,' 'World-Spirit,' 'laws

of nature,' or 'society'--is to commune with reality and to experience 'true' freedom."[53] In other words, out of one ideal and foundational fiction--the state of nature--Rousseau derived a second: an ideal of autonomy and natural freedom that required the sense of community to be impersonal, and dependent, in its turn, on a third, equally constitutive fiction, "the general will." "The general will, like the forces of nature, disdained to deal with particular objects, but, with a majestic impersonality, confined itself to generalized ends common to all."[54]

By making the general will impersonal and responsible for "the common" issues of a society or community, Rousseau drove a wedge into the position that politics and power are merely a question of private or party interests. The general will made it possible to perceive the common interest as separated from and "outside" particular interests. (As The Social Contract reminds us: "It was the habit of most Greek cities to confer on foreigners the task of framing their laws."[55]) The will to community thus represents an urge to, on the one hand, bring people close together and alert them to what they share and have in common, and, on the other, to identify a "public interest" that is free from individual and particular desires.

It is difficult to evaluate the power of this urge, either in the literature of political theory or political discourse in general; it is even more troublesome to decide

how to characterize such a fundamental "idea" or "ideal." Any attempt to delineate its meaning is endlessly controversial and contestable. Nevertheless, we do not seem to be able to do without it as a constitutive and architectonic--what should we label it?--meta-trope. It is as permanent as any concept in "the great code" of political theory, but also so fluid that to assume continuity of its use in different contexts is itself an attempt to stabilize it for one's own strategical purposes. But to do without it appears equally difficult; it is plausible to suggest that a will to community underlies, for example, Habermas' notion of "the ideal speech situation," Gadamer's identification with "the tradition," and Wolin's own "politics of conciliation." If we are to view this theme as something more than a trope whose function is to structure and give stability to the stories we tell about politics and the political, we probably have to resort to notions like a political instinct, or a constitutive interest; in either way, there is something unavoidable and metaphysical in the role played by this recurring quest for community. It fascinates and elludes our grasp. In addition, it seems to imply its opposite: the idea of alienation or estrangement, of not belonging, of not being at home. In other words, the urge towards community as the desire to overcome alienation.

Here is Wolin's summary of the contemporary residue of the will to community:

> Perhaps it was because Rousseau had rekindled some widespread and deeply felt need for a close community that we find succeeding writers returning time and again to the main elements of Rousseau's conception and stressing once more the high value of social solidarity, the necessary subordination of the individual to the group, the importance of impersonal dependence, the redemptive vocation of membership, and the benefits accruing from a close identification between individual and aggregate. The quest for community undertaken by so many writers, who have reflected so many different political persuasions, suggests that Rousseau's conception of community has turned into a specter haunting the age of organization, a continuing critic of the sort of life lived within large-scale, depersonalized units, a reminder that human needs demanded more than rational relationships and efficient routines.[56]

Whatever else it is, the quest for community is a grand interpretive theme of political theory, and serves as a myth that even (or maybe especially) the most sophisticated political discourse accepts as somehow essential to a reasonable political practice. Not accidentally, a commitment to reason--"communicative reason," "the ideal speech situation" (Habermas)--often forms part of the same "metaphysical" code. When we reach the will to community in the name of reason in a theorist's edifice, we have as a rule hit rock bottom in "the architectonic impulse"--the latter does not seem to include a deconstruction of its own cornerstones. Political theory, which traditionally reflects on the very foundation of politics and the political, appears unable to turn that impulse back on its own constitutive assumptions.

IX

In Wolin's account, "organization" (another meta-trope) inherits some traits of "community" but also shifts the discursive grounds on to a different plane. Not too unlike the will to community, and also not too far removed from much classical political theory in general, the will to organization reflects a desire for order, a desire to prevent political instability and disintegration: "...organization theory was born in response to the troubled aftermath of the French Revolution; it carried many of the birth marks of the traditional search of political theory for order."[57] However, the power of organization reaches beyond order and stability, into a realm which, like the general will, transcends individual interests, but also, unlike the general will, provides a path away from politics and conflicts towards scientific principles, administration, and planning. Organization becomes a way to "rationally" and "objectively" control and rechannel the irrational and the subjective; to depersonalize the personal or dehumanize the human. "According to contemporary writers, organization does more than increase man's power or compensate for his shortcomings; it is a grand device for transforming human irrationalities into rational behavior. Planning, which is organization in the socialist idiom, is described by

Mannheim as the 'rational mastery of the irrational.'"[58]

Again we are confronted with an attempt to define rationality in highly specific and narrow terms; this time the undertaking is made in the name of organization, efficiency and administration. And, as is so often the case with definitions of reason and rationality, the attempt is self-serving and tautological, and hides a tendentious foundation. "For by representing the organization as the epitome of rationality, as being that which man is not, organization theory has succeeded in creating a standard for non-human excellence."[59] In so far as the individual fits into this organizational-administrative vision at all, it is as a predictable and law-like entity--as a socially engineered subject. In other words: the rational individual is an organized, monitored and controlled individual; an absolutely stable subject.

Without explicitly stating so, Wolin's narrative (or story) has taken us from Rousseau's notions of the general will and the quest for community, stressed the impersonal element embodied in these ideas, moved from this "ideal" of community to another "ideal," that of organization, and here, too, focused his attention on the non-human implication, this time of organization theory. From this position he formulates two more parallels or connections involving organization, again without being particularly explicit as to the continuity and character of these relationships; nevertheless, the argument is reasonable--too

reasonable?--and coherent--too coherent?--as well as offers a polemical vantage point for his opposition to a scientific approach to politics and society.

First of all, Wolin sees a correlate between organization theory and theories of methodology. "What organization is supposed to accomplish for human behavior and society, method supplies for inquiries into society and behavior."[60] In the manner that organization theory provides its version of rational, universal means of maximizing order and efficiency, methodology offers what it calls rational, systematic, and universal rules for producing order and results in social science. And both organization and method have a timeless or ahistorical prejudice--they declare their knowledge to be valid and true regardless of context and time. Similarly, method is as impersonal and independent of the subjective individual as organization, and is formulated partly as a response to the idiosyncracies and unpredictable turns and whims of the personal and egotistical. In addition, the parallel extends to the phenomenon of leveling: adherence to strict rules of methods and principles of organization raises the (intellectual) level of the average human capacity and the capacity of the community as a whole, but lowers and inhibits the potential of the talented and eccentric person.

This denigration and suspicion of the "irrational," "deviant" or "unintegrated" individual is, besides being a logical consequence of the emphasis on generalities and

aggregates in methods and organization, also the outcome of a general exaltation of the social and society which has been, according to Wolin, prominent in Western thought since Burke and the French Revolution. The same tendency is reinforced by the development of so-called functionalism which views social and political aspects of reality in terms of "function" and "disfunction," the implication being that the former is desirable and the latter is not. Individuals and entire groups or classes are judged by their social function or disfunction and proclaimed rational or irrational, timely or obsolete, depending on their social utility or their contribution to the social "system." In Wolin's rather seamless theoretical web this is tantamount to a form of "theoretical genocide": in the name of social theory and social science, large groups of people are being "objectively" judged and found inadequate.

> The belief that individuals could be classified as "functional" and "disfunctional" continued throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century and steadily assumed more ominous tones. Certain groups and classes were selected for extinction or harsh social sanctions. In the writings of the Utopian Socialists, Marx, Proudhon, communists, and managerialists, there is the same Olympian ruthlessness as, first, aristocracy, then peasantry, then capitalists, then kulaks, and then intellectuals were abstracted, formed into a group, found wanting in some crucial respect, and discarded.[61]

Wolin's second correlate between method and organization theory is drawn with regard to modern theory of

constitutionalism. In this, perhaps less convincing, argument, the claim is made that constitutionalist theory is the product of the same "fears" and "hopes" that inspired organizational theory and methodology, and contain the same leveling tendencies and the same impersonal qualities. Wolin sums up his position as follows:

> Constitutional theory is both a variant of organizational theory and a political methodology. The existence of these affinities is confirmed in the strong fascination constitutionalists have had for the idea of applying scientific methods to the study of politics....My point is that constitutionalists have been especially susceptible to the lures of scientific method because of an assumption that a constitutional system provides a field of phenomena, so to speak, which is uniquely receptive to scientific methods.[62]

Whatever objections that can be raised against these assertions, which, incidentally, are all backed up by respectable quotations and reasonable arguments, this part of the text functions primarily to strengthen and to advance Wolin's somewhat disguised critique of the general direction of modern political theory.

The entire final chapter of Politics and Vision is a variation on the theme or nexus organization-community-science-methodology, with the concept of organization at the center. After having argued for the continuity in the relationship between organization, method, and constitutionalism, Wolin once again returns to the notions of community and organization, this time to show how the political theorists reacted to the upheavals of the industrial revo-

lution with its economic individualism and unrestrained egotism. In the face of increased selfishness, social fragmentation and communal disintegration, the will to community reasserts itself in the 19th century social theorists; the desire for order and stability emerges in the midst of disorder and social turmoil. Economic rationalism --and/or capitalist theory--is attacked as insufficient as a theory of society and ethics, and Wolin argues that one underlying issue of modern political theorists is the problem of how to restore "communal solidarity in the industrial age."[63]

It is this longing for solidarity that is now treated in relation to organization theory. Wolin divides today's organizational theorists into organicists and rationalists; it is particularly the former that display an urge to make the organization serve the purpose of community--the organization ought "to promote the values of social stability, cohesion, and integration."[64] The rationalists have a less moralistic style and take a more instrumental attitude; for them organizations exist for specific purposes, and efficiency is the important criterion. For the rationalist, organization is primary: what is best for the organization is best for the community. Both the organicists and the rationalists meet in their common conviction that "...the world created by organizational bureaucracies is and should be run by elites."[65]

It is obvious here that Wolin is busy drawing caricatures--or, at least, overdrawn Weberian ideal types--for the purpose of advancing his relentless struggle against all forms of excessive rationalism and scientism, and in the process he himself is contributing to a rather uniform and orderly pattern or matrix of the history of social thought. In the name of a critique of science and rationalism, Wolin tells a saga that itself is all too linear and all too rational.

X

At this point, Wolin returns to a central theme of his which is both a questionable and a highly productive aspect of his perspective: the sublimation of politics and the decline of political theory in contemporary society. This theme is crucial in understanding other writings of his, and his sometimes adamant opposition and excessive hostility to a science of politics which includes, what he calls, the methodists of the discipline of political science. The lament that political theory is on the decline is not unique to Wolin but emerges among several contemporary theorists, and it teaches us something about the status of conventional political theory as a genre and about the self-understanding of "political theory as a vocation."[66] It also ensnares

political theory in some theoretical difficulties which remain unresolved and give a paradoxical cast to today's theorizing. We will have reasons to return to this issue momentarily.

One architectonic impulse underlying Wolin's notion of a decline of both politics and political theory in the modern era is his assumption that there ought to be in a society an "autonomous political order" and consequently an autonomous political discourse (or theory) free from, e.g., religious thoughts and problems, and free from other "external" nonpolitical ingredients. This idea produces both insights and dilemmas. His purism with regard to "the political"--in spite of the relative openness of his definition--leads to a limited conception of contemporary political discourse, but it has the distinct advantage of appreciating and capturing the interpretive and constructed foundation for politics. Politics, Wolin seems to be saying, is what a community, with all its inherent conflicts and interests, constructs politics to be, but it is also, and this is paradoxical, something far more universal and timeless which can be in decline, on the rise, or "sublimated." The latter seems to imply that there is a criterion for what politics and the political "really" are, and it appears that "the tradition" of political theory--not the community--provides this standard.

Wolin's adherence to an interpretive perspective on politics and his commitment to the tradition give a doubly

critical distance to especially political science in so far as it pretends to be an objective science, but also to the presuppostitions of contemporary politics. At the same time, however, the use of the tradition as criterion sometimes fails to appreciate the radical extent to which political theory have changed as well as survived--not declined or been sublimated--in the contemporary context. But regardless of the stregths and weaknesses of Wolin's conception, what needs to be understood is the polemical and rhetorical function of any particular definition of either theory or politics.

In Wolin's case then, we have a specific notion of politics--a politics of conciliation--and a definite idea of what constitutes the superior discourse about politics--the tradition of political philosophy--and these two "prej-udices" work polemically together to criticize and challenge, for example, a politics based on private interests, or a conception that treats political issues as problems of administration. To talk about a "decline of political theory" and a "sublimation of politics" is to partake in politics, and Wolin's discourse is always also a politics of discourse. In spite of the claim of a decline in theory, Wolin is himself a theorist in the classical tradition, involved if not in "laying foundations" certainly in maintaining them, and if not "an author of political presuppositions" at least an interpreter of fundamental assumptions.

We remember Wolin's objection to a Platonic view of politics and his own commitment to a politics of conciliation. Throughout Politics and Vision, there is a consistent defense of this conception of politics. The chapter on Machiavelli, for example, contains a further elaboration on both what an "autonomous" political theory ought to include and exclude, and what the nature is of the political.

Sixteenth century Italy presented an opportunity for the political theorists to formulate a theory of politics that was free of religious considerations and that therefore was capable of interpreting politics from a "clean" perspective. Machiavelli's writings represent, for Wolin, "...the first great experiment in 'pure' political theory." For one thing, Machiavelli developed a new language of politics due to his conviction that the concepts and vocabulary of previous thinkers "...had ceased to be meaningful because they no longer dealt with phenomena that were truly political."[67] Machiavelli rejected religious criteria for politics, he opposed hereditary monarchs, and was hostile to the aristocracy without basing his own politics on any specific class' inherent political rights. This became a formidable commitment of the new theory: that it was independent of and removed from any class or group interests, and that his reflections existed, so to speak, solely for the sake of politics itself.

It was a theory of the political that saw its subject matter as a problematic rather than as a choice between competing ideologies, and thus encouraged a type of analysis that we can call "perspectivism" and that discouraged a final verdict as to what should constitute a correct politics. In Wolin's words: "...the vantage point which Machiavelli sought for political theory was to come from its being inspired by a problem orientation rather than an ideological orientation. A problem has several facets, an ideology a central focus."[68] In a sense, Machiavelli wrote a manual of politics, a detached analysis of the techniques and tools of politics, and here, appears to have anticipated modern political science, but with the crucial difference that he infused his theory with a passionate moral purpose that is especially discernible when he wrote about national renewal and regeneration.

This underlying passion and purpose Wolin interprets as a commitment to the vocation of the political theorist, indirectly expressed through an intense concern for what happens to a people in an age of political corruption. This dedication to the vocation parallels the concern for politics as a problem and seems to come down to a profound concentration upon and an obsession with "the political condition," but in no sense can this dedication be labelled objective or disinterested. Contrary though it may sound, Machiavelli's political theory was detached and committed at

the same time: ideologically detached but politically committed; the latter meaning committed to politics--politics understood, however, in the Machiavellian grain.

Structuring Machiavelli's writings was certainly a will to truth about politics, but a "truth" of a very special disposition due to the essence of politics itself. Machiavelli's epoch was one of instability where "political nature now lay exposed as orderless and near-anarchic."[69] In his search for order in politics--as we know, a recurrent impulse and prejudice among political theorists--Machiavelli followed the tradition, but deviated in his search for a new language in which to discuss and frame the political order as well as in his stress on the irrational and unpredictable element--Fortuna--at the core of politics, orderly or disorderly. The new Machiavellian "political metaphysic" freed itself from any attachments to a systematic philosophy, and formulated instead a distinctly political "science," a science, however, that had little to do with modern scientific principles. An anti-platonic attitude permeated Machiavelli's theory in its emphasis on the flux and constant change of political events. Political reality, to put it simply, could not be reduced to stable laws or timeless truths--a position which I also attribute to Wolin. "Political action took place in a world without a permanent basis for action, without the comforting presence of some underlying norm of reality to which men could adjust or from which they could draw firm rules of conduct."[70]

The search for stability and constants were thus founded on illusions concerning the nature of politics, and it led Machiavelli to a "scientific" analysis (read interpretation) of these illusions, but not, as one might expect, in the name of a stable truth about politics, but rather in order to understand how these illusions could be both detrimental and an asset to the political actor who wanted to gain power and influence. In so far as this knowledge could be said to unmask--Wolin uses the term--these illusions, it was to expose the dangers and to make visible the opportunities that they presented to the keen political mind, to somebody who could interpret an unstable and precarious situation with perceptive and cunning eyes. There was, however, no true face behind the masks, no reality underneath the illusions; only a prudent and interpretive grasp of the workings of the illusions, or of the use and abuse of the masks.

From this perspective, there were aspects of political "reality" that could not be controlled or fully understood; aspects that in a Nietzschean fashion decentered reality and made truth and justice ambiguous, elusive and constructed phenomena. Fortuna, for example, introduced an uncertain and impossible-to-pin-down element in all political undertakings, as did unruly human ambitions and insatiable desires. All in all, a dynamic imagery replaced a static one in the discourse of politics, and the insights and

knowledge that could be taught and possessed about politics were in the nature of historical and practical examples; i.e., "...there existed a timeless body of examples, a set of models tested not so much by experience as by their historically demonstrated consequences."[71]

The above displays an apparent similarity with Wolin's own view of political theory as a form of political education, and illustrates why declaring political theory true or false is inappropriate within this framework. A political theory is not as much "right" or "wrong" as it provides the reader--or "the interpretive community"--with a certain perspective of and on political discourse, a political story, a set of political reflections, or whatever, and its "validity" is its own strength as an example or illustration of how politics can be talked (or, rather, written) about, at the same time as it tries to reconstitute the political discourse itself; it tries to convince that politics, or some aspect of politics, ought to be talked about in a different way. The plurality of perspectives endorsed in such an understanding of political discourse leads, of course, to a necessary opposition to all forms of universal, ahistorical and dogmatic approaches to political knowledge (or science). The truth about politics, in other words, cannot be told. Instead we have to settle for political discourse as a limitless multiplicity of interpretations whose strengths and weaknesses are a com-

bination of "insight and blindness" (to speak with de Man)--political discourse as endless visions and revisions, readings and rereadings.

So also with Politics and Vision; it is Wolin's re-reading and revision of a selected number of classical theorists and his view of what the political is and should be, all mixed together into a rather lax historical narrative, notwithstanding a rigorous and grave tone of voice throughout the book; it is Wolin's own contemporary saga of "the tradition" and "the political." It, too, naturally, has its bright and dark areas, but if our claims with regard to discourse and interpretation are, so to say, reasonable, then it could not be otherwise.

In my reading of Wolin, I take him to use Machiavelli to accentuate and delineate the contours of his own notion of political theory, and he does this through a format that is consistent with his own teaching; namely through the use of examples from the tradition, and thus tries to make a case for viewing the classical texts in political theory as a form of political education.

Although Wolin clearly appreciates (and finds compatible with his own position) Machiavelli's conception of political knowledge as ambiguous, flexible, and historical, he objects to its "external," anti-political dimension: "...political phenomena existed to be mastered and controlled."[72] Rather than constructing and formulating political presuppositions on which to build a political

discourse and a politics, Machiavelli developed a set of (external) practical rules or precepts to be adopted by the political actor; rather than the presence of an "architectonic impulse," there was in Machiavelli a manipulative urge to control and dominate. In other words, Machiavelli did not sufficiently cherish the extent to which politics must be "a politics of conciliation."

The realm of the political, in Machiavelli, was independent enough from other spheres of human experience to warrant a uniquely political ethic based on political knowledge which was founded on prudence and historical insights. This ethic, however, was of a different quality than personal rules of conduct, and demanded on occasion a conscious breaking of the conventional ethic governing the prudent individual "outside" of politics. But it was not political power for power's sake that motivated Machiavelli's defense of "evil," nor was the manipulation and control of the people by the rulers seen purely as a matter of "technical efficiency"--as, for example, in today's managerialists. The purpose of politics--whether good or evil--was not power and control for its own sake but for the preservation of society pitched in a nationalistic key. Besides a passion for the uniquely political, a vague but intense nationalism and a desire for social order and survival were the "metaphysical" underpinnings of Machiavelli's political science.

To the degree that politics turned manipulative and a chauvinistic nationalism became the criterion for politics, Wolin invokes his dichotomy of external vs. internal to show the limits of Machiavelli's interpretation. An autonomous political realm cannot appeal to an abstract nationalism or to the values of dominating and manipulating rulers for judging what is, or what is to be done. Both measuring rods are "external" and not sufficiently intrinsic to politics seen as a "pure" independent sphere of human endeavor.

The search for order, this most common and basic theme of the political theory tradition, is, to be sure, compatible with a politics of conciliation in the general sense that there can be no politics or community without some kind of order, and Wolin writes sympathetically about Machiavelli's efforts to establish a politics which could accommodate ever-present hostile or conflicting interests on the basis of a community with common ends. The creation of this civic virtue, however, was perceived as an "external" question--external to the citizens that is. By utilizing the internal/external figure of speech, Wolin points out a novel feature in the Machiavellian world view: "...politics has become external to its participants." And: "...the promotion of man's interior life did not belong to the province of the political..."[73]

> Machiavelli's conception of civic virtue marked an important stage in the development of modern political thought and practice, for it symbolized an

> end to the old alliance between statecraft and soul-craft. Henceforth it would be increasingly taken for granted that while the cultivation of souls and personalities might be a proper end of man, it did not provide the focus of political action. This can be stated more strongly by saying that the new science was not conceived as the means to human perfectibility.[74]

Wolin attributes this strain in Machiavelli to a sense of realism, and places him together with Hobbes, Locke and Hume in "a tradition singularly devoid of illusions about man's political condition."[75] This detachment of theory from the political illusions and the lack of concern for the soul of the individual is, in Wolin's reading, a sign of man's alienation from politics and explains the "amoral" reputation of Machiavelli's theory, but it also reveals how theory frees itself from any particular ideological position--theory becomes a vocation--and expresses a realistic appreciation for the need to use both violence and deception in politics. Wolin shows at length that Machiavelli was not advocating violence purely for the sake of attaining or maintaining power. Instead it was the virtue of Machiavelli to have recognized, in stoic Weberian fashion, the role of violence at the very core of power politics, and also to have realized that the instability of politics sometimes demands the use of force in order to avert greater calamities and injustices and in order to protect the community against internal and external threats.

This "economy of violence" gives Wolin's chapter on Machiavelli its title and main theme, and represents

Machiavelli's no-nonsense realism concerning the significance of political violence when we are dealing with power and the state. Wolin argues that this is a rare accomplishment among political theorists who tend to sweep under the rug the role of violence as a means to gain or maintain political power. "Indeed, it has been and remains one of the abiding concerns of the Western political theorist to weave ingenious veils of euphemism to conceal the ugly fact of violence." And: "That the application of violence is regarded as abnormal represents a significant achievement of the Western political tradition, yet if it is accepted too casually it may lead to neglect of the primordial fact that the hard core of power is violence and to exercise power is often to bring violence to bear on someone else's person or possessions."[76]

Machiavelli's comprehension of the inevitable presence of violence in politics and his conviction that one had to learn to accept the use of violence for the purpose of maintaining oneself in a position of power were consistent with his view that the political realm was unstable, precarious and irrational, and could only be approached with a combination of prudence and a willingness to apply resolute force when deemed necessary. His central theoretical tenets, then, were directly dependent on the picture he painted--or story he told--of "the nature" of the political world.

Part of Wolin's praise for and use of Machiavelli's political theory is rooted in the latter's ethical "realism"; i.e., his rejection of the search for human perfectability, his sensitivity towards the enigmatic qualities of politics, his realization that violence is not an exception but the rule in obtaining and holding on to power, that this violence had to be applied selectively and with caution, and that the criterion of "whether violence had been rightly used was whether cruelties increased or decreased over time."[77] The "economy of violence" was thus motivated by a moral concern, and not an irresponsible defense of violence in the name of power, and Wolin is opposed to the stereotyped image of Machiavelli as an amoral and cynical defender of power and violence for the sake of the ruler. Instead Wolin shows how Machiavelli's thinking was sensitive to the dilemma faced by the political actor who often must choose between the lesser of two evils, and who cannot follow the dictates of private morality but must perhaps, under certain extreme circumstances, do "evil," that is, "break the moral law," in order to maintain order and stability in the polity as a whole.

Machiavelli came to the conclusion that what was needed was a distinct political ethic that should not be confused with traditional ethical notions; "the irony of the political condition" cried out for its own morals. In politics, the outcome of particular acts could not be predicted and often conventional virtuous acts would turn

into their evil opposites. As he wrote in a poem:

> Always so: evil follows good; good evil;
> And each is of the other the sole cause.[78]

The ethical criteria for the political sphere had to be developed from within politics; they "...could not be imported from the 'outside.'"[79]

With the aid of Machiavelli, Wolin has further accentuated what he, in my reading, holds to be necessary elements of a political theory that has thoroughly understood its subject matter. A politics of conciliation has to recognize the presence of irreconcilable conflicts in society--conflicts for which there exist no final solutions but which can only be managed, postponed, temporarily resolved, and accepted by all concerned as inevitable but possible to live with. "A republic, as Machiavelli noted, presupposed divisions, and hence could not be kept to a perfect unity of purpose."[80] In entering politics, whether as a theorist or as a prince, one is moving inside a unique realm--the political--that demands its own ethic, its own knowledge, and its own acting. Only political criteria can be applied to the political sphere, and at the center of the latter there are unpredictable and irrational factors, such as Fortuna, and necessità. "By necessità [Machiavelli] did not mean a form of determinism, but rather a set of factors challenging man's political creativity, manageable only if man treated them as strictly political, excluding all else

from his span of attention."[81] Only then could the prudent and cunning political actor develop and use his virtu in confronting both unpredictable and elusive Fortuna and squarely face the demands of necessità.

That a lot hinges here on the important question of what is to fall "inside" and "outside" such a contestable notion as "the political sphere" should draw our attention to the constitutive role of the inside/outside metaphor and to the importance of how "the political" is defined. Both the politics of demarcation and the use of organizing tropes are as unavoidably rhetorical and committed as they are discursively necessary. "The political" cannot be observed or described as a "thing"; it is not a stable object whose boundaries and central properties can be constituted within a noncontroversial paradigm. The relative consensus that might be temporarily reached concerning the meaning of the political--and I seriously doubt that even this is possible --is at best a negotiated and contextual agreement that itself is a latent political issue that might at any time become manifest. To politicize previously nonpolitical areas of society and to depoliticize the political--i.e., to put inside what was outside, and outside what was inside--is to be involved in politics. With Wolin this politics (of discourse) expresses itself through, for example, the polemical claims that politics is being sublimated and political theory is on the decline; he is dissatisfied with

the current usages of both theory and politics.

Or, perhaps better, Wolin's definition of politics and his adherence to something called "the tradition" become conceptual tools or should we say linguistic weapons in a struggle over meanings and over which discursive practice that ought to prevail in the discourse of politics. And this is not a matter of Wolin's intentions or convictions; "his" commitments are not personal, they are discursive and textual, and since they aim at the foundational aspects of political discourse--in this sense Wolin expresses an unequivocal architectonic impulse--we can say with Wittgenstein that he is engaged in an attempt to construct a new "language game." With the risk of exaggerating, we can claim that, in so far as political theory engages the very premisses of the established political discourse, it is involved in a struggle over "forms of life." This, I will argue, is especially true if we draw out the consequences of the hermeneutical and post-structuralist arguments. Wolin certainly attacks the presuppositions of contemporary political science and theory, but does not take the complete leap into challenging political theory as a whole, including the myth of the tradition. In the name of theory, political theory itself must be scrutinized, or, if we prefer, deconstructed.

Two qualifications are necessary: first of all, it is not particularly clear what the consequences of recent hemeneutics and post-structuralist thought are on political

theorizing; in fact, the lack of a political theory might very well be what characterizes some of these philosophical efforts, and secondly, there are reasons to hesitate before imputing "a position" to Wolin's diverse and erudite interpretations. One practical implication of the aesthetic drift is not to be overly concerned with "positions," and explicit ideological stands. It is the style of these postures and their manner of expression that reveal how we came to where we stand, and it is the style of argument and the tropes and codes we subscribe to that shape the form of life that is embodied in our discourse. As the rhetoric of Adorno has it with regard to philosophy:

> Philosophy serves to bear out an experience which Schoenberg noted in traditional musicology: one really learns from it only how a movement begins and ends, nothing about the movement itself and its course. Analogously, instead of reducing philosophy to categories, one would in a sense have to compose it first. Its course must be a ceaseless self-renewal, by its own strength as well as in friction with whatever standard it may have. The crux is what happens in it, not a thesis or a position--the texture, not the deductive or inductive course of one-track minds. Essentially, therefore, philosophy is not expoundable.[82]

The tone and the temper of Wolin's writings might thus be more important for understanding his political theory than trying to outline his "theoretical position." It is possible that in the process of doing the latter we might miss the obvious fact that Wolin's position (whatever we mean by that) is his writings, nothing more nor less.

Although a trite point, it should remind us that a position develops through a process and is not just "stated"; the stress in Gadamer, for example, on the tradition is among other things an appreciation of the process that made us what we are and on the active and practical task of understanding and interpretation. Similarly with Wolin, political theory is a critical discourse because it shows us the political framework and the political presuppositions that now hold us and whose history and construction ellude most of us. For him, political theory contains a privileged perspective which gives us ways to distance ourselves from our limited and, I think he argues, dangerous form of life. The tradition of political theory is thus immanently contemporary and practical.

But--and this is equally important--all claims as to where we are, whence we came, and where we are heading, are attempts to lure us into ways of seeing that have no other foundation than their own interpretive commitments and polemical conventions. Whether these more or less eloquent attempts at persuasion succeed is, as I have tried to argue throughout these pages, not only a matter of the structure or style of the discourse but also a question of the presuppositions and prejudices that make up the interpreter or reader. Add to this all the conventions and restrictions belonging to the various disciplines, subdisciplines and genres, and then add all the disagreements and struggles over the power and nature of these rules and codes with

their overlapping and confusing boundaries, and we find ourselves in a labyrinth of discursive practices that undermine the authority of any one set of rules or any one form of disourse. And here political theory itself is implicated and its authority as a privileged genre questioned.

Ironically--and appropriately--political theory has made its own contributions to this process of undermining discursive authorities and encouraged a general questioning of political science as a discipline but also pushed its own internal assumptions towards the point where they can no longer be strictly maintained. This might be seen as one reason why several contemporary theorists have found cause for arguing that political theory as a genre is dead or dying. Only if one adheres to a very narrow conception of what constitutes political theory, however, is this the case. If we broaden the perspective and view political theory as a type of political and theoretical writing that raise questions about the presoppositions and interpretive conventions of political discourse in general, then we can perhaps better understand both why there has been a shift away from traditional political theory and why there is so much talk of deconstruction, blurred genres, prejudiced codes, and constitutive tropes.

The undermining of established discursive practices and the questioning of the rules and codes of entrenched

political science are both the consequence and the purpose of treating political theory as a form of literature or style of writing. To further undermine the authority of conventional political discourse and to further elucidate and illustrate the aesthetic drift in contemporary social and political thought is also the purpose of the next and concluding section of this essay.

PART III

TOWARDS A POLITICS OF INTERPRETATION

> What I want to emphasize is simply that the passage beyond philosophy does not consist in turning the page of philosophy (which usually amounts to philosophizing badly), but in continuing to read philosophers in a certain way.
> (Jacques Derrida)

Some of the weaknesses and dangers of not appreciating the contemporaneous and practical dimension of theory and tradition--theory as practice--and of not treating political theory as a form of writing--theory as literature--are exemplified in John Gunnell's attempt at summing up the state of affairs of today's political theorizing.[1] In spite of having the underlying (and productive) purpose of exposing "the myth of the tradition," Gunnell's book fails to convince the reader that the theoretical projects of Strauss, Voegelin, Arendt, and Wolin are flawed and misguided. The failure is primarily due to an excessive focus by Gunnell on the intentions of the theorists--what they say they are doing rather than what they are doing--and his relying on scant summaries of the content of their theories rather than trying to appreciate their form and narrative style.

The basic target of Gunnell's criticism is the now familiar adherence by these writers (and by the academic subfield of political theory in general) to a relatively stable notion of the tradition of political theory, and their exaggerated claims that this tradition provides us with a body of knowledge which can and should serve as a basis for a critique of the present political situation; a situation that is viewed as being in a permanent state of crisis. Gunnell gives a useful account of the already discussed mythical and conventional nature of the tradition, and his assertion that there is a tendency among political theorists to take the tradition for granted, as an accomplished fact is safe and sound. He views the tradition as a construction whose meaning and significance are far from established, and he claims that the maintenance of this tradition is largely an academic enterprise with dubious motives and uncertain status. "Over the years, by academic convention, a basic repertoire of works has been selected, arranged chronologically, represented as an actual historical tradition, infused with evolutionary meaning, laden with significance derived from various symbolic themes and motifs, and offered up as the intellectual antecedents of contemporary politics and political thought."[2] It is hard to deny the validity of this description; it is also difficult to imagine that any theorist would convincingly

oppose it. More and more, the epistemological self-understanding of social science seems to be that all so-called traditions are constructions along these lines even if there are disagreements as to the actual existence or ontological status of such historical constructions.

Gunnell is especially critical of the claim that the tradition is a reasonable or natural product of the works themselves and not a convention of scholarship, and argues that "...the tradition as a scholarly convention came to be conceived as a preexisting historical phenomenon, that is, as a historical tradition."[3] It is not quite clear what damage this inflated conception of the tradition does to political theory, except perhaps gives the theorists themselves an exaggerated view of their own activity, and sometimes encourages an unjustifiably pious (and pompous?) tone among the practitioners of the genre. No doubt, as we have seen, the conviction and commitment that there is a distinct genre of classical political theory that somehow contains the wisdom and truth of politics as we have come to know it, does create a myth which, if strictly adhered to, gives the texts of political theory a privileged position within the broad discourse of politics; a position which is not necessarily earned but just plainly assumed. This bias, however, seems rather innocuous since it is merely an excessive and rhetorical claim among contemporary political theorists concerning their most cherished literature, something which has little or no bearing on the role and

function of theory as part of the discourse on politics in general. In the final analysis, the value or insight of political theory, classical or contemporary, has to prove itself on other grounds than the tradition, and through other means than self-proclamation. This is not to underestimate the detrimental effect of a hyperbolic self-understanding of what the genre of political theory is about, but the self-serving claim by some theorists concerning the privileged status of their products and subject-matter seems analogous to the not unusual insistence by some empiricists that what they are doing is strictly scientific and free from value judgments or ideology. In both cases the claims are mere broadcasts, secondary to what actually occur in each particular work, notwithstanding any initial declaration. Likewise, the orthodox Marxist who insists that his or her analysis is scientific is not judged by this proclamation but by the quality of the study itself. Nevertheless, Gunnell's criticism, as far as it goes, is a reminder that when a theorist appeals to the tradition as an authoritative standard, he is making a polemical statement and announcing a strategy that on its own has no more validity than when we appeal to "intuition," "reason," "science" or a whole range of other polemical markers as the grounding for our arguments.

This being said, it is not clear what else is being gained by attacking the notion of a political theory

tradition. The far more important issues, from my perspective, are how the tradition is being used and what meaning is being produced within and in relation to this tradition. What are the limits and possibilities in perceiving political discourse as tied to a tradition? Are there distinct rules and conventions of the genre? Is there even a clearly identifiable genre in today's political theory? Gunnell answers the last question in the affirmative and thinks that Strauss, Voegelin, Arendt, and Wolin display similarities in both form and content, similarities that override any internal disagreements and differences. He summarizes his findings as follows:

> What is more significant than any disagreements is the consensus on such matters as the historical reality of the tradition; the identification of its major participants and their role in the development or decline of the tradition; the points of the inception and demise of the tradition; the reverence for the Greeks, particularly Aristotle, and the beginning of the tradition; the aversion to modern philosophy and individuals such as Heidegger [?]; the disclaimer of any purely antiquarian interests; the insistence on the crucial relevance of historical studies; the emphasis on the tradition as a principal factor in explaining the present; the antipathy toward contemporary political and social science and its status as a rival educational instrument; the concern with the deficiencies of modern liberalism; the existence, and basic characteristics of, the modern crisis; the sense in which the crisis frees thought for a critique of the tradition; the overall pattern of the tradition as one of decline; the basic division between ancient and modern segments of the tradition and the critique of modernity; the rise of the social over the political realm in the course of the tradition; the sense in which the tradition developed the seeds of its own destruction; and the role of the historian as the transmitter and preserver of political wisdom and the remnant of political theory in the modern age.[4]

Whatever the virtue of this rather negotiable summary, it is probably a fair set of generalizations concerning an attitude that one finds among some of today's practicing political theorists, but it is worth noticing that none of the elements of this consensus refers to issues of form or style; they are all position-oriented. There is virtually no discussion in Gunnell's account of how these topics are developed in the various texts, only vague references to positions. As ideological or political standpoints, of course, these "positions" are neither particularly unique nor interesting, but, the authority they do possess does not come from their final conclusions but from the process through which they reach these conclusions, and in the case of the theorists just mentioned, readers probably often find themselves in the situation of questioning both the premises and the conclusions of the works, but nevertheless being influenced--"taken in," "disturbed," "seduced"; whatever the case might be--by what lies in between, namely the narratives.

And if the common presupposition of these theorists is an adherence to "the tradition" as an established fact, it does not change the use they make of this tradition by pointing out its mythical character. Nor is their critique of the present situation undermined by this exposure of the nature of the tradition. But again, by the same argument, there is of course no self-evident authority in an appeal to

tradition; it has to be viewed as a rhetorical interpretive strategy that has no other authority than its ability to be convincing and penetrating due to the pursuasive power of the arguments themselves, regardless of their "origins" in something nebulous called "the tradition." (But, at least in the case of Wolin, if not all of them, there is no strong commitment to a dogmatic foundation for the classical tradition. As I have already indicated, he insists that it is a constructed tradition and that his is an interpretive perspective.)

Gunnell's criticism, one is compelled to suggest, has something contradictory and superficial about it. Part of the reason for this is that it does not show or discuss the narrative and discursive effects of the strict adherence to the tradition. It appears to be his belief that the rationale and authority of political theory has largely, if not solely, been based on the unrecognized myth of the tradition: expose the mythical qualities and the tradition will lose its authority! But not quite, because Gunnell is himself not without sympathy for classical political theory. He is only critical of the claim that this body of literature forms a clearly discernible tradition. That he is not against a notion of tradition as such is obvious from his sympathetic evaluation of Gadamer's perspective, and from his own interpretations of the classics. He endorses the more loosely defined role of tradition within hermeneutics: "[Gadamer's] argument does not support the

idea of the existence of any particular tradition of effective history....The myth of the tradition would seem to violate the very openness toward the past that Gadamer advocates."[5] However, if we read political theory--contemporary and classical--in the spirit of post-structuralism, as ambiguous interpretive writings, we remove the problem of "what" it represents and focus our attention on "how" the work is constructed. From that angle, the ontological claims (if one can call them that) of political theory--for example, notions of "the nature" of politics, "the reality" of the tradition, and "the decline" of politics--all partake in an ambiguous and polemical code whose grid-like and constitutive prejudices need to be deciphered and interpreted, not merely dismissed. Through such a reading, the following passage from Wolin's concluding remarks in Politics and Vision is saturated with politics and interpretive presuppositions:

> The contemporary social scientist tends to adopt modes of understanding and analysis that are dissective, even scholastic; he is constantly seeking intellectual classifications more manageable than the broadly political one. He is inclined to analyze men in terms of class-orientations, group-orientations, or occupational orientations. But man as member of a general political society is scarcely considered a proper subject for theoretical inquiry, because it is assumed that "local citizenship"--man as trade-unionist, bureaucrat, Rotarian, occupant of a certain income-tax bracket--is the primary or determinant influence on how man will behave as a political citizen.[6]

Here, the decline of political theory and politics is implicit in the argument, but there is no absence of politics in the passage itself, and that holds for the entire dispute concerning the decline of the tradition: it is a highly polemical claim that serves political purposes, from the strict conservative and anti-modernity approach of Strauss to the far more activist and radical writings of Wolin, and both theorists, one could argue, write within the genre of classical political theory, whether in decline or not. Furthermore, they also write contemporary theory; that is to say, their works are never conceived as "history of political theory" but have a different aim of contributing to political discourse in general. They are intended to be read as (and they do read as) contemporary and concerned with politics, however abstractly and distanced the latter is perceived. If "the tradition" is invoked, it is to furnish us with a critical perspective on the present, not to defend theory as an academic subdiscipline.

Although Gunnell stresses the practical intent of Strauss and Wolin, he does not view them as writers in the classical vein; on the contrary, he treats them as "historians" of political theory, and then criticizes them for being more than that: "The historians view their enterprise as a practical response to a modern crisis and as a search for an explanation as well as a remedy. It is a historicized replication of political theory. In many respects, this kind of literature is a surrogate for

political theory. It is an academic imitation of a particular view of classical literature, but it tends to lack the concrete and creative engagement with political problems that characterizes the original works."[7] Perhaps--but this can hardly be said for Wolin's writings, nor for Arendt's. In the case of Strauss and Voegelin, the contemporaneous and practical elements are perhaps more sublimated, but it appears a travesty to call their highly original and polemical works "a surrogate" for theory.

Gunnell's effort, however, does not clearly belong to the genre(s) of political theory, which might explain why the critique seems trivial. Its concern is primarily with the status of political theory as a subdiscipline of political science. It has no other ambition than to comment on the role and function of political theory as an academic enterprise, and it assumes that to be the place and purpose of contemporary theory. It is possible that this is an accurate description of where and under what circumstances political theories are produced, but most theorizing is firmly located within a political and philosophical problematic and not particularly concerned with how they fit into their respective niche in academe. If anything unifies Strauss, Voegelin, Arendt and Wolin, it is their common indifference to political theory as an academic subdiscipline. In fact, all four of them utilize, however excessively, "the tradition" to break away from this self-

understanding and to try to make a case for the broader relevance of theory as part of a larger political and philosophical discourse, including, perhaps, but not limited to political science. This partly explains the curious emptiness of Gunnell's text; it is as if it does not quite touch what it is supposed to criticize. The following two quotes illustrate both the limits and the insights of Gunnell's analysis:

> A question inevitably arises about the status of political theory today, but it does not deserve a great deal of attention. The question has been answered in a number of ways, but most of the arguments are ultimately unsatisfying since they tend to presuppose the intellectual context of the myth of the tradition. In some respects, the question is no longer meaningful once it is removed from this context, since it was prompted by the problem of whether the tradition had come to an end. If what is taken to constitute the literature of political theory is, as proposed here, simply analytically distinguished in terms of certain family resemblances, then to speak of a beginning, end, and future has little significance.[8]

> There is a justification for speaking of this literature, which has come down to us by academic convention, as a distinct genre and even as a tradition if we are careful to acknowledge that these are analytical reconstructions created from the standpoint of certain present concerns and criteria. Similarly, there is good reason to designate political theory as an activity and to discuss the political theorist as a kind of actor as long as it is recognized that these are ideal typifications and not preexistent historical objects. From this perspective, the question of which works belong to political theory and, particularly, which deserve to be considered classics, does not admit of any very definite answer.[9]

Ultimately and somewhat paradoxically, Gunnell's work fails for the same reason that it is (mistakenly) critical of Wolin & Co. Its main arguments are hampered by a too restricted view of political theory and they fail both to engage the reader and to contribute to a wider discourse of politics. Although Gunnell wants to free the classics from the tradition and make them relevant on their own authority, he remains concerned with political theory as an academic subdiscipline, and thus fails to interpret and evaluate the theorists as political writers. Gunnell's own book belongs to the very narrow and small genre of scope and method of the subfield of political theory, a very different type of writing from, for example, Wolin's "normative" theory, history of political theory, and the classics themselves. This is not to say that "scope and method" is an illegitimate genre, only to note its obvious limitations judged from the perspective of a broader discourse on and in politics. Ironically, Gunnell's criticism, directed as it is against the limiting and too narrow concerns of a preoccupation with "the tradition," produces a far more limited and specialized perspective than even the most antiquarian history of political theory. In the process of trying to make political theory relevant and contemporary, Gunnell reduces theory to a subfield of a subdiscipline.

II

There is of course a polemical and contestable strategy behind my designation of genres, but, even if we find ourselves in a situation of increasingly "blurred genres," the type or category of writing is not without importance. As Gunnell rightly perceives, political theory (as a subdiscipline) has been unnecessarily restricted by its tendency to define itself in relation to "the tradition" and by its noticable proclivity for writing "history of political theory."

If Wolin represents a commitment to a use of the tradition for contemporary and pragmatic-political purposes, and therefore writes in an explicitly polemical and pursuasive tone, there is another genre of contemporary theory that makes it a (rhetorical) virtue not to use the classics for anything but strictly historical research and writing. Among the theorists writing in this genre, a perspective prevails that makes political theory synonymous with <u>history</u> of political theory, but "history" understood in such a way that the explicit intentions are (fortunately) belied by the implications of the epistemological reflections. I will exemplify this type of theory through a brief discussion of two essays by J. G. A. Pocock.

In an eloquent study entitled "Languages and Their

Implications: The Transformation of the Study of Political Thought," Pocock outlines the history of what he views as, if not a revolution, at least a major upheaval in contemporary political theory. After recognizing that what he is about to attack is a literary exaggeration--"...my straw man is a methodological or narrative device..."--he proceeds to distinguish between two broad approaches in political theory; two ways of writing "theoretically" about political discourse.[10] The first and, in Pocock's view, questionable and confused approach is to treat the tradition of political theory--"a canon of major works"--as a continuous history with its own internal logic providing an independent story or "uninterrupted course" that only needs to be explicated and commented upon. "Alone among the major branches of historical study in the middle twentieth century, the history of political thought was treated as the study of a traditional canon, and the conversion of tradition into history was in this case conducted by the methods of philosophic commentary on the intellectual contents of the tradition, arbitrarily defined as philosophy."[11] This is another variation on the theme of the myth of the tradition, and in Pocock's version the problem is due to--or rather, was due to, since the solution is already with us--methodological confusion among both historians and philosophers: historians wrote about the tradition and the perennial problems of political theory as if the history of political theory was a

matter of discovering coherence and continuity among and between different texts, while philosophers wrote philosophical commentary as if it was history but without the appropriate historical research and contextual understanding.

Although certainly valid to some extent, this critique is located within a rather limited or purist notion of what the concerns of a political theorist should be. Even Pocock's own "new" political theory is placed within a perspective that attempts to keep political theory from moving beyond the genres of history of political theory. Nevertheless, in his discussion of the transformation of political theory towards this "new" understanding, Pocock comes close to developing and endorsing a type of theorizing, that if taken to its logical conclusion, ends up as having no distinct boundaries, except a vague and general concern with political dicourse; a perspective that, although it focuses on "method" and tries to limit theory to a form of historical reflection, contains assumptions and implications concerning language and contexts that are consistent with hermeneutics and can be said to contribute to the aesthetic drift.

Pocock himself is ambivalent as to the implications of his own insights. On the one hand, he seems to have no urge to move beyond a strictly methodological and historical self-understanding of political theory: "The transformation we can claim to be living through is nothing more or less

than the emergence of a truly autonomous method, one which offers a means of treating the phenomena of political thought strictly as historical phenomena and--since history is about things happening--even as historical events: as things happening in a context which defines the kind of events they were."[12] On the other hand, however, when Pocock turns to explicating this "truly autonomous method," both the notion of theories as "things happening" and the contexts that define them threaten to explode the strict methodological framework within which he desires to confine the new political theory.

Pocock employs the vague but creative device of paradigm (inspired by but not identical to Thomas Kuhn's use of the term in The Structure of Scientific Revolution[13]) to illustrate what he considers the two most fundamental dimensions to questions of meaning in political thought: the role of language systems and the problem of social and historical context.

> Men think by communicating language systems; these systems help constitute both their conceptual worlds and the authority-structures, or social worlds, related to these; the conceptual and social worlds may each be seen as a context to the other, so that the picture gains in concreteness. The individual's thinking may now be viewed as a social event, an act of communication and of response within a paradigm-system, and as a historical event, a moment in a process of transformation of that system and of the interacting worlds which both system and act help to constitute and are constituted by.[14]

It should come as no surprise that neither the language

systems (we can perhaps also call them "language games" or "discursive practices") nor the social contexts are in themselves stable enough to warrant a call for an autonomous method, unless the argument is that it is the task of method to stabilize both language and context in order to make sense out of otherwise chaotic and anarchic political discourses. But in that case we also have to acknowledge the constitutive and creative role of method and genre, and then it is no longer a question of discovering a "paradigm-system" that furnishes the clues to the meaning of a political theory. Instead, the choice of method and the choice of purpose and style of analysis influence both what paradigm we ally ouselves with and what use we make of the theory whose meaning we are trying to discern. Even the broad category of paradigm itself is of a plural nature. Pocock recognizes as much: "...the paradigms of the community of historians, for example, will prove maddeningly elusive."[15] And the situation grows even more complex when we turn to political discourse which permeates several "communities," some of which call themselves "scientific." Here, we can clearly appreciate the multiplicity of perspectives always present and possible; and we can also easily see why method and style of analysis, freeze and order a fluid and multifarious political "reality."

> The language of politics is obviously not the language of a single disciplined mode of intellectual inquiry. It is rhetoric, the language in which

> men speak for all the purposes and in all the ways in which men may be found articulating and communicating as part of the activity and the culture of politics. Political speech can easily be shown to include statements, propositions and incantations of virtually every kind distinguished by logicians, grammarians, rhetoricians and other students of language, utterance and meaning; even disciplined modes of inquiry will be found there, but coexisting with utterances of very different kinds. It is of the nature of rhetoric and above all of political rhetoric--which is designed to reconcile men pursuing different activities and a diversity of goals and values--that the same utterance will simultaneously perform a diversity of linguistic functions. What is a statement of fact to some will symbolically evoke certain values to others; what evokes a certain cluster of factual assertions, and value judgments concerning them, to one set of hearers will simultaneously evoke another cluster and recommend another resolution of conduct in the ears of another set. Because factual and evaluative statements are inextricably combined in political speech, and because it is intended to reconcile and coordinate different groups pursuing different values, its inherent ambiguity and its cryptic content are invariably high.[16]

From this political cacophony, Pocock's "autonomous method" is supposed to produce order and stable meaning, but it is exactly "autonomy" that cannot be achieved; the method investigating political discourse inevitably implicates itself, however abstractly, in what it tries to understand and the situation is a hermeneutical one with interpretive judgments as its foundation.

In his concern for the historical contexts of political language and in his search for an independent role for the historian of political thought, Pocock thus provides us with several theoretical insights: that the meaning of a theory is produced through the contexts in which it is placed;

that, if we want to understand a theory historically, we must thoroughly comprehend the context in which it was written (but also remember that this context is itself ambiguous); that it is the language of politics that should be our primary concern; and that the meaning of political language is never unequivocal but always open to numerous interpretations and always undergoing mutations and shifts of emphasis. The task of Pocock's "autonomous method" is to delineate all these aspects of political language, and its autonomy appears to lie in removing itself from conventional political theory in so far as the latter tries to either be explicitly political or formulate perennial political problems or "truths." Instead, today's theory, Pocock seems to be saying, ought to develop a "politics of language" which he defines as "...a series of devices for envisaging the varieties of the political functions which language can perform and of the types of political utterance that can be made, and the ways in which these utterances may transform one another as they interact under the stress of political conversation and dialectic."[17] In a different context he defines theory as "...the explication of the diverse functions and meanings of paradigms."[18] This "politics of language" is, from my perspective, akin to an aesthetics of political discourse, or, if we prefer a more Anglo-Saxon expression, a poetics of political language. It implies distancing oneself from the "immediate" political content of discourse, the intentions of the author and the empirical

claims, and instead paying special attention to the paradigmatic dimensions of the theory, e.g., rhetorical structures, contextual factors, stylistic conventions, code words and rules of genre.

Although Pocock is unnecessarily strict in his preoccupation with theory as (reflections on) history of political theory, it is clear that he has a pluralistic understanding of both theory itself and political language in general. To the extent that he on occasion seems to imply that political theory is best performed as an historical discipline he is merely expressing a prejudice in favor of his own genre. But even here the meta-theoretical comments reveal an unusually open-ended and interpretive posture. Pocock's "politics of language" is unambiguously plural and complex, and he devotes a great deal of energy to underscoring this confusion and multiplicity, and in the process he also gives the reason for his adherence to a history of political theory.

> A complex plural society will speak a complex plural language; or rather, a plurality of specialized languages, each carrying its own biases as to the definition and distribution of authority, will be seen converging to form a highly complex language, in which many paradigmatic structures exist simultaneously, debate goes on as between them, individual terms and concepts migrate from one structure to another, altering some of their implications and retaining others, and the processes of change within language considered as a social instrument can be imagined as beginning. Add to all this the presence of a variety of specialized intellectuals, making second-order statements of many different kinds in explanation of the language or languages they find

> to be in use, and we shall have some image of the richness of texture to be discovered in what we term the history of political thought.[19]

It is thus the ambitious aim of Pocock's historical method to make sense out of this plurality of paradigms, language-systems, and first- and second-order statements, and to explicate and explain their political implications. Interestingly enough, the contours of this project are not too unlike Foucault's deciphering of "discursive practices," except the obvious differences in temperament and style and, e.g. that the emphasis in the latter is power, while Pocock's key concept appears to be time. Both thinkers also stress the concreteness of their research and its distance from conventional philosophy and, should we say, metaphysics. In Pocock's self-understanding, the project has an empirical dimension which is essential:

> If at this stage we are asked how we know the languages adumbrated really existed, or how we recognize them when we see them, we should be able to reply empirically: that the languages in question are simply there, that they form individually recognizable patterns and styles, and that we get to know them by learning to speak them, to think in their patterns and styles until we know that we are speaking them and can predict in what directions speaking them is carrying us. From this point we may proceed to study them in depth, detecting both their cultural and social origins and the modes, linguistic and political, of assumption, implication, and ambiguity which they contained and helped to convey.[20]

This is hermeneutics with a Foucaultian spin, a form of critical discourse that reflects on historical contexts,

genres, and linguistic prejudices without promising a merging of Gadamerian "horizons" or a harmonious appropriation of the tradition. It is a form of analysis that remains detached and uncommitted in tone and style, and which prides itself on not expounding any particular positive political theory; it does not explicitly commit itself to a discourse in politics, but attempts to map out the boundaries, histories and meanings of various political discourses.

The claim to relative neutrality, however, can itself become an issue for interpretation and stylistic questioning, and then Pocock's perspective looks more polemical and no longer just a reflection on the paradigmatic structure of political discourse, but forms in its turn, part of a paradigm that reverberates of, if not politics, at least rhetoric. For one thing, to speak of paradigms and language-systems is, as I have hinted at, to stabilize and order political discourse in a way that must be treated as a convention or bias; there is no inherent (or empirical) reason for assuming that these paradigms have any other status than, for example, "the tradition" and thus should be seen as a construction that is so feeble and so selective that its stability is dependent on a community of political theorists willing to maintain its "existence," and willing to perpetuate a discussion which makes this paradigm an issue. In Pocock's essay, it is the very concepts of paradigm and language-system that structure his own discussion

and lead to both his insight with regard to the open-endedness and ambiguity of a paradigm, and his limited notion of political theory as history of political paradigms. None of this is necessarily a weakness in Pocock's theory; limits and possibilitites are the very substance political theories are made of--or, as Pocock himself perceives the history of thought: "Confusion and clarification exist together."[21]

Even though he is well aware of the impossibility of remaining "outside" the politics of political discourse, Pocock nevertheless does not ask how his own writing is politically implicated. In an essay called "On the Non-Revolutionary Character of Paradigms," he takes a stand against a construct labelled "romantic man," in favor of "classical man"--another trope--and does in fact attempt to address the problem of bias in a paradigmatic approach. What emerges in this essay, however, is not a reflection on his own perspective but a convincing argument for viewing politics as a struggle between paradigms, as a struggle over the meaning of words, and thus the need for keeping the political dialogue alive and plural and not making one "objective" discourse destroy and outlaw others.

> There is then a clear case against any participant in a politics of language who means by "objectivity" a rigorous determination to talk only in terms of a fixed set of paradigms, and the dissenter from a given practice does well to be wary of the terms on which he is drawn into discussing it. The proper meaning of "objectivity" in this context

> is something like "participation in a communications game possible to all players," and neither conservative nor radical satisfies this criterion if he insists on unilaterally determining the game's structure.[22]

Since this sounds dangerously close to a Habermasian "ideal speech situation," it should be pointed out that there is no assumption that a consensus can be reached in Pocock's understanding. On the contrary: "Communication is possible only because it is imperfect." And: "Politics is a game of biases in the asymmetrical universe of society."[23]

One objection to Pocock's own discursive practice--his own theory as politics--could be that it is not sufficiently aware of how exclusive or "asymmetrical" a dominant political paradigm can be; communication is not only always imperfect, it often fails to include certain constituencies and is often repressive of others. As his discussion of the romantic or revolutionary posture indicates, the socially alienated individual or the political outcast is not a figure whose language Pocock finds legitimate. Instead the latter is firmly on the side of the classical critical man.

> The practitioner of classical or critical politics concentrates on widening all parties' modes of awareness of the universe of implications within which they are communicating; but we have seen that critical exploration presupposes a provisional acceptance of the universe to be explored, and therefore a provisional willingness to live in a universe which eludes more than a measure of control. It is precisely this willingness that the romantic withholds, wholly or provisionally; not that he necessarily aspires to complete control of the linguistic or social universe (what makes him sometimes dangerous is that he sometimes does), but

> that, preoccupied with its function of defining and making intelligible his subjective identity, he sees it as having failed to do this to such a degree that its paradigms and language have become meaningless when spoken to or by him.[24]

This might be a case of blaming the victim, and illustrates one of the pitfalls of focusing all one's attention on the language-systems and forgetting that a theory is also a political act. Pocock knows this, but does not apply his insight to his own theory, unless, of course, he means exactly what he says; that the revolutionary and romantic are not to be part of his paradigmatic politics.

In any case, there is nothing inherently exclusive or conservative about Pocock's theory; it is explicitly open-ended and open-minded, and encourages an interpretive and stylistic awareness of political discourse. Perhaps it also illustrates something close to a dilemma of the stylistic and linguistic turn in theory: by emphasizing politics as a form of discourse--political theory as political writing--we become linguistically and stylistically self-conscious but can easily forget that style and writing are also forms of politics and polemics. By the same token, by being explicitly political and practical, the writer often forgets that his theory is also a style of writing--a form of polemical discourse--a political literature within a specific paradigm or idiom performing ideological functions and rhetorical tricks.

III

The genre or form of analysis exemplified by Pocock takes us part of the way towards an aesthetic approach to political discourse. By showing that the contexts and "language-systems" of political theory are precariously unstable and highly dependent upon normative commitments on the part of the interpreter, this perspective makes clear that the meaning of a political theory is always of a contestable nature, and never sufficiently unambiguous to make a "definitive" interpretation possible. Pocock also convinces us of the need for paying close attention to the language of theory and thereby promotes an awareness of the rhetorical and stylistic structures of political discourse in general.

There are several commitments in Pocock's theorizing, however, that remain within a traditional framework of political theory; commitments that, from the perspective promoted in this essay, must be said to be too conventional and too narrow to encourage an aesthetic understanding of political theory. We must, for example, part company with Pocock with regard to his conception of political theory, today, as the history of political theory. This conception contains two conventional prejudices which seem arbitrary and unnecessarily limited. First of all, there is no reason to privilege the type of historical reflection that Pocock

has in mind. Histories of political discourse can be perceived in such a variety of ways that the entire notion of "history" becomes just another marker whose meaning cannot be stabilized for any but rhetorical purposes. The urge to tell the history of political theory--even if understood in a plural or interpretive spirit--is suspect and, for our purpose, unconvincing. (Pocock is aware of this, but seems to simply desire some order and method in the political theory community, and thus makes a case for his type of historical understanding.) And there are, of course, all kinds of political writings which should be labelled theoretical, but that are not, in any sense of the word, historical.

Secondly; in the context of today's "genre blurring," and in the face of current development within post-structuralism and hermeneutics, there are profound difficulties in maintaining any clear idea of what constitutes political theory. Here, too, Pocock is conventional; his view of political theory is clearly restricted to reflections concerning, on the one hand, "the classics" and their historical contexts, and, on the other, the methods of investigating the history and context of these classics. Important and central as they are, neither of these genres can be said to exhaust the possibilities of contemporary political theorizing. There is no persuasive way, in fact, to delineate or demarcate the boundaries of political

theory--no way to answer the question "What Should Political Theory Be Now?[25]--except to say, with Derrida, that political theory is reading of and writing on political discourse "in a certain way," and that the only thing we cannot do is to tell the truth about politics (or political theory) or make it come to an end or conclusion. We have to start reading political discourse in a new way: as a form of writing.[26] In a discussion of Levi-Strauss, Derrida takes over the former's use of bricoleur in order to illustrate what contemporary critical discursive practice seems to involve:

> The bricoleur, says Levi-Strauss, is someone who uses "the means at hand," that is, the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous--and so forth. There is therefore a critique of language in the form of bricolage, and it has even been said that bricolage is critical language itself.[27]

This amounts to a kind of "literary" pragmatism where the only limits on our discursive activities are self-imposed and due to practical considerations determined by immediate needs; we have to start our analysis somewhere and we have to end it somewhere else, and we have some purpose with what we are doing which will put restraints and limits on what we can talk about; some things have to be taken for granted if others are to be critically scrutinized. And there always

already exist a discourse to which we want to make our own contribution, however critical, and thus the already established conventions have to be addressed, accounted for, and convincingly undermined, if we want to be heard and if we expect to be taken seriously. But there is no appeal to an ultimate authority except the power of our writing; no criteria except pragmatic ones. Richard Rorty has called this a "post-Philosophical culture": "In such a culture, criteria would be seen as the pragmatist sees them--as temporary resting-places constructed for specific utilitarian ends."[28] What in Rorty's view unites thinkers like Dewey, Foucault, James and Nietzsche is "...the sense that there is nothing deep down inside us except what we have not created in the course of creating a practice, no standard of rationality that is not obedience to our own conventions.[29]

The absence of a final resting-place, the impossibility of developing the criterion for knowledge, the futility of attempting to stabilize the meaning of political discourse, the lack of a convincing theory of rationality and truth are negative conclusions that seem to permeate the so-called post-structuralist debate; conclusions that now also must be entertained by political theory. It is far from clear, however, what the impact of these conclusions are for political theory since most writers in the post-structural mode have remained outside of what is (conventionally)

considered the proper domain for the political theory genre. One result, to be sure, is a questioning of "the domain" itself; the authority of the tradition, as I have tried to argue, is destroyed once and for all, and can only survive as part of a much larger political discourse whose authority can only be viewed as legitimate if it manages to stimulate and provoke our interest in or further our understanding of politics, however the latter is defined and discussed. This is of course not too different from the self-understanding of political theory as a classical genre, but the urge to tell the truth about politics which appears to have been a motivating force for much of political theory is undermined and demands a reinterpretation of the entire tradition. One task for this rereading of the tradition is thus to turn the production of political truth itself into a problem, and, in the style of Foucault, attempt to evaluate this truth as a product of power and politics.

> Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.[30]

It is not only political theory that is implicated in this perspective but political science as a whole, and a post-structural political theory would have to involve itself in

a battle on at least two fronts: on the one hand a struggle with the discourse of theory; that is to say, an "internal" battle--political theory reflecting on itself--and, on the other, a struggle against the tendency in political science towards scientism and objectivism; a battle against the exaggerated scientific claims still made, I think, by mainstream political science. Both battles would have to be fought in the name of a pluralistic understanding of political discourse, and would be a subversive endeavor in the sense of undermining all attempts to limit or police the discipline of political science, especially if the policing takes place in the name of truth and science.

One critical dimension of political theory is thus a "negative" one in the sense of preventing political discourse from reifying itself as a unified science. It is also "negative" in that it must itself refrain from trying to tell the truth about politics. If post-structuralist writers teach political theory to deconstruct the codes of political knowledge and to be attentive to the language and rhetoric of political discourse including political theory itself, it is the Frankfurt School writers that point the way towards a political theory that is both critical of a science of politics and at the same time "negative" in that it keeps under control the urge to tell the truth.

The discourse of critical theory is a distinctly political one, and counteracts the current tendency in post-

structuralism to be relatively apolitical in form and content--although Foucault is certainly an exception in this regard. The Frankfurt School's critique of domination, its perceptive analysis of the repressive use of reason and rationality, its relentless critique of all forms of scientism, and its questioning of entrenched authority and tradition are tenets compatible with the post-structural conclusions and push the latter in a political direction. At the same time, however, there are problems with the Frankfurt School's commitment to "dialectical" reasoning which often seems to imply adherence to a notion of truth that a post-structural discourse would reject, as, for example, in the following sentence by Adorno: "The objectivity of truth, without which the dialectic is inconceivable, is tacitly replaced by vulgar positivism and pragmatism--ultimately, that is, by bourgeois subjectivism."[31] It is still an open question to what extent a post-structural critique of the dialectic would seriously modify, let us say, Adorno's notion of a "negative dialectics" which appears to have much in common with, e.g., Derrida's perspective on deconstruction. To the extent, however, that we can talk about critical theory as a distinct perspective, it is probably reasonable to argue that it is committed to a notion of reconciliation (an overcoming of alienation) as a telos of man and to a relatively stable view of the subject; two commitments that would be unacceptable to a post-structuralist discourse.

Finally; more important than any differences between critical theory and post-structuralism is the shared awareness of the decisive role of style and aesthetics in the production of meaning. Both perspectives view theory and knowledge as forms of discursive practices that must be understood as forms of writing whose rhetorical commitments and stylistic strategies are the determinate elements of meaning. And several of the writers within both camps have incorporated this insight in their own works: they express through their style and tone an awareness of the aesthetic and rhetorical foundation of discourse. It is this "aesthetic drift," in my view, that ought to serve as the framework for a serious treatment of the differences between the two perspectives. It is perhaps also this aesthetic dimension that can become the foundation for a further elaboration of a critical, post-structural political theory.

IV

In these pages I have tried to present the contours of a theoretical perspective and a type of questioning that I have termed <u>aesthetic</u> or <u>interpretive</u>, depending on the context. On several occasions I have also used the words <u>structure</u>, <u>form</u> and <u>style</u> to indicate the general direction of this type of investigation. These concepts both overlap

and differ, but taken together they cover a vast theoretical field--so vast and heterogeneous in fact that it defies mapping and closure--representing several discursive practices; practices that can be treated as illuminating different aspects of a theoretical terrain that has one focal point: the problem of discourse and the text, and their interpretation. ("Text" understood here, of course, as far broader than its "literal" meaning.)

What I have outlined is an argument that focuses on discourse as discourse, text as text; an endeavor that problematizes not only how meaning and understanding are constructed through interpretive conventions and stylistic strategies, but also how a discourse can be seen as genre and as tradition, and how meaning is always contextual. It has been my contention that this perspective has implications for the self-understanding of social science. It directs our attention to the codes of social knowledge, "the forms of life" implicated in the idioms of the various disciplines, subfields and genres. In the connotations of words like "conventions," "rules" and "normative commitments" lie an invitation to challenge and contestation. An insistence on a permanent criticism of "foundations" and of attempts to set up boundaries for legitimate inquiries is not a bland and neutral research program; it strikes, I suspect, at the heart of both mainstream social science and Marxism. Someone might object, ironically, that a permanent

Methodenstreit is in fact what we have had in social science, judged empirically, since its inception. True, but a social science that is self-consciously aware of its own interpretive and conventional nature is, one would assume, fundamentally different from one that insists on its own objective, scientific and universal status, however unrealized. For the former, theory becomes not a metalanguage, or a "laying of foundations," but rather discourse reflecting on itself. As Barthes has it: "Theoretical does not, of course, mean abstract. From my point of view, it means reflexive, something which turns back on itself: a discourse which turns back on itself is by virtue of this very fact theoretical."[32] Political theory, then, is theory investigating political discourse, in which we must include both conventional political philosophy and political science in general. Or, to put it differently: political theory is concerned with the politics of political discourse.

Theory as "discourse reflecting on itself" also carries within it the topic of this analysis: the aesthetic drift. Once the locus of our attention is shifted away from reference, substance or "the what," towards style, form or "the how" of discourse and text, we are approaching an aesthetic perspective, an aesthetics of discourse. The three traditions invoked--critical theory, hermeneutics and post-structuralism--have destabilized the forms of discursive practices, albeit in separate contexts and with

very different preoccupations and presuppositions.

If the hermeneutical tradition tends to emphasize the creative event in understanding a text, post-structuralism tends to focus its attention on the formal, structural and linguistic elements of a text or genre. If the former stresses the process of understanding as a constructive and critical practice, the latter is mostly interested in the rhetorical and linguistic structures of meaning, the conditions of meaning. Within hermeneutics there is a noticeable bend towards a critical appreciation of the text, while in post-structuralism there is a thrust towards the formal deconstruction of the textual code, i.e., an exposure and analysis of the rhetorical and grammatical styles and tropes used in the production of meaning. Both traditions view discourse as inherently enabling and disabling, as an opening up of new meanings but also a closing off of alternative interpretive possibilities. Discourse includes and excludes: it can simultaneously enrich and impoverish our understanding.

One interpretive reason to use the term "aesthetics" is therefore to draw our attention to the process of understanding and to the rules, conventions and literary devices used in creating meaning in social science; in short, to view social science narratives as forms of "fiction." The issue under consideration here is thus the fictional and interpretive character of social science, no matter how

"descriptive." The text metaphor should serve as a reminder that our problem is textual and literary: political discourse as writings. Political theory, from this vantage point, becomes a type of "literary criticism" conscious of its own interpretive and constitutive dimension. Barthes, again: "...whatever the methodological or merely operative concepts which the theory of the text seeks to focus under the name of semanalysis or textual analysis, the exact development of this theory, the blossoming which justifies it, is not this or that recipe for analysis, it is <u>writing itself</u>. <u>Let the commentary be itself a text</u>: that is, in brief, what the theory of the text demands. The subject of the analysis (the critic, the philologist, the scholar) cannot in fact, without bad faith and smugness, believe he is external to the language he is describing."[33] Such a theory does not lead away from "politics" or "reality," nor does it lose respect for what is conventionally called content. On the contrary, it should make us aware of how and to what extent "politics" and "substance" can be said to be constructions--fictions.

One aspect of the aesthetic drift is then, to sum up, a move towards an appreciation of the presence (or absence) of an art of political science. It attempts to penetrate the interpretive and aesthetic dimension to political science as a creative discursive practice.

The other dimension to the aesthetic drift is not towards political science as an art form, but instead en-

visions art as an object for political discourse. At the heart of this move lies a banal truth: works of art and literature express and contain indispensable knowledge; they add meaning and depth to "the world." Even this platitude points towards political discourse: the world of art and literature is constantly intruding on and challenging the world of social science, the discourse of which, at best, also adds meaning to what we like to refer to as "reality."

What art can do is to bring the condition for meaning to its logical conclusion, for it is art that draws attention to its own conventions. By analogy, and somewhat polemically, art exposes the constructed quality of "reality" and the interpretive diemension in illusion. Art is self-consciously addressing style and convention, and is perpetually questioning and mocking all attempts to stabilize meaning or reality. From this viewpoint, art is aware of its interpretive rules and techniques, and encourages an aesthetic reading: form is meaning. Its shamelessly sensuous force seems limitlessly to reassert itself, both through its experiential base and its self-contained aesthetic appeal.

To be sure, there is a "politics" of art, but it reveals itself through the aesthetic and fictional qualities, not the "message" or content. (Critical theory is perhaps the tradition which is most perceptive when it comes to this politics of form.) Art undermines the

familiar and introduces the strange--the not-yet conventional. Art mocks and questions not only the objective dimension, the frozen conventions, but also the subjective sphere, the author and the reader. "The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who established it) to define what is real."[34] The task and "truth" of political theory is analogous: it contradicts and refuses to accept the given definition of political reality and the established political discourse. It challenges the ruling conventions of the "official" discourse and exposes its fictional and conventional character. But in doing so, it invariably creates a different set of rules and commitments; whether in a work of art or in political theory, there is no meaning, no matter how innovative, that is not "structured" and that cannot be decoded and reinterpreted.

Theory and art merge epistemologically (reminding us of Barthes' point about writing); art is no less "real" than political theory. "Art has its own language and illuminates reality through this other language."[35] Political theory has no privileged status in its relation to "reality." It, too, "illuminates," but through another language, following different sets of commitments and conventions. Both art and political theory are "representations of reality"--a reality, however, that is "always already" interpreted and keeps the "rules" of the novel and the political analysis separate; but only as separate genres.

And if we are to follow Geertz's thesis concerning "blurred genres" there might be good reasons to criticize and expose not just the conventions within each genre but to begin a deconstruction of the genres and traditions themselves. In this regard, art is more advanced than political science. Postmodernism in art, if the label means anything, appears to imply that: a de(con)struction of its own codes; a ceaseless effort to undermine whatever established meanings, conventions, rules and commitments are in the process of stabilizing themselves, to the point where we can hardly approach the novel, the painting or the poem without crossing boundaries, genres, and discourses. There are signs that something similar is happening to political discourse. The postmodernist temper is slowly working its way into political theory.

NOTES

Part One

[1]Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 3.

[2]Throughout the essay I will employ the terms "empiricism" and "positivism" loosely. It is the idiom and style of the two which I consider, if not identical, largely overlapping, and it is the idiom which is of interest for my argument. The following definition of "the positivistic attitude" by Anthony Giddens can serve my purpose as well: "1. That the methodological procedures of natural science may be directly adopted to sociology....Positivism here implies a particular stance concerning the sociologist as observer of social 'reality.' 2. That the outcome or end-result of sociological investigations can be formulated in terms parallel to those of natural science.... 3. That sociology has a technical character, providing knowledge which is purely 'instrumental' in form;... Sociology, like natural science, is 'neutral' in respect of values." Anthony Giddens, "Introduction," in Positivism and Sociology, ed. Anthony Giddens (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1975), pp. 3-4. For another formulation of my own "working definition" of positivism, see Russell Jacoby, Dialectic of Defeat: Contours of Western Marxism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 133-134, note 46. For other, general and critical, discussions of positivism, see, for example, Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy, eds., Understanding and Social Inquiry (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), esp., "Introduction" and part two, "The Positivist Reception"; and Theodor W. Adorno et al., The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology, trans. Glyn Adey and David Frisby (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976). For a critical history of positivism: Lezsek Kolakowski, The Alienation of Reason: A History of Positivist Thought, trans. Norbert Guterman (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1968; Anchor Books, 1969); and Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 67-90. Other relevant discussions can be found in, e.g., Sheldon Wolin, "Political Theory as a Vocation" in, among other places, Martin Fleisher, ed., Machiavelli and the Nature of Political Thought (London: Croom Helm, 1973), pp. 23-75; and Eric Voegelin, The New Science of

Politics (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 1-26; and also by Voegelin, "Positivism and Its Antecedents" and "The Apocalypse of Man: Comte"; both essays in his From Enlightenment to Revolution, ed. John H. Hallowell (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1975). For a discussion of the philosophical conflict between a narrow empiricism and a speculative metaphysics or rationalism, see Fred R. Dallmayr, Beyond Dogma and Despair (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp. 21-42. For a less critical account of positivism and empiricism, see the relevant chapters in John Passmore, A Hundred Years of Philosophy (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968).

[3]Towards the end of this essay I will define theory as "discourse reflecting on itself," taken from Roland Barthes and so-called "post-structuralism." Here, I am including both "the classics" of political philosophy and the commentaries they have inspired. Political theory, today, must also include epistemological reflections, all so-called metatheory, (theory of) methodology, and a lot more. The boundaries are unclear and rather arbitrary.

[4]For discussions of orthodox Marxism, besides the usual primary sources, see, e.g., Jacoby, Dialectic of Defeat, ch. 1; and Lezsek Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism, vol. 1: The Founders, trans. P. S. Falla (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), ch. XVI, pp. 399-420; and vol. 2: The Golden Age (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, chs. I, XIII, XIV, XVI, XVIII; and vol. 3: The Break-Down (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), chs. I, IV, XIII. The issue of orthodox, dogmatic Marxism vs. the open, "dialectical" Western Marxism is the topic of Alvin Gouldner, The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980). See also Michael Albert and Robert Hahnel, UnOrthodox Marxism: An Essay on Capitalism, Socialism and Revolution (Boston: South End Press, 1978), chs. 1-2, pp. 13-86; and David McLellan, Marxism After Marx (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979). The Second International is important for understanding the history of orthodoxy; for an excellent introduction to this complex issue, see Andrew Arato, "The Second International: A Reexamination," Telos, no. 18 (Winter 1973-74), pp. 2-52; see also James Joll, The Second International 1889-1914 (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966). For an orthodox discussion of orthodox Marxism, see John Mepham and D-H. Ruben, eds., Issues in Marxist Philosophy, vol. 3: Epistemology, Science, Ideology (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1979). Also of interest is Paul Piccone, "Readin the Grundrisse: Beyond 'Orthodox' Marxism," Theory and Society 2 (Summer 1975): 235-55.

[5]Kenneth R. Hoover, The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), p. 22 and p. 34. This book is, in my view, a typical example of scientistic positivism. The term positivism is not invoked in the text, however (which is also typical).

[6]Perry Anderson, Considerations on Western Marxism (London: NLB, 1976; Verso Editions, 1979), p. 94.

[7]Lucio Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin: Studies in Ideology and Society, trans. John Merrington and Judith White (London: NLB, 1972), p. 234.

[8]Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 61.

[9]There is even a bit of irony and metaphysics in the fact that the empiricistic discourse has been exposed as insufficient and naive by the very philosophy it for so long ignored and tried to relegate to the dustbin of history.

[10]For the inexhaustible and complex questions surrounding the philosophy of later Wittgenstein, see, for example, Stanley Cavell, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," in his Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 44-72; and, by the same author, The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), part 1, esp. chs. I and V, and part 2, ch. VII. For a discussion of the relevancy of Wittgenstein for social science, Michael Shapiro, Language and Political Understanding: The Politics of Discursive Practices (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), chs. 1-2, pp. 1-64; and part 3, "The Wittgensteinian Reformulation," in Dallmayr and McCarthy, eds. Understanding and Social Inquiry, pp. 137-216; and Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963); and Karl-Otto Apel, Towards a Transformation of Philosophy, trans. Glyn Adey and David Frisby (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), ch. 1, pp. 1-45; and for a discussion of Apel and Winch, see Dallmayr, Beyond Dogma and Despair, ch. 6, pp. 139-155. Relevant, in this context, is also Richard J. Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), esp., part II, pp. 57-114; and, of course, Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), and Hanna Pitkin, Wittgenstein and Justice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). See also Passmore, A Hundred Years of Philosophy, ch. 18, pp. 424-465; and Anthony Giddens, New Rules of Sociological Method (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1976), part 1, pp. 23-70.

[11]Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1968), # 19, p. 8.

[12]Ibid., # 23, p. 11. For relevant passages--relevant, that is, for this essay--see the following segments in ibid., part 1: # 241, p. 88; # 355, p. 113; # 523, p. 142; ## 526-36, pp. 143-44; and part 2, esp., pp. 220-229. That the meaning of language is conventional is argued in Wittgenstein's The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the 'Philosophical Investigations' (New York: Harper & Row, 1958; Harper Colophon, 1965), p. 24 and p. 57.

[13]Friedrich Waismann, as quoted in Passmore, A Hundred Years of Philosophy, p. 462.

[14]Ibid., pp. 463-464.

[15]Waismann, as quoted in ibid., p. 464. This argument and quotation is from Waismann's essay "Verifiability," Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supp. 19 (1945): 119-150.

[16]Friedrich Waismann, Philosophical Papers, ed. Brian McGuinness (Dordrecht, Holland and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 147-48. In this work Waismann also argues that the important quality of philosophy is "...to give expression to the major trends of the time. And provided this is achieved by a philosophy, it comes to be a symbolization of the Lebensgefühl of a whole epoch, in a similar way as a style of art, say, Baroque mirrors the mood of a time. But it would be a fateful error to assume that such a philosophy owes its authority to logical reasons." Ibid., pp. 146-47. (The paper referred to here was written in the 1950s.)

[17]Among several others: John L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words, 2nd ed., ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); and his Philosophical Papers, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press; Clarendon Press, 1979); and W. V. Quine, Theories and Things (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), esp., ch. 7, pp. 67-72; and Stanley Cavell, Must We Mean What We Say?, and his The Claim of Reason; and John R. Searle, Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). For other studies, relevant for my discussion, see, for example, Mary Hesse, Revolutions and Reconstructions in the Philosophy of Science (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); and his Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); and

Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

Cf., the following quotations from Austin, Quine and Searle. "The total speech act in the total speech situation is the only actual phenomenon which, in the last resort, we are engaged in elucidating." "Stating, describing, &c., are just two names among a very great many others for illocutionary acts; they have no unique position." "...the familiar contrast of 'normative or evaluative' as opposed to the factual is in need, like so many dichotomies, of elimination." Austin, How to Do Things with Words, pp. 148-49. Quine argues that we must recognize that "...a legitimate theory of meaning must be a theory of the use of language, and that language is a social art, socially inculcated." Quine, Theories and Things, p. 192. And Searle concludes with regard to the fact-value distinction: "But the retreat from the committed use of words ultimately must involve a retreat from language itself, for speaking a language--...--consists of performing speech acts according to rules, and there is no separating those speech acts from the commitments which form essential parts of them." Searle, Speech Acts, p. 198.

[18]Stanley Cavell, for example, argues in his penetrating discussion of Wittgenstein's later philosophy that it is not barriers to knowledge Wittgenstein is concerned with, but the conditions for knowledge: "For Wittgenstein, philosophy comes to grief not in denying what we all know to be true, but in its effort to escape those human forms of life which alone provide the coherence of our expression.... The limitations of knowledge are no longer barriers to a more perfect apprehension, but conditions of knowledge Überhaupt, of anything we should call 'knowledge.'" Cavell, Must We Mean What We Say?, pp. 61-2. Cf., Wittgenstein's words: "...our investigation...is directed not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the 'possibilities' of phenomena. We remind ourselves, that is to say, of the kind of statement that we make about phenomena." Partly quoted in ibid., p. 65; from Philosophical Investigations, # 90, p. 42.

[19]Leaving the "primary" sources aside for now, here are some useful "secondary" texts. For hermeneutics: Richard E. Palmer, Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969); David Couzens Hoy, The Critical Circle: Literature and History in Contemporary Hermeneutics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Joseph Bleicher, Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); John B. Thompson, Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

1981); Zygmunt Bauman, Hermeneutics and Social Science (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); Richard J. Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); and, for the philosophical context or background, see Rüdiger Bubner, Modern German Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For Critical Theory: Susan Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute (New York: The Free Press, 1977); Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973); David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981). See also the more specialized, Thomas McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981); John B. Thompson, and David Held, eds., Habermas: Critical Debates (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982); and John O'Neill, ed., On Critical Theory (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976). And for Post-Structuralism: Jonathan Culler, The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981); and, also by Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982); Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics (London: Methuen & Co., 1978); Robert Scholes, Semiotics and Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); and Vincent B. Leitch, Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). For the French philosophical background, see Vincent Descombes, Modern French Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). An informative anthology is Robert Young, ed. Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981). For a summary of Karl Popper's own position, see his Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), ch. 10, pp. 215-250. For the notion of "theory-laden" data, see Norwood Russell Hanson, "Observation and Interpretation," in S. Morgenbesser, ed., Philosophy of Science Today (New York: Basic Books, 1967), pp. 89-90.

[20]In "interpretive perspectives" I include broadly the traditions of critical theory, hermeneutics and post-structuralism, plus a host of individual theorists, difficult to place within any specific tradition. In any case, these traditions are of course impossible to identify clearly, and, to be consistent with my own subsequent argument, should not be taken too literally. Traditions overflow, as do genres, and they only serve vague interpretive purposes, and should be read as inherently polemical; there is no "critical theory" which can be

summarized or pinned down; there are only "texts" that display apparent continuities. The same is true for positivism and Marxism, including the way I use the terms. Labels are pragmatic tools, necessary for the advancement of one's argument and prose, but they certainly do not "exist" as empirical entities. The label "critical hermeneutics" is used by, for example, Paul Ricoeur, in Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 87-100. See also Thompson's Critical Hermeneutics.

[21]Specific works of the Frankfurt School can be seen as a critique and mapping of the positivistic "form of life." See, for example, Jürgen Habermas, Theory and Practice, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), pp. 253-82; Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), esp. chs. 5-7, pp. 123-199; and, also by Marcuse, "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology," in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt, eds., The Essential Frankfurt School Reader (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), pp. 138-62; and The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, Aspects of Sociology, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), ch. 8, pp. 117-28. See also: William E. Connolly, Appearance and Reality in Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), ch. 1, pp. 7-40; Bernard Crick, The American Science of Politics: Its Origins and Conditions (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959); Sheldon S. Wolin, Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), ch. 10, pp. 352-434; and,also by Wolin, "Political Theory as a Vocation," in Fleisher, ed., Machiavelli and the Nature of Political Thought. Relevant is also David M. Ricci, The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy (New Haven: Yale Univeristy Press, 1984).

[22]See, e.g., Theodor W. Adorno, "Sociology and Empirical Research," in Adorno, et al., The Positivist Dispute, pp. 68-86; and, also by Adorno, "Culture and Administration," Telos, no. 37 (Fall 1978), pp. 93-111. This issue seems to form an undercurrent in the sociological literature, starting perhaps with Max Weber's notion of "rationalization" as forming an "iron cage," and reaching its rhetorical zenith in Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man; for a philosophical work along similar lines as the latter, see Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming (London: Allen Lane, 1973).

[23]Robert A. Dahl, Democracy in the United States: Promise and Performance, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Co., 1976), p. 388.

[24]Ibid., p. 389.

[25]See Robert A. Dahl, Modern Political Analysis, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), esp. pp. 20-23, and pp. 131-39. For example: "Whenever students of politics scrupulously test their generalizations and theories against the data of experience by means of meticulous observation, classification, and measurement, then empirical political analysis is scientific in its approach. To the extent that this approach actually yields tested propositions of considerable generality, political analysis can be regarded as scientific in its results." From ibid., pp. 20-21. An archetypical positivist statement!

[26]For an exposure of the ideology underlying this type of "equilibrium theory," see the essays in Charles A. McCoy and John Playford, eds., Apolitical Politics A Critique of Behavioralism (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1967), esp. James Petras, "Ideology and United States Political Scientists," pp. 76-98. (Petras uses the rhetorical "equiliberals.")

[27]A question which is pointedly raised by, for example, Gabriel Kolko in Main Currents of Modern American History (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); and, less convincingly, by Stanley Aronowitz in False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973). See also Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

[28]For, e.g., Habermas' perspective on this issue, see his Theory and Practice, pp. 1-40; and for a general discussion of Habermas' view, see Bernstein, The Restructuring of Social and Political Thought, pp. 213-25. See also McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, pp. 1-52.

[29]As quoted in Edmund Wilson, To the Finland Station: A Study in the Writing and Acting of History (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1940; Anchor Books, 1953), p. 289. Wilson's quotes and remarks are also used by Alvin Gouldner in The Two Marxisms, pp. 69-70. For the aesthetic dimension to Marx's writings, see Leonard P. Wessell, Jr., Karl Marx, Romantic Irony, and the Proletariat: The Mythopoetic Origins of Marxism (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979).

[30]Wilson, To the Finland Station, p. 289.

[31]Ibid., p. 290.

[32]Ibid., pp. 290-91.

[33]Ibid., p. 291.

[34]Karl Marx, Karl Marx: Early Writings, trans. and ed. T. B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 164. For an even earlier statement along deterministic lines, see Gouldner, The Two Marxisms, p. 90.

[35]To mention just one title by each writer: Galvano Della Volpe, Critique of Taste, trans. Michael Caesar (London: NLB, 1978), (in all fairness, this is the least scientistic of the works, here, but the underlying assumption remains firmly rooted in orthodoxy, almost in spite of itself); Lucio Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin: Studies in Ideology and Society, trans. John Merrington and Judith White (London: NLB, 1972), esp. pp. 229-36; Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), esp. pp. 11-22; Nicos Poulantzas, Classes in Contemporary Capitalism, trans. David Fernbach (London: NLB, 1975; Verso Editions, 1978), e.g., chs. 3-4 of part 3; Perry Anderson, Arguments Within English Marxism (London: NLB and Verso Editions, 1980), esp. chs. 3-4; Robin Blackburn, "The New Capitalism," in Robin Blackburn, ed. Ideology in Social Science: Readings in Critical Social Theory (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 164-186; Blackburn's anthology is, as a whole, a good example of the orthodoxy of much of "the New Left"; Göran Therborn, The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology (London: NLB and Verso Editions, 1980); the entire book is a horror example of the role of the "master code" within orthodox Marxism. In this context, see also E. P. Thompson, The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays (London: Merlin Press, 1978); and Anthony Giddens, A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism, vol. 1: Power, Property and the State (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981).

[36]Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 4.

[37]Russell Jacoby, "What is Conformist Marxism?" Telos, no. 45 (Fall 1980), p. 42; also in his Dialectic of Defeat, p. 35. Cf., the following ramark by Robert Nisbet: "... scientism, which is science with the spirit of discovery and creation left out." Sociology as an Art Form (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 4; this book is an example of an "aesthetic" treatment of social science, without making a larger theoretical argument. See also Morroe Berger, Real and Imagined Worlds: The Novel and Social Science (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), passim.

[38]For a discussion of Engels' ambiguous scientism, see Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism, vol. 1: The Founders, pp. 376-77, and pp. 395-97.

[39]Ibid., vol. 2: The Golden Age, pp. 53-54. See also Habermas, Theory and Practice, ch. 6, pp. 195-252; as well as his Communication and the Evolution of Society, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), chs. 3-4, pp. 95-177; and Herbert Marcuse's famous review of Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, in Herbert Marcuse, Studies in Critical Philosophy, trans. Joris de Bres (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pp. 3-48.

[40]Kolakowski, Main Currents, vol. 1: The Founders, p. 175.

[41]Karl Marx, as quoted in ibid. The quote is from the second thesis on Feuerbach, and can be found, in a different translation, in, for example, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, ed. Lewis S. Feuer (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co.; Anchor Books, 1959).

[42]Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy, p. 21. For a critique of Althusser's theory, see Thompson, The Poverty of Theory; and Simon Clarke et al., One-Dimensional Marxism: Althusser and the Politics of Culture (London: Allison & Busby, 1980). For a perceptive evaluation of Althusser's political theory, see Connolly, Appearance and Reality in Politics, ch. 2, pp. 41-62.

[43]Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin, p. 229.

[44]Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 112.

[45]Ibid., p. 85.

[46]Jean Baudrillard, The Mirror of Production, trans. Mark Poster (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1975), pp. 19-20. "Imaginary" is taken over from Jacques Lacan and denotes "...collective values that provide for unitary meaning but are logically unprovable." Ibid., translator's note, p. 20. See also Jean Baudrillard, For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981); and his In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities ...or the End of the Social and Other Essays, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and John Johnston, Foreign Agents Series, (New York: Semiotext(e), Inc., Columbia University, 1983); and Jean-Claude Giradin, "Toward a Politics of Signs: Reading Baudrillard," trans. David Pugh, Telos, no. 20 (Summer 1974), pp. 127-37.

[47]Baudrillard, The Mirror of Production, p. 47.

[48]Ibid., p. 48. (Italics in the original.)

[49]Therborn, The Ideology of Power, p. 47. This is the most extreme example I have seen of an orthodox Marxist text that assumes it is about something (it, after all, claims to represent "reality"), while the reader finds himself increasingly in the realm of the "imaginary." The code is, in this work, everything!

[50]I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within.
(Tennyson; In Memoriam A.H.H.)

[51]A sample of works relevant for this section's summary account: Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, The Young Lukacs and the Origins of Western Marxism (London: Pluto Press, 1979); Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1972); Karl Korsch, Marxism and Philosophy, trans. Fred Halliday (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970); Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971); Gouldner, The Two Marxisms; Kolakowski, Main Currents, vol. 3: The Breakdown; Dick Howard and Karl E. Klare, eds., The Unknown Dimension: European Marxism since Lenin (New York: Basic Books, 1972); Bert Grahl and Paul Piccone, eds., Towards a New Marxism (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1973); McLellan, Marxism after Marx; Jean-Paul Sartre, Search for a Method, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Vintage Books, 1968); Jean-Paul Sartre, Between Existentialism and Marxism, trans. John Mathews (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1976); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Adventures of the Dialectic, trans. Joseph Bien (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973); Jacoby, Dialectic of Defeat; Jay, The Dialectical Imagination; Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics; Anderson, Considerations of Western Marxism; Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960); Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Herbert Marcuse, Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis (New York: Vintage Books, 1961). For the incorporation of psychoanalysis into Marxism, see, besides Marcuse's Eros and Civilization, Russell Jacoby, Social Amnesia: A Critique of Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975); Bruce Brown, Marx, Freud, and the Critique of Everyday Life (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973); and Michael

Schneider, Neurosis and Civilization: A Marxist/Freudian Synthesis, trans. Michael Roloff (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975)--this last work is not really a Marx-Freud synthesis, as the title implies, it is rather a reduction of Freud to Marx.

[52]Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics, p. xiii.

[53]Three examples: Norman Jacobson, Pride and Solace: The Function and Limits ofPolitical Theory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Henry S. Kariel, Beyond Liberalism, Where Relations Grow (San Francisco: Chandler & Sharp Publishers, 1977); and, for questions of interpretation in political thoery, John G. Gunnell, Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation (Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, 1979). For an aesthetic reading of , among others, Rousseau and Nietzsche, see Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). See also, Geoffrey Hartman, "Literary Criticism and Its Discontents," Critical Inquiry 3 (Winter 1976): 203-220.

[54]Clifford Geertz, "Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought," The American Scholar 49 (Spring 1980), p. 168.

[55]Ibid. pp. 175-76.

[56]For an illuminating discussion of criteria and "judgment" in the interpretive vein: Stanley Fish, Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), esp. chs. 13-16, pp. 303-71. Bernstein's Beyond Objectivism and Relativism is also very useful in this context.

[57]Hans-Georg Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 66.

[58]Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, no trans. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. xxiv.

[59]Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, p. 66.

[60]Both quotes in this paragraph are from Eike Gebhardt, "Introduction: Critical Theory and the Philosophy of Science," in Arato and Gebhardt, eds., The Essential Frankfurt School Reader, p. 375. The Frankfurt School perspective on epistemology is perhaps best confronted through Theodor W. Adorno, Against Epistemology, trans. Willis Domingo (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983), and his

Negative Dialectics. Both works show interesting similarities with the perspective of Derrida.

[61]Clifford Geertz, Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 135.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Ibid. Geertz's recent essays--including "Blurred Genres"--can be found in his Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1983). This book contains several first-rate essays relevant for this study, as does Geertz's earlier The Interpretation of Culture (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

[64]Cf., the tennis players, who with their tools--rackets, balls, physical fitness, alertness, etc.--create a good or not-so-good game of tennis. But, of course, always within the rules of the game.

[65]Cf., Fish, Is There a Text in This Class?, ch. 15, pp. 338-355.

[66]Geertz, Neagara, p. 136.

[67]Dahl, Democracy in the United States, p. 372.

[68]Wilson, To the Finland Station, p. 1.

[69]Ibid., p. 2.

[70]Ibid., p. 26.

[71]Ibid., p. 34.

[72]Ibid., p. 162.

[73]Ibid., p. 44.

[74]Ibid., p. 51.

[75]Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[76]Ibid., p. 191.

[77]Ibid., p. 383.

[78]Ibid., p. 387.

[79]Ibid., p. 440.

[80]This "criterion" is suggested by, for example, Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 247.

[81]Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 103.

[82]Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, p. 101.

[83]See Gadamer, Truth and Method, pp. 262-263. (The psychoanalytical discourse, sometimes with Nietzsche's Dionysus and Apollo as source of inspiration, has added the desirable, the repressed and the unconscious to these opposites.)

[84]Cf., R. G. Collingwood, An Autobiography. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), ch. V, "Question and Answer," esp. pp. 31-34.

[85]Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p. 4.

[86]Ibid., p. 10. Cf., Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text; and, for a more systematic treatment of the reading process, Wolfgang Iser, The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); and, also by Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). And for an interesting critique of Iser: Stanley Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," Diacritics 11:1 (1981): 2-13.

[87]Paul Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 32. (Their dictums on religion can exemplify their attitudes: Marx, of course, treated religion as the opium of the masses; Freud saw it as a collective neurosis; and for Nietzsche, Christianity was Platonism for the people.)

[88]Francois Dagognet; as quoted in Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, p. 292.

[89]Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics, p. 104.

[90]Gadamer, Truth and Method, pp. xii-xiii.

[91]Wilson, To the Finland Station, p. 308.

[92]Roland Barthes, Critical Essays, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972), p. 145.

[93]Again, see Fish, Is There a Text in This Class?, pp. 338-55.

[94]Cf., the following remarks by J. P. Stern: "Yet Marx's work, too, remains a torso; it was not he who gave it the name of dialectical materialism. The diversity of his insights, too, is revealed in the sheer unevenness and undirected intellectual energy of his style. The leaps and strange balances of Marx's rhetoric--its unexpected metaphors and violent inversions, the effect of words on the page which do not accumulate to confirm one another, each articulation superseding and challenging the one before--all this is more accurately prophetic of our kind of discourse, more like Nietzsche's anticipations, than Marxists have ever seen fit to acknowledge." J. P. Stern, Friedrich Nietzsche (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 25.

[95]Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, pp. 92-93.

[96]For a discussion of the necessity of "formalism," see the title essay in Geoffrey Hartman, Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958-1970 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 42-57.

97The appearance/essence dichotomy is discussed in, e.g., Hannah Arendt, The Life of the Mind, vol. 1: Thinking (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), pp. 3-16, and in part I, "Appearance," pp. 19-65; and Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), passim.

Part Two

[1]William E. Connolly, The Terms of Political Discourse, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 3. The notion of "essentially contested concepts" is discussed in ibid., ch. 1, pp. 10-41, and was originally discussed in an important 1956 essay with the same title--"Essentially Contested Concepts"--by W. B. Gallie, reprinted in Max Black, ed., The Importance of Language (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 121-46.

[2]Sheldon S. Wolin, Hobbes and the Epic Tradition of Political Theory (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1970), p. 4. For a treatment of political theory as a heroic form of writing, see also Norman Jacobson, Pride and Solace. For a theoretical discussion of the rhetorical and literary commitments of historical writing, see Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). Wolin also discusses the epic and literary dimension to political theory in his essay "Political Theory as a Vocation," in Fleisher, ed., Machiavelli, esp. pp. 65-67.

[3]For a brief treatment of "discursive practices," see, e.g., Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 199-204. And for a discussion of Foucault's notion: Shapiro, Language and Political Understanding, esp. ch. 5, pp. 127-64; and Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), esp. ch. 3, pp. 44-78.

[4]Sheldon S. Wolin, Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960).

[5]Ibid., p. 3.

[6]Gunnell, Political Theory, p. 70. For a more

technical discussion, see Gunnell's "Interpretation and the History of Political Theory: Apology and Epistemology," American Political Science Review 76 (June 1982): 317-327; and his "Method, Methodology, and the Search for Traditions in the History of Political Theory," Annals of Scholarship 1 (1980): 26-56.

[7]See, for example, the following works by Foucault: The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1975); Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); and The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). For an interesting discussion of Foucault's over-all achievement, see University Publishing, no. 13 (Summer 1984), pp. 1-16; the entire issue is dedicated to Foucault's writings.

[8]Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 261. For a discussion of the hermeneutical circle and the concept of "horizon," see, for example, Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, pp. 126-44, and Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, pp. 182-93.

[9]Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 271.

[10]Gunnell, Political Theory, ch. 3, pp. 66-93.

[11]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 5. This theme--that political theory is a largely an "open" and created field--is an unmistakable element in Wolin's writings and locates him firmly within an interpretive self-understanding of political theory. At the same time, the theorist is a product of and bound by the political conventions of his time. Any specific political theory is thus an outcome of the tension and conflicts generated by this truly "hermeneutical situation." For Wolin, then, as we shall see, political theory is a confrontation with and struggle over the boundaries of the official political discourse. Cf., his article, "Political Theory and Political Commentary," in Melvin Richter, ed. Political Theory and Political Education (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 190-203; here Wolin argues that the primary concern for a political commentary informed by theoretical awarenesss is "to contest meanings." Ibid., p. 193.

[12]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 6.

[13]Ibid., p. 7.

[14]Ibid., p. 10.

[15]Ibid., p. 15.

[16]Ibid., p. 20.

[17]Sheldon S. Wolin, "Max Weber: Legitimation, Method, and the Politics of Theory," Political Theory 9 (August 1981): 401. Cf. Wolin's notion of political theory to, e.g., Leo Strauss' idea that political philosophy is "quest for the truth;" in his What Is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973), pp. 9-27. Strauss: "A political thinker who is not a philosopher is primarily interested in, or attached to, a specific order or policy; the political philosopher is primarily interested in, or attached to, the truth." In ibid., p. 12. See also John Dunn, "The Identity of the History of Ideas," in his Political Obligation in Its Historical Context: Essays in Political Theory (Cambridge: Camridge University Press, 1980), pp. 13-28; also to be found in Peter Laslett, W. G. Runciman, and Quentin Skinner, eds., Philosophy, Politics and Society, Fourth Series (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), pp. 158-73. Relevant is also Quntin Skinner, "'Social Meaning' and the Explanation of Social Action," in ibid., pp. 136-57.

[18]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 21. Cf. Collingwood, An Autobiography, pp. 31-34. Wolin's conception reminds us again of the hermeneutical situation, as developed by Gadamer.

[19]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 22.

[20]Ibid., p. 23.

[21]Ibid., p. 26. Cf., J. G. A. Pocock's essay "Time, Institutions and Action: An Essay on Traditions and Their Understanding," in his Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History (New York: Atheneum, 1973), pp. 233-272.

[22]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 27.

[23]Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 15, and pp. 17-18. The metaphor of "distance" is also often invoked by Wolin (and Max Weber), as, e.g., in the following two passages:

> "Distance to things and men," Max Weber once wrote, is a crucial quality for the political actor, and lack of it "is one of the deadly sins of every politician." Distance was also the quality which Weber tried to cultivate in his own theoretical investigations. Indeed, it is not too much to say that, in recommending that quality to politicians, Weber was attempting to transfer to political acti-

> vity a virtue characteristically associated with theoretic activity. Ever since Plato first established his Academy on the outskirts of Athens, away from the bustling political life of the agora, distance has figured as a persistent element in the practice of theory. It has siggnified the importance of being removed from politics in order to see into it more clearly, of establishing not only space between politics and the theorist but a different order of time for putting the present and the emerging future into "perspective."
>
> Theoretical activity establishes distance by means of the theory, not by choice of residence. Theory does not provide a text to which the "problems" of existing politics can be referred, but a form of criticism in which the "text" itself becomes a problem and existing politics problematic. The distance it establishes is a critical distance, a distance that renders familiar occurences strange. The underlying purpose is not to criticize particular issues or to take sides in a debate over policies, but to expose hidden and troubling interconnections that call into question the authority of the "text."

Wolin, "Political Theory and Political Commentary," pp. 198-99, and p. 200.

[24]Gadamer, Truth and Method, p. 324.

[25]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 42. The term "ontological politics" is used by Wolin in "Max Weber: Legitimation...," p. 403.

[26]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 43.

[27]Ibid., pp. 43-44. For a very similar--and Aristotelian--conception of politics--a politics of conciliation--see Bernard Crick, In Defence of Politics, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), passim. For example: "Politics, then, can be simply defined as the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and the survival of the whole community. And, to complete the formal definition, a political system is that type of government where politics proves successful in ensuring reasonable stability and order." "...no finality is implied in any act of conciliation or compromise." Ibid, p. 22. Crick's classical text contains several interesting arguments that are very close to Wolin's theory. (There are differences as well, however.)

[28]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 57.

[29]Aristotle; as quoted in ibid., p. 59.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Hans-Georg Gadamer, Reason in the Age of Science, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981), p. 92.

[32]Ibid., p. 105.

[33]Crick discusses the polemical use of "tradition" by political conservatives in In Defence of Politics., pp. 111-123.

[34]Habermas, Theory and Practice, p. 79.

[35]For an informative and useful discussion of Habermas' theory, see McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas; Thompson and Held, eds., Habermas: Critical Debates; Bernstein, The Restructuring; Bernstein Beyond Objectivism; and Fred Dallmayr, Language and Politics: Why Does Language Matter to Political Philosophy? (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), ch. 5, pp. 115-47.

[36]Jürgen Habermas, Towards a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 79-80. For Habermas at his most "interpretive," see his Philosophical-Political Profiles, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983).

[37]Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 314.

[38]Ibid., pp. 313-314.

[39]Jürgen Habermas, "A Review of Gadamer's Truth and Method," in Dallmayr and McCarthy, eds. Understanding and Social Inquiry, p. 358. For the controversial issue of Habermas vs. Gadamer, see, e.g., Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism, pp. 175-97; Richard J. Bernstein, "What is the Difference That Makes a Deifference? Gadamer, Habermas, and Rorty," in PSA 1982, vol 2, Proceedings of the 1982 Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association, ed. by P. D. Asquith and T. Nickles (East Lansing, Michigan: Philosophy of Science Association, 1983); Habermas, "A Reply to My Critics," in Thompson and Held, eds., Habermas: Critical Debates; Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, ch 7; Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and Social Science," Cultural Hermeneutics 2 (1975): 307-16; Martin

Jay, "Should Intellectual History Take a Linguistic Turn? Reflections on the Habermas-Gadamer Debate," in Dominick LaCapra and Steven L. Kaplan, eds., Modern European Intellectual History (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982); Jack Mendelson, "The Habermas-Gadamer Debate," New German Critique 18 (1979): 44-73; and Dieter Misgeld, "Critical Theory and Hermeneutics: The Debate between Habermas and Gadamer," in John O'Neill, ed., On Critical Theory (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976).

[40]Michel Foucault, in Gerald Raulet, "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism: An Interview with Michel Foucault," Telos, no. 55 (1983), p. 205.

[41]See, for example, the interview by Honneth, et al., "The Dialectics of Rationalization: An Interview with Jürgen Habermas," Telos, no. 49 (1981), pp. 5-31, esp. pp. 27-31.

[42]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 357.

[43]Foucault, Language, Counter-Memory, p. 155.

[44]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 358. Note how the tone of the quotation operates to persuade the reader that the continuity of concern is really self-evident.

[45]Ibid. This is also Wolin's charge against "the methodist" in his "Political Theory as a Vocation": "The methocistic assumption holds that the truth of statements yielded by scientific methods has certain features, such as rigor, precision, and quantifiability. The connection between the statements and their features is intimate so that one is encouraged to believe that when he is offered statements rigorous, precise, and quantifiable, he is in the presence of truth." Against this view, Wolin introduces a different type of knowledge: "On the other hand, an approach to the 'facts' consisting of statements which palpably lack precision, quantifiability, or operational value is said to be false, vague, unreliable, or even 'mystical.' In actuality, the contrast is not between the true and the false, the reliable and the unreliable, but between truth that is economical, replicable, and easily packaged, and truth that is not. Methodistic truth can be all these things because it is relatively indifferent to context; theoretical truth cannot, because its foundation in tacit political knowledge shapes it towards what is politically appropriate rather than towards what is scientifically operational. In Fleisher, ed., Machiavelli, pp. 47-48.

[46]Ibid., pp. 360-61.

[47]Ibid., pp. 365-66.

[48]Habermas, in Honneth, "The Dialectics," Telos, p. 30.

[49]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 368. "Community" and "organization" become foundational code-words in Wolin's account, not too unlike "means of production" in the Marxist scheme.

[50]Ibid., p. 371.

[51]Ibid., p. 372.

[52]Ibid., p. 373.

[53]Ibid., pp. 373-74.

[54]Ibid., p. 375.

[55]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 85.

[56]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 375. Cf., e.g., the following statement by Frank Lentricchia with regard to Marxism: "Because I conceive of theory as a type of rhetoric whose persuasive force will not be augmented in our time by metaphysical appeals to the laws of history, the kind of Marxist theory that I am urging is itself a kind of rhetoric whose value may be measured by its persuasive means and by its ultimate goal: the formation of genuine community." Criticism and Social Change (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 12-13.

[57]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 376.

[58]Ibid., p. 380.

[59]Ibid., p. 381. The critical work on the idea that reason and rationality have become repressive and limiting categories serving particular interests is, from my perspective, Theodor W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. J. Cumming (London: Allen Lane, 1973). The entire Frankfurt corpus is, to some extent, focused on the problem of reason turning against itself and becoming increasingly irrational and reified. Just to mention two more works addressing the issue: Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968); and Max Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973). Of course, the same theme is present in both Adorno's Negative Dialectics, and Habermas' Knowledge and Human Interests.

[60]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 382.

[61]Ibid., p. 387.

[62]Ibid., p. 392.

[63]Ibid., p. 407.

[64]Ibid., p. 410.

[65]Ibid., p. 414.

[66]Besides the essay, "Political Theory as a Vocation," Wolin addresses this issue throughout his writings; see, e.g. "Paradigms and Political Theories," in Preston King and B. C. Parekh, eds., Politics and Experience: Essays Presented to Professor Michael Oakshott on the Occasion of His Retirement (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 125-152. Sometimes the argument is extended and seems to imply a decline of an entire "humanistic tradition." See, e.g., his "Higher Education and the Politics of Knowledge," democracy 1:2 (April 1981): 38-52. For an (unsatisfactory) discussion of the notion of decline of political theory see Gunnell, Political Theory, esp. chs. 2-3.

[67]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 198. See also Felix Gilbert, Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984); Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1958); and the impressive study by J. G. A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[68]Wolin, Politics and Vision, p. 203.

[69]Ibid., p. 210.

[70]Ibid., p. 212.

[71]Ibid., p. 216.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid., p. 236.

[74]Ibid., p. 237.

[75]Ibid., p. 238.

[76]Ibid., p. 220.

[77]Ibid., p. 222.

[78]As quoted in Jacobson, Pride and Solace, p. 25.

[79]Wolin., Politics and Vision, p. 228.

[80]Ibid., p. 232.

[81]Ibid., p. 228.

[82]Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, p. 33.

Part Three

[1]Gunnell, Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation.

[2]Ibid., p. 68.

[3]Ibid., p. 86.

[4]Ibid., p. 58.

[5]Ibid., p. 125.

[6]Wolin., Politics and Vision, p. 430.

[7]Gunnell, Political Theory, pp. 89-90.

[8]Ibid., pp. 159-60.

[9]Ibid., p. 135.

[10]J. G. A. Pocock, Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History (New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 4.

[11]Ibid., p. 5.

[12]Ibid., p. 11.

[13]Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd ed., enl. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

[14]Pocock, Politics, Language and Time, p. 15.

[15]Ibid., p. 16.

[16]Ibid., p. 17. For an excellent discussion of the role of ambiguous language as political action, see Pocock's essay, "Verbalizing a Political Act: Toward a Politics of Speech," recently reproduced in Michael J. Shapiro, Language and Politics, Readings in Social and Political Theory (New York: New York University Press, 1984), pp. 25-43.

[17]Ibid., p. 19.

[18]In the essay, "On the Non-Revolutionary Character of Paradigms: A Self-Criticism and Afterpiece"; in ibid., pp. 280-81.

[19]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[20]Ibid., p. 26.

[21]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[22]Ibid., pp. 287-88.

[23]Ibid., p. 287.

[24]Ibid., p. 288.

[25]As the title has it in John Nelson, ed. What Should Political Theory Be Now? (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

[26]See Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 288.

[27]Ibid., p. 285.

[28]Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. xli.

[29]Ibid., p. xlii.

[30]Foucault, Power/Knowledge, p. 131.

[31]Theodor W. Adorno, Prisms, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981), p. 29.

[32]Roland Barthes; as quoted in Young, ed., Untying the Text, p. 1.

[33]Ibid., p. 44.

[34]Herbert Marcuse, The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 9.

[35]Ibid., p. 22.

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