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POLITICAL THEORY AS NARRATIVE

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Summary

In this essay, I draw attention to the negative political effects of contemporary political theory's flight from particularity, and suggest a way of reducing these problems. My argument is structured as follows. Firstly, I draw attention to the increasing tendency to neglect the intermediary role of political theory, and trace this to the influence of positivist philosophies of science, and more particularly to the ways in which this influence has found expression in the abstract, systematic structure and disengaged orientation of the conception of theory which predominates in contemporary political theory. I argue further, that two negative political effects are encouraged by these structural features of theory: firstly, the abstraction and system of theory encourages an exaggeration of the systematic character of political situations, which in turn results in a diminution of options for change and critique; secondly, the disengaged stance and privileged cognitive status of theory tends to encourage a manipulative political practice. Thus, where political theory's goal is to inform and inspire transformative action, its form or structure tends to undermine this aim. In the second section of this essay, I qualify and specify the above thesis concerning the alienation of contemporary political theory, by assessing the value of Bruce Ackerman's theory of justice as a guide to political action. In the final section, I propose a deliberate retrieval of the narrative dimension of political theory as a useful way of reducing the alienation of contemporary political theory, showing firstly, how narrative can be related to theory, and secondly, how it can moderate theory's abstract and systematic tendencies without losing critical force.
Introduction: Pitfalls and Caves

One of the major themes of this study concerns story-telling; let me therefore begin appropriately by briefly drawing together images from two well-known stories. Thales, so Plato tells us, fell into a pit while gazing up at the sky, and was taken to task by an amused servant-girl for allowing his pursuit of knowledge to divert his attention from the things around him. Despite the rebuke, however, Thales' failing seems to live on; philosophers and theorists of human conduct frequently exhibit a certain disdain or distaste for the indistinct contours of the cave, for what Wittgenstein speaks of as "the rough ground"¹, preferring instead a more rarefied atmosphere in which pure thought meets with little or no resistance. As Michael Walzer notes, "One way to begin the philosophical enterprise - perhaps the original way - is to walk out of the cave, leave the city, climb the mountain, fashion for oneself (what can never be fashioned for ordinary men and women) an objective and universal standpoint. Then one describes the terrain of everyday life from far away, so that it loses its particular contours and takes on a general shape"².

In this study, I wish to consider some possible practical effects of this tendency to neglect plurality and particularity. In order to focus my investigations, I limit my attention to the case of contemporary political theory. Thus, the central question of this study becomes: what are the political effects of political theory's flight from particularity? Underlying this question is the issue of whether the prevailing conception of theoretical knowledge necessarily or always constitutes the most appropriate form of reflection concerning political affairs. In order to consider these questions, I structure my thinking as follows: in the first section of this essay, I attempt to sketch some of the sources of tension that exist between recent political theory and political conduct by considering certain features of both; in the second section, I qualify and focus my views through a
criticism of the political theory of Bruce Ackerman; finally, I attempt to retrieve the intermediary dimension of political theory which has become increasingly neglected over the last century, and whose recovery in the form of narrative, I believe, might succeed in reducing some of the alienation which has grown up between political theory and political conduct.

Before commencing, however, I should perhaps note two underlying aims of this study. Firstly, it attempts to draw attention to the relation between political theory and political practice. Although, in my view, this is a central issue, with crucial implications for the character of political theory, surprisingly few political theorists since the generation of Strauss and Arendt have given explicit attention to it. As political theory lurches towards yet another crisis in self-definition, it seems to me to be important to confront this issue directly. In doing so, I hope to tread between two equally unsatisfying (and unexamined) assumptions - the assumption that theory is radically divorced from politics, and the belief that theorizing is automatically a political act.

Secondly, a number of contemporary philosophers seem to be announcing a "turn against theory and toward narrative." But it is sometimes difficult to discern from these rather sweeping and fleeting pronouncements why it should be important to turn to narrative, and whether this must involve a turn against theory. My attempt to propose narrative as a means of reducing the alienation of contemporary political theory, is in part an attempt to focus and qualify these claims in relation to a comparatively specific set of problems.
CHAPTER 1

1. **Tensions Between Political Theory and Political Conduct**

1.1 **The Disappearance of the Intermediary Function of Political Theory**

According to Benjamin Barber, "Thinking about politics creates a unique dilemma, for it seems inevitably to lead to thinking about thinking; and the more we think about thinking, the less we think about politics". The most recent manifestation of this tendency, Barber thinks, may be found in the failure of contemporary liberal political theory to come to grips with the substantive politics of the late twentieth century. But it is worth noting that related instances of identity crises have recurred ever since the foundation of political theory as an academic field of study in the second half of the nineteenth century. The issue of the alienation of political theory from its subject matter seems first to have been raised most explicitly and with considerable impact by David Easton in an article published in 1951, in which he traced key aspects of what he termed the 'impoverishment' of political theory to its neglect of the investigation of existing political institutions and behaviour in favour of a parasitic study of classic texts. Easton's claims sparked off a protracted reaction, dividing political theory into behavioralists and a variety of opponents to behavioralism. However, over three decades later, an increasing number of complaints can be heard to the effect that few, if any, advances in bringing political theory closer to an engagement with actual political practice have been made.
Those few thinkers who do recognize this estrangement as a long-standing and deep-rooted problem of the enterprise of political theory, rather than the result of any specific theory, frequently attribute it to the influence of philosophy, whose relation to politics, they claim, has been characterized by hostility from the outset. Although I think that there is some truth in this view, it is frequently put forward somewhat vaguely and ahistorically, and so fails to be of much assistance to the task of identifying aspects of the alienation of political theory as a prelude to minimizing it. I think that a qualified and slightly more focused version of this view can be achieved by considering the existing state of features of the mode of expression of theoretical knowledge.

Before proceeding to this task, however, a brief glance at the etymology of the word *theoria*, can provide a useful beginning to my argument. Theory is derived from the Greek *theorein* which means to watch or contemplate, and which is probably related to the words *thaumazein* and *theosthein*, both of which signify a wondering, awed contemplation of gods or cosmos - that is, of eternal truths. This sense of theory is taken up by Plato and Aristotle, and by Greek philosophy in general: Plato refers to a sense of wonder as the mark of the philosopher; Aristotle considers *theoria* as the contemplation of the eternal and sees the theoretical life (*bios theoretikos*) as superior to that of the *polis*. This developing opposition between theory and the *polis*, should not, however, be seen in isolation from a second sense of theory deriving from *theoros*, the term used to designate one sent by the *polis* to attend, and acquire information about, religious festivals in neighbouring cities. The function of the *theoros* was thus intermediary; he had to mediate between the truth which he observed and the life of his own *polis*. In this sense, too,
theory bore a close, although not untroubled relation to political conduct. 13

Although the term 'theory' only came into widespread use comparatively recently, both of these strands - contemplation and mediation - have been juxtaposed in political writing up to the late nineteenth century, that is, up to the point at which political theory became an academic discipline. At this point the always fragile relations between these two strands were disturbed into crisis, as a modified version of theory-as-contemplation came to overshadow its intermediary role. According to John Gunnell, this can be attributed to the fact that political theory's self-designation was dominated by the re-emergence of the term 'theory' in the philosophy of (natural) science of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gunnell stresses that 'theory' acquired a systematic meaning and came to be regarded as a vital ingredient of disciplined or scientific inquiry only at this late stage, at a time when the philosophy of science had been sharply separated from the history (or actual practice) of science. 14 The lack of attention to the history of science, induced by prevailing epistemological doctrines, facilitated the equation of 'theory' as an analytical term and as an actual aspect of scientific practice and made it possible to "present the problems of theory construction and the relationship between theory and fact as actual scientific problems". 15 In fact, this epistemologically dominated treatment of theory and its functions were estranged from the practical concerns of science - and political theory inherited this estrangement along with the term by which it chose to designate itself. In this way, political theory's intermediary function - its complex relation to the world of political conduct - came to be largely neglected. 16 This neglect, and the widening gap
between political theory and politics, have been reflected in the mode of expression assumed by recent political theory.

Consequently, in what follows I shall confine my attention to recent and contemporary political theory, which I understand (in terms of its historical development) as a field of enquiry which emerged in the American academy in the nineteenth century and whose course of development has since come to exercise a formative influence on the character and idiom of the majority of theoretical considerations of politics in the English-speaking world. To specify a little more closely what I have in mind here, it may be useful to offer a thumbnail sketch of the three-stage development of what I term political theory. During the initial stage of development, political theorists (including Robert Blakey, William Dunning, and G. H. Sabine) saw their work as a scientific study which consisted chiefly in collecting and presenting the accumulated political wisdom of an established list of Western political thinkers leading up to American liberalism. In the second stage, during the early 1950’s, this approach was challenged by behavioralists such as Easton, Cobban and Weldon, who labelled it irrelevant to practical political concerns, and called for an empirical study of political behaviour. The following two decades were characterized by an ongoing conflict between political scientists and political theorists (although both positions have softened somewhat) with a resultant institutional marginalization of those who saw political theory as historical and normative, more philosophical than empirical. Although this opposition continues, in my view, the publication of Rawl’s A Theory of Justice has ushered in a third phase by offering political theorists a positive conception of their task and identity which is no longer
dependent on an explicit conflict with political science. While it draws both on developments in philosophy and on the earlier conception of political theory, the current work on justice has added a new dimension of the identity of political theory.

In view of the relations between these three stages and for purposes of convenience, I employ the term political theory to refer to work from all of the above three stages. And now I propose to investigate some general aspects of the form or style of theory as it has become widely understood during this period, which are problematic in view of some significant features of political conduct. In doing so I recognise that I am guilty of caricaturing political theory, since I abstract what might be termed the 'contemplative' aspects of its mode of expression from those which are more closely associated with its intermediary role. I do this, however, because it serves to highlight the importance of this second strand in political theory which has been increasingly thrown into obscurity, and to which I propose to return later.

1.2 Politics and the Form of Political Theory

Let me begin then, by dividing some of the features which most theories are widely understood to share into two main sets. In the first place, theoretical knowledge may be described as a kind of 'knowing-about' which is distinguished from everyday 'know-how' by a comparatively high degree of abstraction and generality. Michael Oakeshott detects this characteristic at work as early as the choice of an object of study, suggesting that while all thinking extracts objects or 'goings-on' "from the unrecognizable confusion of all that may be going on", in the case of everyday knowledge, 'goings-on' are identified
for specific practical purposes, in terms of relevant characteristics, whereas theory examines 'goings-on' in terms of their postulates, a task which leads to increasing abstraction. To take an example, a horse may come to be identified for everyday purposes, as an animal with four legs, useful for carrying human beings for fairly long distances, and similar in appearance to a zebra. A biological theory however, may classify it in terms of genus and species and consider it accordingly.

Bound up with the greater abstraction of theory is the solitary nature of the knowledge which it pursues, and the radical disengagement which is regarded as vital to its task. This perceived need for distance from contingent and 'subjective' factors which may obscure or distort genuine knowledge is also at the bottom of theory's greater rigour and more systematic character and expresses itself in a commitment to formal method and a sparse language of literalism. These features may, as John Nelson claims, derive from an underlying objectivism and from adherence to rationalistic dichotomies between the subjective and objective, and the literal and figurative, but in my view, they can coexist with a fairly weak commitment to objectivism, motivated chiefly by a suspicion of the profusion of symbols in everyday understandings and living, which are taken to encourage errors and superstitions.

This last point provides me with a bridge to the second set of theory's features which I propose to discuss: its critical orientation, or attempt to penetrate appearances. Theory is generally understood to be an attempt to achieve a radically disengaged perspective in order to penetrate through surface distractions and contingent appearances to "what is really going on". This frequently induces a degree of cognitive imperialism and a sense of superiority;
even when theory's critical moment takes the form of classification and articulation rather than those of direct criticism or an attempt to restructure or replace existing understandings, it attempts to set out pre-theoretical understandings in such a way that an underlying order or system may be perceived. For example, while in recent writings, John Rawls has stressed the need for a theory of justice to secure agreement with the "basic intuitive ideas" of a society, he continues to assert the importance of the original position as a device of representation to provide "some point of view, removed from and not distorted by the particular features and circumstances of the all-encompassing background framework, from which a fair agreement .... can be reached". 26

There is thus a kind of necessity or finality about the knowledge for which theory searches; as Charles Taylor observes, it is conventionally thought that in a theory "We are not trying to understand things merely as they impinge on us, or are relevant to the purposes we are pursuing, but rather grasp them as they are, outside the immediate perspective or our goals and activities". 27 In other words, theory looks for the reasons which give rise to appearances, seeking to subsume particular cases or features under neat and stable laws or procedures, or render them intelligible in terms of general concepts, categories, or themes.

It is worth stressing at this point, that the above remarks are decidedly not intended to denigrate the value of theory. It should be evident that in numerous areas of inquiry, the generality and critical distance of theory constitute considerable advantages - for example - a biological theory may make it possible to take more appropriate and effective measures to ensure the health of
an animal, and a physical theory may be put to work in the form of more efficient technology. In other words, theory can contribute to the improvement of technique. However, it should be noted that this contribution is unproblematic only where a relatively high degree of consensus concerning acceptable objectives has been secured. This does not mean that theory cannot be useful in the context of politics or is opposed to the 'essence' of politics (this seems to be the claim of Oakeshott and Arendt)\(^2\) - at different times it will be agreed that different limited areas of political conduct should be subject to administration rather than debate. However, where such agreement has not been secured, theoretical knowledge, in its abstract, critically disengaged aspect, is inappropriate in terms of key features of political conduct.

When theory is applied to political conduct, two kinds of problems (corresponding to the above two sets of theoretical characteristics) may arise. Firstly, the abstraction, system, and reflective character of theory frequently obstruct insights into significant aspects of politics. For example, politics is embedded in action - and consequently involves specific forms of activity, work participation, physical energy (often including violence) and, since action occurs between people,\(^2\) a variety of affective relations which both link and separate people. The abstraction, and the measured rigour of much contemporary political theory has tended to divert attention from these features of political conduct towards concepts of political discourse\(^3\), processes of political deliberation, formal arguments concerning principles of distribution, or (in the cases of systems theory and structural-functionalism) methodological terms which bear only a tenuous relationship to politics.\(^3\) As a result, the order of the political sphere has been exaggerated, and its
fluid, unpredictable features neglected; commenting on this tendency in the context of contemporary liberal political theory, Barber remarks, "Politics reconstructed as theory has been trained to obey the rules of philosophy ... If philosophy's categories are reflective, then action must be made to resemble reflection; if philosophy aspires to certainty, then justice must cease to be a flexible rule of thumb for practical human conduct and live up to certainty's demanding metaphysical standards ... The quest for a useful political theory gives way to the conquest of politics by theory".32

This problem seems to afflict even those theorists (such as Arendt) who exhibit a sensitivity to an ineliminable lack of order in political affairs, in the form of what John Gunnell terms "polidolatry" - the temptation to attribute transcendental qualities to "the political" and thereby render it abstract while still claiming to be addressing an actual activity. This produces, Gunnell points out, "a vacuous normativeness that bears only a grammatical resemblance to substantive political judgment".33 So, for example, Arendt's characterization of politics as the realm of human action (as opposed to work and labour) leads her to exclude attempts to address problems of poverty and unemployment from the domain of politics. Precisely what is left to political activity on her view, is not clear.34 A similar problem can be noted in Rorty's view of politics. His tendency to characterize politics as a self-generated and self-sustaining conversation results in its insulation from actual conflicts and thus deprives political disputes of much of their characteristic urgency.35

It might be argued that this problem is simply a form of the reductionism and distortion which is always involved in articulation.36 This is partially correct, and to the
extent that it is, the problem cannot be completely eliminated. But the application of theory to political conduct may give rise to tensions which produce political effects, and these problems may be more amenable to correction. The political effect of theory's tendency to neglect the action and exaggerate the system of political conduct is a diminished view of change. Typically, the options for change are narrowed down to two - either the 'realism' of adjustment necessitated by the resilience and coherence of connections in the 'system', or a principled and abstractly formulated idealism, which because it is also convinced of the impermeability and systematic character of the political situation in question, resists specific articulation and fails to make contact with substantive issues.

This second option is particularly well illustrated by the communitarian critique of liberalism advanced by Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Sandel. Although it must be conceded that MacIntyre and Sandel do succeed in drawing attention to problems such as voter apathy, the centralization of political power, and the growing bureaucratization of politics, when it comes to spelling out the implications of their own vision of a political order based on community and a shared conception of moral good, their attempts are cursory and woefully inadequate. In particular, they fail to investigate specific features of modern societies - such as their large scale, complexity, dynamism and pluralism - which create serious problems for any contemporary attempts to implement a politics of a common moral order. By the same token, they do not investigate the extent of persistence of communal life in modern societies, and they fail to give attention to the various types of communities which are currently in existence. Thus, their vision of politics remains precisely that - a vision, which is never
brought into relation to existing political realities. At the root of this failure to get down to political detail, lies their tendency to equate liberal political practice with liberal political theory, and to call for an outright rejection of the former on the grounds of their detection of deficiencies in the latter. Thus, the communitarian bias towards theoretical system and neatness causes them to exaggerate the systematic character of liberal politics, and consequently, to fail to explore specific features of modern societies which might permit the implementation of some of their views, or at least give them an institutional foot-hold. 37

The case of communitarianism is by no means an isolated one. What William Connolly has recently identified as the "bifurcation of liberalism" into "technocrats and beautiful souls" in the face of an economic growth imperative can be understood as an example of both typical responses to a situation regarded as systematically pervasive and resistant (although I should stress that Connolly does not draw this inference from the phenomenon which he identifies) 38. The result, in Connolly's words, is that "... technocrats shuffle liberal ideals into the background to concentrate on growth scenarios ... (while) another constellation of liberals gives primacy to the ideals by detaching discussion of them from the institutional imperatives of the order". 39

Moreover, the problem appears to be broader than the present predicament of American liberalism; commenting on current attempts to promote political change in general, Roberto Unger suggests that "The visionary imagination of our age has been ... disorientated by a demoralizing oscillation between a trumped-up sanctification of existing society and would-be utopian flight that finds in the land
of its fantasies the inverted image of the circumstances it had wanted to escape. Unger attributes this oscillation to a failure to take seriously the implications of the insight that society is constructed rather than given, and to a corresponding tendency to regard the existing situation as necessary and resilient - or, in my terms, as systematic. The effect of overestimating the order and regularity of a political situation is the failure to explore (or even be aware of) localized tensions and ambiguities in social practices which suggest possibilities for genuine but non-utopian transformation. This constitutes an effective paralysis of imaginative and innovative political change.

The critical orientation of theory (which is related to its abstraction) may lead to a second problem. As in the first case, this involves a tendency to ignore certain features of political conduct, but here the problem emerges from the attempt of theory to secure a radical, unmediated distance from common understandings and to replace or rearrange them by penetrating to the underlying structure of social reality (which may be variously conceived as laws of historical motion, social interaction, economics, problem-solving, inevitable implications of ethnicity or cultural difference, or even a fair agreement between consenting adults in the original position). Both of these attempts encourage (although they do not necessarily result in) a calculative attitude and a manipulative political practice: issues which belong in the arena of popular debate and choice are gradually transferred to the province of rationally demonstrable and compelling fact or specialist knowledge, and on the basis of the discovery of these necessary truths which underlie political conduct, common understandings which run contrary to them may more easily be treated as symptoms of recalcitrance and brought into
line. Indeed, in extreme cases, theory may disregard everyday understandings and disagreements altogether, resulting in a potential (and sometimes not so potential) evisceration of politics. Administration, which is of course a part of political conduct, may increasingly come to be regarded as the whole. Of course, this process is rarely, if ever, brought to completion, due to the resistance of political actors, but imaginative resistance may be seriously limited, as a diminution of awareness of the range of political dispute and a depletion of the vocabulary of dispute take place. 43

Both this tendency towards manipulation and the narrowing of innovative political vision may be understood as effects of a reductionism which derives, not so much from the content of any particular political theory (although this may exacerbate and focus these effects) but from the orientation and style which has increasingly come to characterize much current political theory - from its proclivity for abstraction, reflection, and system, and from its attempt to achieve radical disengagement from everyday understanding in order to correct and organize them. These two related features of current theoretical style frequently generate political effects which tend to undermine aspects of political conduct associated with action.

Let me formulate this as a general statement of the problem of the alienation of political theory from conduct in the following way: where the goal of political theory is the encouragement of creative and innovative political action, the style of contemporary theory tends to produce the opposite effect. It should be conceded that the result does not have to be the undermining of political action by theory; action may prove more resilient. But in the
process, alienation of political theory from political action may develop to such an extent that theory comes to be regarded as irrelevant to action - as redundant. "In my view, however, the attendant loss to the political imagination of the therapeutic, questioning function of political theory would be serious. It is no doubt true that even the most abstract political theories perform the vital task of extending and enriching the political imagination and encourage a sense of contingency and a probing attitude which make it possible to think beyond a narrow and confining view of the existing political situation. I certainly do not wish to denigrate the value of this function, or to deny that it is performed by theory. However, where political theory is intended to provide a more direct guidance and encouragement of forms of political action (and most political theorists seem to presuppose this as the ultimate aim of their work), this imaginative function must be supplemented. The way of reducing the problems which I have sketched above, lies neither in an outright rejection of political theory, nor in its insulation (à la Oakeshott) from political conduct, but in a retrieval of the intermediary, interpretative aspect of political theory and a more modest conception of its function. Before enlarging on this view, however, I want to consider the theory of justice of Bruce Ackerman as an example of alienated political theory.
2. Ackerman Contra Politics

Although there are numerous instances of contemporary political theory's tendency towards alienation, an examination of Ackerman's liberal theory of justice is instructive for two reasons. Firstly, his writing forms part of the theoretical response to John Rawls's work, which has repeatedly been hailed as the living refutation of the accusation, levelled in the 1950's by Easton, Cobban, Laslett, etc., that political theory had become effectively defunct. Secondly, Ackerman is far from insensitive to aspects of the alienation of contemporary theory. Thus, the extent to which Ackerman succeeds or fails to address this problem may provide a measure for evaluating the high expectations engendered by Rawlsian and post-Rawlsian political theory. In addition, the case of Ackerman provides me with an opportunity to show that my remarks in the previous chapter are not intended as an undifferentiated condemnation of contemporary political theory; I suggest that Ackerman's book, Social Justice in the Liberal State, can be read, and should be appreciated, as a subtle attempt to combat the alienation of political theory - although it must also be seen as an ultimately flawed and failed attempt.

2.1 Ackerman and the Abstraction of Political Theory

That Ackerman is aware of the need to bring more politics into liberal political theory is evident firstly, in his rejection of both utilitarian and contractarian theories of justice as politically problematic. Interestingly, he traces the political weakness of both theories to a common
structure; utilitarianism and contractarianism are similar in that they both "appeal to the judgment of some hypothetical third party whose opinion is said to determine the just resolution of the flesh-and-blood contest for power". In the case of utilitarianism, this hypothetical third person is understood as an ideal observer who, detached from particular desires and projects, is able to determine the nature of happiness and to maximize its sum. However, Ackerman points out that while a partial distancing from particular conceptions of the good is not impossible, at no point can one be sure that he is not projecting his own preference on to the figure of the ideal observer. In judging any case, I "can discover no criterion for determining whether my original judgment represents the considered opinion of the ideal observer, or whether it merely represents a screen upon which I have projected the personal values I initially attempted to suppress". Thus, Ackerman concludes, an appeal to an ideal observer will not serve to settle "even the 'easiest' issues that are likely to arise in modern states".

In the case of contractarianism, the third party is understood as an abstract, pre-political entrant to society, who, because he lacks a specific social position or specific knowledge of social arrangements, will reach an undistorted judgment concerning just distributions in the society to be embarked upon. In order to make sense of the figure of the entrant, says Ackerman, I must imagine myself apart from society. This, however, is an "extraordinary demand", for my notion of myself - my individuality - is gained not independently of society, but through social interaction. Thus, Ackerman argues, "... As we search for the potential entrant within us, we shall soon come to a moment of perplexity similar to that which rewarded our attempt to grasp the ideal observer. No matter where we
halt in the process of disrobing, the being we observe still bears the marks of our encounter with organized society. Whenever we stop, we shall be obliged to separate the distorted aspects of our social identities from the motives of the entrant within us. Yet, for the life of me, I can discover no criteria for making this fundamental discrimination".50

According to Ackerman, the defect of both contractarianism and utilitarianism lies in their appeal to a transcendent figure external to political conduct who must act as a disinterested adjudicator. Although the promise of this move is to avoid distortion, in fact it ensures it, by requiring us to "suppress our own identities as social beings",51 and as a result, it fails to provide an adequate means of settling political conflicts. This failure, Ackerman notes, is a consequence of the liberal tradition's "incomplete liberation from the theocratic past. While traditional liberal thought has rejected theology when it comes to a substantive answer to the question of legitimacy, it has been strangely uncritical in assuming that the proper form of an answer involves an appeal to a hypothetical being who transcends the social situation in fundamental ways".52 To put Ackerman's point differently, the appeal to a standard of judgment external to politics is both politically distorting and impotent. Theories built around such appeals cannot settle real disputes - although they may serve to mask unacknowledged preferences from political challenges. The attempt to remedy this situation constitutes one element of Ackerman's work.

How then, does Ackerman propose to solve the shortcomings which he detects in utilitarian and contractarian liberal theory? In his view, the "real contribution" of his theory is that it never requires the reader "to suppress the fact
that he is a person with his own goals in life, that he encounters others with competing goals, and that he is in a social situation in which conflicts will be settled in some organized way". Ackerman's recognition of the ineliminability of the struggle for power, or competition between conceptions of the good, convinces him that the liberal view of justice, which he understands as a system of "undominated equality" cannot depend on any particular conception of the good, but rather on its "strategic location in a web of talk that converges upon it from every direction." Liberalism, he thinks, can settle power disputes, not by appealing to some view of the good, but through talk, or dialogue. Because he assumes that conflicts concerning conceptions of the good cannot be settled, he imposes a constraint on conversation; while participants may refer to their view of the good, they may not advance this as an acceptable justification for their proposed distribution. Thus, no one may claim: "(a) that his conception of the good is better than that asserted by any of his fellow citizens, or (b) that, regardless of his conception of the good, he is intrinsically superior to one or more of his fellow citizens". Ackerman argues that this move can be justified because the claim, 'I am better than you', implies the neutral statement, 'I am at least as good as you'. From this latter claim, he believes, substantive distributive policies can be arrived at; a society of undominated equality can be derived from a Neutral procedure of resolving disputes.

It should be remembered that Ackerman's goal is to provide a defence of liberalism which is capable of speaking to substantive politics. But has he given us this? There are a number of weaknesses in his attempt which lead me to suspect that it does not make good political sense. Firstly, as both James Fishkin and Richard Flathman point
out, there is a dilemma at the heart of Ackerman's project. According to Flathman, Ackerman makes use of two concepts of Neutrality: he describes Neutrality \((N_2)\) as skepticism concerning the resolution of disagreements as normative issues, but Neutrality \((N_1)\) is a life in which the capacity for free activity through dialogue is supported by "undominated equality". \(N_1\), Flathman notes, is a social ideal, which expresses Ackerman's view of the human good, and constitutes the real justification of his policies (rather than the claimed justification of \(N_2\)).

Despite Ackerman's claim to suppress fewer of the real influences on thought and action than contractarians and utilitarians, continues Flathman, he actually requires citizens who want to challenge egalitarian distributions to set aside their convictions about what is best and worst, on the grounds of skepticism. But this suggests an impossibility: from the premise that we can't agree concerning conceptions of the good, we can't get "reasoned agreement that undominated equality is the good that should take precedence".

Flathman's central point, which is that Ackerman's theory of liberal justice requires (and does in fact make use of) a conception of the good, can be demonstrated in a second way. Ackerman's dialogic touchstone - his reduction of the claim, "I am (or my conception of the good is) better than you are", automatically disallows all inegalitarian proposals. Moreover, it rests on a confusion. Barber points out that while reductions of this sort are logically admissible when applied to ordinal (ranking) judgments, in the cases which Ackerman has in mind, 'better than', despite its ordinal grammatical form, is "defined by and a function of 'good' and is cardinal as well ... Its ethical intent is entirely cardinal". Thus Ackerman has arbitrarily smuggled into his ostensibly neutral procedural
framework, a decidedly partial stipulation. Moreover, in the context of political disputes the reduction of 'better than' to 'at least as good as' makes no psychological sense; as Barber puts it, "We are not dealing with an ordinal spectrum of conduct here but with a profound asymmetry: the asymmetry of Good and Evil, Superior and Inferior. To say 'the superior is at least as good as the inferior' not only makes no sense, but it eviscerates 'superior' and 'inferior' of their essential meanings'.

Ackerman does not so much resolve political disputes as attempt to dissolve them by removing their causes by theoretical fiat. And in the process, his coy evasion of the fact of Neutral dialogue's dependence on a conception of the good makes his talk of neutrality potentially manipulative.

One reason for Ackerman's option for an illusory and politically bloodless Neutral dialogue is to be found in his assumption that political conflicts over conceptions of the good cannot be resolved unless those conceptions are shelved. But this is hardly a convincing assumption. In the first place, participation in, and maintenance of, Neutral dialogue itself would require participants with a considerable regard for neutrality = equality. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Ackerman does not adequately explain how the principles which structure Neutral dialogue are arrived at; in his account, these ground-rules are simply announced, as is the necessity for dialogue. However, it seems most unlikely that structured dialogue would ever begin unless the participants had first been able to identify some sort of common ground - common needs, shared fears or hopes, previously ignored common experiences, etc. Secondly, it seems arbitrary to rule out, a priori, the possibility of reaching an agreement concerning conceptions of the good through dialogue. For
example, one participant might, through convincingly reinterpreting aspects of the other's experience, persuade him to adopt a different conception of the good. Nor is it inconceivable that in the course of discussion, the participants might succeed in hammering out a view of the good capable of accommodating and placing in perspective previously held views (what one might term, because of its origins in political negotiation, a political conception of the good). Of course, this is not to say that disputes will be resolved in one of these ways; some situations may prove intractable, after all. But in such cases, it is unlikely that an appeal to Neutral dialogue will achieve much, either.

2.2 Ackerman and the Manipulative Tendency of Political Theory

Up to this point, I have been concerned to show that despite his promises to the contrary, Ackerman's proposed Neutral dialogue in fact requires us to suppress a very substantial part of our social and political identities, and fails to consider a number of political possibilities. His theory consequently fails to provide a politically adequate alternative to utilitarian and contractarian theories of justice. Supposing however, that an attempt was made to introduce Neutral dialogue as a means of regulating conflicts, its unacknowledged conception of the good, would, without discussion, outlaw numerous challenges from political debate, and in this way, prove to be manipulative. Ackerman himself, is not unaware of the tendency of political theory towards manipulation, and his attempt to avoid it constitutes a second theoretical goal.

In Ackerman's view, liberal politics must reject two traditional understandings of political theory: deductionism and intuitionism. Deductionism, which is the
"belief that the first principles of political philosophy are really 'second' principles that may be deducted from the conclusions reached in some other 'higher' domain of philosophical discourse", must be opposed because it runs contrary to the liberal commitment to toleration and pluralism and imposes a philosophical conception of the good on politics. Intuitionism, on the other hand, which suggests that intuitions are the final court of appeal over which philosophical principles cannot take precedence (although they may secure agreement with them), must be rejected because of its vulnerability to the effect of indoctrination, or distorted intuitions, and its tendency to resist conversational testing. Ackerman's alternative to these two approaches is to suggest that there is a parallelism between the role of political conversation (Neutral dialogue) in a liberal state and the role of theoretical conversation in defence of liberalism: "The task of political conversation is to make it possible for each citizen to defend his power without declaring himself intrinsically superior to any other citizen. The task of philosophical conversation is to make it possible for a person to reason his way to Neutrality without declaring that the path he has chosen is intrinsically better than any other route to liberalism".

Now while I am sympathetic to Ackerman's fears of dogmatism and manipulation, I do not think that he has sketched the options correctly. On the other hand, I agree with Ackerman that the attempt to ground politics in a metaphysical system or a philosophical theory of the good is problematic. However, this is not to say that conceptions of the good which may have originated outside of politics must or can be excluded from it, but rather that they must be subjected to the processes of political dispute and deliberation. On the other hand, Ackerman is surely correct
in thinking that some intuitions is so well established or uncontroversial that it may not be challenged by another, or by a rival interpretation and application of the same intuitions. Thus, "intuitionism" does not deprive us of resources for critique. What it does deprive us of is the kind of appeal to metaphysics or theoretical foundations that would dogmatically pre-empt or eliminate political deliberation. This is surely more appropriate to Ackerman’s desire for a genuinely political theory.

Ackerman’s desire to avoid dogmatism is evident in a further aspect of his view of the role of theory. At this point, I must concede that I have dealt up to now with the part of Ackerman’s work which he entitles "ideal theory", as opposed to "second-best theory" which comes into action when the principles elucidated at the level of ideal theory have to be applied to the real political world. Despite Ackerman’s awareness of the need for a theory which can effectively address current political issues, only a quarter of his book deals with second-best theory. Moreover, Ackerman is concerned to allow such a wide range of decisions at this level that the function of his ideal-theoretical principles, and with them, his distinction between ideal and second-best theory, become vague; he is increasingly forced to rely on the intuitions of political actors - despite his expressed suspicion of intuitions.

Underlying this awkward distinction between ideal and second-best theory is another misconstrual of options concerning the function of theory. According to Ackerman (and here I agree with him), political theory that cannot guide action is "utopian fantasy". On the other hand, a theory which consists of a detailed, concrete programme is "merely a symbol of the theorist’s power lust, an inferior form of autobiography". But surely the latter point can
only be justified if the theorist tries to claim a privileged status for his claims, or to insulate them in some way from the challenges of everyday intuitions. This is, however, unnecessary; it is possible to provide a political justification for proposals, and to present them as suggestions rather than irresistible demands, to be tested against the political experience of the readers. This brings one willingly to the intuitionism to which Ackerman himself is reluctantly forced to resort.

2.3 Ackerman and the Medium of Political Theory

I want now to turn to a third feature of Ackerman's theory - his awareness of the need to find an appropriate medium for political theory.68 In order to avoid dogmatism and manipulation and to convey his recognition of the centrality of social and temporal situatedness, corporality (and mortality), and the struggle for power, to political theory, Ackerman constructs a number of dialogues, most of which are situated within two narratives. In the first, a politically instructive sketch of science fiction, Ackerman imagines that a group of diverse people, headed by a liberal Commander, have embarked on a voyage of planetary discovery, having renounced their previous positions and wealth in order to do so. After a while, they come upon a new world whose single resource, manna, is "infinitely divisible and malleable, capable of transformation into any physical object a person may desire".69 Manna is, however, scarce (there isn't enough to satisfy everyone's demands), and so the question of distribution arises. Fortunately, the Commander is in possession of "a perfect technology of justice" which can inform, execute, and enforce, all distributive arrangements. Moreover, the Commander does not impose her own views on the group, but institutes the three principles of rationality, consistency, and neutrality to
govern all power-talk. The remainder of Ackerman's narrative consists of a series of dialogues between opposing claimants to manna; in this way, Ackerman attempts to illustrate the effectiveness of Neutral dialogue as a means of settling disputes.\(^7\)

Despite its usefulness in terms of theoretical clarification and in highlighting the centrality of the struggle for power to political conduct, Ackerman recognizes that his science-fiction scenario is misleading as a sketch of political conduct as a result of a twofold oversimplification of the problem of time: firstly, the struggle for power occurs not only between adults but also between parents and children; secondly, the rising generation does not encounter a new world, but rather confronts claims issuing from the previous generation. In order to stress the significance of temporal situatedness for a theory of justice, Ackerman constructs what he terms a "five-part biography" of Everyman which focuses on "a set of unavoidable decisions that inevitably shape Everyman's fate as he struggles though life as we know it".\(^7\) The five parts of the 'biography' deal with five chronological stages of human life - conception, socialization, citizenship (seen as the capacity to claim a share of available resources), participation in a transactional structure, death. I want to emphasize that the use of his narrative device does enable Ackerman to investigate a number of live political issues which arise at the five stages of life which he sketches, but which are frequently neglected in political theory - issues surrounding genetic manipulation, education, distribution of resources, trading, and inheritance. Ackerman's attempt to incorporate and deal with these matters should be appreciated as a significant contribution towards minimizing the alienation
of contemporary political theory. However, shortcomings in his two narratives seriously weaken this contribution.

Consider, for example, two defects in Ackerman's science-fiction story which are not rectified in his second narrative or elsewhere in his theory. In the first place, Ackerman offers no account of how his space travellers come to embark on their journey. As a result, while he gives attention to conflicts of interest concerning the distribution of manna, he completely fails to consider possible coincidences of interest arising from shared experiences of the journey or shares conceptions of its goals, which may provide resources for solving or alleviating conflict in other areas. This omission forces Ackerman to resort to the unconvincing step of having the Commander "announce" the need for dialogue and impose its ground-rules. It seems unlikely that without a fairly widespread recognition of a need to reach compromises through discussion that dialogue would be sustained for very long.

In the second place, the introduction of the infinitely divisible and convertible manna 'solves', with a stroke of the pen, complex weighing problems which refuse to withdraw so easily in real political situations. Whereas Ackerman's space-travellers may not have too much to complain about when they receive equal amounts of manna, such straightforward distributions will not suffice when real and limited resources are allotted. As Flathman points out, "In a world of finite resources ... goods compete with one another ...; allocating resource to achieve, acquire, or maintain one among them reduces our capacity (both individually or collectively) to achieve the others". Related problems arise in connection with the compensation
of individuals - for example, what, and how much, must a blind person receive in order to place him on an equal footing with others in his society? These problems of comparison are never solved by Ackerman, and ultimately undermine his distinction between ideal and second-best theory. The guiding principle which ideal theory supplies to second-best theory is the principle of equal sacrifice: distributions may be considered just if they involve equal sacrifices. But this supplies no guidance as to what is to be regarded as an equal sacrifice. Ackerman does suggest that an appeal can be made to "general advantage" to settle these problems. However, this simply reinstates the problem at another level: what is the "general advantage" and how does one calculate which contributions to society are superior?

Ackerman's 'biography of Everyman' is equally inadequate and misleading. Although he refers to it explicitly as a 'biography', it is at best a structuring device which enables him to incorporate a discussion of a series of problems to his theory. As a specific character, 'Everyman' does not exist. Apart from the political problems which he introduces, Ackerman does not provide information concerning his absent archetype. He makes no attempt to examine aspects of the cultural identity, familial history, or economic background of this ghostly figure. As a result, although it's clear that Ackerman sees Everyman as a modern American, far too much of his context and identity which could become politically relevant is taken for granted, seen as given, and masked from critique. Now while all theories must be selective to some extent, this degree of abstraction in a political theory must be regarded as problematic, and can be reduced. For example, although Michael Walzer's interpretation of the various 'shared understandings' of contemporary Americans may be criticized
for selectivity or for exaggerating the coherence and unity of these understandings, the closer relation between his theory and lived political experience" opens that theory to more detailed investigations, rather than occluding them."

Throughout this section, I have tried to show that, Ackerman's theory also provides resources for its own critique, albeit to a much lesser extent than Walzer's work. My reason for stressing this was to show, through the examination of a specific case, that my identification of contemporary political theory's condition of alienation was not intended as an undifferentiated rejection of existing political theory, but rather as an attempt to draw attention to aspects of it, which, although neglected — to differing degrees in particular theories — must be deliberately retrieved, if we wish to reduce the extent of political theory's current alienation from practice. In this way, I have tried to complement and moderate my account of the structure of theory in section one. In the sense that this account ignores the mediatory aspects of political theory, it is a caricature. But the tendency to neglect these features is perhaps the most prominent characteristic of contemporary political theory and is increasingly built into its structure. Thus, the account alerts attention to this dangerous trend, and by example, to the crucial importance of the mediatory aspects and function of political theory. In this section, I have attempted to focus on a specific example of contemporary political theory in order both to indicate its inadequacy and to note the ways in which some of its features indicate how this inadequacy might be alleviated. And, returning to the remarks with which I concluded the first section, I now wish to suggest one way in which the alienation of
contemporary political theory from political conduct could be reduced."
In my sketch of the alienated predicament of contemporary theory, I have tried to stress the intimate relation between form and function; I have argued that problems emerge not simply from particular theories, but from a growing tendency towards an excessively abstract and disengaged form of theory. Any attempt to reduce political theory's alienation must thus involve a search for a mode of expression better suited to theory's task of encouraging political action. This is a point which Ackerman tries to accommodate in his attempt to construct a theory which incorporates more of our lived political experience. And his failure to achieve this becomes particularly evident in his rudimentary use of a narrative mode of expression — that is to say, the arbitrary exclusions of Ackerman's theory are exposed as such when they are presented in narrative form. I want to propose now, that the (partial and rudimentary) turn to narrative of Ackerman's work should be deliberately developed and continued. But why do I see a turn to narrative as an important way of reducing political theory's alienation? In my view the virtue of narrative is that it is able to moderate or mediate the systematizing and manipulative tendencies of theory-as-contemplation without negating its critical orientation. I want now to enlarge on this claim in three overlapping areas: the functions of narrative, and more particularly, political narrative; features of political narrative form; narrative and political critique.
3.1 Relating Narrative and Theory

While it is no doubt not exhaustive, the division of narrative functions proposed by John Lucaites and Celeste Condit helps to show one way in which theory - as contemplation may be moderated by narrative. According to Lucaites and Condit, human discourse can be seen as directed by three goals which may be broadly described as "the display of 'beauty', the transmission of 'truth', and the wielding of 'power'." From these goals of discourse, narrative as a mode of human communication derives three functions - poetic, dialectical, and rhetorical. The task of poetic narrative - the expression of beauty - is carried out through formalizing or 'plotting' "the temporal and spatial relationships between the person, objects, and concepts of a universe of discourse so as to create a pleasurable or entertaining experience". Consequently, the chief criteria for evaluating poetic narratives do not include probability (i.e. conformity to an external reality) but rather internal possibility. This self-enclosure of poetic narrative in a complete vision (of a whole world) enables it to incorporate elements which might be seen as contradictions or inconsistencies in terms of an external world and gives it a multivocal form which lacks unity of direction. On the other hand, dialectical narrative, because of its function of discovery, revealing, or presenting, truth, is governed by criteria of external validity or probability. The complete vision of dialectical narrative is that of a whole truth, and its form is thus univocal and relatively inflexible. In rhetorical narrative, finally, the primary goal is persuasion, or "the enactment of interest" and consequently the relevant constraints are provided by the audience to be persuaded. As a result, rhetorical narrative "requires careful attention to form (arrangement, style, and delivery) as
well as to content (invention), but, more important, it treats those two in the dynamic context of a specific, rhetorical situation — the ('molecular') relationship between speaker, speech, audience, occasion, and change". Rhetorical narrative's unity of purpose (viz. persuasion) gives it a unity of direction and a brevity of form, but also lends it a character of 'discourse dependency'. As Lucaites and Condit put it, "... The rhetorical narrative is functionally constrained to stop short of the formal stage of plot 'resolution' by virtue of its purpose to encourage audience enactment ... Rather than serve a unity of action, the movement of the rhetorical narrative serves a point: the unified purpose of the discourse to enact an interest that exists outside of its textualization".

This sketch of narrative function, despite certain shortcomings, is valuable for four reasons. In the first place, it underlines the dynamic interaction between narrative form and function in specific contexts." As Lucaites and Condit note, it opens the way, obstructed by a purely formal concern with narrative; for an exploration of the role of narrative "in the evolution of social and political consciousness". This parallels my own concern with the effects on political practice of the formal characteristics of theory-as-contemplation.

Secondly, it is evident, and Lucaites and Condit stress, that while a division of narrative functions into poetic, dialectical, and rhetorical, is useful for emphasizing the significance of the interaction between narrative form and functions, it is misleading to conceive of these three functions (and their accompanying) forms as 'pure' or independent from each other." While one of the three functions may predominate in a particular narrative, examples of narratives in which the other functions are not
also present to some extent are rare. For example, even such apparently 'purely' aesthetic works of fantasy as Frank Herbert's *Dune* or Mervyn Peake's *Titus* trilogy do appeal to aspects of our lived experience and can be understood as criticisms of some of our existing beliefs and practices—although clearly, these are not their main functions. By the same token, dialectical narratives must incorporate rhetorical and poetic elements if they are to engage our attention and relate to our lived experience. In this vein, Paul Hayden White has pointed out that 'poetical' and 'rhetorical' elements may be discovered even in such apparently purely 'factual' forms as medieval chronicles, and both Jerome Bruner and Alasdair MacIntyre suggest that our accounts of our own lives involve these elements, which enable us to structure our lives and orient them towards future choices."

From these examples, it can be concluded that the distinctions between the practical, dialectical, and rhetorical functions of narrative should be seen as fluid and dynamic—as a continuum, rather than as discrete categories. Any particular narrative's location on this continuum will be dependent on the pragmatic characteristics and constraints of the contexts in which it is advanced and readvanced, and these contexts themselves must be understood as complex and fluid. I want to return to this notion later, but for my present purposes, the significance of this is that, on the dialectical side of its functional continuum, where its form is predominantly univocal and inflexible and governed by a commitment to the construction of a complete truth, narrative begins to blend with what I have described as theory-as-contemplation. By the same token, to the extent that it must be related to our lived experience, theory acquires narrative form. This can be clearly seen in the case of Ackerman. Where Ackerman
wishes to demonstrate the faithfulness of his theory to our experience as socially and temporally situated beings, he resorts to a narrative form which is primarily designed to be accurate to that experience, although it involves poetical and rhetorical elements also. In suggesting a turn to narrative in contemporary political theory then, I am not proposing that theory-as-contemplation should be ditched in favour of atheoretical story-telling, but rather that to graft narrative form on to it can retain theory's critical insights while moderating its systematizing and manipulative function. I shall return to this point shortly, but let me reiterate here, that an understanding of narrative in terms of the inter-relatedness of form and function can prevent misunderstanding a call to develop deliberately the connections between political theory-as-contemplation and narrative as a rejection of the critical imagination of political theory.

Thirdly, when corrected to give prominence to the contextual fluidity of narrative functions, the classification proposed by Lucaites and Condit is able to suggest not only how narrative may be related to theory, but also how it may be appropriate for the task of encouraging transformative political action. The persuasive task of rhetorical narrative indicates that political narrative is situated on this side of narrative's functional continuum; although by no means all rhetorical narratives are politically significant, all political narratives are predominantly rhetorical in form. As such, they are oriented outwards, towards the goal of securing the approval and active support of their audiences. Thus, the form of political narrative is incomplete, or 'discourse dependent'; it takes on the character of an appeal which must strike a chord with its audience, both in terms of entertaining them and relating in a credible way
to understandings which they already hold. Political narrative, while it may be aimed at changing certain existing understandings and practices, can only achieve this by appealing to other shared understandings. This means that political narrative is less systematic, and less capable of constructing a disengaged, total critique. But, by the same token, it is more sensitive to differences among practices and understandings, thus, enabling it to explore more specific strategies for transformative action. Its 'discourse dependence' too, reduces the presence of those manipulative tendencies which are encouraged in theory-as-contemplation, and in this way, it furthers the vitality of political debate.

The fourth strength of Lucaites and Condit's classification is its ability to recognize and account for a variety of types of political narratives in terms of the functional imperatives which find formal expression in these narratives. Within this framework, it is possible to identify at least three types of political narrative resulting from the presence of more or fewer poetical and dialectical elements within political narrative predominantly rhetorical form. Firstly, and most 'rhetorical', there are narratives of political myth which provide within a compact framework, paradigms of praiseworthy and unacceptable behaviour in political settings. Such narratives, which may be termed paradigmatic or exemplary narratives, involve the most direct appeal to a society's practices and understandings, frequently depicting its protagonists and situations as archetypes or as typical illustrations of the beliefs held by its audience. When successful, such narratives become deliberately embedded in the political and social identity of their audiences; they are retold to establish, recreate, or criticize, aspects of that identity.
Consider, for example the various ways in which the Exodus-story has been deployed in Western history, by Jews, Puritans, and most recently, liberation movements. Or, to take another case, note how the story of the just king who places himself under the same requirements as his subjects resurfaces in a story apparently told by I.B.M. employees in which their manager commends a nervous but conscientious employee for requiring him to produce identification before entering the building.

The retelling of exemplary narratives suggests two further kinds of political narrative. Retelling involves a new appropriation of the story, or a reinterpretation. Awareness of this may encourage a more direct preoccupation with interpretation itself, and so political narratives may take on a more dialectical aspect as interpretations. Political narratives as interpretation may be concerned either to reinterpret exemplary narratives, as in the case of Michel Walzer's re-examination of the Exodus story, or to interpret our current practice and understandings, and Walzer's consideration of the development of understandings concerning welfare provision illustrates. In either case, 'poetic' features associated with narratives, such as plot, multivocality, etc. tend to recede somewhat (although their presence can still be detected) and the discussion takes on a more discursive form, which is nevertheless still clearly organized around the goal of persuading the audience.

Creative retelling may also encourage deliberate experimentation with the poetic aspects of form and more imaginative or fictional narratives may emerge. Although such narratives need not be directly concerned with political practice, where they are understood in a political setting to articulate aspects of political experience more adequately than older, paradigmatic
narratives, they may displace these and aspire to exemplary status themselves. Examples of the kind of narratives which I have in mind here could include Elsa Joubert's *Poppie Nongena*, Orwell's anti-utopia, *1984*, Heller's *Catch 22*, and works of science-fiction. The success of such fictional works as political narratives, would depend largely on the perceived demands of the political situation in question; although initially primarily poetical, fictional narratives would acquire a predominantly rhetorical function.

3.2 The Advantages of Narrative

Having proposed a way of understanding narrative which can recognize both its difference from, and connections with, theory-as-contemplation. I now want to make use of this approach in order to note some features of narrative form which indicate ways in which political narratives may moderate the excessive tendency of contemporary political theory towards abstraction and system. To begin with, the interaction of poetic, dialectic, and rhetorical functions in any particular narrative permits the incorporation of a much wider range of discourses or language-games than is possible within the framework of theory-as-contemplation. To adopt Jean-Francois Lyotard's terminology, within narrative form, denotative, deontic, interrogative, and evaluative statements can be included. Moreover, insofar as this will serve a political narrative's goal of political persuasion, such statements may not only be included but combined in various ways.

For example, Walzer's reference to George Orwell's account of his schooldays in the restrictive and unimaginative atmosphere of an English preparatory school is aimed both at eliciting an emotional response of disapproval towards "the tyranny of wealth and class over learning" and at
suggesting which elements of the practice of education should command support today. To take a more complex example, Michel Foucault’s political narratives involve a rich use of discourses. In the context of his ultimate goal of persuasion to transformative action, Foucault employs discursive style (including long and impressive citations from historical sources), questions and insinuations which enable him to undermine conventional assumptions unobtrusively, recurring and vivid metaphors and symbols which engage the imagination, ironic and humorous remarks, etc. The ability of political narratives to range through graphic depictions of activity, subtle explorations of relationships and psychology, various discursive techniques (à la Foucault) to a reflective, precise style, indicates their recognition of the importance of not only the cognitive, intellectual aspect of human existence but also its symbolic, affective, and emotional dimensions. This recognition may render political narratives less systematic than theory-as-contemplation, but it enables a considerably deeper and so more effective criticism to take place - a criticism which can more adequately come to grips with the vast range of physically, culturally, and temporally situated experience which can become politically significant.

A second strength of political narratives consists in their sensitivity to the local tensions and ambiguities in the social practices which form the contexts of political action. This sensitivity derives from the goal of persuasion of political narratives but also emerges from a feature of narrative form - viz. the tension between plot, understood as a sequence of actions, and narrative world, understood as the rules of operation of the story, or as the constraints with which action must reckon. Narratives are constructed from the specific course of
development which this tension takes; as Paul Ricoeur puts it, "... A story describes a series of actions and experiences made by a number of characters ... (who) are represented either in situations that change or as they relate to changes to which they react. These changes, in turn, reveal hidden aspects of the situation and of the characters and engender a new predicament that calls for thinking, action, or both. The answer to this predicament advances the story to its conclusion". Without this dynamic tension between plot and world, movement is eliminated, and narrative collapses into static summary. Thus, it may be said that this bipolar tension of narrative, forces it to search for localized stresses or ambiguities within the context of action which may permit specific successes in transformation; where it is suggested that action meets with systematic resistance, or conversely encounters no constraints, movement is impossible, as is narrative. This point is of particular significance for political narratives, whose world (unlike the 'closed' world of poetic narratives) must be 'open' - that is, must be recognizably related to the current political experience of their audiences. Thus, if they are to be persuasive, or tellable, political narratives must demonstrate the possibility of their proposed transformative action, by identifying specific conflicts and ambiguities within existing social practices which would give it purchase.

In this way, the structure of political narratives encourages them to explore specific possibilities for change, where theory-as-contemplation tends to ignore them in its search for system. On the other hand, while political narratives seek to identify aspects of practices which can be activated to challenge prevailing or hegemonic understandings of these practices, they must also recognize
the presence of areas of relative consensus, which are comparatively inhospitable to critique. In other words, in recognizing specific sources of indeterminacy in practices, they must also recognize sources of relative determinacy. In this sense, political narratives should be complemented by a theory of political practices, which focuses on the relative regularities and rule-governed areas of institutionalized practices.¹⁰⁷

In the third place, despite their function of persuasion, political narratives are less manipulative than theory-as-contemplation; because of their 'discourse dependency' or reliance on lived political experience, they do not attempt to claim a privileged status or foundation in order to close off or undermine critical responses. This openness to debate is evident in a second bipolar tension (closely related to the tension between plot and world) which structures narratives - the tension between the teleological or configurational dimension and the discursive or episodic dimension.¹⁰⁸ A common misconception concerning narratives is that they simply relate events - that they are bound to linear chronology. However, the movement of narratives is an ordered sequence, a movement directed towards an end. The end of a narrative performs two connected functions: it provides a line of development for the plot which prevents it from becoming endlessly digressive, and it constitutes a rationale which makes it possible to see the narrative as a coherent thematic whole.¹⁰⁹ To put it differently, narrative closure 'patterns' events and offers a retrospective justification for the selections involved in that patterning; it lends a wider significance to events which invites the audience to understand its experience as intelligible and meaningful. On the other hand, the conclusion of a narrative cannot be deduced or predicted at the outset; if
this were possible, the sense of movement conveyed by narratives would be destroyed. Thus, narratives must defer or suspend their closure by introducing further complexities into the situation which they depict; as Ricoeur notes, "there is no story if our attention is not moved along by a thousand contingencies. This is why a story has to be followed to its conclusion. So rather than being predictable a conclusion must be acceptable. Looking back from the conclusion to the episodes leading up to it, we have to be able to say that this ending required these sorts of events and this chain of actions".¹¹⁰

Because the conclusion must be acceptable rather than obvious, and because of the introduction of further detail and digression (the discursive principle of narrative), in any narrative there will be undeveloped possibilities which resist closure and so suggest possible criticisms. For example, in my criticism of Ackerman's narratives, I suggested that their episodic dimension was inadequately developed, and that a fuller characterization of this would lead to the undermining of his conclusions. In this way, the tension between telos and discourse, the polytropic principle of narrative¹¹¹, can enable political narratives to encourage, rather than undermine, political debate.

3.3 Narrative and Critique

Up to this point, I have been concerned to demonstrate the value of retrieving the narrative aspect of political theory by suggesting how political narratives may be related to theory while at the same time moderating those qualities of abstraction and system which render theory problematic in terms of political action. But at this stage, it may be objected that this proposed retrieval, would, if implemented, result in the destruction of
theory's critical function. If political narratives must appeal to a group's (partially articulated) understandings of its social practices, do they not encourage an uncritical acceptance of existing practices?

At the outset, it must be conceded that political narratives are not necessarily critical. Although, as I have pointed out, structural features of narratives render political narratives sensitive to tensions within practices and hinder them from claiming a status of finality which would close off debate, this does not automatically predispose political narratives to favour any particular direction of action. Evidently, political narratives are frequently used in order to rearticulate and buttress existing understandings of practices. So, for example, the story cited by Dennis Mumby, concerning the I.B.M. employee who conscientiously demanded a security pass from the general manager and was commended for this, tends to legitimate I.B.M. as a place in which loyalty and good work will be noticed and rewarded.112

However, the dependence of political narratives on their audiences' understandings of their social practices does not commit them to what Michael Walzer terms "a positivist reading" of those practices - a "description of moral facts as if they were immediately available to our understanding".113 As I have pointed out, rather than assuming the system or identity of social practices, political narratives are sensitive to indeterminacies of meaning and tensions within and between practices. This does not guarantee political narratives an emancipatory character, but conversely, neither does it force them into an uncritical acceptance of existing practices. What political critique is denied on this reading, is any appeal to an objective universal grounding which would guarantee
its privileged status, its radical distance from the 'idols of the tribe', and its claim to final truth.\textsuperscript{114}

Such appeals, in my view, are neither valuable nor necessary. In the first place, political critique does not succeed because it possesses unassailable and universal theoretical foundations, but rather because it is able to connect with the lived experience of its audience and to articulate their hopes and grievances in a striking way. It may well be that appeals to apparently universal features of human beings, such as their needs for life, food shelter, and clothing, are necessary in certain circumstances—during wars, for example.\textsuperscript{115} But such appeals constitute, at best, a 'skeletal' or 'thin' critique. Political critique must achieve more, by appealing to a more particularist, but richer, range of experience. Seeking to resolve antagonisms and secure wide agreement concerning just social arrangements and distributions, political critique must fill out the bare bones of 'thin' critique, by appealing to historically and culturally specific values and understandings in order to draw attention to the presence of areas of striking commonality in apparently intractable differences. Failure to do this convincingly will leave these proposed arrangements without sufficiently strong platforms of public support. The reason for this isn't very far to seek; as Michael Ignatieff points out, "...We recognize our mutual humanity in our differences, in our individuality, in our history, in the faithful discharge of our particular culture of obligations. There is no identity we can recognize in our universality. There is no such thing as love of the human race, only the love of this person for that, in this time and not in any other"\textsuperscript{116}. Political critique can perhaps be understood as a kind of persuasive join-the-dots exercise; it tries to show how two separate
dots could be related in ways which would attractively extend and enhance the partial designs of which each is the current terminus.

Secondly, the most elegant grounding cannot ensure that a theory will exercise a critical or emancipatory effect: this will depend on the circumstances in which it is advanced and the sensitivity with which it is applied - on political skill and experience. In this respect, theory is no better off than narrative; theories which purport to encourage emancipation can, and have been, used to justify the imposition of all sorts of oppressive restrictions. Moreover, as Foucault has shown, today's emancipatory discourse becomes tomorrow's strait-jacket of orthodoxy.

Although they are presumably not decisive (I'm not sure how any evidence could be decisive in this regard), these considerations strengthen my suspicion that such foundational guarantees are not to be had, and that appeals to them are so much whistling in the dark. It would go beyond the scope of this study to try to argue this. But in terms of my present purposes, it is not necessary for me to rely on (or indeed, make) this sceptical claim. Rather, it suffices to raise the political objections that appeals to universal foundations will not bear the weight of political critique's comprehensive and particularist goals, and that claims to possession of such guarantees are politically dangerous, encouraging the bifurcation of societies into experts and ordinary citizens, and whittling down the range of public debate open to citizens. I want to suggest instead, that the claims of critical political theory, like all other political claims, should be tested in the arena of political debate and action.
What kinds of tests can be applied to political narratives? Various suggestions have been made: Walter Fisher proposes internal coherence ("narrative probability"), and "soundness of reasoning and value of values" ("narrative fidelity"); MacIntyre suggests that successful narratives must explain why previously held beliefs must be rejected and how they could have been credible; Walzer intimates that successful narratives must be more powerful in quality. However, bearing in mind the dependence of narratives on specific audiences, it can be seen that as evaluative criteria, these suggestions are inadequate: Fisher's proposed test of coherence may be overridden in some circumstances, and his test of 'fidelity' will depend very heavily on the audience's perceptions of what constitute 'valuable' values and 'sound' reasoning; Walzer's and MacIntyre's suggestions lack substance and cannot generate specific tests. Such proposed criteria are of no real value when it comes to choosing to support or reject a particular political narrative, although they may assist in explaining the outcome of such choices after the fact. Beforehand, one cannot with certainty, distinguish between narratives whose divergences from prevailing understandings will be judged to be unacceptable and those which will be hailed as offering a creative, novel, and commanding reconceptualization of understandings. From this, it would appear that Walzer is correct to recognize the absence of definitive criteria for assessing the 'best' narrative and to note that the audience constitutes the effective authority. Failure to engage the audience's support, however, need not silence the storyteller; rather, it places the onus on him to find new ways of making his story more successful, to explore more avenues of persuasion.
Understood in this way, political critique is characterized more by opposition than by privileged detachment; as Walzer remarks, "Social criticism is less the practical offspring of scientific knowledge than the educated cousin of common complaint. We become critics naturally, as it were, by elaborating on existing moralities and telling stories about a society more just than, though never entirely different from, our own".119 Thinking of critical distance in this way as positional, determined by a relation of opposition to hegemonic discourses, makes it possible to see critical story-tellers as situated protesters or 'counsellors' rather than as benevolent experts.120 This possesses two advantages. Firstly, it abandons the illusion of total critique, and in so doing, encourages a sensitivity to the variety and subtlety of the ways in which power emerges in a society - including through the discourse of liberation itself - and to the need for ongoing critique. Secondly, it stresses the critic's responsibility to make criticism vigorous, persuasive, and practically telling.

Thus, although a retrieval of the narrative dimension of political theory would deprive critical theory of its privileged status and would greatly reduce its distance from its objects of criticism, this need not result in acquiescence to existing social arrangements - although this may sometimes be the case. Rather it renders critique more sensitive and lends its practitioners a greater sense of the urgency and complexity of their task, while at the same time, reducing much of theory's manipulative tendency. Because of this, and because narratives can be related to theory while at the same time moderating its tendencies to abstraction and system, I suggest that political theory which is aimed at informing and assisting action would do well to turn to narrative as a way of recapturing the vital
- and revitalizing - task of the theoros. As Michael Walzer encourages and cautions, "It is better to tell stories - better even though there is no definitive and best story, better even though there is no last story that, once told, would leave all future storytellers without employment, I understand that this indeterminacy prompts, not without reason, a certain philosophical apprehension. And from this there follows the whole elaborate apparatus of detachment and objectivity, whose purpose is not to facilitate criticism but to guarantee its correctness. The truth is that there is no guarantee, any more than there is a guarantor. Nor is there a society, waiting to be discovered or invented, that would not require our critical stories."
4. **Conclusion**

In this study, I have attempted both to sketch the political effects of contemporary political theory's flight from particularity, and to suggest a partial remedy for this situation. In order to do this, I begin by indicating the loss of political theory's intermediary role and trace this to the influence of positivist philosophies of science, and more particularly, to the expression of this influence in the abstract, systematic structure and disengaged orientation of theory (as it is now widely understood). I then suggest some political effects generated by these structural features: a diminution of options for change, resulting from an exaggeration of the system of the situation under consideration; a tendency towards manipulation, resulting from theory's detached stance and privileged cognitive status. Thus, where political theory is aimed at informing and encouraging transformative action, its form tends to undermine this goal. I then proceed to consider the value of Bruce Ackerman's theory of justice as a guide to action; this case-study enables me to illustrate, qualify, and specify, my thesis concerning the alienation of political theory, as well as to hint at my proposed remedy. Finally, I suggest a deliberate turn to narrative as a useful way of retrieving the intermediary role of political theory, showing how narrative can be related to theory and how it can moderate theory's abstract and systematic tendencies without losing its critical orientation.

To return to the story with which I began: it is by no means plain that the harsh light of the sun is the best type of illumination for cave-dwellings. Theorists who, blinded by the sun, are unable to perceive the irregular contours of the cave which they have re-entered, should not
be surprised if their announcement of the need for structural alterations, fails to capture much serious attention. This lack of success should be attributed, not to the cave-dweller's inexplicable perversity but rather to the theorists' failure to take adequately into account the specific realities of the cave. And so, there is a need for story-tellers who, by gathering people together around the fire, are able to illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of the cave in new and effective ways.
Notes

1. Wittgenstein 1958: paragraph 107. The following phrase is adapted from the same section.


3. The term 'alienation of political theory' is drawn from Gunnell 1986, although my use of it diverges from Gunnell's in a number of respects. Another spur for my reflections on political theory's alienation may be found in Rorty's remark that "the habit of endless, ever more sophisticated criticism of the 'ideology' of the surviving democracies, combined with lack of attention to scenarios for their reform, seems to me grounds for suggesting that the First World left has gotten over-theoretical, over-philosophical." (Rorty 1987: 570). I wish to resist Rorty's subsequent insulation of theory and practice, while retaining a sensitivity to his accusation of abstraction.


5. For examples of these assumptions see Rorty 1987: 569 and MacIntyre 1981: 58.


11. This view receives its classic formulation in the work of Hannah Arendt (See Arendt 1958 : 220). More focused versions may be found in Walzer 1981 : 379-399 and Barber 1988 : 3-21, and Oakeshott's attack on "rationalism in politics" proceeds along similar lines (see Oakeshott 1962).


13. This etymological reflection leans heavily on Gunnell 1979 : 136-140.


15. Ibid : 29.

16. Presumably, the academic institutional context of political theory has imposed imperatives which have also played a part in the neglect of this intermediary role.

17. I have chosen here to offer a schematic depiction of the relationship between the three phases of the discipline of political theory in order to stress their relationships and mutual interdependence. There is another approach however, which may further complement the sketch which I have offered. It will have been noted that in the earliest stage of political theory's development, political theorists saw their task in terms of constructing 'Whiggish' histories of political thought aimed at demonstrating the excellence of American liberalism. According to John Gunnell, at least initially, the behavioral critique of political theory, was aimed at thinkers such as Strauss, Arendt, etc., who were perceived as undermining the values of American liberalism. And, in the third stage, Rawls's work has been widely hailed as a 'new liberal paradigm'. From this, it emerges that one of the driving forces of political theory's development can plausibly be interpreted as the question of its relation to American public life, or put more broadly, the issue of the practical function of political theory. This provides me with a further reason for connecting work from all three phases under the heading 'political theory'. To avoid confusion, where I use the term more specifically (to refer, for example, to work from the first stage, or work defined in opposition to political science), I shall state this explicitly.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid : 9-12. Oakeshott's use of the term "postulates" is a little vague, but he seems to mean by it, groups or general categories of characteristics which can be derived from a particular identification.

21. This example is taken from Oakeshott 1975 : 30. Consider also the differences between the ways in which greengrocers and biologists choose to classify fruits and vegetables.


24. Consider, for example, Bacon's suspicion of the "idols" which distort human understanding.

25. This expression is taken from Taylor 1935 : 92. Related observations may be found in Fay 1987 : 66-69.

26. Rawls 1985 : 225. Another complex instance which nevertheless bears out this point may be found in Oakeshott 1975 : 108-109. Anxious to emphasize a complete break between theory and practice (and thus, to undercut the notion that theory can replace commonplace understandings), Oakeshott chooses Latin terms for his key concepts "... because these, being somewhat archaic, are more easily detached from contingent circumstances and less likely ... to be mistaken for the characteristics of historic and equivocal associations" (Oakeshott 1975 : 109, my emphasis).

27. Taylor 1982 : 89.


30. It is of course true, as the work of Austin, Searle, Skinner, etc. indicates, that speech often constitutes a form of action. This is evidently the case in politics. However, studies which focus on concepts such as justice, power, rights, the state, etc., frequently tend to abstract them from their actual contexts of usage. Where this does not occur, and where there is an explicit awareness that speech is only one component of action (and not always the most important one), my present criticisms do not apply.


34. For a useful critique of Arendt on this issue, see Bernstein 1986 : 238-259.

35. For discussion and criticisms of Arendt’s strict exclusion of social issues (eg. poverty, unemployment, etc.) from the political sphere, and the preference of Oakeshott and Rorty for a non-purposive state (ie., a purely procedural state, entirely neutral concerning goals of political association), see Bernstein 1986 : 238-259, Barber 1988 : 167-170, and Wallach 1987 : 599.


37. For a useful critique of the communitarian position, see Wallach 1987, and Mouffe 1988.

38. Connolly’s main point is that "the tension between the imperatives of the contemporary welfare state and the ideals of liberalism are becoming too intense to defend both in detail within the confines of one text". (Connolly 1987 : 49).


41. In this connection, note Unger’s stated goal of working towards "a social theory that pushes to extremes the idea that everything in society is frozen or fluid politics" (Unger 1987 : 172).

42. Although I can’t go into this in any detail here, I suspect that a number of philosophers fall into this trap. Consider, for example, Heidegger’s claim that in response to the calculative thinking or Gestell which characterizes the West, all that we can do is await the ‘voice of Being’. In much the same vein, MacIntyre’s rejection of ‘liberal society’ leaves him with little to do but call for ‘a new St. Benedict’.

43. In this connection, consider Brian Fay’s "tyranny scenario" (Fay 1987 : 209-212).

44. For example, see Rorty 1987 : 569.

45. See Daniels 1975 : xi-xii.


47. Ibid : 329

48. Ibid.

49. See ibid : 327.


51. Ibid : 331.

52. Ibid : 332.

53. Ibid.

55. Ibid: 11.

56. In addition to the principle of Neutrality, Ackerman invokes the more general and less distinctive principles of consistency and rationality. (See Ackerman 1980: 4-8).


60. Ibid: 141.

61. See Ackerman 1980: 31-32.


63. Ackerman 1980: 356.

64. Ibid: 359.


70. See Ibid: 31-103; 107-227.

72. For this line of criticism, see Barber 1988: 127-131.


75. This example is taken from Thigpen and Downing 1983: 594-595.


77. For example, Ackerman observes that "Short of nuclear holocaust, these basic realities - imperial government, bureaucratic structure, burgeoning technology - are fixtures of our age." (Ackerman 1980: 362). Although he goes on to say that "... the task is to master these realities by shaping them into an environment that makes life worth living" (Ibid). Ackerman makes no attempt to investigate these 'fixtures' in any kind of detail, but simply assumes their impermeability.

78. My use of the terms "lived experience" and "lived political experience" is not intended to suggest a belief in an immediate, practically pure, and theory-free experience of politics. It is surely clear, as MacIntyre and Michael Sandel point out, that our experience of politics is frequently shaped by theories and that political practices (eg. voting) embody theories. But thinkers such as MacIntyre and Sandel frequently seem to ignore the other influences on political experience - fragments of past theories, commonplace wisdom, emotional attachments, habits, practical and institutional imperatives, forced compromises (which may be only partially congruent with current theories), etc. - as well as the variety of ways in which these elements interact to form political practice. Thus, by referring to "lived political experience" I do not intend to make an (incoherent) appeal to a realm of experience beyond theory but rather to convey a sense of the variety, complexity, and sheer messiness of politics.
79. See Walzer 1983.

80. I must stress that I do not see a turn to narrative as the only way in which political theory's alienation can be reduced. In this connection, John Gunnell cites some recent work in feminist political theory (although he cautions that this, too, is in danger of alienation) (Gunnell 1986: 222). To this may be added the work of the Critical Legal Studies Movement (See Belliotti 1989: 33-51), the growing resurgence of interest in the role which rhetoric plays in inquiry (See Nelson and Megill 1986: 20-37; Nelson, Megill, and MacCloskey 1987; McKerrow 1989: 91-111), and the attempt to retrieve "public philosophy" as exemplified in Bellah et al 1985.

81. It should be noted that I am not concerned here to develop a full-blown theory of narrative. Rather, my purpose is simply to sketch an approach to narratives which can account both for their difference from, and similarities to, theory.

82. Lucaites and Condit 1985: 92. There may well be other functions of discourse. But there are at least the three which Lucaites and Condit note.

83. Ibid.

84. See ibid: 93-94.

85. Ibid: 94.

86. Ibid: 100.

87. This is also the virtue of Thomas Leitch's examination of narrative. Although he confines his interest to what Lucaites and Condit would term 'poetic narrative', he stresses that narrative must be approached in terms of its relation to a specific audience. (See Leitch 1986: 33-41).

88. Lucaites and Condit 1985: 94.
89. This is conceded by Lucaites and Condit, who emphasize that they adopt this static scheme purely for purposes of clarity (See Lucaites and Condit 1985 : 104).

90. See Hayden White 1980 : 20-23; Bruner 1987 : 31-32; MacIntyre's work has been taken up in the context of communication studies, by Walter Fisher. (See Fisher 1984; Fisher 1985a; Fisher 1985b; Fisher 1989).


93. See Walzer 1985 : 3-6. Walzer remarks, "The Exodus is a story, a big story, one that became part of the cultural consciousness of the West - so that a range of political events ... have been located and understood within the narrative frame that it provides. This story made it possible to tell other stories." (Ibid : 7).

94. This story is related in Mumby 1987 : 120-125.

95. See Walzer 1985.


97. For further examples of political narratives as interpretations, consider Liberation Theology, People's History, Foucault's more political work (See Foucault 1967; Foucault 1977; Foucault 1979) and some of Hannah Arendt's essays (See Arendt 1969; Shklar 1977; Young-Bruehl 1977; Luban 1983).

98. For more examples of this, see Leitch 1986 : 29-30.


100. See Walzer 1983 : 211-213.
101. This is particularly evident in Foucault 1977 and Foucault 1979.

102. Walter Fisher considers that "the homo narrans metaphor is an incorporation of extension of (Kenneth) Burke's definition of man as the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol misusing) animal" (Fisher 1984 : 6). See also Nelson 1983 : 230-233.

103. See Fay 1987 : 146-147.


106. On the distinction between 'open' and 'closed' narrative worlds, see Leitch 1986 : 118.

107. On the institutionalized character of practices, as well as their sources of determinacy and indeterminacy, see MacIntyre 1981 : 89-98 : 181-182. Note also, the following seven general sources of indeterminacy of meaning in social practices: (1) A lag between the understandings of practitioners and changed circumstances; (2) The advancement of rival conceptions of the practice by different generations of practitioners and their need to form compromises; (3) Occupation by practitioners of different positions within the practice's structure resulting in different conceptions of its meaning; (4) The imperatives of institutionalization; (5) Unintended transformations resulting from localized attempts to achieve excellence or extend the practice in some way; (6) Interaction between practices; (7) Participation in more than one practice.


114. Thus, insofar as the use of the term 'ideology' involves contrasting it with 'science' (ie. securely grounded knowledge), I suggest that it could, without loss, be discontinued.


117. See Walzer 1987: 30.

118. Ibid: 30.


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