In 1989, Francis Fukuyama (1989, 1992) revived the end of ideology thesis. Even though he (1989, 3) denies that this is the case, it is clear that the event he describes (which on occasion he has been credited with having portrayed for the very first time) remains essentially what was envisaged a generation ago by Daniel Bell (1988), Alain Touraine (1988), and Jacques Ellul (1964), among others. This is the satisfactory conclusion of the continuous battle waged by human beings to achieve basic rights, the accompanying eclipse of disagreement about the most desirable means for solving important social problems, and the demise of major ideological differences rooted in conflicting societies. For Fukuyama, the process entails the final acceptance everywhere of capitalism and liberalism; a reasonable alternative no longer exists. He (1989, 3) writes:

The triumph of the West, of the western *idea*, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systemic alternatives to Western liberalism.

Fukuyama (1992, xi, 45, 211) argues that “liberal democracy” has “conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently communism.” In the modern age, this means that “liberal democracy remains the only coherent political aspiration that spans different regions and cultures around the globe” (xiii). Moreover, today it is difficult to conceive of any alternative way of ordering a polity that would present significant advantages over these existing arrangements (46).

But what does Fukuyama mean when he talks about liberal democracy? He designates systems that feature the legal protection of civil rights and liberties against the power of government, specifically mentioning substantial property rights, as well as the prerogative of engaging in business, but not including entitlement to health care, housing or employment, all of which, he contends, are problematic because they conflict with these capitalist privileges. The existence of such a “private sphere” and the accompanying weakness of the government distinguishes liberal democracy from “authoritarian” systems. In liberal democracy another right is also guaranteed, that of political participation (42–44).

Apart from a discussion of the merits of Islam as an alternative ideology, which he does not think will be a threat outside those areas in which
it is rooted in the culture (46), Fukuyama sees no other serious contenders to joust with liberal democracy. And certainly he is correct that fascism, communism and monarchy are all but vanquished. He addresses other ideologies only obliquely, but these belief systems are not so easily dismissed. For example, he does not say that conservatism, anarchism, social democracy, socialism, libertarianism, or feminism have been defeated. If they have not, then surely the end of history has not yet been attained. Fukuyama’s response is that these belief systems are facets of liberal democracy. This, he writes (1992, xi), is an important detail that his critics have missed:

> The modern liberal democratic world ... is full of contradictions. In evaluating this claim, we do not want to be sidetracked by objections that misunderstand the point ... for example, by pointing to this or that social group or individual which is demonstrably dissatisfied by being denied equal access to the good things of society due to poverty, racism, and so forth. The deeper question is one of first principles – that is, whether the ‘good things’ of society are truly good and satisfying to ‘man as man,’ or whether there is in principle a higher form of satisfaction that some other type of regime or social organization could provide. (1992, 139)

If it can be shown that there are any viable alternatives that do not form a part of “liberal democracy,” then it seems that Fukuyama is wrong. An obvious suggestion might be the collection of writings that is often called the communitarian critique of liberalism, including the work of Amitai Etzioni (1997, 1999), Alasdair MacIntyre (1984), Michael Sandel (1982), Charles Taylor (1989), and Michael Walzer (1983). Communitarians seem to be an exception to Fukuyama’s theory because they reject “asocial individualism” (Mulhall and Swift 1992, 41) or economic atomism, the characterization of society in terms of *homo economicus*. This deontological liberalism binds the citizenry to a moral system that prizes individual liberty without taking into account the consequences for society, such as crime (Mulhall and Swift 1992, 42–45; Sandel 1982). Communitarians reject this approach, and the work of Etzioni (1997, 1999), who has sought to limit individual freedom considerably when it is in the interest of the community, has popularized the movement in recent years, drawing widespread attention to its tenets.

These two strands of intellectual thought are already linked. The end of history/ideology perspective is related to the communitarian critique because the former theorists are in effect accepting the triumph of a system of ideas that the latter political philosophers reject. A strong ligament between them is the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, a leader of the