The Holocaust has been studied elaborately in the disciplines of art, literature, cinema and history have been studied at length, but this subject has been neglected in the field of philosophy. The previous chapters of this research pursue its study through focusing on the philosophy of aesthetics after the Holocaust. The research shows how the philosophy produced by Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), Jean-Luc Nancy (1940–) and Giorgio Agamben (1942–) has been saturated with the event of the Holocaust and importantly mediated through Adorno’s philosophy of art. The study of their major philosophical texts on the Holocaust and aesthetics has drawn an intellectual analogy between Adorno’s critique of aesthetics in the wake of Auschwitz and the critique of aesthetics in post-Auschwitz culture and society by Derrida, Nancy and Agamben. Adorno’s critical concerns with issues such as Enlightenment myth, anti-semitism, modernity, culture industry, good life, exile and despair, freedom, barbarism and fascist propaganda are studied with respect to his books on the Holocaust such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (1947); *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (1951); *Negative Dialectics* (1966), *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* [1938-69] (1991); *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational Culture* [1941-53] (1994) and *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (2005) in Chapter I. The development of Adorno’s philosophy of art has been examined with respect to his important writings on aesthetics after Auschwitz like *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (1949), translated as *Philosophy of New Music* (2006); *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten*

Adorno’s critique of the Holocaust is situated within his philosophy of aesthetics. The chapter concludes by reiterating Adorno’s claims that aesthetics should not be separated from any consideration of social and historical condition, and that the social and the historical specificity of artworks must carry a philosophical reflection.

In his four books on the Holocaust such as *The Truth in Painting* (1978); *Cinders* (1987); *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (1987); and *Memoires for Paul de Man* (1986, revised 1989), Derrida thinks over issues like the problem of representational thinking in Heidegger, Nazism (Heidegger’s Nazism specifically), cinders/traces of the Holocaust, and the Nazi links of Paul de Man. Derrida’s writings on aesthetics after the Holocaust (especially those after his discovery in America in 1988 of Paul de Man’s anti-Semitic wartime journalism like *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self Portrait and Other Ruins* (1990); *Acts of Literature* (edited by Derek Attridge, 1992); *The Instant of My Death/Demeure: Fiction and Testimony* (1994 & 1998); *Copy, Archive, Signature: A Conversation on Photography* (2000); *H.C. for Life, That Is to Say...* (2000); *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (2005); and *The Beast and the Sovereign, Volume II* (2010) deal with aesthetic forms like paintings, literature, testimony, photography, cinema, television, video and memoir, anddiscuses notions such as blindness, philosophy and literature, testimony, truth, memory, mourning, love, life and death, signature, trace, other, futurity, responsibility, animality, sovereignty, solitude, insularity, violence, boredom, etc.
As an intellectual, Nancy is preoccupied with ideas like community, remythization, totalitarianism, psychic origins of totalitarianism, fascism and psychoanalysis, forbidden representation of the Shoah, and image and violence in his books on the Holocaust such as *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* (1978); *The Inoperative Community* (1986); “The Nazi Myth” (1980, revised 1991) and *The Ground of the Image* (1999–2004). In his philosophy of art and aesthetics produced in books like *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* (1978); *The Sense of the World* (1993); *The Muses* (1994); *The Ground of the Image* (1999–2004); *Multiple Arts: The Muses II* (edited by Simon Sparks, 2006); *The Evidence of Film* (2001); *Noli Me Tangere: On the Raising of the Body* (2003); *The Pleasure in Drawing* (2009); and *Being Nude: The Skin of Images* (2006), Nancy ponders over visual arts like drawing, painting, photography, video and silent film, and literary forms like parables to interpret philosophically the concepts such as Jena Romanticism, sense and meaning, experience and freedom, plurality of arts and of senses, violence, sacredness, finitude, death, deconstruction of Christianity, pleasure/desire, and nudity of being and truth.

preoccupation with extant and simple literary forms like apology, aphorism, fable, riddle, and with modern literary forms and visual mediums like short story, photography, novel, film and painting. He also discusses the philosophical notions such as experience, self-annulment, ends of poetry, potentiality, memory and oblivion, messianic time, profanity and inoperativity.

**CONTEMPORARY AESTHETICS**

The psychoanalytic, Marxist, poststructuralist, feminist and postmodern philosophers and theorists such as Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze, Jean Baudrillard, Antonio Negri, Fredric Jameson, Julia Kristeva and Slavoj Žižek have also produced works on aesthetics and provided meaning revealing insights into the nature of art. They were either successor or contemporary of Derrida, Nancy and Agamben.

In formulating aesthetics after World War II, psychoanalytic theories at the beginning of the modern period played an important role. The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) referred to the construction of the gaze in Hans Holbein’s painting of *The Ambassadors* (1533) in order to demonstrate his ideas about the limits of the Subject. In the right hand side foreground of the painting, there appears a weirdly distorted object. Seen from a high angle to the right of the painting, this object turns out to be skull. This illusionistic device is called *anamorphosis*. When the illusion of the skull is perceived from the right of the painting, the image of *The Ambassadors* becomes distorted and ungraspable. This contradiction reveals the blind-spot in the visual field of the Subject and how it is impossible to fully grasp the whole of the visual field. Lacan valued this blind spot in visuality and felt that experiences occurring in the blind spot of our knowledge and perception can be the source of a libidinal
pleasure which he termed *jouissance*. The experience of *jouissance* is not readily accessible to language and the construction of the ego. The eruption of experiences beyond the grasp of the Subject is normally thought to lead to suffering or depression and even psychosis. Lacan believed that these experiences are integral to pleasure and art precisely because they are unregulated and beyond unconsciousness. He observes this in Lorenzo Bernini’s (1598–1680) statue of St Theresa in Rome called *The Ecstasy of St Theresa* (1644–7) where St Theresa experiences *jouissance*, but knows nothing about it.

In his final book *Camera Lucida* (1980), the poststructuralist theorist Roland Barthes (1915–80) developed a notion of “the punctum”, an effect of being moved and rendered speechless by the photographic image. The punctum effect arises out of Barthes’ astonishment that the people he is looking at have grown older or have even died. Frequently, the punctum effect lies in a photographic detail like Mapplethorpe’s open hand in a self-portrait which captures the right degree of openness, the right density of abandonment. *Camera Lucida* revolves around the discussion of a photograph of Barthes’ mother as a child, which is deliberately not reproduced in the book. In this photograph, Barthes discovers a vision of the essence of his late mother’s gentleness and generosity which defies even death. The photograph transports Barthes to another time when his mother was alive, and leads him to ruminate upon the contradictions of time in photography. In a photograph the person depicted seems to have an extended life, even though he or she is no longer the same, while the viewer becomes aware of their own mortality in beholding the extended life of the subject in the photograph.

The postmodern philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1924–98) explained his theory of postmodernism as a way of describing a growing sense of alterity within
contemporary culture and society with reference to Barnett Newmann’s zip paintings, which he contrasted with *The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (1925–23) and *Etant Donnés (Given ...)* (1946–66) by Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968). Duchamp’s works like *The Large Glass* and *Etant Donnés* can only represent time as occurring either prior to, or after the event. In contrast with Duchamp, Barnett Newman’s paintings like *The Stations of the Cross* (1958–66) are able to represent “the event”. Duchamp’s readymades, such as Bottle Dryer (1914) and Fountain (1917) function in a similar manner to Newman’s paintings as both presentations and representations. They exemplify the constant process of dispossession that the artist experiences even from his or her own work. With this in mind, Lyotard agrees with the art historian Thierry de Duve that “the contemporary aesthetic question is not ‘What is beautiful?’ but ‘What can be said to be art?’”

The philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (1925–95) also exemplifies that of Lyotard and is similarly influenced by Nietzsche’s re-evaluation of Kant’s aesthetics. Like many modernists, Deleuze claims that painting is capable of acting directly upon the nervous system. But he does not use this theory to maintain a controlling Subject within the sphere of experience, as in early Modernist aesthetics. As such, visuality is not confined simply to the eye. Painting gives us eyes all over and breathes. Deleuze’s revised sense of visuality challenges the primacy normally given to eye in modern aesthetics up to and including Lacan, and is part of his philosophical conception of “the body without organs”. Deleuze’s claims for the paintings of Francis Bacon as being composed of intensities of experience are influenced by Artaud’s ideas of “the body’s escape from the mind”. Painting is lodged where the body escapes itself, but in

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1 Deleuze adopted this term from the playwright Antonin Artaud (1895–1948), the innovator of the “Theatre of Cruelty”.
escaping, the body discovers the materiality of which it is composed. Deleuze defined painting in psychopathological terms as a form of hysteria, whereas music's pathology is “more of a galloping schizophrenia” that speaks of disembodiment and dematerialization. Music knows all about waves and nervousness, but it strips bodies of their inertia, of the materiality of their presence. It disembodies bodies. Deleuze maintains that there is an essence to different art forms, but in a way which posits the body as a conduit of psychic conflicts and experiences.

Another well-known postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007) defines the situation of capitalism as “the exaltation of signs based on the denial of the reality of things” which engenders a different form of aesthetics from previously, aesthetics of simulation rather than previous aesthetics of beauty and originality. In his opinion, Pop art in the 1960s exemplifies the fact that the world is made up of copies of other copies. He contrasts the ‘cool’ art of Pop with the ‘hot’ painting of Abstract Expressionism which was seen as a radical gesture of independence from cultural constraints and laws. But Abstract Expressionism is no more radical or ‘real’ than Pop. It confronts a full, saturated system of signs with a pure and empty gesture, which celebrates its own disappearance. Abstract Expressionism is nihilistic, no more than an explosive dream. A recurring theme of postmodern aesthetics is the idea that experience no longer exists in a pure state, autonomous from language, but exists at the limits of language and identity where the edges begin to blur. Following Nietzsche, experience is envisaged as an emotional excess escaping the Subject’s grasp.

Antonio Negri (1933–) who celebrates the development of the information technology and the internet in the age of postmodernism and claims that the creation of the virtual age implies a new primacy of the visual over the verbal, with the implication that images are easier and freer forms of communication than language.
As a way of examining the increasingly close relationship between postmodern culture and Capital, the American Marxist cultural historian Fredric Jameson (1934–) compares examples of modernist with postmodernist art and architecture. In Heidegger’s interpretation of Van Gogh’s peasant shoes in “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1935), the shoes were seen to stand for a wider reality. But Jameson views that Andy Warhol’s *Diamond Dust Shoes* (1980) “no longer speaks to us with any of the immediacy of Van Gogh’s footgear”. Here we have a random collection of dead objects, reminiscent of the pile of shoes left over from Auschwitz, or the remainders and tokens of some incomprehensible and tragic fire in a packed dance hall. There is no way to restore to these oddments a whole larger lived context. For Jameson, even the nature of alienation and tragedy has changed in the contemporary era. In the modern period, images of alienation, such as *The Scream* (1984) by Edvard Munch (1863–1944), represented the breakdown of bourgeois ideals of family life and stable identity. Contemporary images of alienation, like Warhol’s series of Marilyn Monroe, are not opposed to ideology even though they possess a sense of tragedy. Rather, they reproduce a seemingly endless fascination with glamour, stardom and commodification. Whereas modernism embraced parody as a weapon of satire opposed to bourgeois norms, postmodernism indulges in pastiche – a form of ‘blank irony’ lacking a critical edge.

The feminist theorist Julia Kristeva (1941–) argues that certain forms of literature and art reveal a level to the unconscious which exceeds patriarchy’s conception of identity. In her books such as *Desire in Language* (1977), *Powers of Horror* (1980) and *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1987), Kristeva uses the post-Kantian tradition of aesthetics to conceive of pleasure as a corollary to the breakdown of coherence and sense. Kristeva believes that certain forms and art and
literature relate to early infant experiences of both in the womb and after, prior to the child’s acquisition of language. In this respect, Kristeva’s views about art differ from Freud’s. Freud believed that art is an expression of yearning and conflict stemming from the child’s separation from the Mother owing to the law of the Father. Kristeva’s views art as arising from the child’s relationship to the mother preceding the intervention of the law of the Father and the dictates of society. An idea of this formative space of experience, Kristeva writes, is given by Plato in his dialogue *Timaeus* (c. 360 BC) in which he mentions the idea of a *chora*. Kristeva refers to this *chora* as the ‘semiotic’ which is a space of dissolution and fragmentation existing prior to language, but it is also a source of emotive experience and instinctual drives derived from the infant’s relationship to the Mother. For her, the writings of modern authors such as Louis-Ferdinand Céline (1894–1961), Samuel Beckett (1906–1989), Antonin Artaud (1895–1948) and James Joyce (1882–1941) convey a sense of the semiotic. Thier work consists of a desire to impose a music, a rhythm – a polyphony – but also to wipe out sense through nonsense and laughter. Joyce’s novels *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) function on the edges of sense, testifying in a language that is “always already old, always already out of date, as funny as it is ephemeral” to the ecstatic subversion of paternal authority. In the visual arts, the fresco cycles of Giotto (1267–1337) at Padua (c.1304) and Assisi (c. 1305–6) exemplify Kristeva’s notion of the semiotic. To characterize Giotto’s overthrow of geometry and paternal authority through colour and rhythm, Kristeva adopts Lacan’s term *jouissance*. In *Black Sun*, she explores another side to *jouissance*, as a profound sense of melancholy and depression encountered by her in writers such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–1881)

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2 The Greek word *chora* refers to both the womb and a popular dance performed in the open squares of the city. Plato’s *chora* evokes a maternal receptacle, a crushing, dancing receptacle.
and Marguerite Duras (1914–1996), and in the sixteenth century artist Hans Holbein. Lacking any sense of Christian redemption, Holbein’s painting The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb (1522) is utterly austere and sombre. The painting is not even a representation as such, more a blank or discontinuity in representation. Kristeva believes that the discontinuity exemplified by Holbein’s painting is derived from the unconscious, where language and sense are overwhelmed by a profound sorrow originating from the child’s conflicts with, and separation from, the Mother. Kristeva’s critique of patriarchy is also shared by other feminist philosophers such as Hélène Cixous (1937–) and Louis Irigaray (1932–) in their feminist aesthetics.

In order to explore his Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, Slavoj Žižek (1949–) refers to writers and artists such as Sophocles, Kafka, Joyce, Mozart, etc. and filmmakers like Alfred Hitchcock (1899–1980), Ingmar Bergman (1918–2007), Luis Buñuel (1900–1983), David Fincher and Bernardo Bertolucci (1940–). He discussed various films in the documentary The Pervert's Guide to Cinema (2006).

**CONCLUSION**

To conclude, the present research has delineated the historical trajectory of the philosophy of aesthetics before and after Adorno’s critique of aesthetics. It has helped to understand the perceptions of the Holocaust within philosophy and the corrosive impacts of the Holocaust on the philosophy of Derrida, Nancy and Agamben. It has examined how Derrida, Nancy and Agamben have, in view of the Holocaust, interrogated the Western tradition of art and aesthetics and presented a new framework of the philosophy of aesthetics in light of such social crises. Their visions and perceptions of community and futurity after Auschwitz have been studied side by side. The research has mapped the aims of art and philosophy in future.
Aesthetics has been central to the re-evaluation of the Subject since its inception by Baumgarten and Kant in the eighteenth century. It is no coincidence that the official beginning of aesthetics in the eighteenth century coincided with the re-evaluation of the subject in philosophy. From the very start of the twenty first century we find an aesthetics of disembodiment and fragmentation. This has led to the postmodern idea of the breakdown and decentring of the Subject. Aesthetics has taken this central role because its primary concern is with experience and how we experience ourselves. Aesthetics is thus an important domain of philosophical inquiry.