ADORNO'S POSITIVE DIALECTIC

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This book offers a radically new interpretation of the work of Theodor Adorno. In contrast to the conventional view that Adorno's is in essence a critical philosophy, Yvonne Sherratt traces systematically a utopian thesis that pervades all the major aspects of Adorno's thought.

She places Adorno's work in the context of German Idealist and later Marxist and Freudian traditions, and then analyses his key works to show how the aesthetic, epistemological, psychological, historical, and social thought interconnect to form a utopian image.

The book will be eagerly sought out by students and specialists in philosophy, social and political theory, intellectual history, literary theory, and cultural studies.

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Where there is danger, there salvation grows too.

Hölderlin

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Abbreviations

Standard English translations are cited along with the original. English translations are cited according to the Harvard system. Adorno's original German texts are cited in square brackets preceding translation and are abbreviated as listed below.

All references are to *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann (20 volumes in 23, 1973–1986). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Volume 3	*Dialektik Der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Second Edition, 1984)	[DA]
Volume 4	*Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (1980)	[MM]
Volume 6	*Negative Dialektik* (1973)	[ND]
Volume 7	*Äesthetische Theorie* (1970) (edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann)	[AT]

General Introduction

Theodor Adorno is one of the most exciting, controversial, difficult, and misrepresented philosophers of the twentieth century. This book hopes to preserve the excitement and controversy whilst illuminating the difficulties and curbing some of the misrepresentation of his work. This monograph is devoted to the study of Adorno's notion of the particular dialectic that is known as the dialectic of 'Enlightenment' and is the title of one of Adorno's best-known texts, coauthored with Max Horkheimer[1].

After over fifty years of consistent study, two elements of *Dialectic Of Enlightenment* remain seriously neglected. The work is almost always read as a severe critique and unremittingly bleak view of 'Enlightenment'; yet there exists a systematic utopian dimension to Adorno's thought which has yet to be fully interpreted and understood[2]. Further, in spite of a wealth of research into Adorno's post-Kantian German philosophical inheritance, his important intellectual debt to Sigmund Freud, remarkably, still remains comparatively uncharted[3].

Adorno's Positive Dialectic fills in these two lacunae. First, we interpret *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and other key texts by Adorno to uncover the narrative of 'Enlightenment's' failure and the concomitant utopian story of its

[1] Adorno and Horkheimer's use of the term 'Enlightenment' differs from the historical use – referring to the eighteenth century – and will be discussed below.

[2] Adorno's Utopianism has become recognised recently, although there is still much more research needed here. Of the few who recognise this in Adorno, most, for example Wellmer, see Adorno's Utopianism as limited to his aesthetic thesis only, and moreover, herein to his concept of 'the New' (see Wellmer, A. 1985, 1991). None have offered the kind of systematic unveiling of an overarching utopianism of the kind I shall be offering here. See later in this General Introduction.

[3] The only exceptions to this being Alford, F. (1988), Benjamin, J. (1988) and (1998), Dews, P. (1995), and Whitebook, J. (1995). Many of these offer perceptive insights on our topic, but their own project is quite distinct: none pursue a book-length study of Adorno's relationship to Freud.

redemption. Second, we uncover the Freudian debt underlying Adorno's thesis about 'Enlightenment'. We do so by depicting Adorno's German philosophical inheritance and the intersection of this with his appropriation of Freud. Expressed concisely, *Adorno's Positive Dialectic* conjoins German philosophy with Freud in order to offer an argument for a *positive dialectic* of 'Enlightenment' in Adorno's work[4].

Our book consists initially of this introduction which serves to bring Adorno's life, works, and the reception of his ideas into focus for those to whom this is not well known. We also offer an outline of our overall project and contextualise our reading of Adorno amidst the plethora of other readings currently available. *Adorno's Positive Dialectic* then moves on to a Prelude which is, I hope, helpful to those less familiar with his philosophical inheritance. In this Prelude, we depict his foundations in the German post-Kantian tradition and the intersection of this with key ideas from Sigmund Freud. Thereafter, we enter the main body of the text. Herein, we offer our interpretation of Adorno, which consists of two parts. In Part I we analyse his critique of Enlightenment, and in Part II we detail his Utopian project of Enlightenment's redemption.

ADORNO AND THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

To introduce Adorno we place ourselves back to the first half of the twentieth century. Herein, we imagine the highly cultivated Jewish-German family into which Theodor Adorno was born in 1903[5]. His very early years were lived out against the backdrop of the First World War and his education was completed during the time of the moderate socialism of the freshly created Weimar Republic. As he blossomed into adulthood, Adorno witnessed the build-up of National Socialism and saw Hitler's rise to power. Adorno is, in fact, perhaps best known for his intellectual reaction to the atrocities conveyed on the political tide of Nazism. He sought refuge from that barbarity, in what he perceived as an institution of like-minded colleagues, the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, commonly known as the Frankfurt School, which he joined in 1938[6].

[4] *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was co-authored by Adorno and Horkheimer. As both authors claim responsibility for every word, it is true to say that this text represents each author individually as much as it represents both taken together. Thus it is entirely valid to discuss this work in relation to Adorno alone. As we draw upon further works which are solely authored by Adorno, our book taken as a whole is a study of a single author. N.B. For a good discussion of the similarities and differences between Adorno and Horkheimer, see Held, D. (1980), pp. 200–210; Rosen, M. in Rosen, M. and Mitchell, S. eds. (1983); Wiggershauss, R. (1994) or Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 15–27.

[5] For a discussion of Adorno's familial relationship to Judaism, see Wiggershauss, 1994, p. 67.

[6] For more biographical details on Adorno, see the detailed account offered by Wiggershaus, 1994, pp. 66–94 or Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 3–10.

The Frankfurt School was originally set up as an institute for Marxist-orientated study by Felix Weil, the son of a millionaire. It had been formally opened in 1923 and was first directed by the Marxist Carl Grunberg. Later, directorship was handed on to Max Horkheimer, who became Adorno's great friend[7]. The early Institute's principal members besides Horkheimer and Adorno included Eric Fromm, Friedrick Pollock, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse, Franz Neumann, Otto Kirchheimer, and, of course, more complexly, Walter Benjamin[8]. Due to the political upheaval in Germany in the nineteen thirties and forties, the members of the Institute were forced to flee Europe. They went to North America, where they lived, researched, thought, and wrote until Nazism was defeated in Europe. Then in the mid forties the Institute, including Adorno, returned to Germany. Throughout these disruptive events the members of the Early Frankfurt Institute retained their sensitivity and intellectual conviction. To pain, horror, and bewilderment they responded with intense intellectual productivity[9].

Generally speaking, the Early Frankfurt Institute's members were all animated by a concern to understand how the European world had degenerated into the barbarism represented by Nazi Germany. How was it possible that such brutality could arise from the midst of supposed civilisation? The disciplinary orientations through which they pursued this question centred around the social sciences and spread into areas as diverse as politics, sociology, literary theory, aesthetics, history, psychoanalysis, and, of course, philosophy.

The various members of the Early Frankfurt School were not only united in their aim to understand Western society's regression to barbarism, they were linked too by the tradition from whence they derived their intellectual stance. Broadly speaking, they were all committed to a project of 'criticism', be it philosophical, social, psychological, or political.

Expressed in very general terms, the Early Frankfurt School followed the conviction that within society, it was lies masked as truth, folly masked as reason, 'fantasy' veiled as insight, that entailed the collapse of a rational

[7] Of the early members of the Frankfurt School, the most significant relationship for Adorno was that with Horkheimer. There are several dimensions to this. First, Horkheimer influenced Adorno. Second, he was also a collaborator. Third, there were differences between the two which entailed distinct foci of analyses. Fourth, there were more profound philosophical differences which entailed explicit disagreements between them. Finally, implicit philosophical differences also existed which were not raised as points of debate. For details of some of the complexities of Adorno's relationship with Horkheimer, see (for intellectual distinctions) Rosen in Rosen, M. and Mitchell, S. eds. (1983); (for social and personal) Held, D. (1980); or, Wiggershauss, R. (1994).

[8] Later as we all know the Institute grew to include others, the most famous being Jürgen Habermas.

[9] See Held, D. (1980), chapter 1, Wiggershauss, R. (1994), chapter 1; Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 3–10.

society and resulted in corresponding widespread social and moral collapse. In short, it was society's false beliefs – which the Early Frankfurt School referred to as 'myths' – which accounted for why a supposedly enlightened society could degenerate and a phenomenon like Nazism, occur.

The Frankfurt School's response, most poignantly advocated through critical theory, was a particular kind of criticism. This can best be described as a general attempt to *unmask delusions*, that is, the *self-deceptions* which individuals, institutions, and Western culture at large had, they believed, sunk into. So critical theory was a process of 'internal' 'self-criticism' to remove delusions that society held about itself[10].

One of the Early Frankfurt School's critical theories took the form of a critique of '*Enlightenment*'. This somewhat idiosyncratic stance equated mid twentieth-century society with Enlightenment. In holding such a controversial view, they wished to say that their own times were part and parcel of an intellectual movement that is usually regarded as belonging to the eighteenth century. This view was neither accidental nor casual, which is to say they did not express their critique of society as a critique of 'Enlightenment' simply because they were bad historians (as some historians might have us believe[11]) but because they regarded modern Western society as a *continuation* of the project of 'Enlightenment'. Thus their use of the term 'Enlightenment' differs somewhat from the historical one. Let us embody this distinction by henceforth referring to the eighteenth-century historical notion by using the upper case, and Adorno and Horkheimer's concept enlightenment by deploying the lower case[12].

ADORNO: INTELLECTUAL LIFE

Having seen the social and intellectual milieu of the Frankfurt School, we can now focus our attention upon Adorno's intellectual project itself. From the early 1930s until his death in 1969, Adorno wrote dozens of key texts which mirrored several of the projects of other members of the Early Frankfurt School, in particular Horkheimer, Lowenthal, and Marcuse[13].

Generally speaking, Adorno's work belongs within the framework adopted by the Frankfurt School: he was animated by the same motivation – to understand how and why Western civilisation decayed to Nazi barbarism. He pursued this question through the rubric of philosophy with emphasis upon social forms of understanding. Adorno's main influences besides

[10] For more details, see Held, D. (1980) chapters 5 and 6, Wiggershauss, R. (1994), chapters 5 and 6, or Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 15–27.

[11] See Sherratt, Y. (2000), p. 521.

[12] See Sherratt, Y. (2000), pp. 521–531.

[13] Wiggershaus, 1994, pp. 66–94.

Kant included Hegel, Marx, and Lukacs, also spreading to embrace Weber, Nietzsche, Freud, and Walter Benjamin.

Adorno wrote about what he considered to be the more general regression of contemporary Western society's politics, morals, reason, and arts, including the visual arts, literature, and most especially music. He expressed some of his criticisms through works of philosophy, for example in *Negative Dialectics*, he analysed canonical German philosophers, notably, Kant, Hegel, and Marx, and criticised others such as Husserl and Heidegger. He reflected upon society in works such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Minima Moralia* and in addition, he completed an array of remarkable studies on aesthetics, literature, society, and history. Further, he was notably influenced by psychoanalysis, and finally, he produced analyses of musical composers whilst also composing himself. Herein, the majority of his attention was focussed upon New Music, with mentors such as Berg and Schoenberg.

During the course of his life, Adorno wrote with remarkable intellectual continuity. Although in certain respects his own project was one of criticism, and was thereby of the same ilk as that of the Frankfurt School, Adorno's own mode of critical thinking was also in many ways quite distinct[14].

ADORNO'S DISTINCTNESS

The philosophical thinkers from the Frankfurt School worked within the remit of critical theory. This entailed, among other things, that they focussed their criticism of Western society upon problems inherent within knowledge and reason. They believed first, that false knowledge and forms of reasoning were responsible for widespread social decay[15]. Second, they also believed that the very enlightenment forms of knowledge and reason themselves were inadequate – these being scientific and objectifying – and this inadequacy fed back and became responsible for the social decay of enlightenment itself[16].

Horkheimer was the theorist who developed the specific idea of a critical theory[17]. With this he offered a distinct kind of critical reasoning. This was to

[14] See Adorno, T. (1973), Buck-Morss, S. (1977), esp. chapters 2 and 3; Held, D. (1980), pp. 200–222; Sherratt, Y. (1998a).

[15] The Frankfurt School, in general, and Adorno and Horkheimer in particular, are not careful in distinguishing between the concepts of knowledge and reason in the manner that traditional Anglo-American epistemologists would. This is due, in Adorno and Horkheimer's case, to the complex socio-historical view of the epistemological wherein the division between rational processes and empirical ones is indistinct. We follow their usage here and discuss reason and knowledge together.

[16] These points are principally summaries of the key ideas from Adorno, T. (1973), Adorno, T. (1974), and Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979); and also, Horkheimer, M. (1986).

[17] 'Traditional and Critical Theory', Horkheimer, M. (1986).

be a more self-reflective and historically self-conscious mode of reasoning: It was only this which he considered appropriate to the human, or social, sphere of meaning. He developed this against the scientific and objectifying kinds of reason ubiquitous in enlightenment, and appropriate, in his view, to the natural sciences only[18]. In particular, critical theory was an alternative to, what he termed, 'traditional theories' – all those which were objectifying of the social world[19].

Horkheimer's critical theory was definitive of the Early Frankfurt School and taken up in a later generation by Habermas. Although he opposed practices usually regarded as typifying enlightenment, namely, moves to bring objectivising kinds of reason into the humanities, Horkheimer's critical theory remained firmly entrenched within the remit of what he perceived to be enlightenment. Indeed the whole point of Horkheimer's criticism was that it was more in the spirit of enlightenment than traditional (scientific) approaches to studying society. Horkheimer was dedicated to the same pursuit of critical reasoning as the enlightenment itself, so that the development of critical theory was an attempt to uphold what he perceived to be the true values of enlightenment.

Adorno's distinctness from Horkheimer, as well as from other Frankfurt School members, lay in his stepping outside of the sphere of enlightenment. In spite of the fact that Adorno agreed with the Frankfurt School in general, and with Horkheimer in particular, that enlightenment reason was the fundamental problem within Western society – he disagreed with them insofar as he took his critique further. He criticised enlightenment reason from deeper foundations.

Adorno drew upon arguments from arenas other than those specific to enlightenment reason alone. Armed with these Adorno took the project of the critique of enlightenment reason further than any Frankfurt School member had done. Enlightenment reason had to prove that it was itself rational, not through an attempt to generate critical self-awareness as was Horkheimer's remit. For Adorno, enlightenment reason had to prove that it was rational through arguments borrowed from psychology[20]. Specifically, Adorno drew from Freudian psychoanalysis to develop a critical analysis of enlightenment reason and corresponding subjectivity[21].

[18] His criticism is most strongly directed against positivism which he saw as the deepest incursion of scientific practices into the humanities.

[19] See Horkheimer, M. (1986).

[20] Note that Adorno does not take care to distinguish between the enlightenment idea of reason and the 'empirical actuality' of reason as it occurs in his own contemporary society.

[21] Note therefore that he draws from the psychological to explain the social. In this he is not a forerunner by any means as Freud himself had used his psychoanalysis to explain social behaviour in, for instance, *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, which, of course, was hugely influential upon the Frankfurt School.

Having attained a distinctness through stepping outside of discussions about enlightenment reason, Adorno then returned his discussion to this very sphere[22]. His overarching aim (like the Frankfurt School's) was to make enlightenment reason more rational. That is, he too was an advocate of enlightenment values. In going beyond traditional (German) discussions of enlightenment reason and in using arguments from psychoanalysis to develop his own critical perspective, Adorno's critique of enlightenment became one of the most unusual and sophisticated in the twentieth century.

ADORNO'S PRINCIPAL TEXTS

The most important texts of Adorno's critique of enlightenment span contributions to German philosophy and embrace key works of social criticism, the philosophy of history, epistemology[23], aesthetics, and, of course, the deployment of Freudian psychoanalysis. Undoubtably, of the array of his studies, those of particular importance are: *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (co-authored with Horkheimer), *Negative Dialectics*, *Aesthetic Theory*, and *Minima Moralia*.

Of these, the first, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is arguably the pivotal text of the Early Frankfurt School. Herein, Adorno and Horkheimer set out a view representative of the school's social analysis. They depict a philosophy of history of Western society which claims that the entire history of the West is one of oscillations between two extremes, namely myth and enlightenment. This philosophy of history also acts as a critique of enlightenment. They build upon the German post-Kantian tradition and psychoanalysis and also include branches of social, literary, and anthropological theory to map out a philosophy of Western history[24]. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is both an instance of Horkheimer's brand of critical theory and also represents Adorno's own definitive brand of critical thinking.

Negative Dialectics, solely authored by Adorno, both analyses and embodies his own conception of critical thinking. In the main it is a contribution to epistemology[25] and herein Adorno criticises the predominant kinds of reasoning available in his contemporary enlightenment society. First, he criticises scientific kinds of knowledge, which he regards as objectifying and unsuitable for understanding the social world. Second, he is sceptical of analytic, or logic-based, forms of reason, that is, reason as typified by the Anglo-American philosophical tradition. Finally, he is also sceptical of

[22] In fact, from psychoanalysis.

[23] It should be borne in mind that Adorno himself is against the term 'epistemology' as he opposes the idea that one can distinguish either reason or knowledge from the socio-historical processes within which they are embedded. A problem arises from this for us, as we need to use the term 'epistemology' to demarcate thought processes from other human activities, so that we will, in fact, contrary to Adorno's own usage, refer to 'epistemology'.

[24] Schmidt, J. (1998) pursues biographical details and maps out influences upon the text.

[25] Recall that Adorno is adamently against 'epistemology' as we have indicated above.

systematic, or 'grand' theories, that is, those brands of reasoning typical of his own German tradition.

Like critical theory, Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* is an attempt to develop a critical alternative to the above mentioned modes of understanding. More especially, like critical theory, it is an alternative to the (objectifying) practices of the 'traditional theories' that Horkheimer had identified[26]. However, whereas critical theory was a critical and self-reflective alternative to traditional theories, Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* was an attempt to negate many of the traditional features of theorising within the very mode of reasoning itself. That is, its focus was more upon the form of thought, which Adorno regarded as depending upon the practice of 'identification'[27]. Most scholars regard Adorno's critical thought, however, as breaking apart any possibility of reasoning, and he is often seen as presenting little more than a 'cul de sac': in Jay's words, 'Negative Dialectics is the bleakest expression of Adorno's melancholy science'[28].

Turning to examine Adorno's notable contribution to German aesthetics, in *Aesthetic Theory* we find, first, a contribution to the criticism of the major mainstream traditions of the disipline. Second, we find the development of Adorno's own influental aesthetic theory, centred mainly around the concept of the 'New', although also containing important arguments for *art* in relation to *knowledge* and *reason*.

Minima Moralia, written in a literary, aphoristic style, contains the use, criticism, and development of key Freudian ideas. Adorno shapes these early psychoanalytic concepts for the criticism of contemporary Western society.

Each of these seminal texts is on the one hand, a discrete contribution to a particular discipline: *Dialectic Of Enlightenment* to the philosophy of history and social criticism, *Negative Dialectics* to German epistemology, *Aesthetic Theory* to German aesthetics, and *Minima Moralia* to literary criticism and psychological analysis; on the other hand, each of these texts relates to each other, thus forming an overarching systematic philosophical perspective unique to Adorno.

ADORNO'S RECEPTION

Disciplinary Contributions

Adorno's work has been well researched in the secondary literature. First, a large and varied body of studies examine Adorno's discrete contribution to all the particular disciplines mentioned above. These range from

[26] See Horkheimer's 'Traditional and Critical Theory', Horkheimer, M. (1986).

[27] See Chapter 4 of this monograph for a detailed analysis of negative dialectics, also known as non-identity thinking.

[28] Jay, M. (1984), p. 241.

analyses of his works on specific areas of the arts – for instance, musicology[29], literary theory[30], the visual arts[31] – to other works pertaining to Adorno's sociological[32], political[33], or philosophical contributions[34]. However, in spite of the richness of research within each disciplinary orientation, there is little exploration of the systematic connection between ideas from discrete areas[35]. Due no doubt to the focus of this literature, it leaves open the question of how key concepts from certain of his seminal texts relate to each other[36].

[29] For a musicologist's account see Paddison, M. (1993) or for a sociological account, Blomster, W. V. (1994); Witkin, R. (1998). See also Bernstein, J. (1994) Vol. 3, pp. 211–300 and Vol. 4, pp. 1–121.

[30] See Hohendahl, P. (1995) and Hohendahl, P. (1997), pp. 62–82 for a discussion of Adorno on language; see also Pensky, M. (1997) and the essays therein by Bernstein, J. M. (1997); Hansen, M. B. (1997), and Wurzer, W. S. (1997). See also Weber-Nicholsen, S. (1997) Zuidervaart, L., and Huhn, T. eds. (1997), who explore literary issues in Adorno.

[31] For the visual arts and aesthetics, see the excellent studies by Bernstein, J. (1992), Wellmer, A. (1997), pp. 112–134; and Zuidervaart, L. (1991). For a discussion of cultural issues see Benjamin, A. ed. (1991); Dews, P. (1987) offers a theoretically sophisticated account as does Geuss, R. (1999). Homer, S. (1998) through his discussion of Jameson on Adorno touches on many key issues. Looking at specific aesthetic concepts, for instance, 'mimesis', see Fruchtl, J. (1986), Hansen, M. B. (1997), pp. 83–111, Schultz, K. (1990); and on 'aura', see, Recki, B. (1988), Sherratt, Y. (1998), and Weber-Nicholsen (1997).

[32] Some examine his contribution to sociological theory within which they may look to Adorno's criticisms of the social sciences, for instance, Bottomore, T. (1984), Held, D. (1980), Wiggershaus, R. (1986).

[33] For his political contribution to critical theory and its implications, see Benhabib, S. (1986), Brunkhorst, H. (1999); for his contribution to political theory and the history of political thought, see, again Brunkhorst, H. (1999) and Connerton, P. (1980), Krahl, H-J. (1994), Schmidt (1998).

[34] For Adorno's contribution to epistemology, see, Buck-Morss, S. (1978), Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 48–52; for moral philosophy, see Geuss, R. (1999), pp. 78–115; for Adorno's contribution to the philosophy of aesthetics, see Bernstein, J. (1992), Zuidervaart, L. (1991), or for Adorno in relation to contemporary continental philosophy, see the thoughtful studies by Dews, P. (1987) and (1995).

[35] This, in spite of Adorno's well-known claim that you had to read all his works to understand him.

[36] These interconnections are often discussed, for example, Weber Nicholsen talks about the relations between philosophy, literature, and aesthetics. Wellmer discusses the link between epistemology, philosophy, and aesthetics. Most authors draw upon several of Adorno's main texts for their arguments but there is still much work to be done on a systematic interdisciplinary examination of key connecting concepts like 'mimesis', 'aura', and 'non-identity thinking'. Moreover, how his psychological views relate to his philosophy of history as expressed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is notably under-studied. Thus concepts which are rather extensively written about (for example, the aesthetic of 'aura', Adorno's use of the Freudian notion 'ego', the 'historical concept of 'Enlightenment', and the thesis of its regression to myth; or indeed Adorno's concept of 'non-identity thinking'), although each is properly studied within its own terms, are rather poorly understood in relation to other concepts. For instance, Weber Nicholsen (1997), points out the interesting intersection of aesthetic and epistemological ideas but doesn't philosophically demonstrate their link (see my review in Sherratt, Y. 1998c). She does not answer *how* Adorno's aesthetic concepts, eg. aura, have cognitive properties.

Second, a further extensive body of scholarship focuses predominantly upon Adorno's overarching philosophical perspective. These studies can be divided into two groups. First, there are those with a strong view about Adorno, that is, they offer an interpretation of his philosophical perspective. Second, there are those that direct their scholarship towards Adorno's intellectual heritage, looking here mainly to his relation with German philosophy and in particular, to the purported centrality of his debt to Marx.

Examining more closely these bodies of scholarship, it is clear that the first category, namely those offering an interpretation of Adorno's overall philosophical project have a very distinct thread of continuity running through them, to wit, a consensus about his 'negativity'[37]. Most Adorno scholars regard him as 'pessimistic', the bleakest representative of the Early Frankfurt School[38]. Within this overarching consensus there are of course certain distinctions. First, a significant body of interpreters depict Adorno as principally a Marxist[39]. Second, and relatedly, the vast majority consider his work through the light of the Early Frankfurt School's critical theory[40]. Third, others believe he is the anticipator or articulator of a form of post-structuralism, for instance Pensky, who claims that 'Adorno and contemporary post-structuralist theory certainly bear some intuitively clear affinities'[41]. Finally, very few scholars as noted above, examine his

[37] Note that these studies are not criticised here, either by arguing that they are flawed or that they entirely misrepresent Adorno. The contribution of these works is significant, but they do, however, represent Adorno in a particular light, and we wish to show further dimensions to his philosophy. We do not dispute Adorno's negativity but claim this is only one half of his philosophy and emphasise the strength of his Utopianism. See later in this introduction for an indication of the nature of the link we argue for, between Adorno's negativity and Utopianism.

[38] Martin Jay's (1973) phrase, but a sentiment shared by Buck Morss, S. (1977); Roberts, D. ed. (1991) – Roberts, accepting that Adorno can only be negative believes we have to go beyond him for anything positive; Rose, G. (1978) – an excellent study which again, focusses on Adorno's negativity.

[39] Sophisticated accounts are those given by Bernstein, J. (1992), Buck-Morss, S. (1977), Jameson, F. (1990), Jay, M. (1984), and Rosen (1996).

[40] See Benhabib, S. (1986) – a study in the context of Marxist derived critical theory; the many studies collected in Bernstein, J., ed. (1994), vols. I, III, and IV. Geuss, R. (1981), although this focusses upon the later Frankfurt School; Held, D. (1980); Rosen, M. (1983), pp. 98–116; Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 15–27. These views do not, of course, contradict those which emphasise Adorno's Marxism, as they interpret critical theory as based upon Marxism (rather than, say, being a principally Hegelian-derived, or indeed Kantian-derived, Idealist form of critical theory).

[41] Pensky, (1997), pp. 5. See also pp. 1–22. Pensky goes on to say, 'Of course, this . . . places Adorno in a proximity with the later development of poststructuralist theory' (Pensky, M. (1997), p. 5), and further Pensky refers to Adorno's 'negative dialectic and *deconstruction*' (my emphasis) (Pensky, M. (1997) p. 6). See also Nagele, R. (1982–3); Ryan, M. (1982), pp. 73–81. Meanwhile, Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 248–274, has interesting points to make about Adorno and 'post-modernism'. A post-structuralist interpretation of Adorno is one which I dispute, and develop an alternative to throughout the entire course of my

psychoanalytic bent, but when they do, here too, he is seen as only negative[42].

Until ten years ago Adorno was in fact read solely in this negative vein. More recently, however, there has been a growing interest in a positive dimension within his thought. It ought to be strongly noted that, in contrast to the breadth and depth of the negative readings, this positive dimension is explored by only a small minority of writers[43]. More to the point, most of these Adorno scholars perceive a positive strand only in discrete, restricted areas of his work, usually within his aesthetics [44]. Herein they often connect the positive vein of his aesthetic thought with either his concept of the *New* in *Aesthetic Theory*[45], or with the notion of *mimesis*, also in his *Aesthetic Theory* [46].

Looking more broadly at Adorno, very few glimpses have been offered of a utopian dimension beyond his aesthetics. Wellmer's reading is rather typical of this[47]. Whilst uncovering a utopian strand it does so by building

monograph. For excellent accounts which I concur with entirely, and which also dispute Adorno's 'post-structuralism', 'post-modernism', and, in particular his 'deconstructionism' – although they do so from a distinct perspective from my own – see Dews, P. (1987), pp. 150–160; Dews, P. (1989), pp. 1–22, and Dews, P. (1995), Part IV. He writes that: 'up till now . . . the predominant tendency of such comparisons', between Derrida and Adorno, 'has been to present Adorno as a kind of deconstructionist avant la lettre'. Dews continues with: 'it will be the fundamental contention . . . that . . . this is a serious misunderstanding' Dews, P. (1995), p. 20.

[42] Whitebook regards Adorno as 'negative' and as part of 'the impasse of the Early Frankfurt School' (Whitebook, J., 1995, p. 6), as I have noted above.

[43] For example, Brunkhorst, H. (1999), Hansen, M. B. (1997), Weber-Nicholsen, S. (1997), Wellmer, A. (1997), Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 251–252, 256–266. Wellmer is the strongest advocate, and I discuss his view below.

[44] Examples of Adorno's utopianism vis-à-vis his aesthetics are to be found in Hansen, who writes about Adorno's concept of mimesis, accepting his general negativity on the subject: 'the concept of mimesis is obviously dominated by the negative connotations' (Hansen, M. B. (1997), p. 91). She does however acknowledge 'mimetic experience in the utopian sense' (Hansen, M. B. (1997), p. 90). Weber-Nicholsen, S. (1997) also discusses Adorno's utopian element but, again, restricts this to his aesthetic thesis.

[45] Brunkhorst claims that Adorno's utopian element is only really contained within his aesthetic theory and therein within the concept of the New only – see Brunkhorst, H. (1999) p. 4 and pp. 131–133. Geuss agrees with this but is firmly convinced of Adorno's as predominantly a project of critique, see Geuss, R. (1999), pp. 78–115 and 140–166; Zuidervaart also says much to shed light on this issue, he writes that 'much of *Aesthetic Theory* can be read as a modernist reconceptualising of philosophical aesthetics' (Zuidervaart, L, 1997 p. 5) and goes on to discuss Adorno's 'modernism' vis-à-vis issues of his negativity and possible 'Utopian' elements (1997), pp. 251–252, 256–266.

[46] See Gebauer, G. and Wulf, C. (1995); Hansen, M. B. (1997), Schultz, K. (1990), Weber-Nicholsen, S. (1997).

[47] Wellmer writes that, 'the core of Adorno's interpretation of artistic beauty [lies] in the horizon of a philosophy of reconciliation' (Wellmer, A. (1997) p. 112). Wellmer captures the nub of any and all utopian views on Adorno: Adorno regards the possibility of 'truth' to reside in art. My own view certainly concurs with this but differs from Wellmer's in six principal ways.

upon Adorno's aesthetics of the New and then to go beyond the merely aesthetic, it connects Adorno to a Habermasian notion of communicative

First, Wellmer, sees Adorno's utopianism as residing in aesthetic experience only, whilst, throughout the course of my positive interpretation, I argue for a *greater dissemination* of Adorno's utopian element, throughout his philosophy of *history*, belief in enlightenment, concept of 'unity', or 'reconciliation', and most importantly, his '*epistemology*' and *view of subjectivity*. See Wellmer, A. (1985) and (1991).

Second, Wellmer builds his Utopianism mainly upon Adorno's aesthetics of the 'New', and later looks to mimesis, and the Sublime. Wellmer, A. (1991), pp. 1–35. In contrast, I build my view of Adorno's Utopianism upon his aesthetic concept of *aura*. Note also that I do not consider that Adorno uses the aesthetic concept of the sublime – the closest concept to this is that of aura, and I explain later in my monograph how Adorno's notion of aura differs from the sublime (see chapters 5 and 6).

Third, Wellmer ties an aesthetics of the 'New' to a view of Adorno which is closer to a Habermasian one than I would accept; he finds a link to 'communicative rationality'. See my conclusion for my view of this interpretation of Adorno in comparison with Habermas. (Wellmer, A. (1991), pp. 36–94. See also Wellmer, A. (1985). Wellmer is concerned with the 'linguistic turn' in critical theory. Note that this differs starkly from my view of Adorno. I consider that, for Adorno, all linguistic communication, as well as conceptualisation, is built upon 'categorisation', and thus a mode of identification that reinforces the trend of enlightenment, rather than counterbalances with its opposite. Wellmer, is ambivalent here for he does, at points, acknowledge the importance of the non-linguistic, but only with regard to the New as outlined above). My own view of Adorno looks neither to language, as 'communicative rationality, nor to the aesthetic of the 'New', but to the two problematic extremes in Adorno's work: conceptual 'abstraction' and, a kind of aesthetic 'empathy' (I term this kind of 'aesthetic empathy', *absorption*. See Chapter 6 of this interpretative monograph).

Fourth, Wellmer explains that: 'we have to read Adorno . . . to find elements of a . . . 'postmodernist' conception of reason and the Subject' (Wellmer, A. [1991], p. 90. Note that this attempt to find a 'post-modernist' element is part of a synthesis Wellmer builds with modernism: his is not an all out 'post-modernist' view). My view differs considerably from Wellmer's in that I consider Adorno's project to be distinct and in opposition to any kind of post-modernism; in spite of their convergence upon the same object of critique, namely 'enlightenment'. Furthermore, *Adorno's Positive Dialectic* starkly contradicts Wellmer's argument that Adorno's theorising leads us into 'the postmodern impetus' (Wellmer, A. [1991], p. 90).

Finally, my reading of Adorno would counter Wellmer's view that 'post-modernism at its best might be seen as a self-critical . . . form of modernism' (Wellmer, A. [1991], p. 153). I would suggest that Adorno's critique of enlightenment is more profound than anything post-modernism has to offer and, as I suggest in my conclusion, my reading of Adorno would include the idea that Adorno would attack the notion that post-modernism contains 'a self-critical moment'. See Wellmer, A. (1985) and (1991). In my conclusion, I indicate this latter point. All these points will be disputed through the course of my monograph, by the particular practice of building a distinct, Utopian alternative to Wellmer's. (Note that I do not engage in a detailed critique of Wellmer or other Adorno scholars: this would be, at least, a book-length project in its own right. Instead, my monograph engages directly with Adorno's own work and his intellectual influences. I have indicated how my reading contradicts, agrees with, builds upon, and offers an alternative to other Adorno scholars, particularly in the General Introduction, Footnotes, and Concluding Comments).

theory[48]. There is, as yet, no positive notion of *knowledge*[49], *enlightenment*, *history*[50], or *subjectivity* perceived within Adorno's work[51]. No reading of Adorno yet including Wellmer's goes so far as to produce an overarching, systematic Utopian interpretation[52]. Brunkhorst typifies this sentiment of caution with regard to Adorno's positive philosophy when he says, 'I try to avoid too strong a utopian reading'[53].

Finally, in view of the points mentioned above, there is little recognition of the relationship between Adorno's Utopianism and negativity. This relationship is subtle, for although Adorno offers a systematic Utopian thesis, it must be seen that this interconnects with, rather than replaces, his critical project[54]. There appears, however, to be a grave lack of attention given to the connection between these two theses. Consequently the dialectical nature of Adorno's Utopianism is disregarded, both with respect to the 'external' dialectic between his positive and negative theses, and with regard to the further internal dialectical nature of his positive thesis itself[55].

Our overall claims about a lacuna in the Utopian dimension of Adorno scholarship are in fact fourfold. First, Adorno is predominantly read as negative only. Secondly, when his Utopian impulse is perceived, it is limited to his aesthetics and therein to the concept of the 'New'[56]. Thirdly, there is no reading of Adorno which acknowledges the distinctness of his utopianism; his difference from both Habermasian and Postmodernist styles of thought.

[48] My own, as will be seen, builds upon very different aspects of Adorno's aesthetics and places Adorno as an advocate of enlightenment and an 'earlier' form of aesthetics, the sum of which amounts to a thorough-going critical stance towards post-modernism.

[49] The only real exception to this is Tiedemann, who writes that a 'utopia of knowledge guides all of Adorno's work'. Thus far I agree with Tiedemann, but then he sees that Adorno's Utopia of knowledge 'derives from the idea of a language in which word and thing unite without loss'. Tiedemann, R. (1997), pp. 123–146. This is in stark contrast to my own view, as I hope will become clear throughout the rest of my monograph.

[50] Whitebook explicitly takes an opposing strand to the idea that Adorno might offer a Utopian *history*, even an 'idea' of one. He writes that Adorno: 'makes it clear that his utopianism is not historical but an intratheoretical affair' (Whitebook, J. [1995], p. 79). It is particularly important when claiming the opposite to note that Utopia is, of course, '*no place*'. That is to say, our claim is that Adorno offers a Utopian theory of history but that this is an 'idea' only.

[51] This is particularly pertinent to our study. There are few accounts looking at Adorno and Freud anyway, and of these, only one, Whitebook, approaches a semi book-length study devoted to Adorno, and herein, even this, perceives his account of Subjectivity as negative. Whitebook argues that Adorno 'like the postmodernists . . . is also concerned lest an abstract utopian design be violently imposed on the world and become one of domination' (Whitebook, J. [1995], p. 79).

[52] Brunkhorst, H. (1999), p. 9.

[53] Note that I use the term 'positive' in the same way as I use 'utopian' as thus far depicted.

[54] We have references to the fact that they do connect, for example, Whitebook, J. (1995), p. 79., but as yet no detailed analysis of how.

[55] This issue is particularly pertinent to his central text of philosophy of history and critical social theory, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – so far read only as negative.

[56] See Tiedemann, R. (1997), pp. 123–146 and note on Tiedemann above.

Finally no one pursues the dialectic between his critical and utopian thought and the dialectical nature of his utopianism itself.

A further body of work on Adorno looks to his intellectual inheritance. These studies, however, are strikingly skewed towards an examination of the Marxist influence[57]. Marxist intellectual historians have distinct concerns; those with a sociological bent have an interest in the influence of Weber and Lukacs as well as Marx[58]. The more political pivot their attention around the inheritance of Kant and Hegel, as well as Marx, Lukacs and other Frankfurt School members[59]. Meanwhile, philosophers of an 'intellectual historical' disposition, whilst looking to Kant[60], Hegel[61], and Marx[62], also consider Nietzsche[63]. They look in addition to Adorno's relationship with more contemporary 'Continental' philosophers[64], including Kierkegaard, existentialists like Heidegger[65], and phenomenologists, for instance, Husserl[66].

Although there are many studies uncovering the impact of Marx and further strands of German philosophy upon Adorno, a crucial further legacy has scarcely been examined. As Dews' points out, the 'focussed' perspective of Marxism misses, what he refers to as 'the philosophy of desire'[67]. Any

[57] Many examine particular issues in Marxism, ranging from Adorno's contibution to Marxist epistemology – see Buck-Morss, S. (1978) or Jameson, F. (1990) – through to issues in Marxist interpretation. See Bernstein, J. (1992) for a good account of Marxist issues pertaining to intepretation vis-à-vis aesthetic issues, and also Bernstein, J. in Zuidervaart, L. (1997), wherein Bernstein finds the 'promise in Adorno's aesthetics for the development of a materialist ethics' (p. 18). Rosen, M. (1983) offers an interesting Marxist account of Adorno's negative dialectics as 'interpretation', whilst Jameson, F. (1990) and Jay, M. (1984) go on to examine Adorno's relationship to his own contemporary, and indeed later, Marxism.

[58] See Buck-Morss, S. (1977) for the impact of Marx and Lukacs on Adorno, esp. pp. 20–56, Lunn, E. (1982), Rosen, M. (1982) chapter 7. Wiggershaus, R. (1986), pp. 60–94, and finally, Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 10–14, 68–76.

[59] Those whose interest is in the *political* dimension of Adorno's writing look to his contribution to critical theory and its implications – see Benhabib, S. (1986), Bernstein, J. (1992), or Brunkhorst, H. (1999), Krahl, H-J. (1994) – or to his ideas about 'Enlightenment', – see Connerton, P. (1980), Schmidt (1998).

[60] See Bernstein, J. (2001), Bubner, R. (1981), pp. 149–219 for a good intellectual history of the German tradition beginning with Kant; Bernstein, J. (1999), pp. 305–329; Rosen, M. (1996) offers a rigorous treatment of the 'critical tradition' from which Adorno draws; as does Wellmer, A. (1997), pp. 112–134.

[61] See Bubner, R. (1981), pp. 177–160; Rosen, M. (1982), esp. pp. 153–179.

[62] See Bernstein, J. (1992), Bubner, R. (1981), who also looks at the impact of Lukacs and Korsch, pp. 166–177; Buck-Morss, S. (1978); Jameson, F. (1990); Jay, M. (1984); Lunn, E. (1982); Rosen, M. (1996).

[63] See Geuss, R. (1999) and Wellmer, A. (1997), p. 131.

[64] Dews, P. (1987), (1985).

[65] See Bubner, R. (1981), p. 21–25, 46–50; Dews, P. (1989), pp. 2, 16.

[66] See Bubner, R. (1981), pp. 11–20; Dews, P. (1989), p. 12, 15–16.

[67] Dews, P. (1995), p. 20. Note that Dews refers here to the French strand of thought – although, clearly, any philosophy of desire vis-à-vis a discussion of Adorno would have to take into account the impact of Freud.

philosophy of desire must converse with Freud. Yet, in spite of its impact, very little has been uncovered of the Freudian inheritance in Adorno's work: there exists no book-length study of Adorno's intellectual debt to Freud. Further, there exists little analysis of the relationship between Adorno's German Hegelian inheritance and Freud.

The only studies to date that do discuss these issues are those by Alford[68], who explores the general relationship between the Frankfurt School's philosophy and psychoanalysis, but this is not an in-depth study of the issue in Adorno. Moreover, Alford focusses only upon the Frankfurt School's 'negativity'. Further discussions occur in Benjamin, J.[69], although the relationship between Adorno and Freud is not at all her main focus. Dews[70], mentions some points about Adorno and Freud, but his interest lies in locating and analysing Adorno and other Continental philosophers in the light of contemporary currents in European thought[71]. Finally, Whitebook focusses upon the Freudian inheritance of the Frankfurt School, and the relationship between psychoanalysis and critical theory more generally[72]. This again, although addressing Adorno and Freud in more detail, is not solely focussed upon Adorno[73].

Many important questions about Adorno and Freud remain unanswered. First, questions arise concerning Adorno's use of Freud in view of his German intellectual heritage[74]. We need to understand how he connects a

[68] Alford, F. (1988).

[69] Benjamin, J. (1988) and Benjamin, J. (1998). The issue that interests Benjamin, and the aspects of Freud in Adorno she looks to, are very different from my own (one of her main foci is the issue of fatherhood). Finally, my view differs strongly from hers, as she sees Adorno as using Freud only with respect to social *criticism*, one of the strongest points of contention in my monograph, as will be discussed below.

[70] Dews, P. (1995), esp. pp. 231–233. In particular, his discussion of Adorno, Odysseus and the Oedipus complex is stimulating.

[71] We refer to Dews' points, vis-à-vis Adorno, psychoanalysis and Continental thought, to contextualise our own reading of Adorno in contemporary European debates, in the Conclusion.

[72] Whitebook, J. (1995). His views, in this regard, overlap, in certain areas, strongly with my own, in particular in relation to the aspects of Freud that Adorno appropriates, (see Whitebook, J., 1995, pp. 91–118) and how Adorno uses Freud to generate social *criticism* (see Whitebook, J., 1995, p. 119). Further, Whitebook acknowledges the utopian leaning in Adorno, but he views this in *much more restricted* terms that I shall argue for here (see Whitebook, J., 1995, p. 79). My interpretation of Adorno's use of Freud contradicts the main thrust of Whitebook, however, in that first, Whitebook argues that 'Adorno . . . anticipates many Post-structuralist and Postmodern themes . . .' (Whitebook, J., 1995, p. 3). Secondly, Whitebook regards Adorno as 'negative' and as part of 'the impasse of the Early Frankfurt School' (Whitebook, J., 1995, p. 6). I argue strongly against both these views.

[73] Schmidt, J. (1998) does mention the importance of Freud to *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and produces good exegetical evidence for this. (However, his is a brief over view and does not focus upon an analysis of Adorno's use of key concepts from Freud.)

[74] None of the above – Alford, F. (1988), Benjamin, J. (1988), Benjamin, J. (1998), Schmidt, J. (1998), or Whitebook, J. (1995) – focus upon the issue of Freud's relationship to

post-Kantian historical Idealist/materialist vision with psychoanalysis. Second, there is little analysis of the nature of Adorno's appropriation of Freud – what aspects of Freud has Adorno appropriated and how; which ideas has he developed, criticised, and which has he rejected[75]? Finally, a set of questions also remain unanswered about Adorno's use of Freud in connection with his other philosophical ideas[76] – how does his use of Freud illuminate, for example, his social criticism, notion of Western history, enlightenment, myth, knowledge,[77] and indeed aesthetics[78]?

OUR READING OF ADORNO

Our project is an attempt to address each of these under-researched points. We do so in the context of offering a positive dialectic of enlightenment.

Adorno's Utopia

We are now in a position to address our central question, namely: what is Adorno's Utopian project, his positive dialectic of enlightenment?

Adorno's Hegelian-Marxist inheritance. Whitebook, does, however, note the importance of 'effect[ing] a synthesis between Freud and Marx': This was, in his words, 'extreme and Avant Guarde', Whitebook, J. (1995), p. 2.

75 Two notable exceptions to this are Dews, whose focus, although not my own, includes a fascinating analysis of Adorno's appropriation of Freud's views on the Oedipus complex, (see Dews, P. 1995, esp. pp. 231–233) and Whitebook, J. (1995) whose focus, in part, is closer to mine, namely Adorno's appropriation of Freud's theory of the drives and narcissism.

76 Given that we have claimed above that Adorno provides an important overarching systematic philosophy, it becomes key to explore the link between Freud and the other dimensions of this overarching philosophy in Adorno's work. The secondary literature mentioned above examines Adorno in relation to certain of his claims. For instance, Alford, F. (1988) looks to unity and narcissism and claims that Adorno equates all experiences of unity between Subject and Object, self and 'Other' with narcissism, a view which I strongly dispute. Benjamin, J. (1988) and (1998) examines Adorno on the relation with the father, a distinct focus from my own (although I strongly contest her claim about Adorno's limited perspective in comparison to Habermas). Whitebook, J. (1995) assesses Adorno's debt to Freud's concepts of the drives and narcissism, (pp. 93, 194). He also offers a rich analysis of Adorno's deployment of psychoanalytic theory vis-à-vis critical theory. His view, however, places Adorno closer to post-modernism than my own (see p. 79), and indeed, sees this as Adorno's limitation, accounting for his 'insurmountable aporia', Whitebook, J. (1995), p. 133.

77 Whitebook and Dews, again are the only exceptions to this, both providing excellent points including those about the relation between the ego and knowledge. See Dews, P. (1987), p. 116, 209, and 215, and (1995), Part IV; Whitebook, J. (1995), pp. 91–118, 119–164.

78 Scholars with a different focus from simply looking at Adorno and Freud, do however, address certain important issues about how Adorno uses Freud. Dews' account of the Oedipal complex in relation to Adorno's discussion of Odysseus, and hence his thesis about enlightenment and myth, is a notable exception. So too is Whitebook on the relation between critical theory and psychoanalysis. See above.

The answer to this question will be disappointing to some readers for two different sorts of reasons. First, there are some who might hunger for a fairly embodied Utopian image of society, for instance, a map of institutions, a set of guidelines to build a 'good' society or indeed a notion of political programmes. Adorno's Utopia, however, is barely even a picture of a society at all. It does not depict, in the manner of many classical Utopias, like Thomas More's *Utopia* or a much earlier and still more distinguished predecessor, Plato's *Republic*, an imagined society[79]. Rather, in a manner more akin to the 'spiritual' or 'psychological' aspect of Plato's 'Utopia'[80], Adorno's positive vision is in part – metaphorically speaking – one of the 'human soul'[81]. We do not wish to state our point too narrowly: Adorno's Utopia is more fleshed out than simply an image of the human soul, for it does offer a vision of the cultural world in which he believes human beings could most flourish.

Adorno believes in a psychological essence to humanity. He is convinced that part of this essence consists in human beings having a drive for 'aesthetic experience'[82]. As a consequence, he is against a society that marginalises the aesthetic by relegating it to the realm of 'leisure', 'pleasure' or the *autonomous* aesthetic realm rather than seeing it as an essential part of all aspects of human life. Adorno regards the aesthetic as an essential part of relationships, social, economic and political activity, ethics, all kinds of sensory engagement with the external world and indeed, to gaining knowledge and to the very process of reasoning itself. Adorno is therefore critical of many philosophers, including those by whom he is most influenced, namely Kant, Hegel, and Marx, all of whom concur with the enlightenment view of the aesthetic as marginal.

Adorno's uniqueness is that, from a notion of human nature – which he gains, as we shall see, from his own revised reading of Freud – he generates a Utopianism which consists of incorporating aesthetic experience into all the foundational dimensions of human life, including reason itself. Indeed, as an adherent to enlightenment, one of his main focuses is upon incorporating the aesthetic into reason. In fact, he argues, that only through recognising the centrality of the aesthetic can enlightenment best realise its aims.

[79] Our suggested relationship here is metaphorical and for communicative purposes only. We do not suggest an influence, intellectual relevance or conceptual similarity. See Plato (1953) and More, T. (1972).

[80] We do not claim that Plato used this term himself, but that it originated with More.

[81] The 'soul' is Plato's term, not, of course, Adorno's. Note that Adorno does not use the term Utopia himself nor does he give an image of Utopia. This would contravene his Jewish prohibition on religious images of the Absolute. This is my term used for my interpretative thesis.

[82] I use the term aesthetic at this point very generally. Later I will discuss the particular aesthetic concept which Adorno develops.

In combining the aesthetic with reason, Adorno offers a revised philosophy of history. On the one hand, he counters his early predecessors, Kant and Hegel, for Kant challenged reason from its own foundations and Hegel believed that historical development would generate complete rationality. Both saw the aesthetic as merely a part of the broader philosophical spectrum over which (a restricted form of) reason was sovereign. On the other hand, he generates a solution to the problems of rationality that Late Marxists and critical theorists had identified. Whilst these latter, for instance Marx, Lukacs, and the Frankfurt School, sought to either revise a concept of reason or look to material problems for the lack of development of reason, Adorno sought to solve the problem by incorporating aesthetic experience into and alongside enlightenment.

Adorno's Utopian philosophy of history sees aesthetic experience as a source of redemption. Enlightenment can most realise itself, Western history attain its historical goal, if aesthetic experience conjoins with reason. Within this view, Adorno generates a philosophy of history which contradicts both Enlightenment and Romantic pursuasions, the former for seeing 'redemption' as residing within rationality only, the latter for believing it lies solely within the realm of the arts. Adorno is, in fact, unique for combining elements of these traditions that regard themselves as disperate and oppositional, that is, for combining aspects of Romanticism on the one hand, with, a commitment to Enlightenment on the other. He is also unique for seeing these apparently oppositional traditions as mutually reinforcing.

If the reader is disappointed with the rather abstract nature of Adorno's Utopia, a second reason for possible disappointment lies in his answer to the 'when' question: when might this Utopia be realised? In the manner of his predecessors, Hegel and Marx, we might expect a prediction of when redeemed enlightenment might emerge historically. Or, at least, if not a prediction, we might expect a claim or hope from Adorno that it will in fact emerge. However, no such reassurance is forthcoming. Although couched in a philosophy of history[83], Adorno's 'Utopia' should not be read as a prediction, a prescription, an expectation, a probability, nor indeed even a temporal possibility[84]. Like his negative philosophy of history, his

[83] For a good general overview, see Held, D. (1980), chapter 5, 'Critical theory and philosophy of history', pp. 148–175, and in particular, 'Dialectic of Enlightenment: philosophical fragments towards a philosophy of history', pp. 148–156.

[84] In pursuing this project of providing a highly speculative image of Utopia, one devoid of fleshed out institutions and practices, one devoid of prescriptions and predictions, Adorno asserts the worth of 'beauty' and understanding for human life in general, rather than for any (practical) application. Adorno's Utopian ideas defy the most imaginative policy maker. And in that defiance is his policy. In this respect, Adorno becomes, with every passing day of the twentieth and twenty-first Centuries, more controversial still. Beauty and

positive counterpart is an 'idealised' history[85]. Adorno's positive philosophy of history is simply a hypothetical theory of how enlightenment might best be realised[86].

Adorno's *Positive Dialectic*

Having expressed our project in descriptive language, let us now depict the structure of the argument and give the chapter outlines of *Adorno's Positive Dialectic*.

The key text of our study, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as currently understood represents Adorno's dystopia, his critical analysis of Western society as degenerate enlightenment. This critique of society is expressed as a philosophy of Western history. (The relationship between criticism of enlightenment and philosophy of history will be explored at some length in the prelude that follows.) Adorno claims that the entirety of Western history, consists of the competing forces of enlightenment and myth.

Enlightenment, for Adorno, represents the 'good' society governed by genuine reason. In contrast, myth is a society of ignorance and barbarism.

Since the dawn of the Western world, society has oscillated between enlightenment and myth. Adorno's critique of enlightenment is not only expressed as a philosophy of history, but as a *negative* one. It is negative because Adorno seems to claim that Western history can never be free from myth and attain enlightenment.

This is a bleak vision indeed and if it were the culmination of Adorno's philosophy, his would certainly deserve the reputation as the 'bleakest expression of a melancholy science'[87]. However, our Utopian intepretation uncovers the possibility of an alternative vision of history in Adorno's work, namely a positive dialectic of enlightenment.

To achieve our positive interpretation, we must demonstrate the existence of a kind of 'aesthetic experience' that interacts positively with

ideas were, for Adorno, some of the last refuges from the ever embracing tentacles of market society. Indeed, not only were they a refuge, they were an immunity, a defense if you like, by virtue of their uselessness. And it is that refuge, that defense, that we seek to unravel here.

[85] We must be careful in referring to Adorno's philosophy of history as idealised due to the complex relationship between his idealist and materialist intellectual influences.

[86] Always recall that as Adorno's critique of Enlightenment is expressed as a 'negative' philosophy of history, so his Utopian image of its redemption is expressed as a 'positive' philosophy of history. It is this positive philosophy of history that constitutes *Adorno's Positive Dialectic*. Our reading of Adorno is also expressed as Adorno's 'negative' and 'positive' philosophy of history.

[87] Jay, M. (1984), p. 241. (also referenced above).

enlightenment[88]. We outline this and show a positive philosophy of history between this and enlightenment – one wherein enlightenment can achieve its aims.

The structure of our book is as follows. After this initial introduction we offer a two-section Prelude. In Prelude I, we depict the German philosophical foundations of our study. First we discuss Kant and the origins of Adorno's work in 'Enlightenment'. Then we pursue the development of German thought into the philosophy of history. We look to Hegel, Marx, Lukacs, and the Early Frankfurt School. We detail *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a philosophy of history from within this tradition.

Prelude II introduces Adorno's theorising about human nature. We summarise Freud's key ideas and Adorno's use of them. This section discusses some important issues pertaining to Adorno's incorporation of Freud into the post-Kantian philosophical tradition.

After our Prelude, we go on to our main monograph. This is in two parts. Part I of our study interprets Adorno's critique of enlightenment whilst Part II, depicts his Utopian redemption. Part I consists of Chapters 1 to 4, whilst Part II includes Chapters 5 to 9 and the Conclusion. We offer a more detailed summary of each chapter in the following few pages.

Part I, Chapter 1, is a Freudian reading of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. It examines the foundations underlying Adorno's negative thesis that the enlightenment declines into myth. We begin by depicting Adorno's key concepts, enlightenment and myth. Then we offer an exegesis of the relevant aspects of Freud's theory of the self articulated in terms of the drives. We show how Adorno builds upon this to argue that enlightenment possesses a form of *Subjectivity* which inevitably regresses to become mythic.

Chapter 2 continues the analysis began in Chapter 1. It pursues further details in the decline of *enlightenment Subjectivity* as envisaged by Adorno. We go on to depict a further dimension of Freud's concept of the self, namely his conception of its structure, and we show how Adorno builds upon this by examining notions like the boundary between the Subject and Object, the concepts of unity and narcissism. We show how Adorno regards enlightenment as regressing to myth due to a flawed kind of *psychological boundary* between the subject and the external world.

Chapter 3 combines the reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* with a reading of *Negative Dialectics*. Herein we depict the failure of enlightenment in its sphere of knowledge acquisition. We depict Adorno's interpretation of enlightenment's epistemological failure by showing how he combines Freud's insights with German Idealist and materialist conceptions of knowledge.

[88] I use the term 'aesthetic' with caution because this is usually associated with the separation of the kinds of experiences from society which Adorno precisely wants to incorporate into it.

We outline his argument for the decline of enlightenment knowledge and reason into mythic 'animism'.

Chapter 4 continues our analysis of Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*. We depict Adorno's critical, what I have referred to as his negative, attempt to rescue enlightenment from its failure. Herein we show the limitations of Adorno's critical solutions to the problem of the decline of enlightenment knowledge. We analyse the notion of the epistemological 'dialectic' and depict Adorno's solutions to the failure of enlightenment knowledge, solutions such as 'internal critique', 'non-identity thinking' and 'negative dialectics'. We demonstrate that these solutions can not 'rescue' enlightenment from regression into myth, and are thus, in and of themselves, part of the 'negative' thesis of Adorno.

Part II, the Utopian vision of our thesis, begins with Chapter 5. This discusses Adorno's aesthetics. We explore Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* and unravel a strand of argument about a particular aesthetic concept, namely, aura. We illuminate an argument in Adorno's work that aura can produce a special kind of receptivity towards the object. We thereby reveal a concept of aesthetic unity which we have termed *'absorption'*.

Chapter 6 continues to examine Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*. However, we move away from Adorno's own writings and develop from these, the concept of absorption. This is the basis for a notion of a form of aesthetic knowledge acquisition. Absorption relates to a form of knowledge which is non-linguistic. We outline its features and compare and contrast it with enlightenment and mythic forms of knowledge.

Chapter 7 offers a reading based around *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, *Aesthetic Theory*, and *Negative Dialectics*. It outlines the basis of our dialectic. We pursue the positive ramifications of 'absorption' for countering the epistemological failure of enlightenment. We explore the dialectical relationship between enlightenment and 'absorption'. We argue that Adorno offers us a conception of an integrated form of knowledge as a solution to the decline of enlightenment. This results in a positive dialectic of enlightenment in the epistemological sphere.

Chapters 8 and 9 combine analysis of *Aesthetic Theory* with *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Minima Moralia*. Herein we explore the positive dialectic of enlightenment in the psychological sphere. In Chapter 8 we explore the ramifications of absorption for the Subject. In it we provide answers to the dilemmas raised in Chapter 1. We demonstrate how, through this reading of Adorno, the enlightenment's problematic relationship between the Subject and the Object can be solved at the level of the psychological *drives*.

In Chapter 9 we show Adorno's Positive dialectic of Subjectivity at the level of the structure of the self. We show how Adorno can be read to be starkly 'traditionalist' in advocating a conception of selfhood as a particular kind of *unity*. This unity is in direct opposition to narcissistic unity and moreover,

counters the decline of the Subject to immature narcissism. We show here how the enlightenment Subject can be rescued from the decline into mythic subjectivity. This completes our depiction of Adorno's Utopian image of the enlightenment Subject.

In the Conclusion we demonstrate just how provocative this positive reading of Adorno is. We pit this reading against some of Adorno's own influences as well as other twentieth-century strands of thought, showing how Adorno goes starkly against the grain. This completes our depiction of Adorno's Utopian image of enlightenment.

Prelude to Adorno's Positive Dialectic

Our Prelude seeks to introduce Adorno to the philosophical community, to German philosophers less familiar with twentieth-century currents and those from the Anglo-American tradition with a curiosity about this well-known and controversial figure. Possibly the Prelude will be of interest also to Adorno scholars, as it will contextualise my perception of Adorno in relation to older currents of thought.

To introduce Adorno's intellectual project I have had to decide upon a starting point: this was not easy, for Adorno was well versed in many philosophical traditions. He was well read in the classics, Judeo-Christian thought, and many other deep historical layers of Western philosophy. (All of these impacted upon his writing – for instance, in the pun on Aristotle in his title *Minima Moralia*.) For two reasons I have decided to begin with Adorno's origins in Kant and post-Kantian German philosophy. First, Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy are the main strands, besides Freud, influencing our central text, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Second, Kant represents a key point in the building of two distinct disciplinary approaches to philosophy: the moment when the European and Anglo-American traditions divide. It is therefore the last point of connection between these two schools and hence the place to begin to introduce Adorno to them both.

Our prelude consists of two sections. In Prelude I, we show the origins of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in German philosophy. In Prelude II, we introduce key ideas from Freud and show how Adorno connects his German philosophical heritage with central tenets from psychoanalysis[1].

[1] These influences we depict are widely accepted by Adorno scholars as important. For instance, Zuidervaart discusses: 'Adorno's links with Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud' and Adorno's 'lifelong struggle with a philosophy . . . stemming from Kant, Hegel, and Lukacs', Zuidervaart, L. (1997), p. 7.

Prelude I

Adorno's Intellectual Tradition: German Philosophy

In Prelude I we offer a brief contextualising account of Kant's philosophical project. Hereafter, we detail the development of German philosophy after Kant from Hegel's philosophy of history, Marx, Lukacs and the Early Frankfurt School, to Adorno himself. We focus upon the key ideas in this strand of thought that were developed to form the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

I. ENLIGHTENMENT AND CRITIQUE

Kant

In introducing Kant, we focus upon the two principal aspects of his work which are later taken up by Adorno[2]. These are, first, Kant's commitment to Enlightenment and second, the related Kantian project of critique.

Immanuel Kant, as we know, had a very specific project, itself influenced by certain strands of philosophical thinking. Writing after the many developments of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rationalist and empiricist philosophy, he disliked the apparently ceaseless alterations and turns in thought, as developed within these traditions over time. In contrast, he would bring to a halt these precarious vascillating notions. To do this, the greatest luminary in German Thought sought to ground philosophy in *reason* which would end once and for all its historically variable character[3].

[2] It is something of an impossible task to provide an intellectual history of Adorno's German philosophical influences in such a brief space. I have taken the route of choosing the thinkers I consider to be central to the development of Adorno's work and summarised the key points of their philosophy. These summaries are not uncontentious, either in the points I emphasise as most relevant to the later twentieth-century development of Adorno's work or as summaries in themselves. I have therefore indicated in the notes further sources for greater elaboration and also for different emphasis or differing interpretations.

[3] There are many excellent studies on the trajectory of development in German philosophy from Kant to Hegel, particularly good are, Bubner (1997), pp. ix–xxiii; Pippin, R. (1997),

Kant aimed to create an 'end' to philosophy by solving the key philosophical problems of empiricist and rationalist debates, namely those in morality, metaphysics, and epistemology. To do this he developed, through his three great *Critiques*,[4] the following: a comprehensive metaphysical system which attempted to accommodate the claims of *empiricism* alongside the claims of *rationalism*. Moreover, he aspired to incorporate the claims of *Christian faith* within his overarching metaphysics by basing these upon rational principles of morality. The result of these fusions was a new metaphysical system called *transcendental idealism*[5].

Transcendental idealism was Kant's project of a philosophy, indeed an entire 'value system' grounded in reason[6]. The details of just what this meant for Kant, are fourfold[7]. First, philosophy was grounded in reason rather than in tradition or authority. Second, philosophy was grounded in reason as opposed to being based upon *empirical science* (although Kant accepted the validity of empiricism he did not view it as the basis for philosophy)[8]. Third, it meant that philosophy was grounded in reason rather than the non-rational, for instance, non-rational forms of *myth* or superstitious belief. Finally, it meant philosophy was grounded in reason rather than in *non-rational religious* faith (for instance, forms of mysticism)[9]. The overarching aim of this, was clearly the Enlightenment one: In fact, Kant was the eighteenth-century philosopher to most typify the thrust of his epoch[10].

pp. 29–155; Pippin (1989), pp. 16–41 – who in contrast to many, argues that 'Hegel did not crudely misread Kant or even reject as much of Kant's account as is commonly held', (note 5. p. 264); or for an example of a distinct reading from Pippin's, one which, in fact, emphasises the Hegelian 'misreading' of Kant, see Rosen (1982), esp. pp. 115–121.

4 I refer to the standard English editions, Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Kemp-Smith, N. (1929); *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Gregor, M., (1997); *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Meredith, J. C. (1928).

5 See, on the first Critique, Ewing, A. C. (1938); Strawson, P. F. (1966); on the second Critique, Paton, H. J. (1947).

6 Cassirer, E. 1951, p. x.

7 We discuss four main points from Kant for the trajectory that leads into the Frankfurt School. This entails, of course, a great simplification of Kant's enormous philosophical contribution and is intended to be introductory only.

8 Note that although his overarching metaphysics was to ground philosophy in reason, it also accomodated both religion and science: Kant was a Christian and accepted the achievements of Newtonian science.

9 See Kant, I. (1977) *Was Ist Aufklärung* in Reiss, H. ed. (1977), p. 54–60.

10 There is much debate about how diverse the thought represented in Enlightenment is, in Cassirer's words: 'although usually treated as an eclectic mixture of the most diverse thought elements, is in fact dominated by a few great fundamental ideas expressed with consistency and in exact arrangement'. In his view, this unity of thought that was Enlightenment was most represented by Kant and was, in concord with our own view, 'a value-system rooted in rationality' (Cassirer, E. 1951). For a discussion of Kant in relation to Enlightenment more generally see Gay, P. (1967–9); Outram, D. (1995) or Cassirer, E. (1951), esp. pp. 3–37.

All eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers espoused the values of freedom, peace, stability, and progress[11]. They believed these could be achieved through the pursuit of reason. As a consequence, in eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, all society's laws, beliefs and practices, etc., had to be justified, not according to the non-rational, as outlined above, for instance, authority based on tradition or faith, but must stand before the tribunal of reason and demonstrate their warrant before this tribunal. That is to say, all society's laws, beliefs, and practices must prove themselves to be rational in order to be legitimate[12].

Although Kant followed these Enlightenment values – he was committed to and indeed was perhaps its most thorough proponent – he went further in his support than many of his peers had done. He claimed that *even reason itself* must stand before its own tribunal. That is to say, *reason* must prove *its* validity according to its own laws. Kant's great Critiques of Pure and Practical Reason emerged as a result[13].

The Frankfurt School and Kant

The main philosophical representatives of the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer, took the Kantian project into the twentieth century. In the *Dialectic Of Enlightenment*, they sought to understand why the enlightenment project had so pitifully failed and degenerated into mid-twentieth-century Nazism. In addressing this issue they committed themselves to two aspects of the Kantian project, first, to the aims of enlightenment, to the pursuit of reason, freedom, peace, stability, and progress. Second, they continued the Kantian project of subjecting enlightenment to its own critical practices[14]. Where Kant had made a critical assessment of reason, Adorno and Horkheimer aimed to subject enlightenment to its own critical practices by, what they expressed as, 'enlightening the Enlightenment about

[11] Kant also centres upon maturity as an important value. He defines Enlightenment as 'man's release from his self incurred immaturity'. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance of another person' – Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" Kant's Werke, (Akademie-Ausgabe), Vol. VIII, p. 35, quoted in Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), p. 81. See also in translation, Kant, I. (1977) 'Was Ist Aufklärung' in Reiss, H. ed. (1977) p. 54–60. This point about immaturity is something particularly noticed by Adorno who is very concerned with the psychological dimension of Enlightenment. See Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), pp. 81–119.

[12] See Outram, D. (1995), pp. 1–8; or Gay, P. (1967–9); Cassirer, E. (1951).

[13] Gay, P., thinks that this Kantian project of critical reason is common to Enlightenment more generally. He sees Enlightenment as a unity wherein many of the key thinkers believe that freedom and progress are pursued through the critical use of reason. See Gay, P. (1967–9).

[14] At this point we refer not to eighteenth-century Enlightenment but to Adorno and Horkheimer's notion – 'enlightenment'. See the earlier introduction for a discussion of this distinction.

itself'[15]. They directed their critical practices to understand why modern enlightenment had degenerated to (Nazi) myth[16].

Adorno and Horkheimer's project of criticising enlightenment, although originating from the Kantian, had two important distinctions. These were both the result of later nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries influences. First, the post-Kantian tradition of philosophies of history emerged and for these, reason was grounded neither primarily in the transcendental realm nor in universal laws but within *human history*[17]: Enlightenment, including its rationality and the project of criticism, were all products of historical development and had to be considered as such.

Second, for Adorno, besides being grounded in human history, reason was also based upon a conception of *human nature*[18]. Adorno believed that reason could not be construed as compliant with 'rational' (or transcendental) law only, without reference to the essence of what it was to be human. That which was rational had to be that which was rational for human beings, not just for abstract laws[19]. Thus, whereas for Kant, Enlightenment reason had to show its warrant before the tribunal of reason, we could say that, for Adorno, enlightenment reason had to show its warrant before the tribunal of 'human nature'[20].

Adorno's intellectual debt to Kant entails that Adorno is both committed to Enlightenment as articulated by Kant in *Was Ist Aufklärung*?, and to the Kantian-derived project of critique[21]. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a critique

[15] 'The accompanying critique of enlightenment is intended to prepare the way for a positive notion of enlightenment which will release it from entanglement in blind domination', Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), p. xvi.

[16] See Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), pp. ix–xvii, where they set out their critical project.

[17] Pippin writes that for Hegel, 'all this . . . is presumably, to be described as some sort of idealized "history" of Spirit's self-education'. Pippin, R. (1989), p. 101. See also Bubner, R. (1974) and Walsh, W. H. (1985).

[18] This is one of the central claims of my interpretation of Adorno and will be explored in depth and detail throughout the course of this monograph. For an alternative view see, Jameson, F. (1990).

[19] For Adorno, a conception of reason developed on a non-human template was bound to lead to irrationality when applied to human beings, even in their 'mature' condition. See Adorno, T. (1974). Moreover, Adorno would go so far as to claim that an attempt to produce a concept of rationality that is not humanly attainable due to psychological criteria, is itself an instance of psychological immaturity – an inability to accept and relate to the world as it is, when instead, 'the world becomes the . . . concept of all that is projected onto it'. Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), p. 190.

[20] Note that, in view of Adorno's sensitivity to history's role, his conception of 'human nature' is something that must include the historical. This development of a conception of a 'historicised human nature' is a key concern which we address in the second part of our prelude.

[21] Adorno writes, 'the point is rather that Enlightenment must examine itself' Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), p. xv. See also Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Auflklarung?" Kant's Werke, (Akademie-Ausgabe), Vol. VIII, p. 35, quoted in Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), p. 81; and Kant, I. (1977) *Was Ist Aufklärung* in Reiss, H. ed. (1977).

of enlightenment in the Kantian vein wherein enlightenment is subjected to its own critical practices in order to be legitimised according to its own standards. The influence of later intellectual developments – most notably post-Kantian philosophies of history and Freudian psychoanalysis – meant that Adorno's adherence to enlightenment, and its critique, took on a distinct form from the Kantian one.

II. PHILOSOPHIES OF HISTORY

In the following part of this Prelude, we continue to examine Adorno's further influences, the post-Kantian philosophy of Hegel, Marx, Lukacs, and the Early Frankfurt School. Although there are many currents emanating from this rich tradition, perhaps two elements stand out in their centrality, first, the development of Hegel's philosophy into the Frankfurt School's own[22]. (The focus of analysis herein is often the development of idealism, with its associated epistemological issues, into *Critical Theory*, and the accompanying shift to the social, indeed 'sociological', grounding of knowledge[23]). A more important strand of development is that of philosophies of history. The later post-Kantian tradition continued to emphasise the Kantian commitment to Enlightenment and the Kantian-derived project of critique: analysis of Enlightenment, however, took on a new form of enquiry. In fact, understanding of moral, epistemological, cultural, social, and political activity occured through the form of a *philosophy of Western history*[24]. It is to this latter that we turn our attention here, namely to the Hegelian and then Marxist development of the philosophy of history.

In situating Adorno in this tradition of philosophies of history, we have two aims. First, we have a general aim: we show how Adorno's own mode of critical analysis of enlightenment, elaborated in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, occurs in the form of a philosophy of history.[25]

[22] This is well depicted in for instance, Bernstein (1984a, 1984b) or Rosen (1982).

[23] See also Pippin (1985).

[24] We ground the Early Frankfurt School in Kant and Hegelian-Marxism by looking not to the tradition of epistemology evolving into social criticism, as this has been admirably covered by several philosophers, perhaps most notably Kortian, G. (1980), in particular with reference to the Later Frankfurt School; see also Marcuse's more general account of the transformation of Hegelian Idealism into social theory, (Marcuse, H. 1960) and, for an alternative view, Rose, G. (1981). We examine the development of Idealism into philosophies of history and thence into social criticism as this has been somewhat less discussed, though it is as central to the development of post-Kantian philosophy in general and is also key to our project.

[25] As with Kant, no point – however commonly accepted – about Hegel's philosophy, can really be made without touching on controversy. We assume here that Hegel has a philosophy of history, a fairly common assumption, but this is contested: see for example, O'Brien (in Inwood 1985). See also for further varied views, the collection of critical essays in MacIntyre, A. ed. (1976). Finally, for Marcuse's view on the subject, see Marcuse, H. (1987) and Pippin's commentary, Pippin, R. (1985).

Second, we have the more specific aim of introducing Adorno's philosophical language. We wish to introduce the particular key concepts of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by showing the trajectory of intellectual development of these; we are interested in 'teleology', 'totality', 'Idealism/materialism', and 'dialectic'. We pursue the origins of these in Hegel, witness how they develop through Marx, Lukacs, and the Early Frankfurt School to Adorno's own work.

Hegel

Hegel was one of the most influential and systematic of the German idealists[26]. He was Kant's 'successor' and the most notable of his challengers. His motivation was similar to the Enlightenment one that had animated Kant, namely the project of grounding philosophy in reason[27]. Moreover, his motivation, like Kant's, was to solve certain key issues in epistemology and morals[28].

Like Kant, Hegel was a Christian who developed a 'rational' metaphysical system that accommodated the advances of Newtonian science alongside Rationalism[29]. However, Hegel elaborated a more comprehensive Idealist system than Kant had done. Like the Kantian one, this system incorporated within it first, the discoveries made by Newtonian science – that is, many of the claims of empiricism; second, rationalism; third, however, it incorporated Kant's own philosophy itself. Hegel claimed that, whilst none of these

[26] Hegel had several other influences besides Kant. His Christian influences will be discussed in what follows. Most notable of his other influences which we don't unfortunately have time for here, is Fichte. Central issues in the impact of Fichte upon Hegel have been well covered in Pippin, R. 1989, pp. 42–59. Pippin also examines strands of Idealist influence on Hegel other than Fichte, about whom he writes, 'the importance of Fichte for a proper understanding of Hegel's idealism goes beyond the fact that Hegel's all-important appropriation of Kant was everywhere influenced by Fichte's reading of the central issues and unresolved problems in Kant' (Pippin, R. 1989, p. 42).

[27] Hegel's relationship with Enlightenment is more complex than we have space for here, see *Phenomenology of Spirit*, (1977), pp. 328–354. The extent to which Hegel agrees with Enlightenment's 'aims', and the extent to which he is critical of the Enlightenment's assumptions and, of course, the extent to which he is a critic of 'Kantian Enlightenment' are all areas of much contention. Taylor discusses some of the comlexities of Hegel's relationship with Enlightenment (Taylor, 1975, pp. 179–185, 400–3, 505–9, 526–8); whilst Pippin addresses the complex issue of the extent to which Hegel is a critical philosopher, especially vis-à-vis Kant and also points us in the direction of some useful further debates on this topic (Pippin, 1989, pp. 282–3). For an intellectual historical account of Hegel's relationship with other more straightforwardly 'definitive' Enlightenment thinkers, like the 'Philosophes', see Kolakowski, L. (1978), pp. 39–80.

[28] For more detail, Inwood, M. (1985); Taylor, C. (1975) or Plant, R. (1973) can usefully be consulted.

[29] For details of Hegel's Christian influences see Walsh in Inwood and Kolakowski, L. (1978) chapter 1, 'The Origins of the Dialectic'.

philosophies were wrong as such, they were all incomplete[30]. It was he, Hegel, who would develop the first and final complete system of philosophy that the world had seen[31].

Hegel's philosophy was, in fact, a direct challenge to Kant's. In contrast with Kant's *Transcendental* Idealism, Hegel developed a system of *Absolute* Idealism. There are many important distinctions between Hegel and Kant[32]. The most relevant to us is the completely new philosophical significance that *history* acquired. For Hegel, human history was at the forefront of philosophy. In fact, Hegel's Absolute Idealism was pivoted around a philosophy of history[33].

Hegel's philosophy of history had three key elements that form the foundation for developments in the later post-Kantian tradition that culminated in Adorno's own work. These are first, history occurs in distinct *stages* of development; second, historical development embodies particular *key features*; finally, Hegel accords a particular *Idealism* to historical development.

An understanding of the first element to Hegel's philosophy of history, namely the *stages* that historical development takes, requires an understanding of Hegel's Christianity[34]. Although Hegel was specifically influenced by Lutheran Christianity, the basic narrative of creation upon which he based his view is the widespread Christian one that is familiar to us all[35]. This narrative has three parts.

1. In the beginning, there is an undifferentiated unity of humans with God. This is represented in the idyllic Garden of Paradise. Within the innocent and joyous unity with God, humans have no actual awareness of the possibility of separation from God. This is an 'unmediated' unity[36].

[30] 'Every single philosophy, taken by itself, has been, and still is, necessary, so that no philosophy has perished; all are retained'. Hegel, (1985), p. 94.

[31] Our interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of history is based upon his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* – hereafter, LHP, and ILHP for the *Introduction to Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, and also on *Phanomenologie des Geistes* (1986) – hereafter, PhG, and for the translation, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, (1977) PhS.

[32] There is vast literature on the relation between Kant and Hegel. For some central points see Pippin 1989, pp. 16–41, Rosen, 1982, p. 115–121 or Walsh in Inwood, (1985), pp. 13–30. For a detailed discussion of some of the key 'epistemological' issues arising from the transition from Kantian Transcendental to Hegelian 'Historical' Idealism, see Gorland (1996) or Wohlfart (1981).

[33] For the relationship between philosophy and history see Hegel, 1985, pp. 91–100; for Hegel's view of the connection between his concept of Geist and concept of history, see Hegel, 1985, pp. 109–163.

[34] For a discussion of the 'origins' of Hegelianism and the importance of Christanity as an influence on the overall formulation of his philosophical system including his view of history, see Walsh in Inwood (1985), pp. 13–30. See also Kolakowski, L. (1978) chapter 1, 'The Origins of the Dialectic', esp. pp. 17–38, 56–80.

[35] 'It may be worth mentioning in this connection that Hegel was originally a divinity student, intending to be a pastor in the Lutheran Church', Walsh, 1985, p. 29.

[36] Geuss, R. (1995).

2. There then occurs a stage of separation. Human beings partake of original sin and there is a consequent radical separation of human will from God. This marks a state of 'fall'. Human beings must then take the long, slow journey back towards *reconciliation* with God. The possibility of reconciliation, that is, a return to unity with God, is only made possible by the existence of Jesus. He represents the fact that God becomes human in the divine person of Jesus, thus demonstrating the possibility of unity of the human and the divine[37].

3. The final stage is one of 'reunion' with God. Reunion is not a return to the original unmediated unity. In contrast it is a distinct kind of unity wherein a certain degree of 'self-consciousness' and awareness of original sin exist. It is 'mediated unity'[38].

These three stages, from the Christian narrative of creation, form the basis for Hegel's own view of the *historical* narrative. Hegel, however, focusses upon events and uses concepts from the classical world. Moreover, he illustrates his philosophy with 'actual' historical events – although it should be borne in mind that these are rather abstracted.

The first stage of history, according to Hegel, is – like the Christian one – a primordial unity. For Hegel, however, this stage before The Fall was one of *myth*, where myth is understood to be ancient, popular religion[39]. In classical, mythic societies, for Hegel, human beings were simply and spontaneously 'at one' with 'ethical' behaviour. That is to say, they naturally and unthinkingly behaved in appropriate ways and as a result they could be described as experiencing their world as a unity[40].

Hegel's second stage of history (parallel to the Christian stage of the Fall) occurs when the primeval unity is disrupted by reflective thought, by 'reason'. Socratic philosophy and Christianity both introduce reflection[41]. Socratic philosophy and Christianity thereby lead to a break down of the old communities which depended upon unthinking, habitual, spontaneous forms of behaviour. Hegel writes: 'At the beginning of Greek civilisation, philosophy was tied and bound within the circle of popular religion. Then it extricated itself and took on a hostile attitude to it . . . Plato inveighed against mythology'[42]. There then follows a period of separation or *alienation*[43] in which increasingly articulate and rational individuals face social institutions

[37] Geuss, R. (1995).

[38] Geuss, R. (1995). See also Kolakowski, L. (1978) Part I, pp. 11–80.

[39] For instance, that depicted in Homer.

[40] ILHP, pp. 139–140. See also, for an analysis of approximately the counterpart of the 'logical' stage of development PhS., pp. 58–103.

[41] ILHP, pp. 175.

[42] ILHP, 140. See also, for an analysis of approximately the counterpart of the 'logical' stage of development PhS. pp. 104–262.

[43] For an account of the etymological origin and philosophical detail of this term, Inwood 1992, p. 35–36, could usefully be consulted. See also Hardimon, (1994), pp. 119–121.

that appear increasingly non-rational and thus in opposition to how they themselves are.

The final stage of history is one of *a new, higher form of unity* which Hegel terms *reconciliation*[44]. This occurs because, according to Hegel, as human history progresses, the tensions that caused separation develop in such a way that society is brought together again. Eventually the desired state of reconciliation is attained[45]. At this point, the social world has developed to become rational[46]. Moroever, the rational society recognises itself to be *rational*. Hegel writes: 'The goal, Absolute Knowing' is 'Spirit *that knows itself as* Spirit'[47]. The end point of human history, then, is the attainment of unity when the world both is, and moreover is recognised to be, 'rational'[48].

For Hegel, grounding philosophy in reason is not a goal that can simply be attained by rational thought alone – for instance developing a Transcendental Idealist system as Kant had done. For Hegel, *grounding philosophy in reason required the development of human history*: 'Man has needed twenty-three centuries to reach a consciousness of how, e.g. the concept 'being' is to be understood'[49].

The second feature of Hegel's philosophy of history pertains to the pattern of historical development. In Hegel's view, this has the following interconnected features. First, it is *developmental*. History progresses through various stages which we have seen (unity, separation – known as 'alienation' – and reconciliation). Second, these stages develop to an ultimate conclusion: history moves towards *completion*. The whole of human history can therefore be recognised as a totality – it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Third, history has *purpose* and is not simply a contingent sequence of events. Its purpose is to develop towards its '*end point*'[50]. In short, these features amount to the fact that for Hegel, history is a *teleological* process.

The teleological process of history has further characteristic features for Hegel. History unfolds through the internal unravelling of two inextricably

[44] See Hardimon, 1994, for an excellent book length interpetation of Hegel's social philosophy as the project of social reconciliation. For a distinct view see Taylor, C. (1979), esp. pp. 14–16, 22–3, 49–50.

[45] See Hardimon, (1994), pp. 84–122.

[46] As Hegel expresses it, 'The goal, Absolute Knowing . . . ' PhS. p. 493.

[47] PhS., p. 493. My emphasis.

[48] This is a 'richer' and more complex concept of reason than the Kantian one or indeed the previous Enlightenment one. It entails the production of a rational *society* as well as the advancement of the capacity for rational reflection. Finally, and crucially, it encompasses a unity between that rational society and its capacity for reflection. See PhS., pp. 328–354. See also for a more detailed analysis, Hardimon, M. (1994), pp. 84–125.

[49] ILHP, p. 190. For a detailed analysis of aspects of the approximate 'logical' counterpart to the final stage of historical development see PhS., pp. 263–382, 479–494.

[50] That 'end point' being, if not historical Enlightenment or indeed its philosophy, at least, in common with Enlightenment, the attainment of a form of 'Reason' or 'Absolute' Knowing.

connected oppositional forces. For Hegel these are, approximately, tradition (from the ancient, mythic societies of Greece) and reason (from Enlightenment). The interconnection of these opposites, tradition and reason, is of a *dialectical* nature[51].

Having reminded ourselves of Hegel's pattern of historical development – teleological and dialectical – let us turn now to the third issue, the question of whether history is Ideal or material. To do this, let us assess his main metaphysical concept.

Derived from his Christianity, the concept of the *Absolute* is central to Hegel. The Absolute is of a particular nature and is represented by the notion of '*Geist*': Geist can be translated as 'Mind' or more accurately as 'Spirit'[52]. Geist has many particular and seemingly bizarre features. These can be understood by recognising that, besides Lutheran Christianity, Hegel was also influenced by Medieval German mysticism. Walsh discusses this.

'Hegel's type of philosophy has been denounced as resting on mysticism . . . but there seems no adequate ground for convicting him of [this] defect. He differs from other philosophers not in seeking refuge in mysticism but in taking it seriously'[53]. Walsh continues: 'In his lectures on the history of philosophy Hegel gave Boehme more space than Leibniz, and much more than Hume'[54].

Handed down from this mystical tradition was a mystical notion about God creating himself. Hegel adopts and adapts this notion to formulate the view that *Geist creates itself*[55].

The medieval German mystical tradition further argues that God creates himself in a particular way: he creates himself *through creating the world and its people*. Hegel adapts this to his own metaphysical concept: Geist creates 'itself' through creating the world and its people. Creating the world and its people translates in Hegel into the notion of creating society. This, in turn, occurs through *social activity*. Thus we have the following: Geist creates itself through creating society. The whole of human history consequently is the sum total of social activity and the concomitant self-creation of Geist[56].

[51] For an example of Hegel's use of the notion dialectic see the infamous discussion of Lordship and Bondage, PhS, pp. 111–118, or for some of his direct thoughts on the concept see PhS, p. 124. See also Pippin 1989, pp. 250–7, and for a full book-length discussion of the concept in Hegel, Rosen, 1982.

[52] For an excellent discussion of 'Geist' see Inwood, 1992, 274–77; Soll, I. (1969) and Solomon, R. (1983).

[53] Walsh, 1985, p. 29.

[54] Walsh, 1985, p. 29.

[55] Hegel's first writings were on religion and Christianity, including on the subject of a short life of Jesus, and an essay subsequently entitled, 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate'. For more details see Walsh, in Inwood, 1985, p. 14; also Walsh (1965); and Fackenheim, E. L. (1967).

[56] Geuss, R. (1995); for more detail, see also Kolakowski, L. (1978) Part I., pp. 11–80.

An important point to note about this view is, of course, Hegel's *historical* Idealism. As Geist is an Ideal concept and history is driven by, and indeed identical with, the self creation of Geist then human history is driven by and identical with that which is Ideal[57].

Hegel's historical Idealism should not, of course, be confused with a crude kind of *Subjective* Idealism, a view which might suggest that we simply in some way 'imagine' the external world of objects. Geist is Ideal but also social and historical and therefore is not at all the same as an individual's or indeed a group of individuals' imaginations. Geist is the socio-historical totality[58].

The self generation of Geist is understood in several different ways by commentators on Hegel. One view maintains a Christian interpretation wherein Geist is a metaphysical Christian concept of which human beings and society are part[59]. A further view is 'secular' although highly metaphysical[60]. A final perspective is also more secular and equates Geist solely with the socio-historical totality of human Mind or Spirit[61]. Whichever view one takes, the end point of human history, when Geist is (self) created, or 'realised' is the point at which society, the human world becomes complete.

This point at which the world becomes fully complete is also the point at which it becomes fully rational[62]. Hegel's notion of a fully rational world although not exactly synonymous with the eighteenth-century Kantian one, in his view, includes it. Thus Hegel argues that through the entire course of human history (a form of) Enlightenment, a complete and rational society, is attained[63].

Although committed to many of the same aims and features as his predecessor Kant, Hegel is notable in placing the philosophy of history at the centre of his entire thought. In so doing he inspires a further body of post-Kantian philosophies of history, the most influential of these being that of Karl Marx[64].

[57] This is of course an immense simplification of an extremely complex position and one not without rival interpretations. See Pippin's excellent book length treatment of this subject, Pippin, 1989, especially pp. 91–260.

[58] Hardimon (1994) is especially illuminating on this point. pp. 43–51.

[59] See Rose, G. (1981).

[60] See Soll, I. (1969).

[61] This emphasises a more social interpretation of Hegel's work, Hardimon (1994); Taylor, C. (1979).

[62] Pippin, R. (1989) p. 102. When we say 'the world becomes fully rational', we bear in mind the complexity and richness of Hegel's notion of complete 'rationality' and its embeddeness within an overall 'consciousness'.

[63] See Hardimon, and Pippin,

[64] For Adorno's 'unmediated' response to Hegel, see, of course, Adorno, T. (1993); Bubner, R. (1981), pp. 157–160, is interesting.

Marx

Lenin declared that the 'three sources and component parts' of Marx's philosophy were German philosophy[65], British political economy, and French socialism[66]. Herein we are concerned with the first: Marx's thought represents a crucial stage of development in the trajectory of German thought from Kant and Hegel to the Frankfurt School[67].

Marx's motivation was a continuation of the enlightened one of Kant in the eighteenth century, to ground philosophy in reason, and Hegel, in the nineteenth century, to ground reason in a philosophy of history. However, Marx's philosophy was deeply *politically* engaged and although indebted in most ways to Hegel, took a *materialist* turn[68]. Marx, famously in his philosophy of history, 'set Hegel on his feet'. He wrote: 'does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views, and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?'[69]

Marx converted Hegel's absolute Idealism into an equally absolute historical materialism[70]. This is best summarised in his own words in 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness'[71].

History, according to Marx, was not driven by Geist, as Hegel would have it, not by the development of socio-historical 'Mind' or 'Spirit', but by *human labour* and by the *socio-economic relations* within which that labour occurred.

[65] Herein Hegel's influence on Marx was, of course, mediated by the Young Hegelians. For a discussion of this, see Hook, S. (1958); Kolakowski, L. (1978), pp. 81–95 and 108–120; or McLellan, D. (1969) could usefully be consulted.

[66] Lenin, V. I. 'The Three Sources and Component parts of Marxism' in Marx, Engels, Lenin, (1972), p. 452. For an alternative view, see Kolakowski, L. (1978), pp. 408–415.

[67] There is a rich and varied literature on the Marxist origins of the Frankfurt School; for accounts which deal specifically with Adorno, see for instance, Bernstein, J. (1984b and 1992); Jameson, F. (1990); Jay, M. (1973 and 1984); or, for a more general account of Marxism into critical theory see Geuss, R. (1981) or Kortian, G. (1980).

[68] References to historical materialism, arguably the pivotal point of Marx's philosophy, appear throughout all his major texts. The beginning of the theory appears in his early works, wherein it is most articulated in *The Holy Family* (Marx, K. and Engels, F. 1956). However, the majority of his philosophy of history is set out in the *German Ideology* (especially the first part), Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1964). We look to these texts and also to excerpts from *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx, K. (1977b); *Grundrisse* (1973) and, of course, the succinct summary offered in *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx, K. (1974).

[69] Marx, K. *The Communist Manifesto*, (1977c).

[70] For an excellent and succinct depiction of the central themes uniting and dividing Hegel and Marx in their philosophies of history see Cohen (1978), pp. 1–27. See also Kolakowski, L. (1978), esp. pp. 122–125, for a history of ideas account.

[71] Marx, K. (1974), p. 425.

It was these *material* conditions in society that were responsible for the trajectory of historical development.

'History is the history of *human industry*, which undergoes growth in *productive* power, the stimulus and vehicle of which is an *economic structure*, which perishes when it has stimulated more growth than it can contain'[72]. Although the distinction between Marx and Hegel is clear, it must not be forgotten that Marx adopted many of Hegel's notions about history.

First and foremost, like Hegel, for Marx a philosophy of history is at the centre of the project of grounding philosophy in reason[73]. Also like Hegel, Marx develops a view of history wherein at its end-point, society attains 'rationality' and history completes its purpose[74]. However, unlike Hegel, for Marx, society is only rational and complete when the material conditions of society are fully developed, until then reason is part of the 'ideology' of the ruling class: 'the ruling ideas [are] . . . the ideas of its ruling class'[75]. History, is the development of the *material* conditions of society towards greater '*rationality*'[76].

Second, as with Hegel, we can perceive Marx's theory of history as containing three discreet *stages*. These begin, in tandem with the Hegelian view, with an original stage of unity[77]. Marx's unity, however, is one of a primitive kind of communism. Herein, although there is equality in the form of ownership and non-ownership of the means of production, this communism is undeveloped and the productive powers of its society minimal. It is a kind of 'state of nature'[78].

As with Hegel, the second stage in Marx's theory of history consists in a disruption of the original primitive unity. Out of primordial communism develop ever more technologically sophisticated forms of production. For

[72] Cohen, (1978), p. 26.

[73] Grounding philosophy in reason is an Enlightenment project and this represents a predominant strand of Marx's thought, but only one. Moreover, as Marx develops his own language, his ideas are never couched in a straightforwardly recognisable Enlightenment language. In fact, Marx most often discusses the lack of attainment of 'rationality' in society and depicts this (material condition) through the concept 'ideology'. Cohen, (1978), pp. 289–293 is useful on this as is Rosen (1996).

[74] This is, of course, a 'materialist notion of rationality'. For a good discussion see Cohen (1978) aspects of chapters I and II, esp. pp. 16–18 and 41–56. See also Lukacs, G. (1971) for a thorough treatment of the later Marxist 'epistemology' influential to Adorno; Geuss, R. (1981) for a discussion of some pertinent issues in Marxist epistemology, and its later development; Rosen, M. (1996) for a discussion of Ideology.

[75] Marx, K. (1977c).

[76] Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1964). For a more detailed, but still introductory, account of historical materialism in the secondary literature, see McLellan, D. (1971), pp. 134–150; or Cohen (1978) for the book-length treatment.

[77] Compare Kolakowski, L. (1978), pp. 337–338.

[78] For Marx's influence by these earlier 'state of nature' arguments, Rousseau, etc. see Kolakowski, L. (1978), pp. 39–43.

Marx these include the feudal model, early industrial capitalism, and, later, more advanced forms. Over the course of time, Marx argues that the means of production grow and concomitant tensions within socio-economic relations develop. These tensions entail a separation – which constitutes a condition of '*alienation*'[79] – between the owners of the means of production on the one hand, and the non-owning producers on the other. The latter class, infamously, are exploited in Marx's view and the resultant class tension generates the eventual politicisation of the exploited class[80].

The third and final stage in Marx's theory of history also mirrors that of Hegel for it is a state of *reconciliation*[81]. In Marx, of course, this is not the completion of the development of Geist, but of communism. In Marx's final stage, separation is overcome. The means of production is jointly owned and the institution of private ownership is abolished. This final stage is achieved through political revolution and amounts to the collapse of class division[82].

Third, just as Marx offered a model of history with three stages in the way that Hegel did, he also thereby offered a similarly developmental view. First, he saw history as a developmental process with an intrinsic *purpose*, for Marx, to achieve communism. Thus, like Hegel, for Marx history was *teleological*. Moreover, in tandem with Hegel, Marx 'predicts' or at least envisions an *end point* to history. That is to say, in his model, history achieves its goal: it is a complete process, a 'totality'. Further, for Marx, historical development occurs through the unravelling of tensions; in general, the tensions in the material forces of society; in particular, the clash between the ownership and non-ownership of the means of production in late capitalism. For Marx, 'the struggle between these two antagonistic elements . . . constitutes the dialectic'[83]. For Marx, there existed a materialist dialectic: that is to say, for Marx, as for Hegel, history was *dialectical*[84].

Finally, however, in spite of the similarities between Marx and Hegel, the distinction, namely the materialist nature of Marx's model, is crucial. This is a major change. First it entails a radical *secularisation* of Hegel's views[85]. Secondly, it removes the pivotal role of the Ideal and in its place installs the

[79] For Marx's discussion of alienation see the '1844' Manuscripts, Marx, K. (1977a).

[80] See Hardimon, M. (1994), pp. 133–140, for a discussion of alienation in the work of Marx as compared to Hegel.

[81] A more detailed account of communism as reconciliation in Marx's work is provided by Hardimon, M. (1994), pp. 133–140.

[82] Again, see Hardimon, M. (1994), pp. 133–140.

[83] From Marx, K. (1977b).

[84] The general framework of the Marxian dialectic was established in Marx, K. (1977a).

[85] Note that later Marxists have combined Christian thought with Marxism, for example, various contemporary forms of liberation theology, that is to say, materialism does not necessarily imply atheism, but for Marx it most certainly did. See Marx's early writings, for instance, the 1844 manuscripts: 'in religion the human imagination's own activity . . . reacts independently on the individual as an alien activity of gods or devils. . . . It belongs to another and so is the loss of himself'. For Marx, religion is a principal instance of alienation.

material. As a result, for Marx, ideas, reason, forms of 'consciousness' all result (however complexly) from material forces developing over history.

Marx, like Kant and Hegel, was an Enlightenment thinker. Like Kant, Marx believed in the centrality of reason. Like Hegel, he regarded the attainment of reason as requiring socio-historical development. Unlike Hegel, this socio-historical development had to be principally material. Through material development over history rationality could be achieved.

Marx is notorious for the materialist turn in his philosophy of history and for evoking a mammoth trajectory of debate centred around the question of history's ideal or material nature. A principal figure in this late Marxist debate is Lukacs.

Later Marxism

Whereas Marx had predicted a communist revolution, by the late nineteenth century this had not come to pass. Later Marxists sought to explain why. To this end there emerged a strand of thought which was later to be characterised as Late Marxism[86] and proved highly influential. The Early Frankfurt School is often seen to be its most important twentieth-century representative. A crucial stepping stone to these later twentieth-century developments was provided by Lukacs[87].

Lukacs borrowed many German ideas stemming from a philosophical concern with enlightenment and he retained, from the post-Kantians, a metaphysical position which placed a philosophy of history at its centre[88]. Lukacs, however, was preocuppied with addressing particular issues of his times[89]. The most pressing question for him was why, by the later nineteenth century, communism had not emerged. The question arose: Why was history not moving forwards towards higher stages of development? A suspicion fell upon Marx's philosophy. Had Marx been wrong? If so, to what extent? Was the whole of his philosophy of history incorrect or had he simply missed some key point?

Lukacs did not jettison Marxism but looked for a particular weakness in the theory. He was highly influenced by thinkers of his times, notably, Max Weber[90]. Weber, like Marxists, was also interested in the nature of modern

[86] Many discuss the post-Marxian Marxists as 'later' Marxists but Jameson uses the phrase Late Marxism, especially with reference to the Frankfurt School, Jameson, F. (1990).

[87] Lukacs was born 13 April, 1885, in Budapest.

[88] Lukacs intellectual position changed markedly during the course of his life. His early works were strongly influenced by German Idealism and examined cultural phenomena. Later, he embraced Marxism and generated a fusion of Hegelian-Marxism: his most pertinent study, for our purposes is his *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukacs, G. (1971). Later he moved on to embrace more Stalinist positions, although he did not remain bound to them.

[89] We refer here to the Lukacs of *History and Class Consciousness.*

[90] Lukacs was a friend of Max Weber.

society and its historical development[91]. He had argued that the process of capitalist industrialisation, which Marx had so welcomed as a movement forwards in history, was accompanied by inevitable problems. In particular, it was afflicted by the growth in a distinctive kind of administration[92]: the phenomenon of 'bureaucratisation' appeared[93]. Weber explains: 'The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organisations exactly as does the machine . . . precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files . . . strict subordination . . . these are raised to the optimum point in the strict bureaucratic organisation.'[94]

According to Weber, bureaucratisation was not simply a phenomenon restricted to the apparatus of administration but spread to society at large, what he referred to as 'this complete ascendancy of the bureaucratic ideal of life'[95]. This 'bureaucratic ideal of life' included certain kinds of thought processes, indeed, certain kinds of reasoning. These began to permeate all strands of society[96]. Weber's own concern was to depict these changes, account for them and lament, what he regarded as, the disenchantment of the world, as 'modern' capitalism became dominated by the 'iron cage' of rationalisation[97]. That is to say, Weber's project was a *cultural* one, to understand how social processes became '*rationalised*'.

In being influenced by Weber's 'cultural' analysis of history – which included a cultural explanation of historical change – Lukacs splintered off from the materialist wing of Marxism and developed his own strand of thought. In his seminal *History and Class Consciousness*[98]; Lukacs developed the Weberian turn towards an analysis of modern forms of reason, as a possible explanation for history's stunted growth and communism's failure to emerge. Something was indeed wrong with Marx's philosophy of history, and it resided in what Marx had not forseen as accompanying the process

[91] The main texts in which Weber laid out his analysis of bureaucracy and rationalisation which we refer to here are *Economy and Society*, Weber, M. (1968) and *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber, M. (1958).

[92] See Weber, M. (1958) for an analysis of how bureaucratisation emerges from puritanism, esp. p. 181.

[93] Weber, of course, uses this concept in a particular way and identifies various kinds of bureacracy. See Albrow, M. (1970), esp. pp. 26–54.

[94] Weber, M. (1968) Vol. III, p. 973.

[95] Weber, M. (1924) p. 414.

[96] Note that Weber's relationship with bureaucratisation was ambivalent. On the one hand, he acknowledged the greater efficiency and also accepted its inevitable growth. On the other hand he lamented the loss of spontaneity and autonomy that he believed accompanied the spread, so that modern men became 'specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart', Weber, M. (1924), p. 414.

[97] Weber's arguments about rationalisation and his concluding comments about the 'iron cage' occur at the end of *The Protestant Ethic*'.

[98] Lukacs, G. (1971). For Lukacs' relationship with orthodox Marxism, see Jacoby, R. (1971) or Lichtheim, G. (1961), pp. 367–371.

of capitalist industrialisation. Capitalism had developed a problematic, bureaucratic form of *reason* [99].

Following Weber, modern socio-economic conditions entailed, for Lukacs, specific *undeveloped* forms of reason related to the narrow, procedural and repetitive modes of thought that had inevitably arisen to accompany industrial production and its administration. These narrow forms of reason meant that the proletariat could not develop from 'false consciousness' into fuller, truer forms of 'consciousness'. As a result, their political development was also retarded. Further, this meant that the material conditions of society were prevented from progressing. In fact, the narrow form of reason was the central factor impeding historical development[100].

In positing this kind of argument, Lukacs, of course, takes an Idealist turn. He follows the Hegelian notion that developments in knowledge and reason account for historical change. However, Lukacs' argument, whilst focussing upon the Ideal realm, did so in the specific context of the lack of resolution of the material contradictions in society at his own particular point in history. Although adding an Idealist element in a specific context (and developing important arguments about reason), he does not inculcate an overall change to the Marxist philosophy of history[101].

It seems that, even in his early work – which represents his most Idealist phase – Lukacs' position lay ambivalently somewhere between Materialist and Idealist convictions[102]. Although pinpointing problems in reason, and indeed marking these as pivotal in the prevention of the forward movement of history, Lukacs retains a Marxist position in two ways. First, he focussed upon a particular class that suffered from 'false consciousness': he remained tied to an analysis based upon the socio-economic relations of *material production*; thus although reason prevented certain changes in historical development, this form of reason was itself characteristic of certain socio-economic conditions[103]. Second, the transition to full consciousness did not function as the end in itself of history for Lukacs. That is to say narrow forms of reason prevented the development of the material conditions that would constitute the attainment of complete rationality. Full consciousness was important in so far as it enabled communism. It was this that was the goal of his analysis. Thus the teleological dimension of his philosophy of history was still Marxist[104].

[99] See Geuss, R. (1981), p. 24., for Lukacs in relation to the Marxist concept of ideology.

[100] Lukacs, G. (1971), p. 83. Herein Lukacs discusses reification, the central concept of his analysis. For an elaboration of this, see Arato, A. (1972).

[101] For instance, he still regards the vehicle of historical change to reside in the material processes of production and socio-economic relations.

[102] See Jacoby, R. (1971).

[103] Lukacs saw progress to reside in the proletariat led by their party: the political party is the 'bearer of the class consciousenss of the proletariat and the conscience of its historical vocation' Lukacs, G. (1971) p. 41.

[104] We continue to refer here to the Lukacs of *History and Class Consciousness*.

In spite of his notoriously peculiar and uncertain blend of a materialist and Idealist philosophy of history, Lukacs' overall perspective embodies the now familiar features of the German post-Kantian tradition. First, Lukacs' philosophy of history encompasses the idea that history develops through various stages, and that history is teleological and dialectical. Second, Lukacs is committed to the idea that history will attain its end point, thus history is a 'totality'. Third, although Lukacs held that historical progress was made by both ideal and material factors; more common to a Marxist rather than a Hegelian view Lukacs believed that history would attain its goal of a complete and rational society in the form of communism[105].

Lukacs was important in that, first, he upheld the post-Kantian tradition and passed down a mode of analysis of society that was based upon a philosophy of history. Second, Lukacs mattered by virtue of his inculcation of a strand of Late Marxism which took an Idealist turn: this Hegelian-Marxist turn was key to the development of the Early Frankfurt School's perspective[106].

Early Frankfurt School

The Early Frankfurt School – and here I refer to the philosophical representatives of the school, Adorno and Horkheimer – followed the trajectory of development of Marxist ideas that Lukacs had initiated[107]. Their arguments were propelled forwards in this same direction because they shared the same realisation that had driven Lukacs, namely, that Marx's predictions had not manifested themselves. Historical forces had not developed in the expected direction towards (rational) communism.

Instead, by the mid twentieth century the barbarism of Nazism had arisen in Europe. This was, in every sense, the contrary of historical progress, whether one took the post-Kantian materialist or Idealist stance. If enlightenment was construed as the attainment of rationality, freedom, etc. in the Kantian vein, or if it were conceived of as the 'materialist rationality' of communism in the Marxist vein, Nazism was the out and out failure of the historical realisation of any kind of enlightenment.

As a result of their times, the Frankfurt School addressed a somewhat distinct question from that of Lukacs. In common with Lukacs they asked why history had failed. In contrast with Lukacs they were animated by a

[105] Lukacs describes how all the 'objects of the empirical world are to be understood as aspects of a totality, ie. as the aspects of a total social situation caught up in the process of historical change' towards communism. Lukacs, G. (1971), p. 162.

[106] For a discussion of how Lukacs influenced the Early Frankfurt School, see Jay, M. (1973), chapters 1, 2, and for the specific impact of Lukacs upon Adorno, see Buck-Morss, S. (1977) chapter 2, or Rosen, M. (1982), pp. 170–173; or Bubner, R. (1981), pp. 166–168.

[107] There were, of course, further influences, which we do not have space for here, including Karl Korsch, Karl Mannheim and Scheler. For an account of these, see Bubner, R. (1981), pp. 169–177.

horror of Nazism and the pressing question in their minds was less the political one of communism than that of the failure of Western history to realise the 'humanitarian' and 'civilised' values of enlightenment. The Frankfurt School's question then was, why had enlightenment failed? In order to answer this, Adorno and Horkheimer went further in the direction away from Marx's own thought than Lukacs had done. In fact, they went so far as to actually abandon some of Marx's pivotal concerns.

The first Lukacsian notion which Adorno and Horkheimer left behind was the central Marxist one, that of the *proletariat* as a *revolutionary class*. They did not see that the progressive movement forwards in history resided in forces concentrated in this particular class. Not only that, but their turned away from class-based modes of analysis virtually altogether[108].

In common with Lukacs the Early Frankfurt School's question of enlightenment's failure led them to focus upon the role of reason in historical development. They offered an explanation of history's failure based upon the idea that problems in the sphere of human reason prevented the development of historical forces[109]. Thus, the Early Frankfurt School embodied the same shift within Marxism as Lukacs had done, namely towards the earlier Idealist stance. However, whereas it is clear that Lukacs in spite of veering towards Idealism in his explanations of his particular times, regarded reason as emanating from material forces in society, it is unclear to what extent Adorno and Horkheimer followed these *materialist* assumptions. At times it seems they adhered to certain aspects of historical materialism whereas at other times they jettisoned its presuppositions altogether. The question of whether they are best read as materialist or Idealist, certainly in any sophisticated literature, becomes a complex one[110]. What is clear is that whilst Lukacs saw a form of reason as problematic during his own time and as emergent from socio-economic tensions, Adorno and Horkheimer saw a form of reason as problematic throughout the entire course of Western history, not just during one period, and moreover, not just restricted to any one particular class but ubiquitous to society as a whole[111].

Adorno and Horkheimer not only changed the focus of Hegelian-Marxist debates, through the greater historical import given to reason, they also re-evaluated what was problematic about reason itself. Lukacs and many other 'Idealist' Marxists had used concepts like *false consciousness* and 'ideology'. That is, they argued that material limitations in society gave rise to narrow

[108] This is especially true of Adorno.

[109] Most of their literal discussion of their philosophy of history is contained in the introduction to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. However, the text as a whole is an instance of their philosophy of history so that most of our points can be seen scattered throughout the text. See Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979).

[110] See Rosen's discussion in Rosen, M. (1983), p. 105–199.

[111] On this issue of their Hegelian-Marxism, see Rosen, M. in Rosen, M. and Mitchell, S. eds. (1983), pp. 90–117.

forms of reason which resulted in partial and often distorted forms of consciousness. These, in turn had certain deleterious effects including, crucially for the Marxists, an inability to perceive one's correct interests in life. Horkheimer and Adorno however looked to a different problem. They perceived that reason had degenerated into an extremely narrow form which they termed *instrumental reason*[112]. This form of reason did not simply mask or distort the truth, did not simply entail false consciousness or *ideological* delusion, but it prevented the possibility of any kind of *reflective*, rational thought at all[113].

Adorno and Horkheimer believed that instrumental reason was an inadequate form of reason that could not allow human beings to think about *ends*. It thus had no capacity to address moral questions or indeed any questions pertaining to human purposes and meaning. It could only be used as a *means* to ascertain the most efficient way of attaining any arbitrarily given ends. In Adorno and Horkheimer's view, their own period in history consisted of the predominance of instrumental kinds of reason at the expense of almost any other. Thus human beings, on the one hand, were unable to reason about morality or meaning in their lives, whilst on the other hand, they had increasingly efficient means at their disposal for any arbitrarily derived 'ends'[114].

Adorno and Horkheimer not only embodied a greater shift away from Marxist materialism towards Hegelian Idealism than Lukacs had done, they also went further away from Marx than Lukacs had done in regard to their view of historical development. Adorno and Horkheimer abandoned some of Marx's key claims about the pattern of *historical development*.

First, Adorno and Horkheimer abandoned certain key features of Marx's teleological view of history. They did not see history as following a trajectory with stages of development[115].

Second, Adorno and Horkheimer did not view history as reaching an end point. Historical change never achieved completion but was ongoing[116].

Third, Adorno and Horkheimer had a distinctive view about history and teleology. From the notion of history as non developmental and without an end point, it might appear that their view of history is non-teleological. This,

[112] Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979). Adorno and Horkheimer refer to the enlightenment's mode of reasoning with the terms 'enlightenment reason' and 'instrumental reason'. These are used interchangeably, but strictly speaking, the ideal of enlightenment reason is distinct from instrumental reason. However, as almost all their discussion is criticism of the 'failed' form of 'enlightenment reason', then this is indeed interchangeable with 'instrumental reason'.

[113] Full discussions of instrumental reason occur in Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979); Adorno, T. (1973); Horkheimer, M. (1974); see also Guzzoni, U. (1997); Wiggershaus, R. (1994), pp. 344–349.

[114] See Buck-Morss, S. (1977) for a book-length study of some of the problems Adorno perceives in his contemporary society's 'epistemologies' and his attempted solutions.

[115] This also, of course, is one of their criticisms of Hegel's philosophy of history.

[116] Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), p. xvi.

however, would be gravely mistaken. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the issue of *purpose* embodied within history remains[117]. Moroever, this embodied purpose is the *enlightenment* one. History aims to attain enlightenment. Thus, so far as history has a purpose, it retains a key teleological feature[118].

Adorno's views about history's teleology are distinctive. Although history has a purpose, to attain enlightenment, it has thus far failed. Moreover, its purpose is in fact inherently unrealisable. Thus history embodies an unrealised and unrealisable aim[119].

Due to Adorno and Horkheimer's belief in history's inevitable inability to attain enlightenment, many regard them as deeply pessimistic. Adorno's, they argue, is a negative philosopy of history[120]. This is perhaps too unsophisticated an image, for Adorno and Horkheimer believe that history has purpose, and a 'good' or 'positive' purpose at that. As a consequence of this we have goals and aspirations with which to animate and direct our lives. The fact that these can never in 'reality' be attained *in totality* does not make them unworthy of pursuit[121]. Indeed, the enlightenment's aim embodied in history is one of Western culture's greatest treasures for Adorno[122].

Fourth, Adorno and Horkheimer in spite of abandoning many Marxist and indeed some Hegelian views about historical development, do retain one central feature of the Marxist and Hegelian notion of the pattern of history. For them, history is most definitely *dialectical*[123]. They regard history as following a trajectory of change constituted by a particular dialectical relationship. However, the historical dialectic does not take the form of a movemment towards completion[124], but is merely one of 'oscillation'. For an example of the form of Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic, consider one using Marx's 'materialist' categories, which although not those of Adorno and Horkheimer, provide an image, at least, of how they envisage the form of history: Throughout history, at times capitalism would predominate and at other times, communism would have the upper hand. However, there would be no development from capitalism to communism and no point of 'reconciliation' between the two.

[117] Indeed the project of critical theory is entirely dependent upon it.

[118] This point is explained well in Geuss, R. (1981).

[119] Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), p. xvi.

[120] For example, see Jay, M. (1973 and 1984).

[121] Their non-totalising perspective makes them unlike Hegel, Marx and Lukacs. It also puts them into an interesting relation with Kant, for they conjoin the 'empirical' and the 'rational' through historical mediation, as Hegel had done, against Kant, but they then open up a space for skepticism, a gap between the knowable and the rational.

[122] For instance, they write with optimism of an 'Enlightenment which is in possession of itself and coming to power . . . ' Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), p. 208.

[123] They write how they trace 'the dialectic of enlightenment and myth', Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), p. xvi.

[124] They argue that 'myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology' Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), p. xvi.

Enlightenment and Myth

Adorno and Horkheimer's philosophy of history, in veering away from Marxism towards Idealism and a non-developmental view of history, embodies a shift in the key concepts it uses. They do not couch their philosophy of history as a dialectial relationship between *capitalism* and *communism*. Their view, as articulated in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is, as the title suggests, a view of history as a dialectic of enlightenment: more especially, a dialectic between *enlightenment* and *myth*.

Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of 'enlightenment' differs somewhat from the Kantian and Hegelian one. It should be noted, in fact, that few concepts in the history of twentieth-century thought have been so perpetually misrepresented as 'Enlightenment' in their work. First, as we have already argued, it is important to continue to distinguish their concept 'enlightenment' from the historical one. Historical Enlightenment is used to refer to the historical era, circa 1660–1800 – from the foundation of the Royal Society to Kant[125], whereas Adorno and Horkheimer conceptualise enlightenment as part of their philosophy of history. They believe enlightenment, although predominant during the historical era above, in actual fact spans the entire period of Western history from Ancient civilisation to their own contemporary times. Let us consider these points in more detail for a moment.

Conceptually, they accept Kant's definition of Enlightenment from *Was ist Aufklärung?* as the basis for their own conceptualisation. Following Kant, Adorno and Horkheimer define enlightenment as a series of aims[126]. These are the following. The central aim is ipso facto 'being enlightened', understood by Adorno and Horkheimer as the acquisition of knowledge and capacity to reason[127]. This is linked, they argue, to a series of further aims, namely, the attainment of maturity, freedom, security and peace – all of which constitute, for the enlightenment, progress (DA.19,100/3,81)[128].

[125] I am aware that any delineation of historical 'Enlightenment' is contoversial, and that Adorno's embodies a broader temporal conception than that of many other historians, who treat 'Enlightenment' as all but synonymous with the French Philosophes c1720–1780: see Yolton, J. (1991), p. vii. The crudest dismissal of Adorno's concept 'Enlightenment' is expressed by Porter, R. (2000), p. 486, n. 15.

[126] See Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), pp. 3, 81.

[127] Note that we discuss *knowledge acquisition* and *reason*. This is because, as mentioned in our introductory chapter, Adorno and Horkheimer do not follow the usual (Anglo-American) epistemological conventions of distinguishing between knowledge and reason. Henceforth we will mainly be going on to discuss the process of gaining knowledge, which we have referred to as knowledge acquisition. Due to their Hegelian-Marxist derived perspective, they consider knowledge acquisition to entail processes of reasoning. Thus the term knowledge acquisition is a generic term to include reason and is specific to Adorno and Horkheimer's philosophical perspective only. It should be noted that this category of knowledge acquisition is rather broad and somewhat vague in Adorno and Horkheimer's work. We discuss this in more detail in Chapter 3.

[128] Henceforth, references to Adorno's texts will appear in the main body of the text. The conventions for referencing these are given in the *Preface*.

Enlightenment is defined with reference to an *opposite*. This opposite is *myth*. Adorno and Horkheimer's conceptualisation of myth,[129] like enlightenment, is very particular. Historically speaking, myth, like enlightenment, has been present in some form ever since the dawn of Western civilisation. Moreover, (and unlike any discussion of myth in Hegel) it spans from ancient times through to mid twentieth-century Europe wherein Nazism was, for Adorno and Horkheimer, in many respects an instance of myth.

Conceptually speaking, Adorno and Horkheimer's concept 'myth' should neither be confused with any notion of a non-Western, 'primitive' society, nor with a literary genre. For them, 'myth' is derived from the interpretation of certain aspects of 'ancient' Western societies. However, they also regard ancient Western societies as containing non-mythic elements, for instance, elements of enlightenment itself. Furthermore, Adorno and Horkheimer would consider these societies to possess, in general, traits that are both inherently positive and elements that are inherently negative. What we can say about their conceptualisation of myth, in contrast to ancient societies taken as a whole, is that they consider it to refer to something wholly negative.[130]

Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of myth is that which they believe the enlightenment considers to be myth (DA.61–99/43–80): 'the program of the enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy' (DA.14/3).[131] Myth is fundamentally the opposite of enlightenment in that, for Adorno and Horkheimer, it is not based upon any aims[132].

Myth, as they conceptualise it, basically speaking, is centred around a way of relating to the world which is 'animistic'. This involves a particular system of knowledge acquisition for which Adorno and Horkheimer deploy the term *animism*[133]. They regard this as a 'false' system of knowledge acquisition including the traits of *ignorance* and *delusion*. Thus, in contrast to the enlightenment's aim of (true) knowledge, and a capacity to reason, myth entails ignorance and delusion.

Adorno and Horkheimer argue that animism is related to a further set of traits in myth, namely *immaturity* – in distinction to enlightenment's aim of maturity; second, social *domination* – in contrast to enlightenment's aim of freedom; third, an expression of *fear* and *barbarism*, as opposed to enlightenment's aims of security and peace. Together these traits of ignorance,

[129] See Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979), pp. xi–80.

[130] This is a point that is often mistaken. Authors sometimes regard Adorno and Horkheimer as considering that myth could potentially be redemptive.

[131] Note that here Adorno and Horkheimer are paraphrasing what they believe is representative of Bacon and Voltaire.

[132] It is, in fact they argue, driven mainly by fear.

[133] I am not, of course, implying that they invented the term 'animism' themselves for it is, of course, used by both Freud and anthropologists before them.

delusion, immaturity, domination and barbarism constitute an extremely *regressive* kind of society. This is in contradistinction to enlightenment's final aim of progress (DA.61–99/43–80).[134]

The Narrative of Western History

Adorno and Horkheimer's narrative of Western history is that the entire trajectory of the West consists of a dialectical relationship between enlightenment and myth.

This dialectical relationship is, on the one hand, internal. What this means is that enlightenment arises internally from myth and is itself, in part, a form of myth. Myth is proto-enlightenment, enlightenment 'proto-myth'. Internally, enlightenment and myth are inseparable opposites, each constituting the other.

On the other hand, this dialectical relationship is also external. That is to say, enlightenment and myth meet as 'external' opposites, also inseparably linked. Thus enlightenment is distinct from myth and opposes it. Occasionally, during the course of Western history, as, for example, in the eighteenth-century historical era 'Enlightenment', enlightenment predominates. At other times, as, for instance, in Nazi Germany, myth is predominant.

Adorno and Horkheimer's narrative of history is *not* one of distinct stages. History, they believe, simply consists of the oscillation of myth and enlightenment. However, for heuristic reasons, let us attempt to express their philosophy of history in three stages, in the manner of Hegelian and Marxist historical models. This will allow us to visualise the above points.

In the beginning, if Adorno and Horkheimer were to follow a Hegelian model of historical stages (note the subjunctive clause), we would have an initial unity. This would be a stage of myth. However, for them, myth is already proto-enlightenment. That is to say, a primal unity of myth, wherein human beings are unreflectively 'at one' with their social world and its institutions is, they believe, internally already proto-enlightened. Hence there is already a separation in this unity. For instance, through magic and ritual, mythic peoples attempt to control nature and avert disaster. This attempt to control nature includes a separation from it and so a loss of the complete mythic unity.

Likewise, a 'second stage' to history, should it occur, would be one of the begining of enlightenment. However, enlightenment is already part myth. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that enlightenment contains mythic unity,

[134] Note that Adorno and Horkheimer use the concept of myth in a very particular way: it is Adorno and Horkheimer's view of the enlightenment's view of myth, which is to say that it is internal to enlightenment and hence consistent with their project of internal critique. This is quite distinct from other kinds of conceptualisation of myth and is one which certain authors, including Habermas, fail to perceive, See Habermas, J. (1982).

spontaneous unthinking behaviour, and other features like animism and wish fulfillment. In fact, is not enlightenment as envisaged by Kant in part mythic? Is it not indeed a 'mythic' wish to believe we can achieve reason, freedom and peace in the human world? Furthermore, is it not mythic to believe as Hegel does that the world will become completely rational by the end of history? Can we have equality and prosperity for all, as in the (enlightened) communism envisaged by Marx? The idea that all these things can be attained by the development of forces within history is, perhaps, itself mythic. That is to say, it could be argued that the very idea of enlightenment itself contains examples of mythic 'wish fulfillment': as if life is of the nature that we can have all good things, indeed, that all good things are compatible. Or indeed, that abstract reason, Mind's development or material equality will generate complete goodness and peace on earth. The second 'stage' in Adorno and Horkheimer's view of history is continuous with the first: enlightenment contains myth.

The final stage of history in the grand post-Kantian tradition ought to be one of *reconciliation* and the *attainment* of enlightenment ideals. The world should become united but enlightened, complete but rational, equal but free. For Adorno and Horkheimer, this never happens. They believe that enlightenment never escapes its interconnection with its opposite, myth. In fact, in their own era myth predominated, albeit in a 'modern' guise – Nazism.

The attempt to model Adorno and Horkheimer's philosophy of history in the Hegelian-Marxist model reveals that, although deeply indebted to this tradition, they veer starkly away from the entrenched developmental view.

III. ADORNO AND HORKHEIMER AND GERMAN PHILOSOPHY

We have seen that Adorno and Horkheimer's philosophy is deeply indebted to German philosophy. First, it is derived from the Kantian commitment to the project of Enlightenment and related critique. Adorno and Horkheimer uphold the aims of Enlightenment. Moreover, through subjecting enlightenment to its own critical practices they pursue the Kantian derived project of critique.

Second, Adorno and Horkheimer's philosophy of history can also be understood as lying firmly within the German post-Kantian tradition. Adorno and Horkheimer in their philosophy of history *engage* with *all* the *key concepts* from the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, namely materialism/Idealism, teleology, totality, and the dialectic. Within the Hegelian-Marxist tradition, they represent a shift away from Marxism towards Idealism. Indeed, their philosophy of history with its focus upon reason as a central vehicle of historical change, represents perhaps the most Idealist version of Western Marxism, so much so that many doubt their Marxist credentials at all. Moreover, Adorno

and Horkheimer challenge many key concepts of Hegelian as well as Marxist philosophies of history. For them, history has no developmental stages, no end point and no realised purpose. Their view of history does however retain the concept of both an unrealised purpose – hence a form of teleology – and of the dialectic.

Finally, Adorno and Horkheimer marry the Kantian with the Hegelian-Marxist influence by offering a critique of enlightenment that takes the form of a philosophy of history. They encapsulate history as a dialectic between enlightenment and myth wherein in spite of aiming to overcome myth, enlightenment is always inextricably connected to it.

Having articulated Adorno and Horkheimer's philosophy from within the German tradition, we can now go on to see how they connect Freud with this.

Prelude II

Adorno's Intellectual Tradition: Sigmund Freud

Adorno and Horkheimer significantly alter both the German philosophical traditions of Kantian critique and post-Kantian philosophy of history by incorporating the pathbreaking findings of Freud into mainstream German philosophy. In Whitebook's words, 'the assimilation of psychoanalysis provided the Frankfurt School with the concepts needed . . . to comprehend the central dynamics and pathologies of modern *rationality*, individuals and culture'[1]. In view of this, to understand further Adorno and Horkheimer's philosophy of history we need to turn to their appropriation of Sigmund Freud. Herein we articulate three points: First Freud's basic theory of the psyche; second, which particular aspects of Freud's theory are appropriated by Adorno and Horkheimer, and; third, and most importantly, how they map Freudian theory onto the German tradition of philosophy of history[2].

FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS

For the benefit of those philosophers less familiar with Sigmund Freud, let us briefly introduce his key relevant ideas. Writing in late nineteenth-century Vienna, the Austrian neurologist and psychologist founded psychoanalysis. Based on his research into the condition of hysteria, Freud developed a theory of the human *psyche* as in conflict with itself. He composed an analysis of psychosexual development in the human being as a way of accounting for kinds of behaviour with no apparent cause[3].

[1] Whitebook, J. (1995), p. 3.

[2] Our monograph makes a detailed analysis of Adorno's appropriation of Freud so this section is intended as introductory only.

[3] Note that we will use the term *psyche* to refer to the natural element of the 'self', that is, the drives as discussed by Freud. The term *self*, in contrast, will be reserved to refer to (1), the socio-historically determined dimension of the 'self'. This is a logical distinction only,

His theorising developed from his early to his later years and we can usefully divide his work into five, closely interconnected, theoretical languages – note that these are conceptual divisions and not always strictly biographical, although we have tried to follow the overarching trajectory of Freud's life[4].

The psyche is represented by Freud in five differing ways, first, the *psychosexual* theory of human development; second, the division of the psyche into the *unconscious* and *conscious*; third, the categories of *ego* and *id*; fourth, the theory of human development couched in the language of *primary narcissism* and *maturity*; finally, in his later work, to an idea of the psyche as composed primarily of the life instincts (*Eros*) and the death instincts (*Thatanos*)[5].

Consider Freud's first view: his earliest interest was in hysteria and from this developed perhaps his best-known theoretical apparatus, namely the psychosexual theory of the human psyche. This psychosexual theory was expressed through a conceptual division of the mind, which focussed on an analysis of dreams (see the following section)[6]. Also, it was, in his early work, expressed through a theory of human psychosexual development. This latter formed the foundation for psychoanalytic theory and practice. Freud made his argument that the human being develops through four stages, namely the *oral*, *anal*, *phallic*, and *genital*. Most importantly, psychosexual development is pivoted around the *Oedipal* complex. These stages of psychosexual development were frought with difficulties and it was from these, if left unresolved, that symptoms like hysteria – a form of anxiety – might occur in later life[7].

A second way to characterise Freud's work is through his 'structural' conception of the psyche. Herein he divides the psyche into two 'structures', the *conscious* and the *unconscious*[8]. 'The division of the psychical into

because, the socio-historical 'self' also contains the natural psyche as well. For this reason we also use the term 'self' to refer to (2), the overall 'self' which includes the natural 'psyche' and socio-historical 'self'.

[4] Sometimes this clashes with our conceptual divisions. However, we have followed Freud's development from the shift from a concern with psychopathology and hysteria, and the emergence of the concept of the unconscious and of the psychosexual theory of development, to a concern with the drives, finally construed as Eros and Thatanos.

[5] For a summary, see Freud, S. (1940).

[6] Freud, S. (1900).

[7] Freud, S. (1916–17), esp. pp. 344–403.

[8] When we turn to look at the conscious-waking psyche, we encounter a distinction: the conscious and the preconscious. Although this is less relevant to us than the main boundary between conscious and unconscious, it is as well to present Freud's distinctions at the start. This leads us to note a slight ambiguity in Freud's terminology. He speaks of the unconscious and conscious distinction in two senses. Superficially he uses the term unconscious only in a *descriptive* sense, to refer to the difference between what we know we are thinking and what we don't. However, beyond this distinction is between not just different levels of awareness but different domains of the psyche with different features to each *domain*. Now for Freud, the preconscious refers to all those thoughts and feelings of which we are not aware

what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premiss of psychoanalysis'[9]. Freud's innovative 'discovery' about the human psyche was that firstly, we have motives and thought processes of which we are not directly aware. Secondly, that these are non-rational. That is, at the centre of the psyche we have a hidden, non-rational force: the unconscious. This has features that differ from our ordinary, waking, conscious state. The impulses that occur here are not only hidden to our waking psyche, but also occur in a different 'language'. How then, if this 'language' is unconscious are we to gain access to it? Freud explains that: 'there are states of conflict and uproar, when the contents of the unconscious . . . have a prospect of forcing their way into . . . consciousness[10].' There are three main occasions when this may occur. The first is simply that during everyday waking life we make 'slips' or what Freud calls *parapraxes*, ie. moments when our unconscious reveals itself 'between the lines' as it were. This is not, however, a state of uproar. During mental illness, hysteria, and neurosis, however, the unconscious not only surfaces but, in fact, takes over, according to Freud, which is why, of course, he devoted so much time and energy to the study of mental illness. However, there is a third state, in 'normal', 'healthy' people when the waking consciousness submits to the unconscious: sleep and dreaming[11]. In such a state the 'contents of the unconscious force their way into consciousness'. Thus we see not only the content of our own particular unconscious, but we see also the language in which unconscious 'thoughts' appear[12].

at one particular moment, but of which, if we wished, we could become aware, ie. these are thoughts which are unconscious merely in the descriptive sense, but which occur in the same language as conscious thoughts, and therefore belong to the same domain. The preconscious is therefore not part of the unconscious in any proper sense. (I will henceforth use the term *unconscious* only to refer to the domain of the unconscious, which is the important sense that Freud introduces.) The distinction between conscious and preconscious is really only a temporal one, ie. one of which ideas one is thinking at that particular moment. The preconscious thoughts – when they appear consciously – and conscious thought processes are the same, they are clear, ordered and rational. They are conceptual by nature, concerned with fine distinctions between Objects; they can discern differences, similarities, identities, and opposites. That is to say, they have the ability to make, sophisticated discernment of the relations between Objects in the external world.

[9] Freud, S. (1923), p. 351.

[10] Freud, S. (1940), p. 397.

[11] See Freud, S. (1900). According to Freud, dreams are strange phenomena for they display all the characteristics of mental illness. They are complete hallucinogenic experiences: an unreal world which we accept as reality.

[12] The dream work is responsible for transforming ordinary thoughts into the 'dream' langauge with its own peculiar features. Firstly, the movement into the unconscious transforms thought by removing the various *boundaries* between Objects. This is called *condensation* (Freud, S. (1900), pp. 383–413). It disregards the similarities, differences, oppositions and logical relations between things, thus images and events can appear as their opposites or with several features merged together. Secondly, dreams record meaningful content in

The third way to characterise Freud's work is through the theory of the '*instincts*' or, perhaps more correctly translated, '*drives*'[13]. Freud, in fact, moves beyond his initial distinction of conscious and unconscious, for this he finds lacking in one very important respect: it gives too *passive* a picture of the human psyche[14]. Freud perceives that further than a division of domain, there is a division of 'agency'. First, overall the psyche is dynamic: it seeks and is *driven towards the world*. Moreover, its drive towards the world occurs in two very different ways. On the one hand, a drive compells the psyche to pleasure and away from unpleasure; on the other, a drive exists for self-preservation. This first principle of operation of the psyche Freud termed the *pleasure principle*; the second he terms the *reality principle*[15]. The first belongs to the part of the psyche which he termed the *id* and the second to the part of the psyche called the *ego*. Thus whereas before we had a division of conscious and unconscious, we now have a division of ego and id[16].

There is a relationship between these second and third categories. The ego corresponds to a large degree with the conscious and the id with the unconscious[17]. We therefore have the two categories of psyche: the id is primarilly *unconscious*: at the centre of the psyche we thus have a hidden, non-rational pleasure drive[18]. Meanwhile, the ego, corresponds more or less to the consciousness. Thus the conscious workings of the psyche – cognition and logical, sensible thought – are associated with the drive for self-preservation[19].

There are two further features to these divisions in the psyche: the first is to do with time and control. The id is simply spontaneous; it seeks immediate gratification. The ego, on the other hand, can be detached; it can wait, delaying and controlling gratification. It has, in short, the faculty of control which the id lacks[20].

*representation*s of a symbolic rather than a conceptual form (Freud, S. (1900), pp. 420–454). Important are the ways in which certain relations between things can be symbolically represented. For instance, logical connections between Objects can be represented by simultaneity in time, two events happening simultaneously in the dream. Causal relations can be shown by the changing of one thing into another. Time is thus altered: for instance several people who appear together in the dream may never have lived at the same time but their appearance together represents some other relation to the dreamer. In short, the unconscious thought processes occur in a language of symbols in which time, space and causal relations are altered. See Freud, S. (1900), pp. 381–628.

[13] Freud, S. (1923).

[14] Freud, S. (1923), pp. 351–356.

[15] Freud, S. (1911) and (1915b).

[16] The ego also, of course, develops the related super-ego. See Freud, S. (1923).

[17] And also 'preconsciousness' although this does not have distinct thought processes from the consciousness. Freud, S. (1923), pp. 339–367.

[18] Freud, S. (1923), pp. 339–367.

[19] Freud, S. (1923), pp. 357–401.

[20] Freud, S. (1923).

The second division is to do with reality. This has already been indicated but due to its importance can be reinforced. The id, according to Freud, is completely incapable of knowing the real world: it can't discern whether a stimuli comes from the inside or the outside, that is, the human body or the external world. All it can discern is whether such a stimuli is pleasurable or unpleasurable. It is left to the ego to discriminate between the internal and the external and to know the demarcation between the outside world and the internal psyche, and also to know the many varied features that comprise the external[21].

Freud's fourth category for understanding the psyche is through offering *a narrative of development* through the concept of the drives. According to Freud, the psyche begins its journey undifferentiated from the external world. This state of *primary narcissism* is one in which 'an infant at the breast does not as yet distinguish his [psyche] from the external world'[22]. In this state the psyche is merely a potentiality. It cannot be said really to exist as it has no sense of itself as distinct from the external world. 'It', at this stage, is simply a bundle of sensations unable to distinguish between the internal and the external. However, through the recording of stimuli, a primitive 'sense of self' begins gradually to develop. For our account there are two principal important features of this development: primary psychical processes mature into secondary ones and an increasingly sophisticated *boundary* develops demarcating the psyche from the external world[23].

The psyche's primary psychical processes are dominated by what we have already described as the pleasure principle. At first, Freud argues, the psyche makes attempts to satisfy this drive internally through *fantasy*, that is hallucination. This primitive psyche is virtually only id, and does nothing except wish and fantasize. However, hallucination inevitably fails to satisfy, for pleasure is dependent upon external reality, so that eventually some stimuli are learned to be internal and some exteral. For instance, with resect to unpleasure, there are those stimuli that can be avoided through movement ie. flight[24], and those which no form of physical action can avoid or overcome. Through this recognition of internal, constant, and external, fleeting stimuli, a boundary grows demarcating the psyche from the external world. Thus, according to Freud, from the drive for pleasure develops a boundary around the psyche. This boundary is the beginning of the development of the ego and a concommitant 'sense of self'[25].

[21] Freud, S. (1923).

[22] Freud, S. (1914). Clearly, temporally speaking, this is an earlier stage of Freud's work. We have placed it after the discussion of the id and the ego because conceptually, these were more closely related to Freud's earliest categories of the conscious and the unconscious.

[23] Freud, S. (1914).

[24] Freud, S. (1915b), p. 115.

[25] Freud, S. (1914).

The ego, recall, is concerned simply and solely with self-preservation[26]. It is the part of the psyche that instigates control over the id and relates to reality. Further features are as follows: the ego learns to search the world for information in case an urgent need should arrive, that is, it develops the function of *attention*. In addition it develops a system of notation to record this information; *memory*. It develops a faculty of *judgement* over ideas, it doesn't simply reject (ie. repress) unpleasurable ideas, but compares them to reality to see if they accord with this or not, ie. to see if certain ideas are true. It also learns to *control* body movements which under the id had been spontaneous, playful, expressive gestures[27]. It now employs movement in the service of altering reality, in *action*. Furthermore it learns also to restrain movement, response and action. It is able to respond to certain stimuli not by action but by a form of 'experimental acting' which is *thinking*[28]. Last, but not least, the ego develops to include the moral dimension of human behaviour: Freud relegates the term 'super-ego' to this faculty. This is not however, a separate drive as such but an advanced and specialised aspect of the ego.

Finally, Freud offers a fifth way of conceptualising the psyche[29]. We can see that the four ways of categorising the psyche thus far discussed are, in the main, complementary rather than contradictory. In his later work, however, Freud develops a new set of distinctions, which although not incompatible with his old distinctions, do in many ways transcend them. The psyche is still viewed dualistically, and its centre is seen to be comprised of a hidden, non-rational and primarilly erotic force. Topographically, the psyche is still divided into the ego and the id, but these are no longer seen as diverse or exclusionary. There are two sets of instincts which permeate *both* the ego and the id; these are Eros, the sexual, or life, drive and Thatanos, the death drive[30]. Overall Eros is the life instinct; it aims to preserve life which it does on the one hand, through the id, through the drive towards reproduction, that is it seeks to complicate and, so Freud claims, to preserve life, by combining and multiplying. On the other hand it seeks direct protection, which it does through the ego.

[26] Freud, S. (1940), p. 377.

[27] Freud, S. (1911), p. 38.

[28] Freud, S. (1911).

[29] These categorisations do not, of course, include Freud's work on society. See Freud, S. (1930).

[30] Freud, S. (1920); Freud, S. (1923), pp. 380–408; Freud, S. (1924). Eros manifests itself, first, in the id as an uninhibited sexual instinct, second, it is mediated by the ego and inhibited in its aim, becoming a sublimated sexual instinct, when it may appear, as Freud puts it, as 'a heightened interest in anything from bird watching to the divine'. Finally, Eros may appear in the self-preservative instinct, i.e., it emerges out of the ego. Thus, we can see, that Freud sees the ego and the id as holding not different kinds of instincts but the same instincts, in this case Eros, but that this takes a different function in the different parts of the self. He has not therefore replaced the old ego-id duality in terms of topography or function, but merely clarified the nature of the instincts that dwell in each realm.

The second set of instincts are the *death instincts*[31]. These are simply and purely an instinct for destruction of the psyche or external objects, and a desire to return to stability and peace[32].

ADORNO AND FREUD

Adorno's Appropriation of Freud

Adorno relates to all five of these dimensions of Freud's theorising about the psyche. Principally however he is concerned with the 'middle' two stages of Freud's intellectual career. First, Adorno is influenced by Freud's notion of the psyche conceived of through the drives of the ego and id. Whitebook notes this: 'Adorno, as we know . . . praised the orthodox psychoanalytic theory of the drives'[33]. Further, Freud's developmental theory represented through the concepts of primary *narcissism* and *maturity* is also key. Again, Whitebook perceives this when he refers to: 'the theory of narcissism . . . which Adorno "counts among Freud's most magnificicent discoveries"[34]. Note that we will not be analysing Adorno in relation to Freud's psychosexual theory of human development (with its categories of the oral, anal and phallic stage and the Oedipal complex, although this has yielded some fruitful analysis by Benjamin and Dews[35]). Moreover, we do not explore Freud's use of the life and death instincts, as these latter,

[31] Freud, S. (1920); Freud, S. (1923), pp. 380–408; Freud, S. (1924). Freud became convinced of their existence through the inability to explain certain forms of behaviour as occuring due to the pleasure or reality drive, such as the compulsion to repeat. This he believes originates from a drive that is older and more primitive than the pleasure principle, a drive that tries to take the self back to a pre-animate phase, before life had disturbed its rest. This death instinct is a more radical addition to Freud's theory. Through it he can account for certain forms of behaviour which had previously remained inexplicable. Firstly, the death instinct attempts to achieve stability. It wants to return to rest and so it can seek to destroy either internal or external stimuli and Objects, or both: it can manifest itself in forms of masochism and sadism. Secondly, in its drive for stability it is also a drive towards simplicity. The death instinct does not seek to reproduce and multiply, that is, to complicate life. It seeks instead its own internal rest, its own end to life. Finally, it is important to emphasise what should by now be clear, that the death instinct is not associated with either self-preservation or with the sexual drive, and operates in fact to override these. It is, however, Freud claims, tamed by the libido so that some of its drive for destruction is directed outwards to the external world, and appears linked to self-preservation in the drive for mastery, and linked to the sexual function in sadism. However, some of the death instinct modified by the libido remains internal and this, Freud claims, is the basis of the erotic pleasure associated with masochism. Pleasure and self-preservation can thus be associated with the death instinct but are not components of it.

[32] Freud, S. (1924), p. 418.

[33] Whitebook, J. (1995), p. 194.

[34] Whitebook, J. (1995), p. 93.

[35] See Benjamin, J. (1988); (1998); and Dews, P. (1995) Part IV, pp. 215–235.

are the categories which are of the least import to Adorno. We focus our examination upon the notions of ego and the id, primary narcissism, and maturity and on how Adorno analyses the Western psyche from these two pairs of concepts[36].

Adorno's 'Psychological' Philosophy of History

Adorno's relationship to Freud has distinct facets to it. We can, in fact, distinguish four main ways in which he uses the above pairs of Freudian concepts.

First, Adorno directly appropriates the insights from psychoanalytic theory and uses them to analyse specific features of Western society[37].

Second, Adorno engages in criticism of Freud's work[38].

Third, Adorno uses Freud to build his own theoretical apparatus. Herein he both deploys unadulterated aspects of Freud's theory and also critically adjusted facets[39]. For example, Adorno, on the one hand, uses the concepts of ego and id to develop his notion of enlightenment and myth. On the other hand, he also criticises Freud for relegating the id to the ego. Moreover, Adorno also directs an attack upon Freud's notions of narcissism and maturity[40].

Finally, Adorno weds the philosophical content of Freud's psychoanalysis to a Hegelian-Marxist philosophy of history in order to develop his own overall theory of Western history[41]. In short, Adorno appropriates Freud to analyse society: critises Freud and finally, uses Freud's ideas to develop his own philosophy of history.

ADORNO: COMBINING A HEGELIAN-MARXIST PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY AND FREUD

Later on, in our interpretative monograph, we pursue the detail of Adorno's critical appropriation of Freudian theory by analysing Adorno's own texts.

[36] Adorno's appropriation of Freud occurs throughout *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Minima Moralia*. For direct references to his view on Freud, see in particular the latter, Adorno, T. (1974), pp. 35, 60–61, 213–214.

[37] For example, Adorno uses Freud to analyse certain 'personality types' he believes common in Western society: 'There are two kinds of avarice. One, the archaic type, is the passion that spares oneself and others nothing; its physiognomic traits have been . . . explained as the anal character by Freud', Adorno, T. (1974), p. 15. See also Adorno, T. (1974), pp. 63–66.

[38] Freud 'vascillates, devoid of theory and swaying with prejudice, between negating the renunciation of instinct as repression contrary to reality, and applauding it as sublimation beneficial to culture' Adorno, T. (1974), p. 60.

[39] For an interesting discussion of Adorno and Horkheimer's use of Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*, see Whitebook, J. (1995), p. 26.

[40] Adorno, T. (1974), pp. 60–61; Adorno, T. (1974), pp. 63–66.

[41] See Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1979).

Here, in this Prelude, our concern is to show how Adorno combines Freud with the philosophical foundations he derives from Hegelian-Marxism. We wish to view the underlying connection in Adorno's work between German philosophy and Freudian psychoanalysis. This relationship is not unproblematic and raises many issues, not all of which we have space to address adequately here. There are perhaps three main questions to be confronted.

First, how might Freud's view of the psyche be compatible with German *Marxist materialism* or *Hegelian Idealism*?

Second, can the Freudian theory of the psyche as psycho-sexual – henceforth referred to as 'natural' – fit with the Hegelian-Marxist view of individuals as *objects* and *subjects* of *historical determination*?

Third, how does the Freudian view of the psyche as historical connect with the Hegelian-Marxist conception of the individual as changing according to his historical moment[42]?

Idealist-Materialism and Freud

To address our first point, how Freud's view of the psyche might be compatible with German *Marxist materialism* or *Hegelian Idealism*, we need, on the face of it, to see how Adorno connects Freud to Idealism or materialism. In order to do this, we in turn, it seems, need to assess whether Adorno is predominantly Hegelian or Marxist. This is a topic of considerable speculation. Some consider Adorno to be mainly a materialist Marxist with a slight Idealist 'leaning'[43], whilst others see him as the most Idealist representative of the Early Frankfurt School[44]. This debate is usually concerned with whether 'Spirit'/reason or the socio-economic predominate as historical forces.

There is a problem in pursuing this debate. As we have said, we do not consider Adorno's main role in the Frankfurt School to consist in his contribution to the Idealist-materialist debate through the conventional categories of reason and the socio-economic. Moreover, his writings seem inconsistent and unclear on this point. Further, it is not the main focus of our study. We do not wish therefore to approach this issue in detail. Certain points, however, are important to note.

First, whether Adorno is read as predominantly materialist or predominantly Idealist, there is a consensus that his philosophy is a combination of both. Nobody would claim Adorno was solely a materialist, or solely an Idealist. Thus, so long as we follow the conventional view that Adorno is an Idealist-materialist, we do not need to assess the exact 'ratio' of his commitment to either. We simply need to show how Idealist-materialism connects with Freud. This we can do as follows.

[42] For instance, the Oedipal complex does not just for Freud occur at certain historical periods but is universal.

[43] See Rosen, M. (1983).

[44] My own reading, for example.

Freud's theory of the psyche is predominantly materialist (biological variant) although it allows for an Ideal element[45]. First, consider Freud's conception of the psyche which is based on the notion of the 'drives'. These, he argues, emanate from the sexual 'energy' of the body. This is understood as material in the biological sense. The drives thus have a basis in the material realm; in Adorno's words, 'Freud . . . tracked down conscious actions materialistically to their unconscious instinctual basis'[46].

Freud's concept of the pysche is more complex than simple materialism. His notion of the psyche is such that – although deriving from material sources of energy in the body – mental activity takes place in, what German philosophy would depict as, an Ideal realm. The psyche in Freud's view, although originating in the material realm in fact spans both the material and the Ideal[47]. Thus his view of the psyche is certainly compatible with a Hegelian-Marxist, that is a material/Idealist, perspective[48].

A second point of relevance is that both Hegelian Idealism and Marxist materialism rely on a notion of historical determination as occuring through *social activity*, albeit Ideal or material. Because social activity is the concept common to both Idealism and materialism, any compatability between Freud's view of the self and social activity is therefore a point of compatability between Freud and Idealism or materialism. We can therefore circumvent further discussion of the details of the Idealist-materialist debate and consider instead, how Adorno connects Freud to the view of history as determined through social activity. This we will do whenever the issue of Idealism versus materialism arises in the sections that follow.

Let us now turn to pursue the further points at issue in Adorno's relating Freud to his Hegelian-Marxist derived philosophy of history.

The Historical and Natural Self

The second question arises which is crucial to our study. How does Adorno connect a historical and a natural conception of the self?

Adorno inherits the 'German view' of the *self* as historically constituted[49]. He also inherits the Freudian view of the self. Yet Freud provides a

[45] Whitebook, J. (1995), p. 194., refers to this as Freud's 'biologism', which, remarkably, Adorno accepted to a high degree. He also agrees, that to this 'biological' materialism, Freud, and Adorno following him, developed 'Ideal' theoretical aspects. See Whitebook, J. (1995), p. 3.

[46] Adorno, T. (1974), p. 37.

[47] As Adorno expresses it, 'Freud places social goals higher than the fundamentally sexual . . . ones' Adorno, T. (1974), p. 60.

[48] Depending on one's reading of Freud, he could potentially be compatible either with a purely materialist perspective – see Rosen, M. (1983), pp. 90–118 – or with an Idealist-materialist perspective, weighted towards Idealism – see my own reading in this monograph. Freud would never be compatible, however, with pure Idealism.

[49] This is a simplification of Hegel and Marx's view and is not to suggest that they do not have some conception of 'human nature'. See for example, Acton, H. B. (1985), pp. 137–152.

psychosexual theory of the psyche, that is a view of the psyche as 'natural'[50]. We need to see how Adorno relates the Hegelian-Marxist *historical* notion of selfhood to Freud's notion of the psyche as constituted by *natural* drives[51].

The first problem to address is whether a socio-historical conception of the self can map onto a natural one; can these two views even be compatible? This question initially appears to be answered in the negative, for Hegelian-Marxist philosophies of history view history as pertinent to 'humanity' only[52]. In the main, the accepted reading of these philosophers is, as Inwood expresses it, that 'nature does not . . . have a history'[53]. That which is natural can have no history and if the human psyche is indeed taken as 'natural', then the psyche can have no history. Therefore, if Adorno takes the Freudian view of the psyche, then it appears that this is simply incompatible with a Hegelian-Marxist perspective[54].

Adorno does indeed take such a view, so therefore let us see how he conjoins these apparently contradictory perspectives[55]. That is, let us see specifically how Adorno develops a concept of the self that is at once natural and historical. To do this, let us first pursue certain distinctions from within Hegelian-Marxist notions of historical Objects.

From Adorno's Hegelian-Marxism, there are two ways in which the self is historical. The first is through the self as the Object of historical determination. As we have argued, both Hegelian historical-Idealism and Marxist historical-materialism consider history to be determined through social activity. As the Object of historical determination the self, therefore, is acted upon, and constituted by social activity[56].

[50] We take the notion of 'natural' to refer here to Freud's psychosexual view of the psyche, including the idea that the drives derive from biologically *based* energies.

[51] This is also a simplification of Freud's view: he does not map the natural psyche onto history but he does allow for a social element to the self, of course. This will be discussed below in the main text and the notes.

[52] Note that within both Hegel's and Marx's philosophies of history there is a complex relationship between nature and history which we have not presented here.

[53] Nature, according to this reading of Hegel (and Marx), does not progress historically. 'Nature does not, on Hegel's view, have a history: fossil remains were never alive', Inwood, M. (1985) – note that this quote comes from Inwood's 'Hegel dictionary', wherein he is trying to present the most generally accepted reading of Hegel, rather than his own particular argument. Many see difficulties with this view, including Inwood himself. See also, Buchdahl, G. (1984), and Buchdahl, G. (1985).

[54] For a discussion of one reading of Hegel's own view of the concept of 'human nature', see Acton, H. B. (1985), pp. 137–152.

[55] Although Hegelian-Marxism has a conception of 'human nature' and Freud, a notion of the social aspect of selfhood, these are the complexities rather than the essence of their views. The Hegelian-Marxist view does certainly emphasise nature's lack of history. Further, Freud's social dimension of selfhood is not, for instance, historical.

[56] Albeit the social activity of reason – Hegelian Idealism –, or the *social activity* of economic productivity, Marxist materialism.

The second way in which the self is historical is through the self as *Subject* of historical determination[57]. Herein the self is not acted upon, but instead, as a *Subject, the self acts*[58]. It thus contributes to social activity and so partakes of determining the course of history.

Let us first consider the self as Object. How does a conception of the self as principally an historical Object constituted through social activity over time connect to the concept of the self as determined by 'nature'?

To answer this point we can well utilise Rosen's work on Adorno and Horkheimer's Idealist-materialism. In addressing the issue of their Idealist-materialism, Rosen develops certain categories through which to analyse the Objects of history and to what extent these Objects are formed by social activity[59].

Our key point of contention is how an Object can be both natural and (socio)-historical. Rosen provides us with valuable ammunition with which to address this[60]. Rosen develops three categories through which we can assess different ways in which the general Object may be determined by social activity over history[61].

First, Rosen argues, the Object is determined by social activity at the *material* level[62]. He gives the example of an Object from nature, the climate. Human actions can have a transformative effect upon the climate. For instance, 'the clearing of the jungle, the pollution of cities' transform the Object of the climate. Social activity of these varying kinds changes the weather; we have hotter summers due to pollution from cities and possibly also from

[57] We are only concerned with 'purposeful' historical change, 'will', as will become clear through our use of the categories below.

[58] Note that we use 'self' here as the Subject, to be enabled to act, must be more than its mere natural psyche.

[59] For us, this issue of how Idealist or how materialist Adorno and Horkheimer are, is not too significant, because both Hegelian Idealist views of history and Marxist material ones have the common feature of believing history to be constituted by *social activity*. Note that we do not wish to be detracted by Rosen's own central concern – namely the issue of the extent of Adorno and Horkheimer's Idealism versus their materialism: is history primarilly constituted through the socio-economic or through reason, etc.? For Rosen this classic post-Kantian question is central. We should note that Rosen's answer to this question does differ from our own, should we pursue the issue. Rosen leans towards a materialist reading: 'According to Horkheimer the role of social action in the determination of the object increases with a society's capacity to affect and control the environment: 'The sensible world which a member of industrial society sees about him every day bears the mark of deliberate work' (Trad. and Crit. Theory)" Rosen, M. (1983), p. 95.

[60] Note that Rosen develops these categories in relation to Horkheimer's work: thus they are relevent to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. However, our interest is in Adorno, whom we read as more strongly Idealist. In spite of this, we can still make use of Rosen's categories because the crucial historical determining factor in both materialist and Idealist-materialist readings of Adorno, is *social activity*.

[61] See Rosen, M. (1983), pp. 93–99.

[62] This term is awkward for us because of its materialist leanings. We will use it but not to relate to any claims about materialism per se. Rosen, M. (1983), pp. 94–96.

the extensive de-forestation. The Object of the climate is clearly here in some sense determined by social activity. We will follow Rosen's distinction and conceive of this as *material* social activity. This distinguishes it from a further kind of determining social activity which we characterise next[63].

The second way in which social activity transforms the Object is at 'an *ontological*' level Rosen claims. Herein, reference to (individual) 'human *purposes* and *intentions* plays an indispensable role in establishing the identity of the Object in question'[64]. For example, 'we would not establish that a bicycle was a bicycle or a house a house except with reference to the purposes embodied in its construction and use'[65]. Thus unlike the first instance, where the climate was determined through social activity devoid of *a specific intention* of changing the identity of the Object 'climate', the second example shows how human activity transforms the actual identity of the Object – for example, bricks into a house.

The third instance of the historical determination of the Object, provided by Rosen, is key. The third kind of transformative process is one which embodies the constituting activity of the *'will'*[66]. This differs from the former example because the concept of 'will' used here is historical – henceforth we will refer to this as *historical will*[67]. Rosen makes the distinction between social activity which determines the identity of an Object 'ontologically' through purpose and social activity which determines the identity of the Object through historically embodied will. For instance, social activity may build a house, but this is (logically) distinct from the activity which in Marxist theory constitutes the development of communism; or the activity which in Hegelian theory constitutes the development of *reason*. That is to say, *not all human intentions are necessarilly part of the overall progression of historical purpose*[68]. For example, the political activity of the proletariat would, for Marx, add to the purpose of history. Developing rational institutions and recognising these, would add to historical purpose for Hegel. However not

[63] Rosen, M. (1983), p. 95.

[64] My emphasis. Rosen, M. (1983), p. 95.

[65] Rosen, M. (1983), pp. 95–6.

[66] Rosen, M. (1983), p. 96. Rosen is slightly unclear here between 'ontological' and 'will'. I take it that the former could cover 'instinctual' human activity, for instance, human beings build homes and create new identities in the same way that animals do, for instance, birds build nests etc. This activity, although generating new identities does not constitute a distinction between human and natural activity. This distinction is, of course, crucial for our project. The distinguishing factor between ontological and will, then, is that, whilst the former covers the 'natural' element of man and does not distinguish him from other animals, the latter, 'will' captures his distinctness. This latter concept, 'will', relates to Hegel's and Marx's view that it is the 'human' – the social – that has a history. The concept of 'will' is socio-historical. To highlight this point I have adapted Rosen's term to 'historical will'.

[67] My use of the term.

[68] See note above.

every human conversation or trivial inentional activity will contribute to history's realisation. This then is the distinction between ontological determining activity and (historical) will.

We are left with three ways in which the Object may be socially constituted from a Hegelian-Marxist perspective. First, it may be constituted materially, secondly, ontologically and thirdly, through (historical) will[69]. Our first point is to see how these concepts of the self as historically determined map onto the Freudian notion of the self as a 'natural' Object.

If we consider the Freudian view of the self as Object, then we are looking at a 'natural' psychosexual Object consisting of two characteristic features; first, the drives and secondly, the capacity for development into maturity. We can apply to this 'Freudian' Object the same distinctions Rosen developed above for Objects in general.

First, Rosen argues that an Object may be 'materially' affected by social activity. Thus the Object of the human psyche can be 'materially' affected by social activity. For example, the psycho-sexual drives will be shaped by the activity of the parents. How intimate the mother might be with her child, itself affected by her need to procure economic survival if she is a single parent mother, for example, will, affect the time she spends with her child, the role in relation to the rest of her family and this in turn will affect the nature and extent of the developing child's drives[70].

Secondly, Rosen claims an Object may be 'ontologically' affected by social activity. Thus the Object of the human psyche may be 'ontologically' affected by social activity. At this ontological level, the child's psychosexual development will be affected by the intentional shaping of the parents upon the child: how they educate the baby, what behaviour they encourage, etc. These factors can shape the nature of, and development of, the ego in the direction of intended outcomes. For instance, good parenting can help produce a strong and mature ego[71].

Thirdly, an Object may be affected by social activity according to the feature of *(historical) will*: thus the Object of the human psyche may be affected by (historical) will. This deeper historical will can affect the child's developing drives. For instance, on the one hand, a historical culture of enlightenment, and thus maturity, will encourage the child's development in these directions, including, shaping a 'strong ego'[72]. On the other hand,

[69] Clearly the first of these categories would have to be modified if we were to take a strictly Hegelian View. But this in fact turns out to be the least essential of our categories.

[70] Thanks to Rae Langton's critical comments in the Edinburgh Social and Political Theory seminar, March 2001.

[71] Thanks to Kim Hutchin's critical comments in the Edinburgh Social and Political Theory seminar, March 2001.

[72] Note that Adorno's concept of the strong ego is critical of Freud's and is distinct from it. See Chapter 1 for my argument of how Freud's 'strong' ego collapses according to Adorno.

a period of myth will fail to develop a strong ego and encourage immaturity and an undeveloped self.

What all these distinctions hold in common is that there is a compatability between the '*natural' Object* of the psyche and a view of the self as constituted through history. The human psyche may be a 'natural' Object, but that is entirely compatible with its being shaped by social activity. This is true for all kinds of historical determination, material, ontological or (historical) 'will'. *In short, the self can be conceived of both through Freud's theory and through Hegelian-Marxism.*

This hypothetical compatability is realised in Adorno's work. He derives his view of the self, first, from Freud: the essential core of the self consists of the psychosexual drives. Second, from Hegelian-Marxism, the 'natural' core of the self is historically determined, that is shaped and constituted by social activity over the course of time. The result is that Adorno's concept of the self is part natural (in the Freudian vein) and part socio-historical (in the Hegelian-Marxist vein).

Let us see how this manifests itself in Adorno's work. We are principally interested in the activity of (historical) will. How does (historical) will constitute the Object of the natural psyche in Adorno's usage? Let us answer this for both dimensions of the Freudian theory of the psyche that he appropriates.

First, consider the psyche as constituted by the drives. The psyche consists of the ego and id drive. By 'nature' these two drives will always exist with certain characteristics as depicted by Freud – the ego to control and cognize, the id for pleasure etc. Historical will, however, can determine any of the drives' variable qualities[73]. For instance, the strength of the drives, their ratio in relation to each other and in relation to the external world of Objects[74]. Thus, the ego may be strong and driven strongly towards the external world so that we have an era characterised by the social activity of control and related cognizing[75]. The id may be weak so that there is little pleasure drive and Subjects barely engage with their world as a source of pleasure. We explore these examples in much more detail in our interpretative monograph ahead.

Second, consider the psyche as an *Object* depicted by Freud as *developmental*. Herein the psyche is understood through the categories of primary narcissism and maturity. The psyche will, at its core, from Freud, always originate in a condition of primary narcissism and always be driven to develop through

[73] (Historical) will herein is the intentional human social activity – material and ideal – to shape the ego and id drives of the human psyche in these particular ways during the course of history.

[74] See Chapters 8 and 9 of this monograph.

[75] See Chapter 1 of this monograph.

to maturity[76]. Historical will (as one factor) can determine the course of that development[77]. If historical will in enlightenment is strong and effective the human psyche will attain a high degree of maturity, if not, the psyche will in all likelihood remain at a more immature, narcissistic level[78].

Let us now go on to examine the self as Subject. We will see how Rosen's Hegelian-Marxist categories apply to the self considered as the *Subject of historical change*. There are three ways in which the Subject can act socio-historically.

First, if we take Rosen's own first category, the Subject can act materially. Herein Subjects act upon the world and, continuing Rosen's own example, produce 'material' change. They burn fuel etc. and the climate becomes hotter[79].

Second, Subjects can act ontologicallly. They build houses, have conversations and through these intentional acts, produce transformations in identity. They turn bricks into houses, acquaintanceships into friendships, etc.[80]

Third, Subjects can act according to Rosen's third category – will, or historical will. Herein Subject's activity transforms the social world in accord with historical will[81]. For instance, from a Hegelian perspective, individuals indulge in rational activity and transform the world to become more rational. From a Marxist perspective, individuals undertake political activity and transform capitalism into communism[82]. For Adorno and Horkheimer activity in this category of historical will would be that which helps transform the social world into enlightenment[83].

The purpose of illuminating the connection between Adorno and Horkheimer's Hegelian-Marxist derived philosophy of history and Freudian

[76] Freud, S. (1914).

[77] Material and Ideal historical forces, the conditions of labour and productivity and also the forms of reason present in society will shape the course of the psyche's development.

[78] See Chapters 8 and 9 of this monograph.

[79] Rosen, M. (1983), pp. 94–96.

[80] Rosen, M. (1983), p. 95.

[81] Rosen, M. (1983), p. 96.

[82] I give here the most obvious examples of historical will. There are however many more activities, that though less obvious will contribute to historical purpose.

[83] Our acting Subject is, of course, more complex than simply a Freudian Subject. He/she is a Freudian-Hegelian-Marxist Subject. That is to say, he/she is part natural, and also always part social – meaning part socio-historical. The Subject is constituted by his world, unintentionally (materially), intentionally (ontologically) and historically ('historical' will). This affects the nature of the Subject's identity as a thinking, acting human being. Of course, much more can be said here about the nature of identity but this would detract from our purpose). The Subject is never in its hypothetical pure Freudian state of natural drives only. However, the Subject's natural drives are part of this constituting activity and so, even though never in the 'pure' state, do contribute to historical determination. Thus, the natural drives are, in part, historically determining.

categories is to examine their own philosophy of history. To do this, we are interested here only in how social activity determines the human psyche according to Rosen's third category of historical will. Let us look at the human psyche in more detail in relation to historical will[84].

That the psyche can be the Subject of historical will entails the following for Adorno. Besides material (socio-economic) factors, and the Ideal 'realm' of reason, the *psyche* is also a factor in *constituting social activity* and *historical determination.* This is a great distinction between Adorno's work and the materialism and (rational) Idealism of his Hegelian-Marxist predecessors. For Adorno, the psyche plays a key role in historical determination.

First, the drives exert historical influence. The ego and the id, their respective strengths and relationship with the external world of Objects, including other selves, play a determining role in history[85].

Second, the nature of psychological development has a historical impact. The level of maturity of the Subject, how narcissistic or mature he is, will determine the social activity that constitutes historical change and the possible realisation of historical purpose[86]. Therefore, if the Subject is immature and undeveloped, his social activity will not engender enlightenment, but its contrary, myth. In contrast, if the Subject is mature with a 'strong' ego, the Subject will help history to realise its purpose, enlightenment[87].

The Historical and 'Universal' Self

We have now seen the answer to our question of how a conception of the self as historical links with Freud's concept of the self as 'natural'. We can now move on to consider a final point of contention in the relationship between Freud and Hegelian-Marxism. Let us consider the pattern of change of Objects over human history. In Hegelian-Marxism, all historical Objects change over time. Moreover, their pattern of change is distinctive. How does this connect with the notion of the natural psyche as conceived by Freud? How, for instance, does Freud's idea that the individual psyche is the *same* basic natural Object throughout history – let us define this as 'Universal' – connect to the 'Germanic' pattern of historical change? Does Adorno claim that the (Freudian) process of psychological development changes during the course of history, if so, how does this change occur? What pattern does it take?

To address this question, consider the key features of the pattern of historical change in Adorno's philosophy of history. First, history consists of an

[84] Rosen, M. (1983), p. 96.
[85] See Chapter 1 of this monograph.
[86] See Chapter 2 of this monograph.
[87] For Hegel this would be, Geist, for Marx, communism, and for Adorno and Horkheimer historical will is all activity which generates *enlightenment.*

(unrealised) teleology. Second, history is non-developmental. Third, it has no end point, and fourthly, consists in the form of the dialectic. We need to see how each of these features relate to the human psyche as conceived by Freud[88].

The first feature to history for Adorno is that it contains an inherent *purpose* (enlightenment). How does this map on to Freudian theory? For Freud, human psychological development occurs in a particular direction and towards a particular goal. Thus, Freud's own theory of the psyche is in some sense 'teleological'. The goal of the psyche's development for Freud is, of course, maturity. This relationship described is one of parallel: both Adorno's philosophy of history and Freud's psychological theory are, in some sense, teleological.

If we look more closely, however, we can see that the relationship goes beyond mere parallel. For Adorno, as we know, the goal of history is enlightenment, and part and parcel of Adorno's conception of enlightenment, as we also know, is *maturity*[89]. However, maturity is what Freud too considered to be the *goal* of the *psyche's* development. Therefore Adorno's perceived goal of history *includes* the Freudian psychological one. Adorno has, in fact, mapped these two aims, the one from his philosophy of history and the other from his appropriation of Freud, onto each other. The first key feature of historical change from Adorno's Hegelian-Marxist philosophy of history, an inherent purpose, includes the Freudian psychological goal of attaining maturity[90].

We can now see how Adorno maps Freud's theory with the second feature of his philosophy of history. For Adorno (against Hegelian-Marxism) history is *non-developmental*: This means that for Adorno, history does not necessarilly progress ever closer to its aim, enlightenment. How does this link to freud? Freud articulated that the progress of the human psyche was towards maturity. Maturity, as we have seen, is also one of the aims of history's goal – enlightenment. If Adorno views history as non-developmental, then it neither progresses towards enlightenment nor maturity. The particular marriage of Adorno's non-developmental historical perspective with Freudian theory results in Adorno's theory of history containing the idea that maturity does not increase during the course of Western history. That is to say, the human psyche is not at a more developed stage later in the course of history than earlier on. Note therefore, that for Adorno, we 'moderns'[91] are

[88] This is, of course, an interpretation of Adorno's mode of connecting Freud to Hegelian-Marxism.

[89] This is true even of enlightenment as first articulated by Kant. See Prelude I, for more details.

[90] Note that although Adorno accepts Freud's notion of the goal of human development, and moreover, he accepts this to be a strong ego, he is critical of what Freud considers the strong ego to consist in. This contention arises from the fact that Freud's theory is dualistic but undialectical.

[91] Or indeed, later 'postmoderns', who, in fact, represent for Adorno the most regressive stage of psychological development.

not necessarilly more mature, developed or psychologically 'sophisticated' than our ancient predecessors were.

A third feature of Adorno's philosophy of history, again, in reaction against earlier Hegelian-Marxism, is that history has no end point: historical change never ceases. Enlightenment therefore may be more or less realised in future times. As this includes the Freudian goal of maturity, Adorno's conjoining history and psychology simply asserts that future generations may be more or less mature than ourselves. The process of historical oscillation between various levels of maturity is merely ongoing.

Fourth, let us consider the trait derived from the accumulation of the last three features of history, (a) inherent purpose, (b) non-development, (c) no end point. All these entail, as seen in Prelude Part I, that Adorno considers history to consist in an *unrealised teleology*. Complete enlightenment is never attained in Adorno's view. This feature fits with Freud's notion of the psyche as aiming for maturity in the following way. When enlightenment fails, because it includes maturity, then this too is not attained. History, for Adorno, never produces fully mature individuals.

It would be a mistake to equate these features of no development, no end point and an unrealised teleology with an 'open' philosophy of history; that is a notion of history as mere contingency in the Nietzschean sense. Adorno believes that although history neither necessarily develops nor 'concludes', the pattern it takes is nevertheless *a highly precise and systematic one*. Historical change always occurs within the form of the *dialectic* and *never* moves outside of this.

Adorno's stringent dialectical model of historical change maps onto Freud's ideas as follows. Because human history changes *dialectically*, the level of psychological maturity in individuals is *determined by a historical process that is always dialectical*. That is to say, the Object of the human psyche is determined as mature or immature, with a strong or weak ego, according to a dialectical pattern within history. The level of the self's maturity is hence not contingent but occurs according to a systematic historical pattern.

Adorno's overall historical model of enlightenment and myth includes key Freudian psychological concepts. Enlightenment has the attribute of full maturity and myth of immaturity. Over the course of history, because enlightenment and myth are dialectically related, then so too are maturity and immaturity. This means that the historical determination of the Object of the human psyche varies over time dialectically. This dialectic is one of the oscillation between two extremes – enlightenment and myth, maturity and immaturity, strong ego and weak ego. During the course of history it is simply the case, for Adorno, that at times the ego is strong and at other times weak.

CONCLUSION

We have shown that Adorno marries Freud to a Hegelian-Marxist derived philosophy of history. This centres around Freud's concepts of the ego and

id, maturity and immaturity. These concepts from Freudian theory map onto those from Adorno's German Philosophy of History tradition in the following ways.

First, as both Object and Subject, the Freudian-derived concept of the natural psyche plays a role in being determined by and in determining historical change. Second, the unrealised aim of historical determination, for Adorno, enlightenment, includes the Freudian-derived aims of maturity and the 'strong' ego. Finally, the form of historical change entails a corresponding form of change in the human psyche. This is one of an open-ended dialectic. In short, Adorno generates a Hegelian-Marxist derived philosophy of history which includes the human psyche as both Object and Subject of historical determination[92].

In our overall Prelude we have seen the intellectual foundations of Adorno (and Horkheimer's) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and assessed some of the issues arising from the nature of these foundations. We have discussed the key features of the German philosophy of history tradition, the fact of its compatability with Freud and the nature of that compatability. This does not by any means represent an exhaustive study of the above. It serves as an account of the roots from which Adorno's philosophy grows. Moroever, it includes the key concepts that underlie our interpretative monograph: *Adorno's Positive Dialectic.*

[92] Note that the claim that the psychological *replaces* other Ideal and material considerations as the prominent historical determining factor, would be a very strong one indeed and not one we wish to promote here. Adorno's philosophy of history focuses upon the self and includes the human psyche within the overall historical determining role, as I believe we have made clear in our main text.

Adorno's Positive Dialectic

Introduction

Our aim in *Adorno's Positive Dialectic* is quite distinct from our Prelude, which served merely an introductory role. We wish herein to focus upon a central issue that has as yet not been satisfactorily addressed in Adorno scholorship, namely, the nature and extent of his utopianism.

In Adorno's central text *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, he (with Horkheimer) depicts the central social problem of the twentieth century: the phenomenon of the decline of Western civilisation into Nazism in Germany. Adorno depicts this as the decline of enlightenment into 'myth'. In *Adorno's Positive Dialectic* we want to deduce Adorno's possible solution to this decline. In order to see this we first make a systematic analysis of Adorno's negative dialectic of enlightenment.[1] From deepening our understanding of why Adorno believes enlightenment fails, we are then able to understand how he might regard it as succeeding.

In *Adorno's Positive Dialectic*, the tone of our analysis changes considerably. In the main introduction and throughout the Prelude, we have examined Adorno's work from rather an epic perspective. We have swept through three centuries of German philosophy, from the eighteenth to the twentieth in Prelude I, and mapped concepts from two powerful traditions, the

[1] We need to take note of a few central features of Adorno's mode of philosophical expression. For Adorno, all understanding of our world is historically transmitted to us and therefore changes over time. This includes the very meaning of the concepts we use. He draws from this the conclusion that it is inappropriate to offer formal definitions of his central concepts. Adorno is at pains to avoid not only inappropriate determinacy in definition but also in the overall structure of theoretical understanding. When analysing his ideas, therefore, some commentators make an attempt to imitate his prose and style of thought. Herein, however, we attempt to provide a systematic exposition of Adorno's thought. This has the problem of being an instance of determinacy, which is exactly what Adorno seeks to avoid. However, as he expresses it: 'systems elaborate things; they interpret the world while the others really keep protesting only that it can't be done' (Adorno, 1973: 20 [ND 31]). In following the systematic approach I am true, at least, to this paradox.

Hegelian-Marxist and the Freudian psychoanalytic in Prelude II. However, henceforth we make a shift to a far more intimate relationship with Adorno's work. In order to construct *Adorno's Positive Dialectic*, we examine in very close detail our pivotal text Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. As well we look to Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, *Aesthetic Theory*, and *Minima Moralia*, again paying close attention to textual detail. Part I, Chapters 1–4 constitute our analysis of Adorno's depiction of enlightenment's failure. Part II, Chapters 5–9 constitute our deduction of how Adorno might see enlightenment succeed.

PART I

NEGATIVE THESIS

The Decline of Enlightenment

INTRODUCTION

In Part I of our monograph which focusses upon Adorno's negative thesis, expressed in his *Dialectic of Enlightenment*[1], we analyse why Adorno believes enlightenment fails. The central figure to whom Adorno is indebted for this analysis is Sigmund Freud, hence here we unravel the Freudian dimension to Adorno's depiction of enlightenment's failure.

The 'architecture' of the negative thesis is as follows. Chapter 1 depicts the failure of the enlightenment, linking Adorno's views on a Freudian based notion of subjectivity, the acquisition of knowledge and the enlightenment's aims. Chapter 2 focuses upon issues in Subjectivity. Chapter 3 explores the notion of knowledge acquisition. Chapter 4 looks at Adorno's own 'negative' solution to enlightenment's failure; and points out the limitations of this.

ENLIGHTENMENT'S FAILURE

Before embarking on the specific chapters of the negative part of the monograph, let us clarify Adorno's thesis about enlightenment's failure. We have introduced the main details of this negative philosophy of history in Prelude I. Here, however, let us remind ourselves of the main points.

Adorno in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* believes the following. Enlightenment sees itself as having transcended myth; as having overcome myth's *negative* features of animism, immaturity, domination, fear, barbarism and

[1] We discuss Adorno only, rather than Adorno and Horkheimer, even when depicting their coauthored text, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This is not to detract from Horkheimer's contribution, but is because our claim only extends to Adorno for our overall thesis, the negative as well as the positive dialectic: we do not wish to enter into claims about Horkheimer's own views.

regression. According to Adorno, the entire self-conception of enlightenment is formed in opposition to myth[2].

Adorno believes that enlightenment fails. He argues that this failure is of the nature of a regression to myth. The regression of enlightenment into myth is what the enlightenment itself would conceive of as a regression into its absolute opposite and thus a sign of complete failure. It is a regression that for Adorno encompasses *all* aspects of enlightenment[3].

Adorno's project, as we know, is an analysis of how and why the enlightenment regresses to myth. In order to assess this, Adorno first establishes what the enlightenment regards as its aims. These are best depicted by Kant's verbalisation of (historical) Enlightenment. Adorno explains how the central aim of the enlightenment goes hand in hand with a series of other aims; maturity, freedom, security, peace, and progress (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 81 [DA, p. 100]). The central aim, upon which all these others depend, is however, the attainment of knowledge and reason[4]. These should not be dependent upon authority, status, prejudice, or opinion but should be gained through the Subject's independent ability.

Due to the fact that Adorno views knowledge acquistion, and reason as the main aims of enlightenment, his analysis centres upon these[5]. His assessment thereby becomes one of how enlightenment *knowledge acquistion* fails. He addresses this problem in a very distinct way.

Adorno deploys Freud's ideas about 'Subjectivity', that is, about the *essential nature of the human mind*, to see what underlies the acquisiton of knowledge. He then takes Freud's ideas and applies them to gain an analysis of the psychological undercurrents of enlightenment knowledge acquisiton. In so doing, he accounts for enlightenment's failure.

Adorno's account of enlightenment's failure is in the form of a historical narrative. It is a historical narrative of the gradual collapse of the psychological undercurrent to enlightenment knowledge acquisition, and the corresponding collapse of enlightenment itself.

[2] See Prelude I of this book, pp. 63–69, for the details of Adorno and Horkheimer's definitions of enlightenment and myth.

[3] Adorno uses the terms *enlightenment culture*, *the enlightenment*, and *enlightenment* interchangeably.

[4] Note that Adorno refers to the enlightenment's mode of knowledge acquisition with the terms 'enlightenment knowledge acquisition', 'instrumental knowledge acquisition', 'conceptualisation', and 'conceptual thought'. He tends to vary his use of terms according to context. He uses 'enlightenment' as prefix when discussing knowledge in its cultural context, 'instrumental' as a prefix when talking about knowledge in relation to the instincts or the feature of control, and 'conceptualisation' or 'conceptual thought' when discussing epistemological details themselves.

[5] We use the term conceptualisation in order to avoid the more common term, 'epistemology' as Adorno is against epistemology. See Adorno, T. (1982a).

1

The Decline of Subjectivity

The Instincts

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we show how Adorno regards enlightenment as regressing into myth. We do so through an examination of Adorno's use of Freud. We see how Adorno deploys Freud to make a critique of the *instinctual* basis of enlightenment Subjectivity.

First we depict the relevant aspects of Freud's work on the instincts. Secondly, we show how Adorno uses Freud. We do this by following his narrative of the decline of enlightenment which we depict through four clear stages.

ADORNO ON FREUD

Adorno utilises Freud's ideas in order to interpret the enlightenment. Although deploying Freud, we have noted in our Prelude, that Adorno's relationship with Freud's work is complex; he both approriates and criticises. We should note that in fact, the complexity of this relationship derives in no small measure from Adorno's view that Freud is deeply connected to enlightenment. There are two dimensions to Adorno's view of Freud in this regard.

First, Adorno considers that Freud most clearly represents the ideas of the enlightenment. That is to say, Freud is an instance of the general phenomenon of enlightenment which means that Adorno regards him as both inherently positive, in the sense of being in league with the enlightenment's *aims*, and inherently negative: he is part and parcel of the *failure* of the enlightenment.

Second, Adorno's ambivalence towards Freud has a further peculiarity. Not only is Freud intrinsically part of enlightenment culture but, in Adorno's view, Freud provides a conceptual framework through which to view enlightenment critically. This Freudian conceptual framework is ubiquitously employed by Adorno (often tacitly) and shall therefore be depicted here.

More specifically, in what follows we will interpret the way in which Adorno deploys Freud's ideas about the Subject's drives in order to see how Adorno believes that enlightenment regresses into myth[6]. Let us first depict the relevant aspects of Freud.

FREUD

All Freud's theorising centres around a perceived aim in human life, namely as with his Greek forefathers, that of 'happiness'. His theorising is directed towards an understanding of the psychological grounds of happiness in human beings. He claims, in fact, that for the individual to be happy and secure in the world he must attain *maturity*. Maturity is equated with the idea that the Subject will develop a full 'sense of self'[7]. The central focus of all Freud's theoretical work is, therefore, as we have seen in our Prelude, an understanding of how the individual develops to maturity and attains a full 'sense of self'.

Much of Freud's work explores the various stages of psychological development and the pitfalls that may befall the self if development towards a 'full sense of self' is prematurely arrested. Freud's theorising over his lifetime, as explained in Part II of our Prelude, can be read as consisting of five interconnected stages, of which, we are interested only in the theoretical stages that Adorno uses. Adorno looks to Freud's use of the notions of the ego and id drives, and to the concept of narcissism. Let us offer more detail about the former of these aspects of Freud here.

As we will recollect, at its initial most primitive stage, Freud conceptualises the self as a mere *pleasure*-seeking entity, which consists of various (uncontrolled) impulses for pleasure and for the avoidance of 'unpleasure'[8]. Later as the self develops it attains the faculty of *control*. However, an aspect of the uncontrolled pleasure-seeking part of the self remains and is referred to by Freud as the *id*. The other part develops into the mature adult's *ego*[9]. The ego and the id thus correspond to two very different aspects of the adult self (Freud, 1923: 364). The ego refers to the part of the self that is

[6] Note that, as it would be contrary to Adorno's mode of philosophical expression, I refrain from defining the term 'Subject'. I use it, as he does, in the context of its historical transmission to us. However, I will note that Adorno tends to use 'Subject', 'self', and 'selfhood' rather interchangeably. The former is more common in historical, cultural and epistemological discussions whereas the latter two terms more commonly in psychological contexts.

[7] Note that when Adorno borrows from Freud, he often discusses the notion of 'sense of self' without clearly distinguishing it from the notion of 'identity'. In Freud, 'identity' is a richer concept than 'sense of self', and incorporates many features that distinguish one individual from another, whereas 'sense of self' usually refers to the highly developed self in general – the 'foundation' for identity.

[8] 'Unpleasure' is Freud's own term for the *opposite* of pleasure (Freud, 1911: 37).

[9] Freud first mentions these categories in Freud (1911: 345) although his full exposition is given in Freud (1923: 357–408).

responsible for self-preservation, capable of control and gaining a sense of reality. The id is the more *primitive* aspect that is uncontrolled and concerned with pleasure[10].

In his early work Freud was concerned with the *structure* of the self, using the terms ego and id to demarcate its principal regions. However, he later became concerned with the self as something *active* in the world and so was not content merely to talk about it as a *structure*, but began to conceive of it as something driven by *instincts*. He then used the concepts ego and id to discuss the self in instinctual terms[11].

Instincts, according to Freud, form the basis of the individual's action. They emerge out of the ego, when they are referred to as the 'reality principle', and out of the id, when they are referred to as the 'libido' (Freud, 1915b: 105–138).

An important characteristic of instincts is that they have an *aim* and their aim is an *Object*[12]. Freud writes: 'the object of an instinct is the thing in regard to which or through which the instinct is able to achieve its aim' (Freud, 1915b: 119). The id seeks out an Object in order to satisfy its aim of pleasure, whereas the ego seeks out an Object in order to satisfy its aim of self-preservation. The Object of the instincts is predominantly external reality – although it can (*sometimes* abnormally) be the self or even 'illusions'[13].

The satisfaction of these instincts upon their Object leads to different consequences and thus to a different kind of experience of the Object. For the *id* it leads to *pleasure*. It is important to note that Freud's notion of pleasure is somewhat distinct from his notion of happiness. Freud writes: 'happiness has a positive and a negative aim. It aims, on the one hand, at an absence of pain and unpleasure, and, on the other, at the experiencing of strong feelings of pleasure' (Freud, 1930: 263). As it is, the satisfaction of the ego-instincts that control the world to provide security these are the ones that secure an 'absence of pain', that is the negative aim of happiness. However, Freud goes on to say that security, whilst an essential *precondition* for happiness, is not actually the *content* of happiness itself. He writes: '[i]n its narrower sense the word 'happiness' only relates to the [positive form]' (Freud, 1930: 263). The positive form is the pleasure derived from the satisfaction of the id-instincts. The experience of *true happiness* in relation to an Object can only be achieved through the id.

[10] Notice that for Freud the definition of the id is that it is intrinsically undeveloped – we will return to address this point in Chapters 8 and 9.

[11] These categories are not, of course, completely coterminous but I am not concerned here with the various distinctions. For these see: Freud, 1923 and Freud, 1915a.

[12] For Freud, the term 'Object' refers to things external to the sense of self, that is to things in the external world including other people, and also the self when it is converted into a 'thing' for contemplation, desire, etc. in contrast to selfhood as an 'experiential process'.

[13] The term illusion will be discussed later in this chapter.

The id-instincts also secure a further crucial feature, for Freud, which is also an aspect of the notion of happiness. There is a kind of *meaning* in human life which is dependent upon the satisfaction of the id-instincts (Freud, 1930: 261–270). For instance, Freud argues that a vocation gains its meaning to the person employed in it through the pleasure he derives from it (Freud, 1930: 272). Art gains its meaning, Freud argues, through the pleasure derived from the experience of beauty, and another person becomes deeply meaningful because of the pleasure of sexual love (Freud, 1930: 270). This kind of meaning, for Freud, is distinct from that associated with knowledge, which relates to the ego instincts; see below. For example the kind of meaning that being in love with a person imbues them with is quite distinct from the kind of meaning contained in the knowledge of how the human organism functions (Freud, 1930: 261). Let us refer to these two distinct kinds of meaning as 'Meaning A', for that relating to knowledge (derived from the ego-instincts), and 'Meaning B', for that related to pleasure (derived from the id). An Object can only be experienced as Meaningful B, according to Freud, through the satisfaction of the id-instincts.

Happiness, for Freud, is comprised of both elements, pleasure and Meaning B, entailed by the satisfaction of the id-instincts. Furthermore, Freud claims, happiness is the goal of human life which is to say that happiness is an end in itself rather than a means to another end (Freud, 1930: 262). As Meaning B is an aspect of happiness, it is of the nature of being an end in itself. That is to say, the kind of meaning gained through the satisfaction of the id-instincts upon the Object is of the nature of experiencing that Object as meaningful in and of itself rather than in relation to any use or gain.

Let us now look at the ego. As we have seen, the ego, according to Freud, provides *for self-preservation*[14]. Self-preservation is achieved, according to Freud, by the ego's capacity for control. The ego controls the self internally, balancing needs arising from the id and the body with external conditions for their satisfaction. It also relates to Objects in the external world in order to avoid danger and to gather what is necessary in order to satisfy internal needs.

Self-preservation is also, Freud claims, achieved through the acquisition of knowledge. The ego can glean all the information it needs from the world in order to procure survival. Freud writes: 'Consciousness now learned to comprehend sensory qualities in addition to the qualities of pleasure and unpleasure which hitherto had alone been of interest to it. A special function was instituted which had periodically to search the external world, in order

[14] Survival is one form of self-preservation, when self-preservation is understood as the preservation of the biological entity of the 'self' – that is, the self understood as dependent upon the body. Self-preservation can also be conceived of in a purely psychological sense in which the self is a 'sense of self' or 'psychological identity'.

that its data might already be familiar if an urgent internal need should arise' (Freud, 1911: 37–38).

Freud's view of knowledge acquisition as stemming from the ego leads him to claim that knowledge acquisition consists of certain features. First, it means that knowledge acquisition is bound up with *self-preservation*. Second, it is bound up with the feature of *control*.

Third, it includes the further feature of *discrimination*: when the ego searches the external world for information it discriminates more than simply between pleasure and unpleasure. It discriminates between Objects in the external world.

Finally, Freud's conception of knowledge includes the notion of meaning, which we have termed 'Meaning A'. This is a 'categorising' kind of meaning. It occurs, according to Freud, within the propositional statements that form knowledge in so far as these statements refer to Objects in the external world[15]. So for example, 'knowing that' the earth orbits the sun is an instance of Meaning A. It is also related to the 'use', 'function' or 'instrumental' dimension of an item. Thus, 'knowing how' a radio works such that one can repair it is also an instance of Meaning A. Because it is related to instrumental activity, Meaning A can be considered as 'instrumental' in nature. This makes it contrast with Meaning B which is bound up with the end of happiness. We could say therefore, that Meaning A is a kind of meaning that is bound up with 'means' whereas Meaning B is bound up with ends. Furthermore, for Freud, only Meaning A is related to knowledge. Armed with this detail about Freud, we can now move on to see how Adorno deploys it to criticise enlightenment.

NARRATIVE OF DECLINE

Adorno deploys Freud to interpret the failure of enlightenment. This interpretation takes the form of a historical narrative. It is worth noting that Adorno's narrative of enlightenment has been criticised for being historically inaccurate; however, it is *not* intended as an empirical history, but as an 'ideal' one[16]. Further, Adorno's depiction is a critical theory, intended, in his words, to 'enlighten the enlightenment about itself' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: xi–xvii [DA 11–18]). (See Prelude I for more detail).

I divide this 'narrative' into four clear stages which I entitle, '*impoverishment*', '*fantasy*', '*totalisation*', and '*fragmentation*'. The categories are my

[15] I wish to delimit my thesis such that it does not verge into a discussion of the notion of meaning. I am deploying this notion as secondary to that of knowledge acquisition which *is* central to my thesis.

[16] There is a reductive commonplace about Adorno's concept of the enlightenment. For instance Young writes of: 'the obsessive iteration of 'modernity' as a watchword of enlightenment, which is to be found in writers such as Adorno and Horkheimer' (Young, 1998: 5).

own and should not themselves be read as historical or even temporally successive; they are an interpretative or heuristic device[17].

Adorno's narrative of the decline of enlightenment to myth centres around a key character from Homer's *Odyssey* – namely Odysseus. Although initially somewhat surprising to see Odysseus appearing in a narrative about *enlightenment*, this is explicable in that Adorno regards Odysseus as the 'prototype' of the enlightenment Subject. Odysseus embodies many of the key characteristics of enlightenment subjectivity, such as the pursuit of certain *aims*[18]. For instance, Odysseus has a central aim. This is to attain security and steer his ship safely home to Ithaca[19].

Impoverishment

The first stage of Adorno's critique of the enlightenment I term 'impoverishment'. This is a stage illustrating the first point of Adorno's critique. Adorno argues that the enlightenment, in order to achieve certain of its aims, generates a culture that is *impoverished* in certain ways.

Adorno displays impoverishment in enlightenment Subjectivity through a critical look at Odysseus. Odysseus sets out to attain his central aim: security. In order to achieve this, Odysseus, according to Adorno, has an absolutely paramount need to establish control. Odysseus needs to control his external world in order to avoid its dangers. He must also control his ship, his crew, and, as much as possible, himself. Odysseus' need of control over other Objects gives him the feature of an instrumental attitude towards the world, an organisational mind and an overall administering and administered 'personality'. Odysseus' trait of self-control leads Adorno to write that Odysseus 'is the self who always restrains himself' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 55 [DA 73]).

There is a cost. Adorno reveals this through an analysis of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens. In order to keep his ship on course, Odysseus must avoid being drawn in by the Sirens' singing (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 32–34; 58–59 [DA 49–52, 77–78]). To achieve this he plugs the ears of the rowers so that they should not be exposed to the temptation of the song. Odysseus has himself tied to the mast, from where he can hear the song but is secure from the danger of responding to it. Adorno explains how Odysseus thereby oppresses the impulse for pleasure in his fellow humans – the rowers whose ears are plugged cannot even hear the song. Odysseus

[17] I do illustrate these through examples from periods of the twentieth century: for instance, Adorno's view of Nazism, his 'contemporary American culture', and I add 'post-modernism'. These are instances of the traits depicted and are not intended to be part of any causal claims.

[18] This is in contrast to any trait of mythic subjectivity wherein, for Adorno, there would be no aims.

[19] For a distinct analysis of Odysseus' role in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, see Dews, P. (1995), pp. 231–33; or Whitebook, J. (1995), pp. 148–150.

also represses his own pleasure in rendering himself unable to jump overboard and submerge himself in the music. In being unable to respond to the Sirens, Odysseus receives only a diluted aesthetic experience. Both he and the rowers therefore (virtually) 'know only the song's danger and nothing of its beauty' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 34 [DA 51]). The price of Odysseus' control, quite simply, is an impoverishment in the quality of pleasure.

The impoverishment of pleasure encompasses a loss of *sensual pleasure*: Odysseus cannot submerge himself completely in the sensuality of the Sirens' song. It also entails a restriction of the *imagination*[20]. 'With the technical easing of life the persistence of domination brings about a fixation of the instincts by means of heavier repression. Imagination atrophies' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 35 [DA 52–53]). Furthermore, the capacity for self-abandonment is lost. Whereas 'primitive man experienced the natural thing merely as the evasive object of desire . . . Odysseus . . . cannot yield to the temptation to self-abandonment' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 35 [DA 52]). Finally, as the faculties of response to beauty decline, so too does *the actual existence of beauty*. The lack of appreciation of the Sirens' song results in a depreciation of the song itself:

> Despite all the power of his desire, which reflects the power of the demi-goddesses themselves, he cannot pass over to them, for his rowers with wax-stopped ears are deaf not only to the demi-goddesses but to the desperate cries of the commander. The Sirens have their own quality, but in primitive bourgeois history it is neutralised to become merely the wistful longing of the passer-by. The epic says nothing of what happened to the Sirens once the ship had disappeared. In tragedy, however, *it would have been their last hour*. Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 59 [DA 78][21].

From Adorno's use of certain of Freud's ideas we can see an additional, related element to this cost. Pleasure, as we have seen, is accompanied by an experience of the Object as Meaningful B. With Odysseus' loss of experience of the world as pleasurable, there also comes a loss of experience of the world as Meaningful B. Odysseus thereby loses not only experience of the world as beautiful but also as, in part, meaningful.

Adorno depicts a clear tension in the story of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens. In order to attain his goal of security, Odysseus must forfeit the pleasure and Meaning B of the Siren's song.

Adorno considers this anecdote of immense importance because it illustrates one of the central problems of enlightenment. Like Odysseus, the enlightenment Subject has a series of aims which include the attainment of security and peace. Like Odysseus, the enlightenment Subject, in order to achieve his aims, must exert control over himself, his fellow human beings

[20] 'Imagination' is used here in the ordinary sense of the word.

[21] My emphasis.

and his external world. The enlightenment Subject is controlled, organised, administered and administering. That is to say, the enlightenment Subject relates to his world in an *instrumental* fashion.

Like Odysseus, the enlightenment Subject must also pay the price. As with Odysseus, he forfeits much of the sensual pleasure of the world. He also loses his capacity for imagination and self-abandonment. Moreover, the actual existence of beauty within his world plummets: the quality of art declines. Relatedly there occurs an etiolation in substantive meaning. The enlightenment Subject begins to lose a sense of the world as a meaningful place[22].

Adorno believes there is a terrible tension contained in the enlightenment. In order to achieve its aims[23], the enlightenment Subject, like Odysseus, must relinquish pleasurable and substantive experience. The tension is felt and the price paid. As a consequence, Adorno believes the enlightenment Subject becomes *impoverished.*

By impoverished, Adorno means two specific things. First, that there is an impoverishment in the Subject's experience of reality. We can see this from Adorno's use of Freud. Adorno sees that pleasure in all its aspects is derived from the id-instincts. When, in impoverishment, the Subject loses the experience of pleasure he suffers a 'depreciation' of the id-instincts. The enlightenment Subject, like Odysseus, loses not simply pleasure, but pleasure in relation to reality: reality is no longer the Object of the satisfaction of the id-instincts. Thus reality as an Object of experience becomes depreciated.

Secondly, there is an impoverishment in actual Subjectivity. The stage of impoverishment consists of the withdrawal of the Subject's id-instincts from reality and any withdrawal of the instincts constitutes a regression for Freud[24]. Adorno thus considers that impoverishment sees the onset of the regression of Subjectivity in one instinctual sphere.

Whilst the failure of enlightenment to provide pleasurable and substantive experience for the Subject may be regarded as an *external* criterion by which to judge enlightenment, the onset of regression thereby encountered marks a failure of an *internal* aim of the enlightenment, namely that of maturity. Impoverishment thus consists of an external problem and the onset of an internal failure.

Fantasy

The stage of impoverishment does not stand still. It heralds further decline: thereby emerges the stage which I have termed *fantasy.* Fantasy entails

[22] In the sense of substantive meaning only.

[23] The fundamental ones of which are security and peace – fundamental because, Adorno argues, without security and peace, the enlightenment sees no possibility of any freedom or progress etc.

[24] The details of this will be elaborated in the next chapter.

further regression in Subjectivity and so consolidates failure in one of the enlightenment's aims – maturity[25].

'Fantasy' comprises a split in the Subject's instinctual relationship with reality. This occurs in the following way. In the stage of impoverishment, as we have seen, the Subject's ego-instincts are deployed upon reality while the id-instincts are 'impoverished'. That is, only *half* the Subject's instincts are actually engaged upon reality. What therefore happens to the other half? That is to say, what do the id-instincts now take as their aim?

Freud argued that all human instincts aim to have an Object upon which they can satisfy themselves. As a consequence of the increasing loss of reality as an Object for the derives, Freud explains a likely outcome: '[when] the connection with reality is . . . loosened; satisfaction is obtained from illusions' (Freud, 1930: 268). The id seeks an alternative Object. It turns to illusion.

Freud argues that the earliest stage of human development is that of infantile narcissism[26]. In this condition the self, not properly formed, is unable to discriminate between the internal and the external. One aspect of this lack of discrimination encompasses an inability to discern between sensations derived from Objects in the external world and the self's own impulses or wishes. The self in such a primitive condition *simply wishes* and then satisfies its instincts upon these wishes. In the 'adult' self this process can also occur. The adult self *projects* its wishes outward. It either projects them onto an external Object 'converting it' into what the id would wish it to be, or its wishes reside within the imagination without forming an attachment to any external Object. The 'Objects' of these wishes are *illusions*. They are the Subject's projections generated from the id's own impulses then masquerading as an 'Object' in the external world. Illusion is a feature of a primitive stage of the self's development and any reversion to it in adult life constitutes a regression.

Following on from the stage of impoverishment, when the id can no longer satisfy itself upon the external world, is a stage characterised by the generation of illusions. We can term this the stage of 'fantasy'. In 'fantasy', the ego satisfies itself upon reality whilst the id generates its own illusions. Half of the self is thus engaged upon the world, half not. The self is split.

This split in the self's engagement with reality encompasses a regression. Half of the self, the id, in turning to illusion is *turning away from reality* and towards itself as its Object. Freud terms this condition narcissism as it is a reversion to a condition akin to infantile narcissism.

An instance of fantasy is given by Adorno through his account of Odysseus' experience of the Lotus-eaters. The lotus is a source of obvious pleasure. Homer describes it as 'sweeter than honey'. However (unlike the song of the

[25] See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 3, 81 [DA 19, 100].

[26] I will elaborate upon the notion of narcissism in more detail in the next chapter.

Sirens) the lotus, according to Adorno, does not embody any *reality-content*. In contrast to the Sirens', who knew 'everything that has happened on this so fruitful earth, including the events in which Odysseus himself took part' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 33 [DA 50])[27], the lotus is a pleasure which is wholly disconnected from reality. It is, for Adorno, a 'kind of idyll, which recalls the happiness of narcotic drug addicts reduced to the lowest level' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 62 [DA 81]). Due to this lack of 'reality content' in the lotus-eaters' experience, the pleasure itself, according to Adorno, 'is actually the mere *illusion* of happiness' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 63 [DA 81])[28]. The pleasure results from the satisfaction of the id upon its own products. This 'condemns [the Lotus-eaters] to no more than to a primitive state' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 62 [DA 81]), for the pleasure encompasses a loss of desire for reality: 'whoever browses on the lotus . . . succumbs . . . [to] oblivion' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 62 [DA 81]), so that 'all who ate the lotus . . . thought no more of reporting to us, or of returning. Instead they wished to stay there . . . forgetting their homeland' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 62 [DA 81]).

For Adorno, the lotus-eaters appear in modern society in the guise of the culture industry[29]. Culture industry products, such as film, 'lull the audience into a state of [empty] passivity' and through a kind of illusionary pleasure which, in reality 'confirms . . . that the real . . . will never be reached' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 139 [DA 161]). Because this pleasure disconnects the 'Subject' from reality, the consumers of the culture industry's products are condemned, like the lotus-eaters, 'to a primitive state' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 120–168 [DA 141–191]).

For Adorno, worse is yet to come. He follows Freud in believing that there is an interconnection between pleasure and Meaning B. For Freud, as we know, the pleasure that emerges out of the satisfaction of the id-instincts upon their Object is accompanied by a sense of the Object as Meaningful B. Adorno takes up and elaborates Freud's notion. For Adorno, we cannot necessarily depict the exact content of this Meaning B in linguistic form. However, through the experience of pleasure we can gain it. What we gain is a sense of a 'value' or 'significance' in the Object which is independent of any need, desire or usage of it[30]. That is, Meaning B refers to the Object's *own* inherent significance. We could say that the Object is an end in itself rather than a means to the Subject's ends. When Adorno considers something as an

[27] Although Adorno interprets the Sirens as embodying 'reality content', this is not an unproblematic interpretation. Some would see the Sirens as an instance of illusion. We will follow Adorno's interpretation because it is internally consistent with the rest of his argument.

[28] My emphasis.

[29] See Adorno and Horkheimer 1979, on the culture Industry [DA 141–191].

[30] This kind of meaning is most vividly present for Freud in religious experience. Adorno might agree with Freud that religious sentiment is related to Meaning B, although Freud's general account of religious experience is reductive in contrast to Adorno's.

end in itself rather than a means to another end, he regards it as substantive. Let us therefore refer to Meaning B as substantive meaning from this point on. We will depict it in more detail in Chapter 6[31].

According to Adorno's analysis, when illusion becomes the new source of pleasure, because pleasure is inherently linked to *substantive meaning*, then illusion also of course becomes the new source of *substantive meaning*. Illusions therefore come to *replace reality* not only as a source of pleasure but also as a source of substantive meaning. This marks a terrible regression. Illusions, for Adorno, are infantile fantasies which are intrinsically substantively meaningless. Therefore when they become imbued with substantive meaning, the substantively meaningless mistakenly comes to be taken as meaningful. This is a state of *delusion*[32].

Delusion is even more regressive than illusion; for substantive meaning has not merely been forfeited – as was the case in 'impoverishment' – nor even exchanged for entertaining illusions – as is the case with 'illusion' – but has actually become 'false'. That is to say, Objects devoid of substantive content have become imbued with it. This is illustrated in the case of the lotus eaters when their experience 'is like yet unlike the realisation of utopia' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 63 [DA 82]). That is, their experience begins to *imitate* utopia whilst lacking the substantive meaning that such genuine experience would hold. In modern society it is the culture industry's products that emulate substantive meaning, so it is these that are responsible for generating delusion.

What we have depicted here as 'fantasy' represents only half of the Subject's instinctual engagement with reality. The ego-instincts are highly developed and strongly engaged upon reality: the enlightenment Subject experiences an ever-spiralling increase in control. This is apparent, Adorno argues, in the increase in technological power paradigmatic of enlightenment culture[33].

'Fantasy' corresponds to the split in the Subject's instinctual engagement with reality is a society made up on the one hand of enormous technical power and efficiency, and on the other of depleted pleasures and illusory

[31] It is terribly important to note that this is a particular kind of substantive meaning which, for Adorno, is impossible to conceptualise. A 'propositional' kind of substantive meaning is totally impossible, in Adorno's view, in the twentieth century.

[32] In this way, Adorno argues, illusions become actual *delusions*. Note that the concept 'delusion' will be used throughout the text to refer to the notion that an idea, belief or statement is *mistaken* about its own nature or validity. This is distinct from a mere fantasy or illusion where an idea or image etc. may be 'imagined' but not actually believed to be real. Delusion is also in contrast to the notion of 'ignorance' which refers to the notion that an idea, belief or statement is merely *incomplete* or inadequate.

[33] In the film industry for instance, we have a growth in the technological systems of communication, administration, production and distribution. See Adorno and Horkheimer (1979: 120–168 [DA 141–191]).

meanings[34]. Although strong in its instrumental sphere, the Subject's engagement with the Object has declined to myth in its 'substantive sphere'.

Adorno's critical point here, that the substantive sphere has declined to myth, is an external criticism because the substantive sphere does not directly participate in the enlightenment aims. That is to say, the enlightenment does not aim for high quality pleasure, aesthetic sophistication, substantive meaning etc. Therefore, although Adorno's criticism is indeed a criticism, it is not yet of enlightenment itself.

However, in the sphere of enlightenment proper there is the onset of a further problem[35]. The withdrawal of the Subject's instincts in half their sphere entails a regression into narcissism in one half of the self. This comprises a failure of the Subject to attain complete maturity. (The culture industry, for Adorno, expresses this immaturity.) In failing to attain maturity, enlightenment fails to attain one of its aims, and in this respect *enlightenment proper* partially declines into myth.

The stage of 'fantasy' marks two aspects of decline. First, in the substantive sphere, pleasure and substantive meaning regress to delusion and the id instincts regress to become narcissistic. We thereby have myth in the substantive sphere. Secondly, the sphere of enlightenment proper begins to decline. The aim of maturity fails and we have the *onset* of regression towards myth here too.

Totalisation

With further 'progress' the enlightenment worsens and enters the third stage of decline. This can be characterised as the stage of totalisation. This represents a regression, not simply in the substantive realm but in the realm of enlightenment proper. It occurs in the following way.

In 'fantasy' the only set of instincts engaged upon reality were those of the ego. According to Adorno, in the stage of totalisation these grow more and more powerful and exert more and more control over the id. As a result the id-instincts become more restricted and are eventually unable to generate their 'wish Objects,' that is to say, the enlightenment Subject becomes increasingly unable to generate illusions. Adorno writes: 'with the technical easing of life the persistence of domination brings about a fixation of the instincts by means of heavier repression. Imagination atrophies' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 35 [DA 52–53]). However, the drive of the id, if weakened, persists. What therefore can it turn to in order to obtain satisfaction?

[34] Adorno and Horkheimer illustrate this split with respect to the culture of industrial societies which they claim consists of regressive 'fantasy' entertainment on the one hand and *highly sophisticated* technology on the other (1979: 120–168 [DA 141–191]).

[35] The onset actually first emerges in the stage of impoverishment although it is only here that it really becomes apparent.

In fact, there is a readily available 'Object' for the id to satisfy itself upon. In its predominance, the ego has generated a complex web of instrumental 'knowledge', a world of science, logic and technology. This complex technological world is a readily available 'Object' for the id. Thus, in the third stage of the enlightenment the ego's products become the new Object for the id.

What are the results of this? We know that the id has the characteristic of experiencing Objects in terms of pleasure; therefore when the ego's products become the Object of the id, instrumentality becomes a source of *pleasure*. Adorno sees this phenomenon as ubiquitous in the culture industry, which encompasses a shift away from escapist fantasy towards an appreciation of special effects, the latest modern gadgets, that is, of technology[36]. In his analysis of the stage of totalisation Adorno sees a shift in the Object of pleasure, examples of which permeate, for instance, the realm of music. For example, in the sphere of 'popular' music sounds begin to emulate machinery in the literal sense so that the instrumental working of technology begins to be taken as pleasurable (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 148 [DA 170–171]).

I have characterised this stage as that of *totalisation* for the following reason. Previously, when the enlightenment was split into two halves (enlightenment proper and 'substantive myth' or 'fantasy') there still remained two *separate* spheres of experience. However, once instrumental abstraction replaces illusion as the Object for the id, then, on the hand, the ego-instincts are the *only* way of relating to reality itself and, on the other hand, although the id-instincts remain, they neither relate to reality nor do they even any longer generate their own Object. They can only experience the ego's products. Thus the ego provides the only way of *experiencing* reality and has come to *replace* reality as the experiential realm for any other aspect of the self. Instrumental abstraction becomes the only kind of possible experience in both spheres. In this sense, the enlightenment is totalized.

Totalisation entails certain devastating problems in *instrumental knowledge acquisition*. To see these, consider the following. Through the id, the Subject experiences Objects as pleasurable and substantively *meaningful*. Hence the products of the ego – instrumental Objects and knowledge – become experienced not only as pleasurable but also as meaningful – which is to say meaningful in the id's sense, what Adorno considers as *substantive meaning*. This raises a question. Does instrumental knowledge contain

[36] It is important to note that Adorno does not necessarily regard this kind of pleasure as *intrinsically* regressive: a degree of pleasure drive towards the 'self' – understood in this context as the kind of subjectivity of a particular culture – through cultural forms including the technical is beneficial. However, there are distinctions within the realm of the technical between that which, for Adorno, is regressive and that which is 'meaningful' – in some sense of the notion of 'meaning'. There is a further distinction which is of scale – it is the scale of 'ego-worship' in instrumental society that Adorno finds problematic.

substantive meaning? We know that it contains *Meaning A*, that of enlightenment knowledge – which we can refer to from now on as *instrumental meaning* – but this is entirely distinct from substantive meaning.

We can see Adorno's answer to this in his comments on art. With respect to art, Adorno talks of 'the catastrophe of meaning', after which he claims 'appearance becomes abstract' (Adorno, 1997: 22 [AT 40]). For Adorno the catastrophe of meaning refers to a loss of *substantive* meaning, such that for him 'abstract appearance' certainly does not contain this *substantive* kind of meaning. Thus, when the Subject experiences abstraction as *substantively* meaningful, he experiences a kind of meaning within it which it does not inherently possess. This is delusion. Adorno also believes that this delusion spreads into 'thought' itself. Adorno writes: 'thought appears meaningful only when meaning has been discarded' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 93 [DA 113]).

An example of delusion in thought would be a belief that an explanation of the Subject along biological lines which contains *instrumental meaning* conveys a sense of the inherent significance of the Subject – an instance of *substantive meaning*. Another instance of delusion could be economic forms of explanation (such as rational choice theory) supplanting substantive explanations of the Subject and then posing as substantive themselves. Mathematics, is Adorno's own example, which for him is the purest form of instrumental abstraction and comes to be taken as substantively meaningful. To imbue the instrumental with substantive properties is to be, in fact, deluded about the instrumental itself. In so doing instrumental knowledge becomes deluded about its own nature. This delusion marks the onset of *myth* in instrumental knowledge acquisition which is part of the sphere of enlightenment proper.

For Adorno, the enlightenment reduces all knowledge to the instrumental. Adorno writes: 'enlightenment . . . is the philosophy which equates *the* truth with scientific systematization' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 85 [DA 104])[37]. As the instrumental becomes deluded about itself, Adorno and Horkheimer write that enlightenment becomes one of the '[e]xplanations of the world as all or nothing . . . mythologies' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 24 [DA 40]).

Totalisation also marks a regress in the further aims of enlightenment. Consider maturity. In 'totalisation', once the id has turned to worship the products of the ego, the relationship between the self and the external world alters: '[t]he libido that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to the ego and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism' (Freud, 1914: 67). From *reality*, to *fantasy*, to the *ego's products*, the self has turned increasingly away from the external world as its source of pleasure and meaning, and towards its own ego. The self, in

[37] 'Truth' for Adorno in this context refers to *all possible kinds of meaning*.

turning towards its own ego, is returning to 'a primitive objectless condition' (Freud, 1915a: 202), which marks a *regression*[38]. The feature of *maturity* is thus fundamentally undermined.

The further aim of *freedom* also fails. In totalisation the *only* relationship with reality is through the ego. This limits the Subject's experience of reality to forms of instrumental control. In turn, in Adorno's view, this entails the onset of the problem of domination, which is, of course, a loss of freedom. Adorno's analysis of freedom is complex, but in terms of its relevance to us we can focus upon two dimensions.

First, there is the freedom of the Subject understood as that emanating from the id-instincts. This is an 'expressive' kind of freedom and appears in forms of sensual and imaginative behaviour etc. The total control exerted from the instrumental sphere prevents this kind of freedom. For example, Adorno writes of 'the self-dominant intellect, which separates from sensuous experience in order to subjugate it' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 36 [DA 53])[39]. The best instance of this is found in Adorno's interpretation of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens. Odysseus forfeits the freedom of full sensual abandonment to the music in order to steer his ship safely home.

This 'expressive' notion of freedom, is, however, 'external' to the enlightenment. Domination also prevents a second kind of freedom – freedom conceived of as the Subject's 'free will': free will, in turn, being conceived of as a free 'instrumental will'[40]. The Subject's freedom in this respect is the freedom he has to carry out tasks essential to his own self preservation. The Subject in dominating the external world (including other subjects) becomes himself an Object of domination. For instance, Odysseus, once tied to the mast, not only loses the freedom to drown in the music but also the freedom to enact his instrumental will in other ways. Once tied, he cannot perform other actions. The instrumental attitude adopted to attain his aim 'enslaves' him with respect to the pursuit of other instrumental actions. Furthermore, a social dimension of domination creeps in. Odysseus forces the rowers to row. He therefore forces the rowers to engage in a particular instrumental activity and thereby dominates their free (instrumental) will. The goal of the enlightenment, freedom, whether conceived 'expressively' or instrumentally, is therefore undermined.

Let us now look at the enlightenment subject's remaining (instrumental) relationship with reality and its impact upon the aim of security. Access to reality is solely through the ego and its products. The ego relates to its

[38] The 'Subject' at this stage is already declining from an ideal concept of subjectivity, that is a fully developed 'sense of self'. He is, however, a Subject in the sense that he typifies the regressive subjectivity of his historical moment in time.

[39] See also Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 32–35 [DA 49–53].

[40] The control of this other kind of freedom is, for instance, expressed in the cry that 'the government must control the population' – that is, control their 'free-wills' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 89 [DA 106–108]); see also: 86–88 [DA 108].

Object in terms of *survival* and when the world is related to solely through the drive for survival it is treated as something that is a potential *threat*. Of course, in part the world had always been experienced as dangerous but this *had* been offset by the pleasure and substantive meaning which it afforded. Now that pleasure and this kind of meaning have gone the world is experienced *solely* as *dangerous*: reality becomes *only* a source of *fear*. This marks the emergence of another feature of myth. Whereas enlightenment (Adorno and Horkheimer claim) aimed for security, it regresses to a culture of fear. Adorno thus writes: 'enlightenment is mythic *fear* turned radical' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 16 [DA 32])[41].

Let us analyse this feature of fear and see how it leads to the loss of the final goal of enlightenment, peace, and so to the onset of the final feature of myth, barbarism.

Fear entails that the self will be concerned only with the preservation of itself (Freud, 1930: 264–272). Self-preservation becomes the omnipresent concern of the enlightened self. Here 'self-preservation' should be understood as psychological survival, that is the preservation of a '*sense of self*' or 'identity', rather than merely biological survival. For this psychological kind of self-preservation the self is threatened by that which is different: it fears that this may 'contaminate' its own identity. We can term that which is different from the self 'the Other'[42].

Now ordinarily, the self relates to 'the Other' through both its instincts so that 'the Other' is potentially pleasurable and substantively meaningful as well as potentially harmful. At the stage of totalisation however, now that the ego's products are the only source of pleasure and substantive meaning whilst external reality is devoid of these qualities, the world is no longer a source of pleasure or meaning. It is *only* threatening. Adorno argues that this sense of threat reaches paranoid proportions so that the 'enlightened self' fears obsessively *everything* that is not self.

This fear is, as we have seen, a fear of difference: a sense that 'the Other' will annihilate the self's identity. This kind of fear expresses itself in several ways. One is an attempt to *remove* the threat. Adorno argues that this can manifest itself in a drive for the *destruction* of difference. It can be a drive for the destruction of external reality or of any perceived 'Other'.

Epistemologically, this manifests itself, Adorno claims, in the rigid closed systems of logic which are concerned with their own internal rules and reject all that lies without. Adorno writes that: 'the system is the belly turned mind. . . . It eliminates all heterogeneous being' (Adorno, 1973: 23, 26

[41] My emphasis.

[42] The way in which 'difference' is perceived by the Subject as threatening to his or her identity is complex. We have offered merely one suggestion. Of course, that which is different may also be threatening in the sense that it may be a physical threat, ie. it is unknown and could thus be potentially physically harmful.

[ND 34, 37]). It is a philosophical devouring, which leaves nothing outside of its own system: it equates reality with itself, thereby 'exterminating' any potentially different reality.

A brutal manifestation of this becomes inevitable, Adorno argues. He sees this in anti-Semitism. 'The fascists do not view the Jews as a minority but as an opposing race, the embodiment of the negative principle' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 168 [DA 192]). This fear of the difference of the Jews is, on the one hand, a narcissistic worship of the self: 'The nationalist brand of anti-Semitism . . . asserts that the purity of the race and the nation is at stake' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 176 [DA 200]). On the other hand, it is a drive to exterminate difference. 'The *I am*, which tolerates no opposition' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 177 [DA 201]) was of such paranoid proportions that it resulted in the brutality of the Nazi 'extermination camps'.

Fear leads to barbarism. The final aim of the enlightenment, peace, has thus regressed to mythic barbarism.

At the stage of decline which I have characterised as 'totalisation', instrumental knowledge acquisition begins to regress as do the further aims of maturity, freedom, security, and peace. Enlightenment has regressed to myth in its own instrumental sphere. Totalisation includes the regression of the (external) substantive sphere, which has become mere fantasy, and the enlightenment's (internal) instrumental sphere. It has regressed in both spheres. Totalisation is 'total myth'.

Fragmentation: Postmodernism

One would think that the regression of enlightenment to total myth would represent the final stage of the enlightenment. What possible further stage of decline could there be? Adorno, however, pushes his argument further and claims that the decline continues. How and in what form?

The instinctual relationship that the Subject has with the external world at the end of the stage of totalisation is solely through the ego-instincts. This is a relationship where fear has led to the attempt to 'exterminate' all that is external to the self. If successful this leads, of course, to the loss of all that is external, including the external world as the Object for the ego. The only remaining Object therefore becomes the ego itself[43].

What of the instinctual drives? The id-instincts have become progressively dominated by the ego such that the self has lost first, the ability to relate to reality as its Object of pleasure; secondly, the ability to generate fantasy 'Objects'; and now finally, according to Adorno, the ego dominates the self

[43] This is my interpretation of Adorno and differs somewhat from the notion that the destructive traits of this stage result from the *id-instincts*, which although repressed are still present and express themselves in a neurotic and pernicious way.

such that the id-instincts decline altogether[44]. The result? The only instincts that allow for the possibility of any experience are those of the ego. The stage of fragmentation consists of a peculiar situation wherein the *only* instinctual drive that remains is that of the *ego* whilst the only *Object* for experience is also the *ego*. The stage of fragmentation therefore consists of the *ego* relating to the *ego*[45].

The consequences that emerge from this fact are as follows. The ego-instincts *lack* a capacity for the experience of pleasure and *substantive meaning*. Thus, when the self relates to itself solely through the ego it loses a sense of *itself* as pleasurable or *substantively meaningful*.

However, the ego-instincts do not simply *lack* certain features, they also *consist* of a certain feature: the drive for self-preservation. This drive relates to the Object as something the ego wishes to protect itself against. Previously the ego-instincts protected themselves against the external world. When the ego becomes the only Object of experience these instincts turn to protect themselves against the ego itself. The combination of a loss of pleasure and substantive meaning in experience coupled to the existence of a drive for protection, results in the Object becoming a source of fear. The ego thereby becomes threatened by *itself* as an entity. The result of this is that the enlightened self begins to attack itself. It starts to attempt to destroy its own sense of existence. The coherent 'I', psychological 'identity', comes under threat of extinction.

Adorno illustrates an instance of this through the story of Odysseus[46]. Odysseus has an encounter with the mythic monster, the Cyclops, Polyphemus. Cyclopses eat human flesh and this one intends to eat Odysseus, thereby destroying Odysseus physically but also, and most importantly for Adorno, devaluing Odysseus' existence as a *self* by regarding him as merely food[47]. Therefore the Cyclops is an external threat not only to Odysseus' physical survival but, importantly, to his *psychological survival, or identity*. In order to defend himself physically Odysseus tries to trick the Cyclops by telling the Cyclops that his name is 'Nobody'. When the Cyclops tries to identify Odysseus in order to eat him he thus suffers confusion and in this confusion Odysseus takes the opportunity to flee. Odysseus has thus apparently triumphed and saved his physical life. But, Adorno argues, there is a

[44] This is, of course, a serious departure from Freud. A Freudian analysis would see the id-instincts as repressed and as a result becoming increasingly perverted. This would then be an explanation of violence. Adorno straddles this more conventional view and a view where he regards the id-instincts as dying out such that the ego instincts become responsible for the violence.

[45] This stage provides us with a second notion of narcissism as will become clear in the following chapter.

[46] The incident actually illustrates features from the third and fourth stages of the decline of the enlightenment. We are only interested here in the fourth stage.

[47] And thus as an Object for another's physical self-gratification.

concealed cost. In order to trick the Cyclops and protect his own life, Odysseus has had to *deny* his own identity. In terms of psychological survival, therefore, Adorno explains, Odysseus has ironically completed what the Cyclops intended. Odysseus has destroyed his identity – his self: 'the Subject Odysseus denies his own identity, which makes him a Subject'. Odysseus employed an 'artifice that breaks the ordinance by fulfilling it' and thereby 'saves his life by losing himself' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 60, 65–68 [DA 79, 84–88]).

In destroying his identity, Adorno explains, Odysseus may survive physically but degenerates psychologically to the same level of 'un-self-consciousness' as the monster. Adorno even accuses Odysseus of being lower than the Cyclops because Odysseus has the capacity to be better: 'The stupidity of the giant, an element of his barbaric crudity . . . *represents something better* as soon as it is subverted by *the one who ought to know better*' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 67 [DA 86])[48]. Adorno argues that Odysseus degenerates to a stage even beneath that of the mythic monster to the amorphous, that is, to un-self-conscious nature itself: Odysseus 'keeps himself alive by imitating the amorphous' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 67 [DA 86]).

This marks the stage that I have termed 'fragmentation', a stage where the coherent entity of the self comes under threat of 'fragmentation' and eventual collapse.

We could interpret a contemporary version of this decline as resulting from the 'modern' enlightenment self, like Odysseus, defending himself against a threatening world. He therefore turns away from the world seeking refuge in the ego and then, in turn, attacks this. There then emerges the (so called) 'post-modern' notion of 'selfhood'[49]. Through Adorno's theory we can analyse this as an attack upon the very concept of the 'self'. Post-modernists characteristically argue that the notion of a 'real', or 'essential' self is merely a *cultural* construction and that it is part of a 'conservative ideology'. We are ignorant, in their view, to the status of the self as a cultural 'fiction'[50]. Post-modernism responds with the 'radical' notion that just as culture can construct the notion of the 'self', so it can 'deconstruct' it. Various theories therefore pursue the project of the 'deconstruction' of the self, 'revealing' that the self consists merely of disconnected fragments, a series

[48] My emphasis.

[49] 'Post-modernity' and 'postmodernism' I take to consist of the same essential traits. I will not be developing any kind of systematic critique here, simply illustrating how I think Adorno's theory can be used to characterise 'post-modernism' in relation to enlightenment – rather than critique I will concentrate on my attempt to elaborate an alternative.

[50] By the term post-modernism in relation to subjectivity I refer to a trend in the arguments about subjectivity of late, so called post modernity. Analyses, although critical of modernity, tend to be uncritical of their own era of post-modernity so that postmodernists celebrate the demise of the modern. In so doing they celebrate the decline of sophisticated subjectivity.

of separate experiences, multiple disconnected impulses, mere snapshots of experience. For instance, they argue that the 'Subject' is no longer, as in 'traditional psychology', a unified collection of thoughts and feelings, but is 'de-centred'. As a consequence, there are innumerable references to the 'Subject' as 'lacking', 'fading', marked by a 'lack of being', possessed of an 'empty centre'[51].

Through Adorno's theory we can see that this so called *post*-modern movement is simply the most regressive stage of modernity. It is no more than the collapse of the modern self. It consists of the self (as Subject) feeling threatened by itself (as Object). In an attempt to exterminate this threatening Object, the self attacks its own existence. In so doing, according to Adorno's argument, the post-modern deconstruction of the self represents the demise of self-conscious subjectivity, which it even actually celebrates. It shouts, as did Odysseus, 'I am nobody', celebrating the cunning of its own death.

In the stage of fragmentation, the enlightenment Subject degenerates beyond myth, to the amorphous, to the collapse of any kind of subjectivity at all.

The psychological disintegration of the self has a physical counterpart. This occurs due to the collapse of the Subject's ability to control his external environment. This collapse of control can be most readily observed through the disintegration of instrumental knowledge acquisition.

The ego-instincts contain no capacity for the experience of pleasure and *substantive meaning*. Thus, when the ego solely relates to itself it loses a sense of itself as pleasurable or meaningful and, furthermore, it loses a sense of its *products*, including *instrumental knowledge*, in the same way. Enlightenment's instrumental knowledge eventually becomes experienced as wholly substantively meaningless[52].

In certain circumstances, as we have seen, the ego attacks itself. In fact it does not merely attack itself but also its products including instrumental knowledge. This results in a destruction of instrumental knowledge. An example of what such destruction can result in is apparent again in the myth of Odysseus. Homer depicts the mind of the mythic monster Cyclops as 'lawless', a mind that cannot relate to the world in any kind of systematic way – it lacks all capacity for controlled thought. 'Stupidity and lawlessness are diagnosed as one: when Homer calls Cyclops a "lawless-minded monster," this does not mean merely that in his mind he does not respect the laws of civilisation, but also that his mind itself, his thinking, is lawless, unsystematic and rhapsodical' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 65 [DA 84]). It has no

[51] See Benvenuto and Kennedy's discussion of post-modern selfhood in Benvenuto and Kennedy, (1986).

[52] As we explained earlier, a certain amount of narcissism of the id-instinct directed towards the self's products is necessary. Instrumental knowledge must retain some worth as an Object for the id. We will see this more in Chapter 8 when we discuss dialectics.

systematic instrumental capability. If the ego attacks its own products, this could be the result.

A physical death then becomes inevitable. Through the loss of law-governed thought the Subject becomes unable to control the external world, so undermining the conditions for self-preservation in the sense of survival. Instrumental knowledge collapses and the biological self can no longer survive.

How does the loss of a controlled mind manifest itself in enlightenment? This pattern of the final stage of destruction of the self, when ego attacks ego, is reflected in modern systems of knowledge. Texts, theories, systems, concepts are 'deconstructed' into disconnected fragments which are then themselves dissolved. The notion of what counts as the structures of knowledge, the unitary, linear nature of thought, is undermined. Then the notion of what counts as knowledge itself is 'revealed' to have no actual reality or validity. Finally, the ability of the ego to have any rational capacity is itself undermined. For instance, the ego is viewed as a fiction. Fiction here means an imagined lie. Not only is the notion of the ego as a unitary entity regarded as fictional, but also the notion of its ability to be rational is seen as fictitious. Lacan argues that the ego is subject to irrational forces which prevent any possibility of rationality[53]. All these characteristics, however, are simply the result of the overly developed, solipsistic ego turning in upon itself as the Object of attack. The ego becomes suspicious of its own products and attempts to dismantle them. Just as Odysseus called himself 'nobody', the modern Subject dismantles his knowledge as 'fiction' or 'nothing'. Derrida claims that: 'In a certain sense, "thought" means nothing'[54]. Adorno calls this 'the linguistic adaptation to death' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 60 [DA 79]). The dismantling of systems amounts to a dismantling of the laws governing thought. That is to say, empirical experience, facts, ideas, can no longer be related to each other in any systematic way. This represents, for Adorno, the end of any capacity for an instrumental knowledge of the world and so of control and therefore survival.

Adorno, far from being a potential advocate of the later 'postmodern' movement, as many commentators claim, let alone being a prior form of 'postmodernist' himself, provides a theory which conceives of postmodernism as a regression of the enlightenment to a stage more degenerate than myth[55].

CONCLUSION

In each stage of enlightenment, problems in the Subject's instinctual relationship with reality set off a decline, first, in subjectivity, secondly, in the

[53] For a detailed book-length study of Freud and irrationality, see Gardner, S. (1993).
[54] As the postmodernists express it: 'thought becomes mere tautology' (Derrida, 1974).
[55] See for instance the essays in Pensky, (1997), as mentioned above.

acquisition of knowledge and finally, these herald the failure of enlightenment's aims.

We can illustrate the four stages of decline of enlightenment thus:

Enlightenment

	Instrumental Sphere	Substantive Sphere
1. Impoverishment:	enlightenment	impoverishment
2. Fantasy:	enlightenment	myth
3. Totalisation:	myth	myth
4. Fragmentation:	collapse	collapse

The failure begins with an impoverishment in the substantive sphere, a sphere which is *external* to the enlightenment's aims and thus not inherently part of its failure. However, the impoverishment in this substantive sphere sets off a decline in the Subject's instincts which undermines the ability to achieve the aims *internal* to and constitutive of enlightenment itself.

In the realm of Subjectivity, a loss of substantive instinctual engagement through the id leads to a loss of instrumental instinctual engagement through the ego. What begins as an *imbalance* of the instincts in their relationship with reality ends in the complete collapse of both instincts and the subsequent loss of the self.

In the realm of the *acquisition of knowledge*, impoverishment in the substantive sphere feeds back to affect instrumental knowledge so that this too regresses. Failure in the substantive sphere heralds a failure in instrumental knowledge acquisition itself.

As a result of the failure of Subjectivity and the acquisition of knowledge the enlightenment cannot achieve any of its aims. Altogether it is unsuccessful in attaining the acquisition of knowledge, maturity, freedom, security, peace and progress. It therefore fails according to its own internal standards and regresses to become myth.

Adorno demonstrates that enlightenment culture through centralising the ego and marginalising the id, that is to say, through centralising the source of the 'rational' and marginalising the source of the 'non-rational', actually thereby undermines itself. A narrow culture which focusses obsessively upon the rational undermines that very rationality.

2

The Decline of Subjectivity

Narcissism

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter our aim, as with the previous chapter, is to understand the psychological foundations of how enlightenment declines to myth. Here we focus upon examining Adorno's analysis of the failure of enlightenment due to problems within the *structural boundary* around the self. Adorno sees enlightenment *knowledge acquisition* as entailing certain traits in the structure of the self which become problematic for maintaining the strength of Subjectivity and knowledge acquisition itself [1].

First, we depict Freud's analysis of the structural boundary. Second, we show how Adorno develops Freud's ideas in order to demonstrate that enlightenment knowledge acquisition entails a *particular* structure of the self. Third, we depict the traits in the structure of the self implied by mythic knowledge acquisition. Fourth, we show how the boundary around the self implied by enlightenment leads paradoxically to the collapse of that self and the resultant loss of enlightenment knowledge acquisition, whereby, enlightenment regresses to myth.

FREUD

Freud considers that the principal *structure* of the self is the *boundary* surrounding it. This develops in the following way. At the first stage of life there exists merely a state of unboundedness. This is referred to by Freud as the stage of *primary narcissism*. It is, he says, 'the universal and original state of things' (Freud, 1916–1917: 465). At such a stage the 'self' has no sense of the internal and the external. As such, it cannot distinguish between sensations

[1] Whitebook comments on how, for Adorno, Freud, with the concept of narcissism, 'introduced a 'veritable evil genius, to which must be attributed our most extreme resistance to truth' (Whitebook, J. 1995, p. 93.)

arising from itself and those arising from the external world[2]. Freud writes: 'an infant at the breast does not as yet distinguish his ego from the external world as the source of the sensations flowing in upon him' (Freud, 1930: 254). In fact, the 'infant' conceives of everything as being 'self': in Freud's words, 'originally the [self] includes everything' (Freud, 1930: 225). As such, primary narcissism is a condition of complete and undifferentiated unity.

In order to come into existence the self has to 'separate off an external world from itself' (Freud, 1930: 225) and learn to distinguish between which sensations arise internally and which emanate from an external source. The self gains the capacity to make these distinctions in a particular way according to Freud, that is, through the development of the instincts. The most primitive instinct, the id, is driven towards pleasure and away from unpleasure and its first Object is the breast. The way in which it develops the capacity to discern between the internal and the external is related to its drive towards this Object. It is driven *towards* the pleasure of satisfaction derived from the breast and *alarmed*, according to Freud, at any impediment to the pleasure that this satisfaction affords. Freud explains that the infant will

> be very strongly impressed by the fact that some sources of exaltation which he will later recognise as his own bodily organs, can provide him with sensations at any moment, whereas other sources evade him from time to time – among them what he desires most of all, his mother's breast – and only reappear as a result of his screaming for help. In this way there is for the first time set over against the ego an 'object', in the form of something which exists 'outside' and which is only forced to appear by a special action (Freud, 1930: 254).

Thus through the most primitive pleasure drive in relation to its first Object the infant realises that an instinct can sometimes be satisfied and sometimes not: pleasure can be procured or denied. In this way the infant realises that pleasure depends upon something *separate* from himself. He thereby gains his first awareness of a separate, external world.

The self develops this capacity to distinguish between internal and external sensations as part of the id grows to become the ego. It is this development of the *ego* that allows for discrimination between the internal and the external. It is the ego that demarcates a sense of internal self from the external world. In this way *the ego* provides the boundary around the self.

This boundary, Freud claims, has three principal features. First, in demarcating the self from the external world it delimits what is self. That is to say, it provides the very basis for a sense of self.

Second, it provides a connection between the internal self and the external world. One aspect of this connection is the capacity to discriminate between the self and the external world. For instance, a child may have

[2] The notion that the self is ever completely 'unbounded' is, of course, hypothetical.

nightmares where he sees monstrous creatures, but eventually he learns that these creatures emanate from his own imagination and are not actually part of the external world. That is, he learns to discriminate between images from his own fears and fantasies and those features that are actually part of the external world. This faculty of discrimination becomes more sophisticated as the self develops.

Third, in connecting the self to the external world, the boundary allows for a further kind of discrimination. This is the self's capacity to discern between different Objects in the external world. The self learns to distinguish, for instance, at a rather basic level, between chairs and tables, and, at a slightly more complex level, between printed symbols on the page. It also learns to discern differences of 'meaning', for instance between words spoken in irony and in earnest. As the self develops, the world gains difference and complexity.

The boundary around the self which provides such differentiation in the world can, according to Freud, always potentially be lost. Such a loss takes the self back to an earlier stage of development and so can be called 'regressive'. There are a number of ways in which this can occur, resulting in a number of different problems. The main problem is the 'neurotic disorder' of narcissism[3].

Narcissism, is caused by a withdrawal of certain of the self's instincts from the external world. In the normal human being, as we know, the instincts for self preservation and pleasure are directed, in the main, towards the external world. A further portion of these instincts, however, is always driven towards the *self*[4]. In the disorder of narcissism the portion of these instincts that are driven towards the external world *decreases*, whilst those driven towards the self *increase*. For the narcissist, the self is a greater source of pleasure than any Object in the world: 'the libido[5] that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to the ego and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism' (Freud, 1914: 67). This situation can become exaggerated. Once the libido is no longer driven towards the world, the world is no longer experienced as a source of pleasure. However, it is still experienced as a source of *fear* so that, as a result, the narcissistic self is only driven to the external world in order to defend itself. One way in which it can do this is to seek complete independence from reality (Freud, 1915a: 202 and Freud, 1917: 245–268). We can now see just why narcissism is so problematic. When the individual turns away from reality he actually *loses* not only reality as a source of fear but also any actual sense of reality at

[3] Other conditions are what Freud discusses as 'being in love', and 'religious' feelings. I will discuss these later.

[4] For Freud, a certain amount of self-love and self-preservation are, of course, necessary and normal.

[5] 'Libido', in Freud, as we know, refers mainly to the id-instincts.

all. That is to say, he loses an awareness of the external world and in this way the self loses that from which it once differentiated itself.

Freud writes: 'the libido that has been withdrawn does not seek a new object, but retreats into the ego . . . and a primitive objectless condition of narcissism is re-established' (Freud, 1915a: 202). Such a condition, as the self turns away from any Object towards itself, represents the loss of the boundary around the self.

A further set of conditions which Freud describes as a loss of the boundary around the self are what he refers to as 'religious feelings'. These he also groups together with certain aesthetic experiences and with that of 'falling in love'. Freud opens his work on *Civilization and its Discontents* with a discussion of the origins of such 'religious' feelings. He refers to a 'common religious feeling' which consists of a 'sensation of . . . something limitless, unbounded as it were' (Freud, 1930: 251). He recounts that this feeling is a subjective fact, common to many people, a source of 'religious energy' rather than a particular tie to any doctrines of faith. He reports that: 'One may . . . rightly call oneself religious on the ground of this . . . feeling alone, even if one rejects every belief and every illusion' (Freud, 1930: 252). He interprets this feeling of unboundedness as emanating from a state in which the self opens its boundary to the external world and feels united with it. Freud refers to this as a sense of 'oneness' or *unity* with the world.

Although Freud claims that he himself has never experienced any feeling similar to this, he proposes a psychoanalytic interpretation. He writes:

> The idea of men's receiving an intimation of their connection with the world around them through an immediate feeling which is from the outset directed to that purpose sounds so strange and fits in so badly with the fabric of our psychology that one is justified in attempting to discover a psychoanalytic explanation of such a feeling (Freud, 1930: 253).

Although accepting that such an experience of unboundedness is not pathological, Freud does however regard it as originating in an earlier stage of mental development – primary narcissism. Religious feeling is the persistence of the memory of this state. He explains: 'we may assume that there are many people in whose mental life this primary ego-feeling has persisted to a greater or lesser degree' (Freud, 1930: 253). Being in love – we could say being at one with another person – and being absorbed in aesthetic experience are also, for Freud, like being 'at one with' the world, temporary 're-enactments' of primary narcissism.

All conditions of regression of the boundary around the self, because they are a reversion to primary narcissism, involve its traits. Thus they encompass first, a loss of the sense of self. This alone shows why primary narcissism is so problematic for Freud: it is not simply that maturity represents some kind of abstract ideal, it is a very real condition which allows for actual psychological

existence, whereas any regression puts the self's very existence into jeopardy. In the experience of narcissism the regression is complete, whereas in the experience of religious feeling, being in love and aesthetic engagement, it is more temporary[6].

Second, the reversion to primary narcissism, for Freud, encompasses a loss of the capacity to discriminate between the internal and the external: the self becomes 'united' with the world.

Third, the self's experience of primary narcissism entails a loss of the capacity to discriminate between the multiplicity of Objects in the external world. The world becomes experienced as a unity.

ADORNO

Enlightenment

For Adorno, Freud's ideas are of the utmost importance in understanding the kind of subjectivity underlying enlightenment 'culture'. He accepts Freud's central ideas about the self: that a strong structure to the self is essential for the development of a strong sense of self; furthermore, that any on-going weakening of this boundary is detrimental. He furthermore agrees that narcissism is deeply regressive.

He then deploys these ideas in an analysis of enlightenment in the following way. Knowledge acquisition is the central aim of enlightenment. The mode of knowledge acquisition is instrumental. In fact this is the only mode of acquiring knowledge recognised by the enlightenment. The boundary around the self plays a central role and in order to assess this, let us examine the features of instrumental knowledge acquisition.

We have seen in Chapter 1 that, for both Freud and Adorno, control is a central trait of the acquisition of knowledge. There is a further trait of equal significance for both thinkers, namely that of *discrimination*. We have seen 'control' in relation to the instincts; let us now look at discrimination in relation to the boundary around the self.

Discrimination in instrumental knowledge acquisition is the capacity to discriminate between different Objects in the external world. An instance of this in enlightenment is the following. Odysseus, the 'prototype' of the enlightenment Subject, performs the act of discrimination between Objects as a matter of course in the 'cognitive' activities involved in steering his ship. In order to steer his ship safely between rocks and different currents in the sea, Odysseus must perform precise calculations which entail perpetual discrimination between Objects, discriminating rocks from the ocean, currents

[6] One of my central aims is to argue that Adorno criticises the notion that religious feeling, being in love and aesthetic experience are necessarily instances of narcissistic unification. I will develop this criticism later in Chapter 9.

one from the other, the moving body of water from the winds in the air, etc (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 3–80 [DA 14–99]).

Adorno sees this first kind of discrimination, namely that between external Objects, as in fact related to and dependent upon a *second kind* of discrimination. The second kind of discrimination is more obviously psychological in nature and is the discrimination between the self and the external world. Although this is an idea which Adorno takes over from Kant (and Hegel), we can give one kind of explanation for the connection between these two kinds of discrimination through unravelling the logic in Adorno's own argument. Consider the following. Implied in the Subject's ability to perceive a distinction between Object A and Object B is the fact of his also perceiving a distinction between Object A, Object B and that which is neither Object A or Object B – let us say the whole world of external Objects. If, for instance, I can see that a rock is distinct from a ship, I can also presumably see that a rock is distinct from that which is neither rock nor ship, for instance, water. Following from this, I can presumably also discriminate rock, ship and water from Objects in general that are neither rock, ship nor water. Thus, implied in the ability to discriminate between individual Objects in the external world is the ability to discriminate individual Objects from the external world in general.

Consider now the further following point. In order for the Subject to perceive the existence of Objects in general, the Subject must also perceive that the Objects in general are distinct from the Subject. That is to say, the Subject can distinguish between that which is Subject and that which is not Subject, ie. Object. Our point is that, implied in the ability to discriminate between individual Objects in the external world is the ability to discriminate between the internal self and the external world. Having seen an example of the first kind of discrimination, that between Objects in the external world, let us now depict an instance of the second kind. Odysseus' ability to discriminate between himself and the external world is apparent in the incident wherein Odysseus has himself bound to the mast. We can see that, in having himself bound, Odysseus recognises that he must not allow his desire for the Sirens' song to lead him to throw himself overboard into the water, for then he would drown. That is to say, he discriminates between his (internal) desire for their song and the (external) threat of drowning (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 32–35 [DA 49–52]). He discriminates between his internal self and the external world in order not to drown[7]. He also, of course, discriminates between self and external Object in even having himself bound to the mast.

7 Of course, the irony is that the Sirens are fantastical anyway, so that this more sophisticated process of discrimination is built upon an inherently infantile wish impulse. See later in this chapter.

For Adorno, following Freud, the ability to discriminate between the self and the external world of Objects depends upon a highly developed boundary around the self. Thus, Odysseus, in order to peform the many multiple, complex tasks needed to attain his goal of reaching Ithaca, needs a strong boundary around the self. To have a such a boundary around the self is also to have a strong basis for a sense of self.

The enlightenment's instrumental form of knowledge acquisition, likewise, through consisting of a high capacity for discrimination between Objects in the external world entails, and is dependent upon, a strong demarcation from the external world. The enlightenment Subject is 'strongly bounded' and has the basis for a strong sense of self.

For Adorno, it appears that enlightenment knowledge acquisition is coupled to, and indeed dependent upon, a strong sense of self.

Myth

Let us now compare enlightenment with myth. According to Adorno, myth has a primitive form of knowledge acquisition. The mythic Subject experiences a 'venerable cosmos' inhabited by 'primal powers'. Adorno derides 'the evident untruth in myths, the deception of the claim that the waters and the earth are actually inhabited by demons' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 46–47 [DA 64]). Mythic culture is based, Adorno claims, upon a 'system' of superstition and false belief: *animism*. He takes over his conception of animism from Freud[8]: 'The term 'animism' . . . [is] used to denote the theory of the living character of what appear to us as inanimate objects' (Freud, 1913: 132). Mythic cultures 'people the world with innumerable spiritual beings both benevolent and malignant; and these spirits and demons they regard as the causes of natural phenomena and they believe that not only animals and plants but all the inanimate objects in the world are animated by them' (Freud, 1913: 133).

Through this belief that the world is populated by spirits and demons, societies in the grip of myth provide explanations of phenomena. Freud explains: 'animism is a system of thought. It does not merely give an explanation of a particular phenomenon, but allows us to grasp the whole universe' (Freud, 1913: 134).

Let us examine the feature of discrimination between Objects in animism. In animism, Objects in the external world are discerned on the basis of their 'characterisation' as demons or spirits, etc. Now these are not very sophisticated categories in the sense that they do not allow us to discriminate between Objects very precisely: to characterise a rock as having demonic potential, or a tide or current likewise, may enable us to discern its nature

[8] And Freud from Fraser and others. That is to say, this term does not originate with Freud.

as a source of danger but cannot provide us with very precise demarcations of the variety which enable us to steer a ship with any accuracy. Animism, according to Adorno, has a poor faculty of discrimination between external Objects.

What of the second kind of discrimination, that between the self and the external world? We know, from our previous section on the enlightenment, that the discrimination between the self and the external world is linked to, and interdependent upon, the capacity to discriminate between Objects in the external world. When the one capacity is weak, the other is also weak. Therefore in myth, the capacity to discriminate between the self and the external world of Objects is weak. That is to say, in animism the capacity of the Subject to discriminate between his own internal *impulses* and the external world is weak.

Adorno shows how, in animism, this is indeed the case. He agrees with the enlightenment's perception of myth: 'enlightenment has always taken the basic principle of myth to be anthropomorphism, the projection onto nature of the subjective' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 6 [DA 22]). This lack of discrimination is revealed in animism's definitive feature, namely, *projection*. Freud writes that animistic 'spirits and demons . . . are only projections of man's own emotional impulses' (Freud, 1913: 150). Projection is a psychoanalytic term for the placing of internal impulses onto the external world. Mythic man 'turns his emotional cathexes into persons, he peoples the world with them and meets his internal processes again outside himself' (Freud, 1913: 150). Projections can consist of the placing of 'evil impulses into demons', such that it appears to be demons wishing or enacting harm upon others rather than the individual himself (Freud, 1913: 121). Projection can be a defense against a prohibited emotional impulse, a destructive wish towards a family member, etc. However, as Freud explains, 'projection was not created for the purpose of defense; it also occurs where there is no conflict' (Freud, 1913: 120).

Freud quotes Hume to say that 'there is an universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every Object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious' (Freud, 1913: 134). Projection allows the Subject to satisfy his wishes and desires by conceiving the world to be as he would like it to be. However, in regarding the external world through these projections the mythic Subject can be seen to lack the ability to separate his impulses from it. He sees in the world his own wishes, and he sees the world as being just like himself: 'animism came to man naturally and as a matter of course. He knew what things were like in the world, namely just as he felt himself to be' (Freud, 1913: 149). In animism the faculty of discrimination between internal subjective impulses and external Objects is poor.

To say that there is a poor capacity to discriminate between the internal self and the external world of Objects is to say that the structural boundary

around the self is poorly developed. Therefore, the mythic Subject has a weak boundary around the self.

In psychoanalytic terms, a poorly developed boundary around the self in turn suggests a weak basis for a sense of self. The mythic Subject can only have a weak sense of self.

This weak sense of self consists in a high degree of *unity* between the Subject and the 'Object'[9] For Freud, of course, this is constitutive of the infantile state of narcissism. Freud, in fact, recognises animism as corresponding with narcissistic unity. He writes that: 'the animistic phase would correspond to narcissism' (Freud, 1913: 148). The mythic Subject, due to his form of knowledge acquisition, experiences a high degree of unity between his internal self and the 'external world'[10].

Enlightenment to Myth

Using this new analysis we can now enrich our answer to the overarching question: Why does enlightenment regress to myth?

We demonstrated in the first chapter that enlightenment regresses to myth because the Subject's instinctual relationship with the Object regresses. Consequences emerge from this fact for the boundary around the self. The gradual withdrawal of the instincts from the external world as their Object involves a weakening of the boundary. Let us follow through the four stages of decline of the enlightenment in order to see this.

The *first stage* of enlightenment we characterised in chapter one as the stage of *impoverishment*. Here the id-instincts were weakened in their relationship with the external world. In the *second stage* of the decline of the enlightenment, 'fantasy', the id-instincts turned towards the self for gratification. This marks the onset of narcissism. The *third stage* of decline, we termed totalisation. Here the id-instincts continue to turn towards the self for gratification and narcissism deepens. Finally, fragmentation entails the ego turned towards the ego and 'narcissism' deepening yet more. This leads to the eventual collapse of the ego altogether.

The Subject's instincts withdraw from external reality and *narcissism* ensues. This constitutes a weakening of the structural boundary around the self. This has three consequences for the enlightenment. First, the very sense of self depended upon the boundary so that its weakening means *a weakening of the sense of self.*

Second, the boundary around the self is directly responsible, as we know, for the discrimination between the internal and the external. With its

[9] This is, of course, for Adorno, not an 'Object' in reality as it is a projection of the Subject's wishes.

[10] The 'external world' is qualified in the same way as the 'Object' – explained in footnotes above.

collapse the faculty of discrimination between self and the external world of Objects is lost. As a result the self can no longer discriminate between that which is internal and that which is external – 'the unknown' – so that knowledge acquisition starts to take on the properties of *projection*. Adorno writes that 'in mathematical procedure the unknown becomes the unknown quantity of an equation' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 24 [DA 41]), which is to say that the 'unknown' is assimilated into the mathematical system so that external reality is considered to be of an inherently mathematical nature. In this way, Adorno argues, instrumental systems – of which mathematics is simply the most refined – are projected onto the external world and actually *supplant* it: 'Nature . . . is converted by means of mathematical theorems' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 24–25 [DA 41]).

Third, the loss of discrimination between the internal and the external implies, as we have seen, a loss of a further kind of discrimination – that between external Objects themselves. Discrimination is an essential feature of *instrumental knowledge acquisition* so that this too regresses.

A peculiarity has arisen in Adorno's notions of narcissism and projection. Consider that in our discussion of narcissism in Freud we saw that he identified a *single* notion of narcissism which consisted of the *libido* directed away from the external world and towards the self. Adorno, however, in his discussion of the decline of the enlightenment has actually depicted a second, further, notion. First, he depicts a notion of narcissism which indeed accords with that of Freud. For instance, in his discussion of myth – both when he depicts 'Ancient myth' and when he depicts the stage of 'fantasy' in enlightenment (and the first aspect of the stage of totalisation) – Adorno conceptualises a kind of narcissism that consists, as Freud's concept does, of the *libido* relating to the self. Let us refer to this as *fantastical narcissism*.

However, in his discussion of the onset of the stage of *fragmentation*, Adorno depicts a stage where the libido is vanquished and all that remains are the *ego instincts*. It is therefore these that are directed towards the self (all that remains of the self being the ego). Adorno thus provides a second notion of narcissism, that of *the ego turned towards the ego*. Let us refer to this as *instrumental narcissism*.

Adorno thereby provides us with *two* notions of narcissism, against Freud's single concept. On the one hand we have narcissism as the id-instincts begin to relate exclusively to the self; and on the other we have narcissism as the ego-instincts turn towards the self. They both entail the self relating to self. This means that both conditions accord with Freud's depiction of narcissism as a *unity*. The significance of this is that they both entail the *loss* of the boundary around the self[11].

[11] It is interesting to note that, with respect to Adorno's second notion of narcissism, the collapse to a unity is, of course, paradoxical. It is the ego that forms the boundary around the self providing demarcation. Adorno's second incidence of narcissism tells us that the

Narcissism

Instinct	Object of Instinct	Type of Narcissism
(Freud – one type of narcissism)		
Id	Self	Narcissism
(Adorno – two types of narcissism)		
Id	Self	Fantastical narcissism
Ego	Self	Instrumental narcissism

Adorno has also made a distinction within the notion of projection – just as he did within the notion of narcissism. Freud, in his discussion of projection, assumed simply one form: Adorno discerns two. For Freud projection consists of the self projecting its wishes and fears onto reality: 'he peoples the world with them and meets his internal processes again outside of himself' (Freud, 1913: 150). Adorno in his discussion of 'Ancient myth'[12], and also in his notion of fantasy, accords with Freud's notion that projection is the self mistaking 'wish Objects' for reality: 'inward impulses appear as living powers of divine (or demonic) origin' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 89 [DA 109])[13].

Adorno, however, makes a discrimination within Freud's single notion. In his discussion of (the first aspect of) the stage of fragmentation in enlightenment, Adorno reveals a condition of projection which consists of the self mistaking Objects derived from the *ego* for reality. The Subject projects the conceptual system onto the Object. Thus we have two distinct kinds of projection in Adorno's work. On the one hand we have projections emanating from the *id*: 'the old demons [which] inhabit the distant bounds and islands' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 46 [DA 64]). On the other we have projections emanating from the ego: 'the wholly conceived and mathematized world' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 25 [DA 41]).

Projection, as we have seen, is the loss of the capacity to discriminate between the internal and the external, which thus entails the loss of the first capacity to discriminate. This also, of course, leads to a loss of the second capacity to discriminate, that is, between external Objects themselves. Now the two kinds of projection entail the loss of the capacity for discrimination in two distinct ways.

predominance of the strong ego results in the weakening of the ego and the undermining of its very existence. That is to say, the predominance of the feature that causes the very existence of the boundary results in the collapse of that boundary.

[12] Classical myth is depicted for Adorno by Homer.

[13] My parentheses.

The first kind of projection, that which emanates from the id, discriminates between Objects through the catagories of spirits and demons; these, as we have previously stated, are rather crude ways of discriminating between Objects, such as, for instance, tidal currents, or boulders. The categories of spirits and demons lack the precision of the categories of concepts, thus they do not discriminate so well in *instrumental* terms. We can thus say that this kind of projection lacks the faculty of discrimination between external Objects in terms of *instrumental meaning*.

This kind of projection, stemming from the id-instincts, does, however, allow for *substantive* meaning. The categories of spirits and demons do allow for distinct meaning in this sense. However, we know that the substantive meaning is projected and thus is not the meaning of the Object, but rather that of the Subject.

Projection from the id, let us say 'fantastical projection' therefore entails a loss of both instrumental and substantive meaning of the Object.

'Fantastical – Projection'

Instrumental Meaning		Substantive Meaning
Capacity of discrimination:	Lost	Appears to be maintained but projection

The second kind of projection, that which emanates from the ego, discriminates between Objects through the catagories of the concept. It can be witnessed in the projection of 'instrumentality' onto the external world. When the world comes to be construed as an instrumental system it becomes all the same. Objects are regarded as having the same 'significance': they are all instruments. Instrumental projection allows for no other possible significance. For instance, with the encroachment of scientific tools, of whatever kind, into the study of human society, it becomes impossible to discern any other kind of significance in human behaviour than precise demarcations and causal relations between phenomena. Objects in the external world are regarded merely as being part of a 'law governed' unity. Instrumental meaning predominates. Substantive meaning is lost. In fact, it is not merely lost but supplanted. Adorno writes: 'thought appears meaningful only when meaning has been discarded' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 93 [DA 113]).

There is, however, a further curious feature: stemming from the ego, instrumental knowledge acquisition appears to maintain a capacity to discriminate in terms of instrumental meaning – it still makes precise, distinct demarcations between concepts in a system. However, this kind of

'discrimination' no longer refers to the external Object, it is merely a projection of the system. Thus the capacity to discriminate between the actual instrumental meaning of Objects is also eventually lost.

Instrumental projection therefore entails a loss of both substantive meaning and instrumental meaning of the Object.

'Instrumental – Projection'

Instrumental Meaning		Substantive Meaning
Capacity of discrimination:	Appears to be maintained but projection	Lost

These two kinds of projection correlate with two distinct kinds of 'unity'. The first kind of unity, that of ancient myth and fantasy, consists of a world populated by *fantasy* Objects. The second kind of unity consists of a world populated by *instrumental* Objects. The second kind of instrumental unity appears to consist of a high degree of instrumental discrimination, as for instance mathematics might[14]. This apparent 'discrimination' is, however, as we have seen, a mere projection.

We have isolated two conceptions of projection, 'fantastical', and 'instrumental', which in fact reveal a distinction between two kinds of myth.

Fantastical and Instrumental Myth

Overall, myth has the central features of projection, in the epistemological sphere, and narcissism, in the realm of Subjectivity and it is always regressive. However, we have isolated two kinds of myth. The first results from a regression in the id instincts. Here we have a condition of narcissism wherein the Subject turns to himself and his own fantasies for pleasure and a kind of projection wherein he regards the external world as populated by demons and nymphs (or the contemporary equivalent). This corresponds with the ancient instance of myth and with that of the second stage of decline of enlightenment, namely the regression in the substantive sphere that is characteristic of the stage of 'fantasy'. We can call this *fantastical myth.*

The second results from a regression in the ego instincts. Herein we have a condition of narcissism where the Subject completely detaches himself from the external world in order to protect his sense of self from it. In this case a kind of projection occurs wherein the Subject regards the external world as an abstract mechanical system. This corresponds to the instance of

[14] See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 24–25 [DA 40–41].

myth that is the regression of enlightenment proper, namely the regression of the instrumental sphere that is characteristic of stages three and four of enlightenment's decline. We can call this *instrumental myth*.

CONCLUSION

Enlightenment's regression to myth encompasses a loss of a strong boundary around the self, the corresponding regression of the sense of self, and capacity for the various kinds of discrimination essential to knowledge acquisition. Narcissism and projection arise – the key traits of myth.

The important points we wish to make here are that myth consists of narcissism and projection, that there are two kinds of myth and that the one, *fantastical myth*, heralds an eventual decline of enlightenment to the other, *instrumental myth*. Adorno expresses this when he writes: 'instrumental reason destroys myth by virtue of the same rational order in which it reflects it' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 44 [DA 61]). Adorno not only highlights the two kinds of myth but the 'unfolding' of the one into the other.

3

The Decline of 'Knowledge Acquisition'

INTRODUCTION

Having examined how enlightenment regresses to myth through an analysis of the instincts and structure of the self, let us focus upon the decline in *knowledge acquisition* itself[1]. Whereas both our instinctual and structural analyses involved us in an assessment of both the substantive and instrumental spheres of existence, knowledge acquisition in enlightenment involves us in an assessment of the instrumental sphere only, as Adorno believes that enlightenment only recognises this as knowledge. We analyse instrumental knowledge acquisition internally to see how it is inherently unsustainable.

Following the pattern of Chapters 1 and 2, we see how Adorno builds upon Freud. First we depict Freud on the psychological processes involved in knowledge acquisition and we also depict Freud's rudimentary 'epistemology'. Second, we see Adorno's appropriation of both these in Freud. Third, we examine knowledge acquisition in Adorno seeing how he connects Freud to his Hegelian-Marxist tradition. Specifically, Adorno uses the concept of *representation*, from his Freudian inheritance, and '*identification*'[2], from Hegelian-Marxism. Finally, we detail Adorno's critique of instrumental knowledge acquisition.

ADORNO: KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION. 'REPRESENTATION'

Adorno has a somewhat singular 'epistemological' approach. He in fact combines two traditions of understanding knowledge; the first, is *the psychological*

[1] We continue with our usage of the term 'knowledge acquisition' as one which refers to the gaining of knowledge and includes, in Adorno's view, rational *thought* processes.

[2] From 'Hegelianism', the notion of identification between the Subject and the Object consists in an 'epistemologico-historical' movement towards 'reconciliaition': that is, unity between Subject and Object. See Hardimon, M. (1994).

approach of Freud[3]. The second approach is the 'ontological epistemology' inherited from the Hegelian-Marxist tradition. Let us see, first, what Adorno inherits from Freud.

Freud: Knowledge Acquisition

What, according to Adorno, is the nature of enlightenment's form of knowledge acquisition, namely instrumental knowledge acquisition? We can now see how Adorno uses Freud to make an analysis *of instrumental knowledge acquisition* in enlightenment[4].

Knowledge acquisition, according to Freud, is derived from the *ego*. The ego-instinct is *connected* to a 'reality principle'. This attempts to *protect* the self against damage: 'the reality-ego need do nothing but strive for what is useful and guard itself against damage' (Freud, 1911: 40–41). To achieve this protection it needs to exert control both upon itself and the external world. Knowledge acquisition, therefore, according to Freud, is bound up with the feature of *control*.

The second most significant feature of knowledge acquisition for Freud is, as we have already seen, *discrimination*. The ego develops this faculty in a way that provides a greater discrimination between the Objects that comprise the external world, than the mere pleasure/unpleasure faculty of the id: 'Consciousness now learned to comprehend qualities in addition to the qualities of pleasure and unpleasure which hitherto had been of interest to it' (Freud, 1911: 37).

These discriminations are between what Freud terms the '*impressions*' of Objects. He writes: 'It is probable that thinking was originally unconscious, in so far as it went beyond mere ideational [re]presentations and was directed to the relations between objects' (Freud, 1911: 38–39)[5].

After receiving these sense impressions, the ego then according to Freud has a faculty for ordering and retaining them. He argues that 'probably a system of *notation* was introduced, whose task it was to lay down the results of this periodical activity of consciousness – a part of which we call memory' (Freud, 1911: 38)[6]. Freud moves on to talk less, in fact, about the acquisition

[3] The psychological dimension to Adorno's work has received little detailed attention. One exception to this is Alford (1988).

[4] Adorno and Horkheimer refer to the enlightenment's mode of knowledge acquisition with the terms 'enlightenment knowledge' and 'instrumental knowledge'. These are used interchangeably, but strictly speaking, the ideal of enlightenment knowledge acquisition is distinct from instrumental knowledge. However, as almost all their discussion is criticism of the 'failed' form of 'enlightenment knowledge', then this is indeed interchangeable with 'instrumental knowledge'.

[5] I transform the word 'presentation' into 'representation' because the translation mistranslates the German in this important respect.

[6] My emphasis.

of knowledge from the external world and more about the *representation* of knowledge in the self. Freud asserts that impressions of Objects are represented and linked to a 'word' so that the Subject forms *representations* of Objects in the mind in the form of *words*. He claims that thinking: 'did not acquire further qualities, perceptible to consciousness, until it became bound to verbal residues' (Freud, 1911: 39). The words that represent Objects develop into propositional statements and it is these propositional statements that constitute knowledge.

Thus, for Freud, the acquisition of knowledge occurs through the processes of *control* and *discrimination* of sense impressions. Knowledge itself consists of representations of these sense impressions in the form of words.

Adorno from Freud: Knowledge Acquisition

Adorno's notion of the acquisition of knowledge has certain similarities and differences with that offered by Freud: first, the similarities. Adorno follows Freud in positing that knowledge acquisition consists of a *representative* aspect and that it has the features of *discrimination* and control[7].

In Adorno's depiction of '*representation*' he agrees with Freud that Objects are represented in the mind in the form of propositional statements. However, whereas Freud argued that representations of Objects are held in the form of *words*, Adorno argues that they occur in the form of *concepts*[8]. Adorno claims that: 'the concept' is 'the organon of thinking' (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 27]). He reiterates this point when he quotes Kant as saying that: 'understanding . . . [occurs through the] construction of concepts' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 81 [DA 100]).

Concepts are then developed into *systems*. The goal, Adorno writes, is to 'make "a certain collective unity the aim of the operations of the understanding," and this unity is the *system*' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 81 [DA 100])[9]. It is these conceptual systems, for Adorno, which form the propositional statements. Thus one aspect of knowledge acquisition is *representation*, which consists of propositional statements in the form of a conceptual system[10].

[7] Whitebook comments on the centrality of Freud's 'epistemological' influence on Adorno: 'psychoanalysis provided the Frankfurt School with the concepts needed . . . to comprehend . . . modern rationality', Whitebook, J. (1995), p. 3.

[8] In fact, even prior to concepts, the representative system depends upon categories. Adorno is not careful to distinguish between the conceptual and linguistic because for him, words are categories in the same way that concepts are and thus, for Adorno, the features of linguistic representation are the same as for conceptual. Strictly speaking, Adorno would view language as involving a less precise form of representation than concepts.

[9] My emphasis.

[10] The terms 'propositional statements' and 'conceptual statements' will be used interchangeably.

Let us now look at how Adorno's view of enlightenment knowledge acquisition differs from that depicted by Freud. Freud holds an 'empiricist' perspective: for Freud, sense impressions of Objects enter the mind and words are derived from these. The contrary of this perspective, which, as we all know, was also a predominant Enlightenment view, is a rationalist perspective. Adorno does not conceive of enlightenment knowledge acquisition as being rationalist in the absolute sense – which is that we are born with a rational 'schema' through which all knowledge is derived. Adorno does however certainly differ from Freud's strict empiricism. Adorno thinks that knowledge acquisition implies a mastery of concepts, which *in a given context* are *prior* to sense impressions: 'the conceptual apparatus determines the senses, even before perception occurs' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 84 [DA 103]).

For Adorno, enlightenment knowledge acquisition depends upon conceptual statements being *priorly* formed. This is a fundamental difference between Adorno and Freud. This difference is due to Adorno's first set of intellectual influences, namely the Hegelian-Marxist tradition.

Hegelian-Marxism: Knowledge Acquisition

Hegelian-Marxism inherits the Kantian dissatisfaction with the two prior opposing strands of 'epistemological theory', namely the rationalism, exemplified by Leibniz, and the empiricism, exemplified by Hume. On the one hand, like Kant, Hegelian-Marxism opposes rationalism in the absolute sense, namely that all 'knowledge acquisition' occurs through a rational 'schema'. Moreover, like Kant Hegelian-Marxism does not resort to empiricism as an alternative. Hegelian-Marxism takes the view that acquiring knowledge implies a mastery of concepts, which *in a given context* are prior to sense impressions.

Hegelian-Marxism holds three key ideas which ground the notion of how the Subject's knowledge of the Object is acquired. First, the conceptual apparatus which allows the acquisition of knowledge is historically transmitted. Thus, (a) human history determines the major role in establishing the conceptual apparatus through which knowledge of the Object is derived. (b) Our conceptual apparatus changes over time so that the very meaning of concepts we use change over time. (c) At any one point in history we have a particular conceptual apparatus through which we can acquire knowledge of the Object. Knowledge is relevant to a particular moment in history.

Second, Hegelian-Marxism takes the idea that the process of acquiring knowledge is not passive. It is not one, as previous epistemological theories implied, that entails the Subject's passive reception to 'sense data' (or indeed any other kind of passivity). The process of acquiring knowledge is one of the Subject's *activity*.

Linking the first and the second points, we see that in Hegelian-Marxism, acquiring knowledge entails socio-historical activity.

Thirdly, for Hegel, (and Hegelian-Marxism) in the process of acquiring knowledge, the Subject confronts the 'separation' that exists historically between the Subject and the Object[11]. This 'separation' is, of course, *alienation*. The process of acquiring knowledge is part of the overall historical process of overcoming alienation. To overcome alienation, the Subject must 'overcome' the divide between the Subject and the Object. This requires an *engagement* between the Subject and the Object. This engagement consists in an act of 'identification' between the Subject and the Object. In short, the process of acquiring knowledge in the Hegelian-Marxist tradition entails an act of identification between the Subject and the Object.

Adorno from Hegelian-Marxism: Knowledge Acquisition

Adorno inherits all three of the above points from Hegelian-Marxism. First, knowledge acquisition depends upon a conceptual schema which is historically transmitted. The concepts we use therefore change over time. Second, knowledge acquistion is an *active* process. Third, this active process is one of engagement between the Subject and the Object, in the form of an act of 'identification'. In identification, the Subject overcomes the separation between Subject and Object. This latter is the essence of all 'cognitive activity' as conceived by Adorno.

The main point to take forwards is that, Adorno's own view of the acquisition of knowledge (in enlightenment) is that, it occurs via a historically transmitted 'rational schema' of concepts by means of which the Subject can '*identify*' the Object[12].

ADORNO

Identification

For Adorno, from Hegelian-Marxism, *the fundamental basis of all knowledge acquisition is the process of identification*. Let us examine this in more detail. First, let us step back a moment from Adorno's Hegelian-Marxism, and see how, even in this, Adorno deploys an element from Freud.

Adorno uses Freud to explain how the *psychological* impulse towards the acquisition of knowledge occurs[13]. Adorno claims that the acquisition of

[11] This separation is, of course, alienation.

[12] Note that I specify 'in enlightenment'. Adorno goes on to find a kind of identification free from concepts which, nevertheless, contains cognitive properties.

[13] Adorno's analysis of knowledge acquisition is twofold. First, from his Hegelian-Marxist inheritance it is historical and social. Secondly, from his Freudian inheritance it is psychological. It is to this latter that we look here. That is to say, we are examining a psychological view of the process of acquiring knowledge.

knowledge results from a condition in which the Subject feels himself to be separated from his external world, that is, from the Object. Adorno writes: 'everything unknown and alien . . . whatever in things transcends the confines of experience; whatever in things is more than their previously known reality. What the primitive experiences in this regard is . . . the intricacy of the Natural in contrast to the individual' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15 [DA 31]). This separation, according to Adorno, is a source of great anxiety and even of fear: 'the unknown . . . [is] terror' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15 [DA 31]). The result of this is that, through the drive for self-preservation, the Subject seeks to overcome this separation. He does so in a particular way. To overcome the threatening separation he can *identify* the external Object with himself and one way in which the Subject can do this is to *make the Object like himself.* Adorno describes how this can be done: 'the gasp of surprise that accompanies the unusual becomes its name' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15 [DA 31]). Through identifying the Object with the human gasp, Adorno argues that the Object can become 'familiar'. Adorno describes how this 'fixes the transcendence of the unknown in relation to the known, and therefore terror as sacredness' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15 [DA 31]). In this primitive example the Subject in identifying the Object with the sound emanating from his own voice makes the Object like himself. Adorno depicts this simple instance as illustrative of the basis to all 'explanation'. He writes that 'myth and science, originate in human fear, the expression of which becomes explanation' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15 [DA 31]).

In the enlightenment, Adorno claims, the same psychological impulse to identification occurs. The Subject *identifies* the Object, not with a gasp, but with his own priorly conceived conceptual system. That is, the Subject 'invents' a conceptual system and assimilates the Object to it. For example, he would have a concept, 'lake', which would locate the expanse of water within a set of other concepts, for instance 'water', 'landscape'. All the aspects of what constitutes a lake, its parameters, size, content, shape, etc. would be experienced through these priorly conceived concepts. The lake is 'experienced' through being assimilated into the Subject's conceptual system[14]. This process of identification – of (in this instance) making the Object like the Subject through the system – is intrinsic, Adorno claims, to the acquisition of knowledge[15]. He writes: 'to think is to identify' (Adorno, 1973: 5 [ND 17]).

In both myth and enlightenment, identification is derived from a psychological impulse. Moroever 'epistemological' forms of identification retain a psychological dimension. That is to say, identification of the Object by

[14] Note that, for reasons of clarity, I have given my own example here.

[15] Note that in later chapters we will develop an argument for an alternative form of identification.

the Subject is always, for Adorno, in part, a process of psychological identification.

In his conception of identification in knowledge acquisition, Adorno combines the Hegelian-Marxist notion of knowledge acquistion entailing a *historical* process of identification between Subject and Object, with the Freudian *psychological* notion of identification. These points are true for *all* the forms of identification Adorno perceives, be they mythic or enlightenment.

We have shown the psychological dimension to identification, let us now see the detail of Adorno's view of its 'epistemological' features[16].

The characteristic traits of 'epistemological' identification in *enlightenment* are as follows[17]. First, as we have seen, it entails making the Object like the Subject. Secondly, it has, Adorno claims, two distinct features: discrimination and control. Thirdly, it facilitates the acquisition of instrumental meaning (which we discussed to some extent in Chapters 1 and 2). Let us now see how identification in enlightenment knowledge acquisition achieves these features.

The aspect of knowledge acquisition that gives the enlightenment identification the particular features of discrimination and control is the representative aspect. *The representative* aspect of knowledge acquisition is the priorly conceived conceptual system. It is through assimilating the Object to this that the process of identification occurs. Adorno terms the overall process of knowledge acquisition – the process of identification which occurs through the Subject assimilating the Object into his conceptual representations – '*conceptualisation*'[18]. Let us now examine the connection between representation and identification.

Identification By Representation

How exactly does Adorno consider that the conceptual system allows identification of the Object to occur? First, which properties of the conceptual system allow for discrimination? We can divide the conceptual system into the notion of 'the concept' on the one hand and 'the system' on the other. It is the properties of 'the concept' that are in fact relevant to the process of

[16] Adorno's notion of identification is a conglomerate term, that is, it is an 'epistemological' term that includes a psychological dimension. Having depicted its psychological dimension, we will follow his usage throughout the remainder of our 'epistemological' discussion.

[17] Note, as we will show in the second part of our monograph, identification is not restricted to enlightenment, but can occur in a non-conceptual (and non-linguistic) form, in a kind of 'counter-enlightenment'.

[18] We see that although the term 'conceptual statements' refers to the process of representation only, the term 'conceptualisation' refers to the whole process: that is, to both identification and representation.

discrimination. A concept is a 'category' or 'label' which attempts to discriminate between objects. The concept of a lake should be clearly demarcated from other concepts such as – river, puddle or ocean. Concepts, in order to achieve discrimination, are *precise*, *clear*, and *distinctive* (Adorno, 1973: 134–207 [ND 137–207]).

Second, there are the properties that allow *control*. These can be construed as those of 'the system'. The system has the property of organisation: individual concepts are *organised* into a system which is law-governed. Adorno writes that: 'knowledge consists of subsumption under principles' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 82 [DA 100]). These laws, or 'principles', are those of logic which are very precise, so allowing the conceptual system to be 'finely tuned'. 'Cognition', as Adorno puts it, does not occur 'by chance' but [is] 'attained by a rational, systematically unified method' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 25 [DA 41–42]).

A further property of the system is that it attempts to be *comprehensive*. It attempts to grasp the whole of the Object leaving nothing without – there is no residual part of the Object believed to be left beyond the system. Systems of conceptual thought[19] attempt to embrace entire complexes of Objects, so that the system, according to its own rules, can eventually conceive of itself as capturing the entirety of the external world. Comprehensiveness – the attempt to grasp the entirety of the Object world – combined with organisation – the attempt to mentally manipulate it – leads to the idea that the whole of the external world of Objects can potentially be controlled (theoretically) in these systems.

If we add together concepts and the system, we have the conceptual system. This is the representative aspect of knowledge acquisition. If we group together all its properties – precision, clarity, distinctness, organisation and comprehensiveness, we have the overall property of *determinacy*. Representation in enlightenment knowledge acquisition is determinate.

The determinacy of the conceptual system allows the enlightenment process of identification to occur, for it is this overarching property of determinacy which facilitates discrimination and control.

Having offered a brief depiction of Adorno's notion of enlightenment knowledge acquisition, let us now move on to view his critique of it. This critique takes a particular form. Adorno claims that enlightenment knowledge acquisition regresses to become mythic. We will analyse this claim for both the realms of enlightenment knowledge acquisition – that is, *representation* and *identification*.

[19] Adorno talks about 'conceptual thought' so I use his term here. However, this is not to introduce a distinction between 'conceptual thought' and 'conceptual knowledge acquisition' as this is not something that Adorno himself pursues. I neither wish to criticise nor elaborate upon this terminology, simply to note this conflation of terms.

ADORNO: CRITIQUE OF CONCEPTUALISATION

In understanding Adorno's criticism of the enlightenment it is important to note that Adorno, due to his Hegelian-Marxist approach, systematically refuses to make a number of distinctions which would ordinarily be found in (Cartesian) philosophical discussions of knowledge. Such discussions would make a distinction between notions of what a conceptual system is, that is its properties etc., and how systems change to allow knowledge to develop. Adorno intentionally transgresses these boundaries and links the very features of concepts to the development of knowledge[20]. He believes that the features of conceptualisation[21], themselves lead to the incapacity of knowledge acquisition to develop, and moreover, lead to its eventual regress.

Adorno believes instrumental knowledge acquisition regresses in both its spheres of representation and identification to become animistic. First, let us look at *representation.*

Representation

Representation has the property of being determinate. For Adorno, problems arise for the conceptual system, due to this very determinacy. Let us divide our discussion of these problems into those that arise from the features of the actual *'concept'*, and those that arise from the *system* itself.

First, looking at '*the concept*' we see that its features of precision, clarity and distinctness comprise its determinacy. Adorno argues that the concept's determinacy regresses.

The determinate nature of concepts allows for highly sophisticated demarcations between them. These become increasingly rigid, 'immune' to any internal or external development. Adorno argues that this problem of rigidity means that concepts become less like the vehicles of thought they ought to be and more like mere 'facts'. All they can then do is simply convey fixed categories of 'meaning'.

Adorno's criticism goes further. In their immunity to development, he argues, it is not simply that concepts can not facilitate the acquisition of any further knowledge, but indeed, they actually come to prevent it. Adorno states that the 'rigidity . . . which concepts were generally compelled to assume', (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 22 [DA 39]), leads to a 'frame-covered, never-changing realm' (Adorno, 1973: 33 [ND 43]), and this

[20] This stems from his Hegelian-Marxist approach wherein conceptual systems are historically transmitted so that there can be no separation between the nature of the conceptual system we use and its development over time.

[21] We must remember that for Adorno, 'enlightenment knowledge acquisition' is 'instrumental knowledge acquisition' which is also 'conceptualisation'; and 'mythic knowledge acquisition' is 'animism'.

'frame-covered, never changing realm, is true for untruth only' (Adorno, 1973: 33 [ND 43]). For Adorno, determinate concepts have an in-built tendency to prevent the further acquisition of knowledge by becoming rigid[22].

Second, there are problems arising from the determinacy of *the system*. The *determinacy* of the system is founded upon its *organisation* and *comprehensiveness*. These aspects regress in the following way, according to Adorno.

Organisation in the system consists, according to Adorno, of the administering of concepts into various groups, which are themselves then compiled into various broader groups. The relations between the concepts, and between the various groups and subgroups of concepts are governed by a series of laws. The administrating and law governing nature of the system facilitates thought. It also comes to prevent it: the 'administrative apparatus of thought' and its laws have an inherent tendency to lose flexibility and so to become rigid. As a result the mind cannot manoeuvre information in any on-going attempt to know it. In this way the laws actually disallow the manipulation of the elements of 'thought'. Instead, the whole administrative apparatus of the system itself comes to organise the relations between concepts and this entails them actually dictating the propositions that form knowledge. Thus, for Adorno, through rigidity the administrative apparatus actually comes to dictate the content of knowledge. Adorno refers to this as the trend of *domination*. Adorno describes how the conceptual system, the apparatus of thought, thereby becomes like a bureaucratic mode of 'thought': 'The decisions of bureaucracy are frequently reduced to . . . drafts submitted to it; the bureaucratic way of thinking has become the secret model for thought allegedly still free' (Adorno, 1973: 32 [ND 42]).

The regression of the feature of *organisation* to *domination* encompasses a regression in knowledge acquisition to myth[23]. Adorno writes: 'the "domination," which Freud anachronistically ascribes to magic, corresponds to realistic . . . domination only in terms of a more skilled *science*' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 11 [DA 27])[24].

A further aspect of the system's determinacy is its *comprehensiveness*. Comprehensiveness, for Adorno, with respect to the system, refers to the property whereby the system attempts to 'know' the world of Objects in its entirety. The system aims to 'incorporate' all Objects within itself. No aspect of the world of Objects remains outside of the system. Although, through

[22] Adorno writes that: 'the concept [is] the organon of thinking, and yet *the wall* between thinking and thought' (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 27]) – my emphasis.

[23] For Adorno magic is part of myth, and thus negative.

[24] My emphasis. It ought also to be emphasised that there are two kinds of domination which, for Adorno, are related. There is the tendency within thought for the system to come to dominate thought processes, which we have depicted. There is also the emergent tendency for this to translate into forms of social domination, which we do not depict as such. The quotation, strictly speaking refers to how the former kind of domination leads to the latter.

comprehensiveness, the system attempts to incorporate the Object, in practice, in the very process of incorporation, the system annihilates the Object which it incorporates. Adorno describes this process through the metaphor of 'eating'. He writes that: 'the system is the belly turned mind' (Adorno, 1973: 23 [ND 34]). The system attempts to 'eat' or 'devour' the Object. That which we eat is, of course, destroyed. The comprehensiveness of the system therefore incurs a destruction of the Object.

It destroys the Object, according to Adorno, in a very particular way, by construing the Object as like the system. It thereby destroys any inherent difference in the Object: to express it another way, it 'annihilates' the Object's own, intrinsic 'being'[25]. Adorno terms the elements of the Object which differ from the system 'the heterogeneous'. The system, therefore, he writes: 'eliminates all heterogeneous being' (Adorno, 1973: 26 [ND 37]). Adorno regards this phenomenon of 'devouring' as a kind of domination. The system in 'devouring' the Object brings it under its own laws etc., so denying it any possibility of 'autonomy'. In this way, it imposes its 'own voice' upon the Object and this for Adorno, is a kind of domination of the Object's own intrinsic 'being for itself'.

Looking at the regression of the features of the *concept* and those of the *system* we have the following. For Adorno, the *determinacy* of the concept regresses to *rigidity*. The determinacy of the system, in both its features, *organisation* and *comprehensiveness*, regresses to domination. Whilst the former, rigidity entails the lack of an ability of the concept to respond to the Object, the latter, *domination*, is even more regressive in that it encompasses, not only a lack of responsiveness to the Object, but an actual imposition of the system's own voice upon the Object. In this way, the system actually comes to 'ignore' and supplant the Object. That is, it regresses to encompass the further feature of *hypostasis*[26].

The hypostasis of the (representative) conceptual system consists of three aspects. First, it ignores the Object. 'The system, the form of presenting a totality to which nothing remains extraneous absolutises the thought against each of its contents and evaporates the content in thought' (Adorno, 1973: 24 [ND 35]). Second, it becomes a world unto itself governed by its own laws. Adorno claims that we get: 'a system of detached signs devoid of any intention that would transcend the system' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 18 [DA 34]). This, he writes, is: 'the game which mathematicians have for long proudly asserted is their concern' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 18 [DA 34]).

Third, it mistakenly believes that this internal world of detached signs actually 'is' the Object. In this way the representational system replaces the Object and determinacy regresses to hypostasis.

[25] This is, of course, a parallel in Adorno's thought to Kant's notion of 'noumena'.

[26] We will discuss this term over the page.

We can summarise these features in the following chart:

Conceptualisation

Features of Representation	Features of Regression
Concept	
Precision	
Clarity	
Distinctiveness	Rigidity
System	
Organisation	
Comprehensiveness	Domination
Conceptual System	
Determinacy	Hypostasis

The representational conceptual system in its regression becomes *rigid*, *dominating*, and *hypostatic*. These, in fact, are the features of *instrumental animism* for Adorno[27]. Instrumental knowledge acquisition has thereby regressed to become *animistic*, ie. mythic, in the sphere of representation.

In spite of these problems of rigidity, domination and hypostasis the conceptual system still retains some of its internal qualities. It still retains much of its determinacy. Determinacy in the system facilitated the processes of discrimination, control and the acquisition of instrumental meaning in the process *of identification*. Therefore, we ask, in spite of the regression of the *representative system* to become animistic, can instrumental *identification* itself be maintained?

Identification

The process of identification in instrumental knowledge acquisition cannot, in fact, be preserved according to Adorno. It also regresses to become animistic. Let us analyse this regression.

First, instrumental identification makes the Object like the Subject – like the Subject's conceptual system in fact – and it has the features of discrimination, control and instrumental meaning. The principal feature of any animism is projection. Projection is the term for the process whereby the Subject mistakenly identifies his own system of knowledge for the Object and thereby projects himself (in his own mind) onto the world. As a result, he in fact, conceives the world to be exactly like he is. In so doing, he fails to actually identify it. Thus, when instrumental identification regresses to become animistic it actually fails to be a form of identification

[27] We will analyse the features of animism later in our discussion of the regression of identification.

at all and becomes mere projection. We will show how instrumental identification regresses to become such a form of projection.

There are two distinct routes for the regression of instrumental identification. On the one hand, there is a regression in identification that derives from the regression in the representative system. On the other hand, there is a regression that derives from identification itself. We will begin our examination of how instrumental identification regresses by first, considering the effect of the regression of the representative system upon it. That is to say, we will address the question of how hypostasis in the representative system might lead to projection in identification.

Hypostasis occurs because of problems internal to the representative system, namely, it is a problem that arises from the feature of the determinacy of the system. Determinacy results in problems of rigidity and domination. These entail that the Subject's mind cannot actually engage with anything beyond the system. His mind then takes the system to be the Object. The result of this is that the Subject does not actually perform the act of identification at all (he already believes his system captures the Object).

Hypostasis therefore behaves like the projection of 'fantasy'. In fantasy, the Subject 1, does not identify the Object, and 2, simply projects his imaginings onto the Object. In hypostasis something similar to these two processes occurs because the system becomes 'rigid' and the Subject is unable to go beyond the system to the Object itself. In hypostasis therefore, the Subject as in fantasy does not engage with the external Object. Furthermore, in remaining within the internal workings of his own system, although there is no actual act of projection of his imaginings onto the Object, the system comes to replace the Object as the 'Object' for the Subject's mind.

There is however a second way in which instrumental identification can regress to instrumental animism. This is a regression in identification that occurs in the actual process of identification itself. That is, instrumental identification regresses to an animistic form. This occurs in the following way.

First, the process of discrimination increases so that there are more and more demarcations between Objects. This has the effect of 'breaking' the Object up into ever and ever smaller 'pieces'. As a result, discrimination becomes fragmentation.

Second, the feature of control within identification increases. As more and more control of the Object is generated, control regresses into rigidification and domination.

Third, it becomes apparent that the actual process of identification itself regresses. Making the Object like the Subject becomes mere fantastical 'projection'. The Subject simply *imagines* that the Object is like himself. The process of bridging the separation between the Subject and Object is replaced by the Subject's fantasizing that the Object is like himself [28].

[28] The relationship with the external world is undeveloped so that the Subject fantasizes rather than 'encounters'.

(Note that projection here is distinct from the appearance of 'projection' we mentioned in the regression of representation to hypostasis. There, hypostasis meant that the Object was replaced by the system so that there was no actual process of identification at all. Here 'projection' encompasses the idea that the actual process of identification occurs but in a regressive form, that is, as mere fantasy.)

Finally, in the regression of identification we see that the Object through being fantasized by an instrumental mind, becomes imbued with instrumental meaning. Note that this latter encompasses three points: first, imbuing the Object with instrumental meaning entails a loss of substantive meaning; second, it entails an impossibility of there even being a substantive meaning – that is to say, the Subject does not consider substantive meaning merely inaccessible but that he denies the very possibility of there being such a kind of meaning. Third, the projection of instrumental meaning also entails that instrumental meaning itself becomes potentially false – that is, a projected form replaces the actual form.

There are thus two different 'routes' for the regression of instrumental identification to animistic projection. One through the decline of representation to hypostasis and one through the decline of the process of identification itself. In spite of these two distinct routes the actual resultant problems are the same.

Regressive identification, namely, projection, consists of two major problems. These are delusion and a 'loss of the Object'.

Let us look first at delusion. Projection entails delusion which occurs on two levels. On one level, the conceptual system is 'deluded about itself'. 'It believes' itself to identify the Object. However the conceptual system has merely (in the main) identified itself. The conceptual system in believing it captures the Object therefore is deluded about itself. On another level, the system is deluded, not just about itself, but also about the Object. In the process of projection what the system in fact captures – 'in' what Adorno refers to as 'the anticipatory identification of the wholly conceived and mathematized world' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 25 [DA 41]) – is the 'system itself', but in believing that it captures the Object, the system is also, in fact, deluded about the Object.

Projection also entails a second problem, namely the 'loss of the Object'. Adorno writes: 'The separation of subject and object . . . must not be hypostasized, not magically transformed into an invariant' (Adorno, 1978: 499). However, he writes of how 'this [problem] in the separation of subject and object is imparted to epistemology' (Adorno, 1978: 499)[29]. In identifying the Subject with the Object, the Subject conceives of himself to have overcome the separation between the Subject and the Object. In fact this

[29] Adorno uses the term 'contradiction' which I have replaced with the term 'problem' because I only refer to 'half' the contradiction.

separation is 'magically transformed' – for which read 'mythically transformed', magic being inherently part of myth for Adorno – which is to say, the separation is mythically traversed; which is, of course, also to say that it is not traversed at all. The Subject, in hypostasis, falsely believes himself to have traversed the separation which is why Adorno says that the separation is 'invariant'. In this merely magical transformation, the separation remains! The Subject thereby fails epistemologically[30]. What the Subject actually achieves is an inadequate knowledge of the Object. This state, because the Object becomes increasingly unknown, can be termed a state of a 'loss of the Object'.

Adorno writes that the Enlightenment's failure, 'its untruth', 'does not consist in what its romantic enemies have always reproached it for: analytic method . . . but instead in the fact that for enlightenment the process is always decided from the start' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 24 [DA 41]). In 'deciding the process from the start', the epistemological problem of enlightenment is projection and it is this that constitutes its regression to myth.

Enlightenment knowledge acquisition declines to delusion in both its realms of representation and identification to become animistic. Adorno expresses this when he writes, ironically, of 'the course of demythologization, of enlightenment, which compounds the animate with the inanimate just as myth compounds the inanimate with the animate' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 16 [DA 32]). However, it differs from the animism of fantastical myth, which was a projection of the divine or demons. Enlightenment's animism is a projection of 'inanimism'. The entire world, including the Subject himself, is conceived of as instrumental, so that Adorno is led to write: 'animism spiritualised the object, whereas industrialism objectifies the spirits of man' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 28 [DA 45]).

[30] See Freud (1913) for a depiction of magical, mythical 'omnipotence of thoughts'. Adorno is claiming that the whole of enlightenment ends up in such a childish fallacy.

4

Knowledge Acquisition

A Negative Solution

INTRODUCTION

In the previous three chapters we have seen a story of unrelenting failure. The question posed by this story is, how to solve it, How do we rescue enlightenment from its decline into myth? Adorno seeks a solution 'epistemologically'. He seeks to prevent the decline of enlightenment to myth by introducing a new mode of thinking which he terms 'non-identity thinking'[1]. We depict this solution and argue that Adorno's 'epistemological' solution to the problem of enlightenment knowledge acquisition's decline, is extremely limited in its effectiveness. (Note that this chapter is rather distinct from our previous chapters, for it consists of a much more detailed and analytic treatment of Adorno's unusual concepts, identity and non-identity thinking.)

In this chapter we discuss first, Adorno's conception of the relationship between enlightenment and myth, which is *dialectical*. Second, we view the decline of enlightenment *knowledge acquisition* through its dialectical regression into its animistic variant. Third, we make an isolated analysis of Adorno's notion of non-identity thinking. Fourth, we analyse the impact of non-identity thinking upon enlightenment knowledge acquisition. Finally, we assess the limitations of this merely 'negative solution'.

DIALECTIC: MYTH AND ENLIGHTENMENT

A dialectical relationship means that two entities are *inextricably connected and in opposition*. The aspect of the dialectic that involves 'opposition', means that myth opposes enlightenment and enlightenment opposes myth. In Adorno's words, enlightenment 'destroys myth' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 44 [DA 61]). We have seen myth's opposition to enlightenment, resulting in the latter's regression.

[1] This is defined later.

By 'inextricably connected' we mean, of course, that they cannot be separated. Thus, in the dialectic between enlightenment and myth, enlightenment can never be separated from myth nor myth from enlightenment: one is always present within the other so that we can never have 'pure' enlightenment or 'pure' myth. Adorno and Horkheimer indicate this when they write that enlightenment 'destroys myth by virtue of the same rational order in which it *reflects* it' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 44 [DA 61])[2].

Although, Adorno considers that we can never have the pure form of either 'enlightenment' or 'myth' – most relevantly for his analysis, never pure enlightenment – there are several possible forms that this relationship can take. We can have varying degrees of *extremity* of both cultures or we can have varying degrees of *predominance* of one over the other. For instance, we could, hypothetically speaking, have the following set of circumstances.

First the form of the dialectic between enlightenment and myth might be a state of 'equivalent degrees'. We could have a condition of overall extremity in the two cultures, that is, *extreme* enlightenment coupled to a condition of extreme myth. On the other hand, we could have an overall condition of *minimal* enlightenment coupled to minimal myth (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 43–80 [DA 61–99]).

If we are going to designate the overall condition of enlightenment and myth as extreme, or indeed, designate the overall condition of enlightenment as minimal, we need to have a sense of what we mean by extreme or minimal – that is, extreme in reference to what? For Adorno, the notion of extremity in enlightenment and myth refers to the (overall) degree of the Subject's engagement with the Objects in the external world. Consider the instance of an extreme degree of engagement with respect to the instance of Odysseus steering his ship home. If Odysseus were strongly driven to reach his goal he would fully engage his mind on the task and seek powerful control of his ship and crew. This would be an extreme enlightenment drive. He would also, however, be strongly fearsome (and desirous) of the deities he imagines lying in wait around him during his voyage. A strong propensity to (imagine and) engage with these would be a strong mythic drive. This overall condition of an extreme drive towards the Objects in the external world is one of extreme enlightenment and extreme myth. The contrary state of minimal enlightenment and minimal myth is, in contrast, one of a weaker degree of engagement of the Subject upon the Objects in the external world. In such an instance, Odysseus would be less purposive in his voyage and, also, less concerned about deities, etc. In such a condition the mind would simply not be strongly driven towards the Object – either to control or to fear (or indeed fantasize about) it (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 3–80 [DA 19–99]).

[2] My emphasis.

A second possible form of the dialectic between myth and enlightenment is a state of the *predominance* of the one over the other. Here the two cultures are not present in equivalent degrees. On the one hand, we could have a condition of the predominance of enlightenment over myth. On the other hand, we could have a condition of the predominance of myth over enlightenment[3].

To designate the condition of enlightenment as predominant over myth, or myth over enlightenment, we need a sense of what we mean by predominant. For Adorno, the notion of predominance in this context means that the Subject's drive towards the Objects in the external world differs so that one is in excess of the other. Either he is strongly driven to Objects in the mythic sense or he is strongly driven to Objects in the enlightenment sense. We can again illustrate this through Odysseus' voyage. In the case where myth predominates, Odysseus is drawn in by fantastical temptation and swayed by fear. Although trying to steer his ship home, he cannot gain control and is overridden by mythic fears – we have analysed this condition in detail in chapters One to Three. In the case where enlightenment predominates in contrast, Odysseus is in control of himself and his crew and avoids major engagement with the fears and fantasies of myth. He attains his goal of steering his ship safely home. Fear and fantasy are not removed but their power vis-à-vis enlightenment is less. This latter, is the state Adorno considers to be desirable and true to the enlightenment's aims (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 3–80 [DA 19–99]).

There is, however, a third further complexity to the dialectical relationship between enlightenment and myth. This is due to the fact that the nature of the dialectic between enlightenment and myth is 'internal': one actually constitutes the other. For Adorno, enlightenment helps constitute myth and myth helps constitute enlightenment: 'myth is *already* enlightenment and enlightenment reverts to mythology' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: xvi [DA 16])[4]. The internal nature of their relationship is not, however, one of equivalence. It must be remembered that enlightenment is *developed* myth and myth is *un*developed enlightenment. The consequence of this, for Adorno, is that enlightenment can always degenerate into myth but, although it might seem to be the case on logical grounds that the converse is true, and that myth can become enlightenment, this is not an equivalent possibility. It is a far more difficult task, according to Adorno, for myth to develop into enlightenment than for enlightenment to regress into myth:

[3] Further possibilities arise in combining 1. and 2. That is: (a), extreme and predominant enlightenment coupled to a low level of myth; (b). Extreme, low-level enlightenment coupled to an even lower degree of myth; (c). Extreme and predominant myth coupled to weak enlightenment; and (d). Predominant but weak myth coupled to an even lower level of enlightenment.

[4] My emphasis.

changing the emphasis on our earlier quotation, 'myth is already enlightenment and enlightenment *reverts* to mythology' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: xvi [DA 16])[5]. An analogous case is that an adult can always degenerate into infantile behaviour, but a child, in order to become mature, must go through the experiences that constitute maturity. He can not suddenly become mature. Adorno's position is pessimistic: enlightenment is always in danger of regression.

Despite his pessimism, Adorno's aim is to help enlightenment become extreme and also predominate over myth. How does he hope to attain this?

DIALECTIC: INSTRUMENTAL KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION AND ANIMISM

To see Adorno's own 'negative solution,' we need first to examine the 'epistemological' dimension to the negative dialectic between enlightenment and myth. The core of this negative dialectic is constituted by enlightenment and myth's forms of knowledge acquisition, namely instrumental knowledge acquisition and animism[6].

We recall, from Chapter 3, that knowledge acquisition (in both its instrumental and animistic forms) has two levels, namely *identification* and *representation*. For Adorno, instrumental knowledge acquisition and animism are dialectically related at *both* the level of *identification* and *at the level of representation*[7].

Let us look at the dialectic between instrumental knowledge acquisition and animism at the level of identification[8]. These two forms of identification are connected and in opposition in the following way. They are *connected* in that both instrumental and animistic identification are aspects of the same identificatory process. Although this identificatory process can tend strongly towards one or the other, it always involves an element of both. Instrumental knowledge acquisition and animism identify the Object by 'making it like' the Subject. In *instrumental knowledge* acquisition this is accomplished by the Subject making the Object like his *conceptual system*, whereas in *animism* it consists of the Subject making the Object like his *divine or demonic images*. For Adorno, there is always an element of the image in the concept: the concept is a sophisticated form of the image[9]. Furthermore, there is always

[5] My emphasis.

[6] This is the particular type of animism of instrumental animism.

[7] See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15 [DA 31–2].

[8] Adorno's concept of 'identification' is based on Hegelian-Marxism and Freud. It has, respectively from these two traditions, an epistemologico-historical dimension and a psychological one. We have already elaborated upon these two distinct elements and will henceforth use the term following Adorno's own usage.

[9] See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15 [DA 31–32].

an element of the concept in the image: the image is the prototype of the concept[10].

Instrumental and animistic identification are also *oppositional*. Animistic identification's image is a less developed form of identification than instrumental identification's concept in that it projects more subjectivity onto the Object. According to Adorno, it therefore 'misses' much of the Object. The concept is a more sophisticated means of identifying the Object, but it can only identify the Object in so far as it is able to 'reach' the Object. This requires opposing the tendency to projection that is characteristic of animism[11].

Having seen the dialectic between instrumental knowledge acquisition and animism at the level of identification, let us now view it at the level of representation. In instrumental knowledge, representation consists of concepts being drawn into an overall conceptual system. In animism, it consists of images which are also drawn into an overall system – the animistic system is a system of relations between images of deities[12].

At the level of representation, instrumental knowledge and animism are connected and in opposition. They are connected in the following way. They are connected in that the systems of representation of both instrumental knowledge and of animism 'utilise' the same 'set of relations' between the various elements of the representative system. In fact, this set of relations between the various elements of the system of *representation* is also a kind of 'identification'. However, the kind of identification that occurs between the various elements in the representational system (be it of the instrumental or animistic kind) is of a *distinct* nature from the kind of identification that occurs in the process of identification itself – which we discussed above - ie. that which occurs between the Subject and the Object. Let us distinguish these two processes of identification by referring to that which occurs in representation as *representative identification*, and that which occurs in the identification between the Subject and the Object as *identification proper*.

In representative identification the concept is 'drawn into' a whole system of concepts (or the animistic image into a whole system of animistic images). This, for Adorno, is a similar process to identification proper in that the individual concept (or animistic image) is made like the overall conceptual system (or system of images). For instance, in instrumental knowledge acquisition the concept 'lake' is 'made like' the overall conceptual system of 'body of water'. Representative identification encompasses the process of making the concept (or image) part of the overall system of concept (or images).

[10] In this respect, Adorno's notion of the development of the 'concept' is parallel to Freud's. Although Freud discusses 'words' rather than concepts, he also depicts the origin of words as images. Images are the 'words' of the primitive part of the mind – the unconscious, according to Freud. See Freud, (1915: 216–222).

[11] See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15 [DA 31–32].

[12] See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15 [DA 31–32].

Instrumental knowledge acquisition and animism consist of the same process of representative identification. They both consist of making the particular like the whole. This similarity is a crucial aspect of their connection.

The conceptual and animistic representative identificationary processes are also in opposition. Their oppositional relationship derives from a difference between them which is as follows. Animism, as a representative system, according to Adorno, is fixed. The relations between images are unchangeable in any respect. For instance, deities have particular relationships with each other (often expressed in terms of kinship). These are fixed. Furthermore, they have particular forms of behaviour which are also fixed. The conceptual system, in contrast, aims to be flexible and open to development. Although governed by fixed laws, these laws ought not prevent a certain kind of development. Indeed they are designed precisely to facilitate it. The rigidity of the animistic system opposes the inherent flexibility of the conceptual system and vice versa.

IDENTITY THINKING

Adorno, as we have seen in Chapter 3, regards instrumental knowledge acquisition as always likely to regress into animism. He believes that the features of instrumental knowledge acquisition will degenerate into their animistic variant. For instance, the inherent flexibility of the conceptual system regresses to become rigid – as we saw in Chapter 3.

Adorno develops the concept of *identity thinking* as a way of analysing how instrumental knowledge acquisition regresses into its mythic variant. Adorno construes instrumental knowledge acquisition and animism as forms of identity thinking because he feels that this term captures the property of knowledge acquisition that leads to its regression from its instrumental variant into its animistic form. Let us therefore look at Adorno's notion of identity thinking.

Identity thinking is a term that Adorno develops to encompass the process of identification that occurs in both 'identification proper' and in 'representative identification'. That is, with respect to identification proper, identity thinking occurs when the Subject 'identifies' the Object by making it like his concept (instrumental version) or image (the animistic kind). Furthermore, with respect to representative identification, identity thinking occurs when the Subject identifies a particular concept with the conceptual system as a whole.

The (second) form of identity thinking – representational identification – is distinct from the former in that a particular concept is not equivalent to the conceptual system. Rather, the particular concept is 'incorporated' into the system, and in this way, for Adorno, is 'made like' the system. Whilst in instrumental knowledge acquisition identity thinking occurs in the representational system when a particular concept is 'made like' the system, in

animism it occurs when a particular image of a deity 'is made like' a system of deities as a whole.

Note that identity thinking is common to both instrumental knowledge acquisition and animism. To express it more accurately we would say that, for Adorno, instrumental knowledge acquisition and animism are both forms of identity thinking. Instrumental knowledge acquisition is a highly developed form and animism a regressive variant.

We can summarise Adorno's terms in the following diagram.

Knowledge Acquisition

Instrumental		Animistic	
Representation	Identification	Representation	Identification
Conceptual system	Concept	System of deities	Deity
Developed		Undeveloped	
Identity thinking of concept with system	Identity thinking of concept with object	Identity thinking of deity with system	Identity thinking of deity with Object

NON-IDENTITY THINKING

Adorno devises the notion of non-identity thinking in order to rescue *instrumental identity thinking* from its potential decline into its animistic variant. Note that because the point of non-identity thinking is to rescue *instrumental* identity thinking we will only discuss non-identity thinking vis-à-vis instrumental knowledge acquisition.

What is non-identity thinking? How, in instrumental knowledge acquisition, can the Subject grasp the Object in order to know it (or relate concepts to the conceptual system) without identity thinking? Surely identity thinking is essential to the very act of knowledge acquisition?

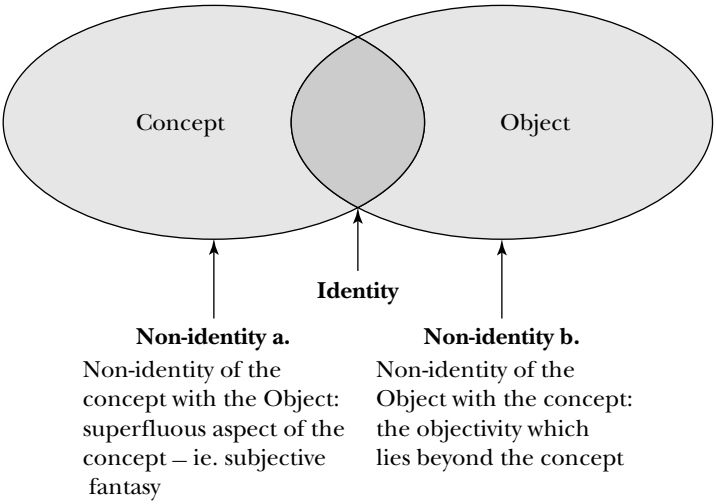
In fact, we encounter several potential interpretations of the term non-identity thinking in Adorno's work[13]. Some of these centre around a reductive reading of Adorno and assume that non-identity thinking involves an actual non-identity – that is, they use the term non-identity as a noun, so implying that there is an actual 'entity' called a non-identity. There then follow two possibilities for what constitutes a non-identity. On the one hand, non-identity might refer to that part of the concept which is an emanation of the

[13] In what follows I provide three 'ideal types' of the notion of non-identity thinking which pervade the exegetical literature on Adorno.

conceptual system. This is the part of the concept that fails to 'fit' the Object; this part is mistaken. It not only fails to grasp the Object but furthermore it 'invents' the Object and so produces a 'fantastical' representation of it.

On the other hand, the 'entity' non-identity could refer to the unknown part of the Object, the part that the concept 'misses'. That is, when the concept attempts to identify the Object and fails, a part of the Object remains untouched by the concept. This part is beyond the concept and as such *un*identified. The term non-identity here seems to be synonymous with the *un*identified aspect of the *Object*.

We can summarise these points in the following diagram:



Is Adorno's 'non-identity thinking' therefore, as this literature implies, the process where we find the entity of non-identity (a) and/or non-identity (b) – and so compensate for the deficiencies of identity thinking? The issue then becomes how we come to recognise non-identity (a) or (b)[14]. That is, how we come to recognise the superfluous part of the concept or the 'missing' part of the Object.

This leads us into a discussion of a further set of meanings of the notion of non-identity derived from a second reading of Adorno. These deploy non-identity thinking as a *verb to depict a process*. According to this usage the term appears in his phrase non-identity *thinking*. At first sight, there again appear to be several possible ways this term could be used. First, there are reductive interpretations of non-identity thinking which assume that Adorno refers to the uncovering of the 'entity' of the non-identity. In which case the

[14] For instances of the literature that uses the term non-identity in this way, see the bibliography at the end of this book.

term describes the process deployed to attain the entity of the non-identity (a) or (b). The term non-identity would then refer either to the superfluous aspect of the system or to the entity of the 'undiscovered' part of the Object. Non-identity thinking would refer to the process that *uncovers* this entity. In this case, there would appear to be a consistency between the forms of usage as a noun and a verb[15].

However, if this were the case, non-identity thinking would, in fact, become merely a refined kind of *identity thinking*. This is because it would simply be a process of identifying the non-identity. Non-identity thinking cannot, according to Adorno, be conceptually determinate in any sense, otherwise it merely becomes identity thinking. The term non-identity as the description of the process cannot therefore refer to the finding, that is to say, to the identifying, of non-identities. Let us therefore emphasise that non-identity thinking is not the identifying of non-identities in either sense of the term: 'The non-identical is not to be obtained directly, as something positive on its part' (Adorno, 1973: 158 [ND 161]). We will return to the implications of this point at the end of this book as there have been a significant number of commentaries explicitly stating or tacitly assuming that non-identity thinking is the gaining of the non-identity. This has led to a number of serious errors – errors that give the process of opposition a kind of 'ontological status' and lead to the mistaken belief that Adorno is an advocate of a kind of post-modernism.

A second possibility is that non-identity thinking could mean a kind of thinking which is *distinct* from any form of positive identification. That is to say, it is a form of thinking which is non-identificatory in the sense of *not* identificatory. I discuss this possibility in Chapter 7[16].

Third, more than being simply a kind of thinking that *differs* from identity thinking it could be that non-identity thinking is actually contrary to identity thinking. That is to say, it in some sense *opposes* identity thinking[17].

In fact, non-identity thinking in Adorno's usage refers principally to this last process of *opposing* identity thinking.

CONTRADICTION

Having argued that non-identity thinking is a process of thinking oppositional to identity thinking we now need to see what this actually consists of.

First, we look at non-identity thinking in the realm of *representation* in knowledge acquisition. That is, we will look at non-identity thinking as

[15] This is a very common way of using Adorno's term non-identity thinking.

[16] A further instance of non-identity thinking might be that of the 'Constellation'. See Buck-Morss, 1977; and for my own thoughts, Sherratt, 1998a.

[17] One way in which this opposition works is in the form of a 'critical theory' or 'internal critique'. See Buck-Morss, 1977, and again my own ideas are in, Sherratt, 1998a.

oppositional to the identity thinking that occurs between the particular concept and the overall conceptual system.

Contradiction in Representation

Adorno describes non-identity thinking in the representative realm as a mode of 'thinking' that involves the process of looking for contradictions between a particular concept and the conceptual system.

A particular concept can contradict the overall conceptual system. Consider an example from zoology of the concept of the 'duck-billed platypus'. This concept has certain features which make it part of the conceptual system of the 'mammal' – it has an endo-skeleton, is warm-blooded, etc. However, it then contradicts the mammalian conceptual system because it lays eggs which, by definition, mammals do not do. In laying eggs it has a feature of the conceptual system of 'birds'. However, it does not belong to the system of birds for it cannot fly, etc. so that it also contradicts this particular conceptual system. The conceptual systems of 'mammals' and 'birds' are themselves part of the overall system of 'animals'. The concept 'duck-billed platypus' therefore contradicts the overall system of 'animals'.

The process of non-identity thinking, construed in general terms, is that which opposes identity thinking. The relationship between the individual concept and the conceptual system as a whole entails incorporating the particular concept into (or 'making' the individual concept 'like') the conceptual system as a whole. Concept A is incorporated into (or 'made like') System B. Non-identity thinking is the process whereby the individual concept is revealed to 'be unlike', that is to contradict, the conceptual system as a whole. Concept A 'is not like' System B. (Note that Concept A is not merely non-identical with System B but actually opposes System B.)

We have seen an instance of the non-identity of a particular concept with the overall conceptual system. We need now to see how Adorno develops this into an actual process of non-identity thinking. First let us explain that for Adorno, it is not merely the case that non-identity thinking is a method of trying to rescue instrumental knowledge acquisition from a potential decline to animism, but that non-identity thinking is valid in its own right. Consider the role of the contradiction in identity thinking.

In identity thinking concepts are identified with the system in that contradictions are (believed to be) removed. That is to say, identity thinking works through attempting to *remove* contradictions from influencing the system. From the above example, the concept 'duck-billed platypus' would thereby be 'removed' from the system: the system of 'mammals' would remain intact as would that of 'birds' and, overall, that of 'animals'. The concept of the duck-billed platypus would become a mere 'anomaly'.

The subtext of this, Adorno believes, is that the system has a higher epistemological status than the 'contradiction'. Adorno, in advocating non-identity thinking advocates treating the contradiction more seriously. For Adorno it is not to be discarded as a mere 'anomaly'. Instead, for Adorno, such contradictions are of *equivalent* epistemological status as the system itself.

Let us now see how Adorno develops non-identity thinking as an actual process of thinking. To do this we will make an analysis of Adorno's own mode of thinking through an interpretation of his own texts. That is, we will examine his texts as an actual instance of non-identity thinking. We will look at an example from his *Aesthetic Theory*. Adorno discusses the role of the concept of the 'heterogeneous' in art. He writes: 'What is heterogeneous to artworks is immanent to them: it is that in them that opposes unity and yet is needed by unity if it is to be more than pyrrhic victory over the unresisting' (Adorno, 1997: 89 [AT 138]). We can see that the concept the heterogeneous has two contradictory meanings. On the one hand, it is that element within the artwork which opposes the unity of the overall work of art. On the other hand, the heterogeneous is that element which is needed by unity.

If we were to pursue identity thinking we would have to 'make' the particular concept of the heterogeneous 'like' a theoretical system which explains its role in art. One possible meaning of the concept 'the heterogeneous' could be 'made like' one kind of theoretical system. For instance, we could advocate the meaning of the concept 'the heterogeneous' as being that which *is oppositional* to unity. We could then develop a theory of its role in art along these lines. This would entail abandoning the other meaning of the concept, that is, that the concept 'the heterogeneous' is unavoidably *a part* of unity. The notion of the heterogeneous as a 'part of unity', the abandoned meaning of the concept, would then be a mere 'anomaly'.

Instead of advocating a system to which the concept is extraneous, a mere anomaly, Adorno pursues the 'thought' of the contradiction itself. For Adorno, the contradiction is important for it tells us something about the immanent nature of the concept. That is to say, for Adorno, the concept of the heterogeneous is by nature contradictory and thus to 'smooth out', or attempt to eradicate, this contradiction in the interests of the laws of the system is to deny the concept a part of its immanent nature.

Adorno's inclusion of the contradiction entails a new form of thinking which is as follows. Consider again Adorno's discussion of the concept of the heterogeneous: 'What is heterogeneous to artworks is immanent to them: it is that in them that opposes unity and yet is needed by unity if it is to be more than pyrrhic victory over the unresisting' (Adorno, 1997: 89 [AT 138]).

Adorno characterizes the concept 'the heterogeneous' as that element in the artwork which opposes unity. Adorno *also contradicts* this 'definition'

of the concept and depicts 'the heterogeneous' as that which is needed by unity. Adorno thereby in the same sentence presents a definition and contradicts that definition. We can say that instead of presenting a single, consistent strand of thought about the concept the heterogeneous, he presents a 'paradox'. Thus, in Adorno's non-identity thinking concepts appear as paradoxical.

This appearance of concepts as paradoxical has ramifications for the system of thought. For instance, the existence of the contradictory meanings of the concept 'the heterogeneous' mean that this concept cannot be organised into a coherent, unified system. To retain the immanent contradictory nature of the concept, we cannot form an overall coherent system of which the concept the 'heterogeneous' can be a part. This means that the organisational structure of the system is altered. It is no longer a 'singular' unity.

Furthermore, in Adorno's non-identity thinking the system can no longer be 'closed'. For instance, when, in his theory of aesthetics, he discusses the notion of beauty in nature, he concludes his discussion with the remark: 'Nature is beautiful in that it appears to say more than it is' (Adorno 1997: 78 [AT 122]). He then goes on to say that: 'To wrest this more from that more's contingency . . . : This is the idea of art' (Adorno 1997: 78 [AT 122]). Thus he ends his discussion of beauty in nature by defining natural beauty as that which appears to say more than what is merely present. However, he then, in part, contradicts this by claiming that 'more', that is to say, the very essence of what constitutes natural beauty, is, in fact, that which constitutes artistic beauty. (He then goes on to discuss artistic beauty). There is thus no closure to the idea of natural beauty as it simply 'vanishes' into the idea of artistic beauty. Through contradiction Adorno perpetually renders an ending as a potential beginning. Furthermore, Adorno will present contradictions to his points about beauty in nature in other passages of his text: discussions are constantly reopened.

We have seen something of Adorno's non-identity thinking. It has the feature of being paradoxical, it does not consist of a singular unity of thought and is without closure. Let us now look at the effects of the features of non-identity thinking upon identity thinking.

The pursuit of the contradictory nature of the concept in thought has certain ramifications, an important one of which relates to the structure of the representative system of 'thought' itself. According to Adorno, the pursuit of contradictions opposes the features of the identity thinking of the system. This, in turn, *negates* the animistic tendency of the representative system. That is, it prevents its decline into its animistic variant. We can see this by examining the effect of non-identity thinking upon each set of features of the system in turn.

The first group, *precision*, *clarity*, and *distinctness* are features of the *concept* in the representative system. We can examine the effect of contradiction

upon these through the example that Adorno provides us with in his own work[18].

Consider again Adorno's discussion of the concept of the heterogeneous: 'What is heterogeneous to artworks is immanent to them: it is that in them that opposes unity and yet is needed by unity if it is to be more than pyrrhic victory over the unresisting' (Adorno, 1997: 89 [AT 138]). The concept on the one hand, precisely, clearly, and distinctively captures the notion of the heterogeneous as that element in the artwork which opposes unity. On the other hand, Adorno *contradicts* this 'definition' of the concept. However, the contradiction also appears as an equally precise, clear, and distinct definition.

As will be recalled from chapter three, Adorno considers that a precise, clear and distinctive demarcation between concepts can lead to a highly 'refined' but *fixed* definition. That is, the concept becomes static, or '*rigid*', to use the term that Adorno himself uses. The refined concept thereby prevents further thought (and so undermines itself)[19]. Adorno expresses it thus '*reducing* philosophy to categories', (Adorno, 1973: 33 [ND 44]), involves 'a concept that concludes, and thus brings [thought] to a standstill' (Adorno, 1973: 25 [ND 35]).

The contradiction of one precise, clear and distinctive definition by another, for Adorno, presents a paradox. This paradox means that each definition *criticises* the other and, for Adorno, this prevents any one, single definition from becoming fixed. Adorno writes that 'criticism of the system recalls what would be outside the system' (Adorno, 1973: 31 [ND 42]). Through definitions becoming fixed the problem of rigidity arose; through criticism, instead of thought becoming a fixed set of 'definitions' or 'propositions', for Adorno, the actual *process* of thinking is retained. The contradiction thereby, although consisting of the same features – precision, clarity, and distinctness, prevents the concept from becoming a mere definition (or 'thing') and thereby the problem of rigidity is to some extent overcome[20].

Each definition does however need to be precise, clear, and distinctive for the paradox to work, otherwise we would just get a kind of vagueness which, for Adorno, would be detrimental to any kind of thought. The introduction of the contradiction, therefore, does not undermine the features of instrumental identity thinking but of its animistic, regressive counterpart.

[18] These categories are intended as a method of thinking about the properties of the conceptual system and are not intended to be exhaustive. Neither are the relationships between the features I depict here intended as final.

[19] Adorno writes that: 'concepts. Their precision substitutes for the thing itself' (Adorno, 1973: 53 [ND 62]). He thereby links the feature of precision with hypostasis which we discuss later as a problem emanating from the escalation of the initial problem of rigidity.

[20] The notion of 'thought' becoming a 'thing' is of course encapsulated by the concept of reification which is important to Adorno's thought.

For Adorno, contradiction *retains* precision, clarity, and distinctness and *negates* rigidity[21].

The second group of features of import to the representative system are those of the conceptual *system* itself, namely *organisation* and *comprehensiveness*. We can examine the effect of contradiction upon these, again through the example that Adorno provides us with in his own work.

Consider first, *organisation*. We have seen how retaining the contradictory meanings of, for instance, the concept the heterogeneous entails that this concept cannot be organised into a coherent, unified system. In fact, in retaining the immanent contradictory nature of the concept, we cannot organise the system into a coherent unity. The process of retaining and pursuing contradiction in thought thereby opposes the organisation of the conceptual system.

Second, organisation in the system is coupled to the feature of *comprehensiveness*. The system aspires to grasp the Object in its completeness. The system's (belief in its) attainment of this depends, among other things, upon closure. 'Closure' means coming to a definite end. Contradiction, as we have seen, prevents the closure of the system. Through preventing closure it opposes the appearance of comprehensiveness.

Through opposing comprehensiveness within the system Adorno hopes to stave off the problem of *domination*. Domination occurs when the claim to comprehensiveness which the system makes is believed, so that the Subject no longer relates to the Object itself, but instead solely to the system, which then becomes the source of 'authority' about the Object. The system thereby comes to dominate the Object, claiming to have 'grasped it'.

For Adorno 'domination' also includes other problems. First, in domination the system becomes *learned* as a completed set of information. In this way, the learning of the system replaces the actual process of thought. Thus, as with the problem of *rigidity*, 'thinking' as an actual process threatens to stop[22]. Second, the system as the source of authority comes to replace the actual Object itself. The Subject no longer relates to the Object but to the system: 'each [Object] being the atom it becomes in the logic of classification', as Adorno expresses it (Adorno, 1973: 25 [ND 36]). This is the problem of *hypostasis*.

Contradiction, through opposing such claims to completeness, means that the system is incomplete. Therefore, the system can not dominate the Object. This alleviation of the problem of domination also helps alleviate the further related problem of rigidity. As the system is incomplete the Subject cannot simply learn the system but must continue the process of thought itself. Adorno writes:

[21] 'False clarity is only another name for myth' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: xiv [DA 14]).

[22] Furthermore, the system in this way becomes false: 'the framecovered, never-changing realm, is true for untruth only' (Adorno, 1973: 33 [ND 43]).

Philosophy serves to bear out an experience which Schoenberg noted in traditional musicology: one really learns from it only how a movement begins and ends, nothing about the movement itself and its course. Analogously, *instead of reducing philosophy to categories, one would have in a sense to compose it first.* Its course must be a ceaseless self-renewal, by its own strength as well as in friction with whatever standard it may have. *The crux is what happens in it, not a thesis or a proposition – the texture . . . . Essentially, therefore, philosophy is not expoundable* (Adorno, 1973: 33 [ND 44])[23].

Finally, we can look at the problem of hypostasis. As the system is incomplete it cannot make a claim to know the Object in its entirety and therefore can not replace the Object. That is, it becomes clear that more of the Object lies beyond the conceptual system and as a result, hypostasis is countered.

We saw in Chapter 3 that the features of precision, clarity, distinctness, organisation, and comprehensiveness together help comprise the overall feature of *determinacy*. Determinacy as a whole also regressed to hypostasis. In opposing these features, Adorno argues that we have helped prevent the overall feature of determinacy from regressing into hypostasis.

The prevention of the individual features of precision, clarity, and distinctness from regressing into rigidity is a prevention of them regressing into their animistic variant. Likewise, the prevention of the systematic features of organisation and comprehensiveness from regressing into domination is a prevention of them from regressing into their animistic variant[24]. Overall, the feature of determinacy is prevented from regressing into hypostasis which is a prevention of the representative system of instrumental knowledge acquisition from becoming animistic.

For Adorno, non-identity thinking thereby prevents the identity thinking in the representative system of instrumental knowledge from regressing into its animistic variant: 'Disenchantment of the concept is the antidote of philosophy. It keeps it from growing rampant and becoming an absolute to itself' (Adorno, 1973: 13 [ND 24]).

It is important to understand that with his notion of non-identity thinking Adorno does *not* advocate breaking apart or destroying the identity thinking of the representative system itself. Adorno writes that: 'we cannot think without identifying. Any definition is identification' (Adorno, 1973: 149 [ND 152]). Adorno's aim is to negate the animistic-regressive aspects of the identity thinking of the representational system precisely in order to *retain the effectiveness* of the representative system.

We saw with respect to the features of precision, distinctness and clarity that whilst contradiction opposed these in such a way as to prevent their regression into animism, contradiction did not oppose the actual features themselves. As Adorno emphasises many times: 'Definitions . . . are not to be banished' (Adorno, 1973: 165 [ND 167]). This is also true of the feature of

[23] My emphasis.

[24] As Adorno puts it: 'mythical is that which never changes, ultimately diluted to a formal legality of thought' (Adorno, 1973: 56 [ND 66]).

organisation. Adorno argues that we need organisation because 'the open thought has no protection against risk of decline into randomness' (Adorno, 1973: 35 [ND 45]). It is true too for the feature of comprehensiveness: 'The un-naive thinker knows how far he remains from the object of his thinking, and yet he must always talk as if he had it *entirely*' (Adorno, 1973: 14 [ND 26])[25]. In fact, Adorno retains the system as a whole. It must always be remembered that Adorno aspires to rescue enlightenment knowledge acquisition as the means for enlightenment to achieve its aims. He most definitely does not advocate 'deconstructing' the 'identity thinking' of the system: 'Systems elaborate things; they interpret the world while the others really keep protesting only that it can't be done' (Adorno, 1973: 20 [ND 31]).

DIALECTIC 'IDENTITY AND NON-IDENTITY THINKING' IN REPRESENTATION

Non-identity thinking, in fact, forms a dialectical relationship with identity thinking. This dialectic is such that non-identity thinking *negates* identity thinking, so preventing its decline to myth. Adorno captures the nature of this 'force' of non-identity thinking when he writes: 'the force that liberates the dialectical movement in cognition is the very same that rebels against the system (Adorno, 1973: 31 [ND 42]).

It should be noted that non-identity thinking negates identity thinking only if it is in 'counterbalance' with the former. This counterbalance has two aspects. First, of course, it consists of an equal proportion of each – equal that is, relative to the other. Secondly, identity and non-identity thinking should be two equal and opposite *extremes*. Adorno writes: 'Dialectics . . . does not seek a middle ground between the two; it opposes them through the *extremes* themselves' (Adorno, 1973: 35 [ND 45–46])[26]. That is to distinguish them from any idea that their 'counterbalance' might be one of 'moderation'. Adorno does not advocate non-identity thinking somehow moderating or 'compromising' the identity thinking of the system. Adorno wants the system to be extreme in its features and so, eventually, to achieve extreme efficiency and control, etc. He thus writes that, with respect to identity and non-identity thinking: 'Both attitudes of consciousness are linked by criticising one another, not by compromising' (Adorno, 1973: 31 [ND 42]).

If the dialectical relationship between 'identity and non-identity thinking' is one of 'equal', counterbalancing extremes then these oppositional forms of 'thinking' will have the following effect upon the further dialectical relationship between enlightenment and myth. They will negate the mythic aspects of enlightenment such that enlightenment *predominates* over myth. That is to say, for Adorno, equivalent forces of system-identity thinking and

[25] My emphasis.
[26] My emphasis.

contradiction will lead to system-identity thinking predominating over animistic identity thinking.

If, however, the dialectical relationship between identity and non-identity thinking should be such that one comes to *predominate* over the other, then enlightenment will regress to myth. We have seen that this is the case for the predominance of 'identity thinking' – un-negated it regresses to animism.

It is also the case for Adorno that if 'non-identity thinking' itself should predominate over identity thinking in the system, then there will also be a decline to myth. Contradiction is, after all, an emanation of logic. Another way of expressing this is to say that contradiction is not *more* ontologically valid than logic, only equally so. As Adorno articulates it: 'Contradiction is not what Hegel's absolute idealism was bound to transfigure it into: it is not the essence' (Adorno, 1973: 5 [ND 17]). For Adorno, contradiction is simply a kind of criticism of the identity thinking of the system: 'it indicates the untruth of identity, the fact that the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived' (Adorno, 1973: 5 [ND 17]). Contradiction between the identity thinking of the particular concept and the system is itself a part of the identity thinking of the system. As Adorno puts it: 'it is nonidentity under the aspect of identity' (Adorno, 1973: 5 [ND 17]). As such, if it *itself* is not opposed – or criticised (by identity thinking) – then contradiction will also regress to become animistic. In this situation, we will be no better off in our understanding of the Object. Adorno explains this when he writes that: 'whatever happens to come into the dialectical mill will be reduced to the merely logical form of contradiction' As a result, he explains, 'the full diversity of the noncontradictory, of that which is simply differentiated, will be ignored' (Adorno, 1973: 5 [ND 17]).

The question of what constitutes a counterbalance, for Adorno, is determined *historically*. At a particular point in history one force will predominate over the other. During his time he considered that systems had been virtually unopposed so that there was a condition of extreme myth. He thus advocated extreme opposition, that is, a process of extreme non-identity thinking[27].

Adorno's notion of non-identity thinking as contradiction sets up an opposition to identity thinking so as to prevent instrumental identity thinking from becoming animistic. One aspect of this opposition occurs in the structure of the representational system itself. Non-identity thinking opposes determinacy so as to prevent it from regressing to hypostasis. In this way, non-identity thinking seeks to preserve instrumental identity thinking itself.

[27] However, Adorno acknowledges that 'dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things. The right state of things would be free of it: neither a system nor a contradiction' (Adorno, 1973: 11 [ND 22]). It is crucial to note that we cannot take short cuts in attaining such a 'system-free' state of knowledge – we have to go through the dialectical process. See Adorno, 1973: 10–11 [ND 21–22]. Furthermore, this image of a wholly system-free way of knowing the world is, for Adorno, utopian and thus unrealisable – although not something we should give up aspiring to, or indeed *can* give up aspiring to.

CONTRADICTION IN IDENTIFICATION

The 'Representative' Form

We know that, according to Adorno, in the realm of representation, identity thinking can regress from its instrumental to its animistic variant. As a result we have examined non-identity thinking as a process of thinking oppositional to identity thinking in the realm of *representation*. That is, we have examined it vis-à-vis the relationship between the particular concept and the overall conceptual system. We also know however that, according to Adorno, in the realm of identification, identity thinking can also regress from its instrumental to its animistic variant. There is therefore as much need to halt the regression of identity thinking in this sphere as there is within the representative sphere. Hence we will now look at non-identity thinking as a process oppositional to identity thinking in the realm of *identification* in instrumental knowledge acquisition. That is, we will examine it vis-à-vis the relationship between the concept and the Object.

We will begin by examining the potential ramifications of the non-identity thinking that we have just discussed. That is, we will be looking at the relationship between the two realms within the acquisition of knowledge. That is to say, we will look at the impact of non-identity thinking in the realm of representation upon identity thinking in the realm of identification.

In order to generate clarity let us make the following demarcations. Let us refer to identity thinking in the realm of representation, that is between the concept and the system, as identity thinking (1), and the identity thinking in the realm of identification, that is between the concept and the Object, as identity thinking (2). Correspondingly, let us refer to the non-identity thinking in the realm of representation – which we have just discussed – as non-identity thinking (1), and the non-identity thinking in the realm of identification – which we will discuss later – as non-identity thinking (2). Using these terms we can now look at the potential impact of non-identity thinking (1) upon identity thinking (2).

Adorno writes of the importance of the impact of the non-identity thinking in the system; that is contradiction, upon the relationship between concepts and the *Object*. He writes that: 'The task of dialectical cognition is not, as its adversaries like to charge, to construe contradictions from above and to progress by resolving them . . . Instead, it is up to dialectical cognition to pursue the inadequacy of *thought and thing, to experience it in the thing*' (Adorno, 1973: 153 [ND 156])[28]. Adorno emphasises that the point of non-identity thinking in the system is to reveal the non-identity between 'thought and thing', for which read 'concept (and/or system) and Object'.

What bearing does the non-identity thinking in the representational system have upon the identity thinking between concept and Object? The

[28] My emphasis.

conceptual system purports to know the Object. It purports to know the Object through both the particular concept and the conceptual system itself. Therefore if there is a contradiction between the concept and the system, there is a problem in the identification of the Object.

For instance, if we identify a particular Object as a duck then we also identify it as belonging to the overall system of birds. If there is a discrepancy between the concept 'duck' and the overall system of 'birds', there is not only an internal problem with the system, ie. between the concept 'duck' and the system of 'birds', but also in the purported identification of the Object. Consider that if the concept 'duck' can not be incorporated into the system 'birds', then the Object – the so called 'duck' – cannot both be a 'duck' and part of the system of 'birds'. We can therefore see that contradiction between concept and conceptual system that is, the identity thinking of the system, also implies a 'problem' in the identification of the Object itself.

We can not, however, be certain about what the problem in the identification of the Object is. First, it may be that the system is at fault, but that the concept itself is 'correct'. For instance, the concept 'duck' may correctly identify the Object. However, it may be that ducks are not birds, so that the contradiction between the concept 'duck' and the system of 'birds' relates to the fact that ducks are not birds. Second, it may be that the system is correct in its identification but the concept mistaken. For instance, the system may correctly identify the Object as a bird. However it may be that although the Object is a 'bird' it is not a 'duck', so that the contradiction between the concept 'duck' and the system of 'birds' relates to the fact that ducks are not birds. Third, it may be the case that birds are not ducks and the Object is neither a duck nor a bird, so that both concept and system are incorrect in their identification.

The existence of a contradiction between the concept and the system therefore reveals that there is a problem in the purported identification of the Object. It cannot however tell us whether the fault is with the concept, the system or with both.

There exists a further set of problems that non-identity thinking (1) may point to in identity thinking (2). This relates to the *nature* of the 'mistaken' identification of the Object. If there is a contradiction between the concept and the conceptual system so that the concept, the system or indeed both are 'flawed', then we know that the Object is in some way 'mis-identified'. However, we do not know the nature of the mis-identification. There are two possibilities. First, it may be the case that the concept or system has 'identified' aspects to the Object that are simply not there. That is, the concept or system has mistaken its own outgrowth for the Object and thereby projected itself onto the Object. This kind of failure of the concept (or system, or both) relates to the problem of delusion and projection in identity thinking (1).

Second, the concept or system may be mistaken in that it has simply missed aspects of the Object – that is, it has failed to adequately identify the Object. This kind of failure of the concept (or system, or both) relates to the problem of 'ignorance' or 'loss of the Object' in identity thinking (1). We know that contradiction within the system means that one or the other of these problems has occurred, or indeed both, but we do not know which.

There is a final unknown element which emanates from the realisation of the existence of *projection* in the identification of the Object or 'loss of the Object'. On the one hand, the problem of projection would mean that the identification mistakenly included non-identity (a)[29]. On the other hand, the problem of 'loss of the Object', would mean that the identification failed to include non-identity (b). However, the non-identity thinking (1), of the representational system can not reveal these 'non-identities' (a) and (b) in the identity thinking (2) of the concept (or system, or both) to the Object.

Consider the role of non-identity thinking with respect to non-identity (a). Contradiction between the concept and the system can show us that our understanding of the Object contains fallacious elements. It cannot however adjudicate the source of the problem. That is to say, we can say that non-identity thinking reveals *the fact of the existence* of non-identity (a). However, this is distinct from claiming that it can point to the actual nature of non-identity (a).

Similarly, non-identity thinking in the system can reveal the fact of the existence of non-identity (b). It can reveal that our knowledge of the Object may be incomplete and that aspects of the Object lie beyond our system. However, it cannot show us what these unknown aspects of the Object are. It cannot reveal to us the actual non-identity (b).

Non-identity (b), for Adorno, as the aspect of the Object that lies beyond the conceptual system is what we are interested in knowing. Adorno refers to this unknown part of the Object as the 'heterogeneous' or sometimes as the 'differentiated'. Contradiction is *not* non-identity (b). Contradiction is not the heterogeneous, it is not the 'differentiated'. We have already depicted this earlier in our discussion. Now we can add a further point. Contradiction is not the heterogeneous, moreover, it does not in fact reveal the heterogeneous – non-identity (b). Adorno expresses this point when he writes that: 'whatever happens to come into the dialectical mill will be reduced to the merely logical form of contradiction, and that the full diversity of the noncontradictory, of that which is simply differentiated, will be ignored' (Adorno, 1973: 5 [ND 17]).

Given these limitations of non-identity thinking (1) in revealing the failings of identity thinking (2), it is clear that it cannot solve the problems of projection and 'loss of the Object' at the level of identification.

[29] See page 133.

That is, non-identity thinking (1) in the representational system fails to solve the problems in identification itself. It cannot therefore prevent the regression of instrumental knowledge to its animistic variant at the level of identification.

Identification's Own Form

We may not be surprised to find that non-identity thinking in the representational realm has a limited effect upon the identity thinking involved in identification. That is to say, we may not be surprised that non-identity thinking (1) has a limited effect upon identity thinking (2). Let us therefore examine the possibility of a form of non-identity thinking in *identification* itself, that is, let us examine a possibility of a kind of non-identity thinking (2) and assess the import of this to identity thinking (2).

There is an obvious difference between the notion of a kind of non-identity thinking in relation to identification between the concept and Object and that between the concept and conceptual system. The non-identity thinking of concept to system depends upon the rules of logic: contradiction arises out of those rules and is governed by them. The rules of logic are our own mental constructs, that is, they are those of the Subject. Putting it in the terms we used earlier we could say that in 'making' the concept 'unlike' the conceptual system we 'make' one Subjective construction 'unlike' another Subjective construction. Furthermore, we do this through a process governed by the Subject's own rules.

Non-identity thinking in the realm of identification proper, however, involves stepping outside of the Subjective realm. We can see this if we consider identification itself. Here we are using the concept, a subjective construction, to identify the *Object* which is *outside* of the Subject's constructions. Although the process of identifying the Object by the concept is in part governed by the Subject's own set of rules, it is also in part governed by something that lies beyond these. We could express this by saying that it is as if the Object itself governs part of the process of identification.

What would non-identity thinking be in the context of the relationship of the concept to the Object? If we again take the notion that non-identity thinking is the process of finding *contradictions* we have the following possibilities.

First, we could have two distinct identifications of the same Object each one of which contradicts the other. For instance, we can on the one hand, identify an Object as a duck, and on the other, identify it as something which is not a duck (whatever that might be). Thus, through an initial act of identity thinking (2) we arrive at, let us say, concept X, and through a further act of identity thinking (2) we arrive at, let us say, concept Y. Concept X contradicts concept Y. However, these contradictory conceptual identities are merely concepts contradicting other concepts. That is to say,

the contradiction is *external* to the relationship between the concept and the actual Object[30].

If we are looking for non-identity thinking (2) as analogous to non-identity thinking (1) then we are looking for contradictions *internal* to the actual identification itself: in representation the particular concept and the system contradict one another; therefore, in identification, the concept (and/or system) and the Object should contradict one another. How can an Object and a concept (and/or system) be contradictory?

Contradiction is a mental construction of the Subject. Thus to make the Object contradict the concept we first need to draw the Object into the realm of the Subject's mental constructions and processes. This, however, is to eradicate precisely that which we are interested in, namely the Object itself as 'unmediated' by the Subject. If the Object is distinct from the Subject then it is also distinct from the Subject's mental constructions, including contradiction.

The only possibility of a kind of non-identity thinking between the Subject and the Object would have to entail a distinct form of non-identity thinking. This would have to be *a form of contradiction that is the Object's own.* That is, a way in which the Object, through its '*own voice*', can contradict the concept. What would such a form of 'contradiction' be? How can the Object 'speak back'? We will go on to discuss this possibility in the following chapters.

We can arrive at the following conclusion about the possibility of finding a form of non-identity thinking that can act upon identity thinking (2), that is *identification proper.* First, non-identity thinking (1) is a plausible kind of non-identity thinking. However its impact upon identification is negligible. Second, the notion of a kind of non-identity thinking (2) has so far not been shown to be a possibility. Therefore, there is not an effective form of non-identity thinking in the realm of *identification proper.* The problems of identification, namely projection and 'loss of the Object', cannot be negated. In the realm of 'identification proper', therefore, we cannot prevent the regression of instrumental knowledge acquisition into animism.

CONCLUSION

Our overall assessment of Adorno's notion of non-identity thinking in instrumental knowledge acquisition is the following. In the realm of representation non-identity thinking (1) upon identity thinking (1) can have a significant effect in preventing the regression into animism. However, in the realm of identification proper non-identity thinking (1 or 2) can have negligible

[30] Adorno offers a system of 'the Constellation' which consists of a series of identifications, each surrounding an Object. However, this simply reveals different facets of the Object. It does not uncover the non-identity' (a) or (b).

impact and cannot prevent the regression of instrumental knowledge acquisition to animism.

The problems in identification proper are major and can, in and of themselves, represent the decline of instrumental knowledge acquisition into animism. Consequently, the overall assessment of non-identity thinking in Adorno's work has to be that it has little impact upon the regression of enlightenment into myth in the epistemological sphere. For this reason it appears to be a merely 'negative' solution and commentators might indeed be right in thinking that non-identity thinking is 'the bleakest expression of Adorno's melancholy science' (Jay, 1984: 241).

Concluding Comments on Part I of Adorno's Positive Dialectic: Negative Thesis

Through our assessment of the decline of enlightenment, the following becomes clear to us. On the one hand, the impoverished nature of the *external, substantive sphere* in enlightenment leads to the collapse of enlightenment. On the other hand, the inherently unsustainable nature of the *internal, instrumental sphere* of enlightenment itself leads to its failure.

Adorno offers a solution, namely non-identity thinking. This, however, as the counterpart of logic remains within the *instrumental sphere*. It thus rests upon the very same instrumental foundations as the problem which it seeks to solve. It therefore fails because it can neither address the impoverishment of the external, substantive sphere, nor, by remaining part and parcel of it, become able to redeem the internal, instrumental sphere in any way. Indeed, non-identity thinking is itself derived from the ego instincts and wrapped up with the very instinctual imbalance that causes the regression of enlightenment in the first place. It thus flounders as a merely 'negative solution'.

PART II

POSITIVE THESIS

The Redemption of Enlightenment

INTRODUCTION

Adorno's Positive Dialectic is a solution to enlightenment's decline: a way of rescuing enlightenment from its own internal regression to myth. Our aim is to find a 'positive' solution to what Adorno has envisaged as the problems of subjectivity and knowledge in enlightenment. For our positive solution we look in particular to the realm of knowledge acquisition. We are not content, however, with the merely critical 'solution' offered in the previous chapter and wish to extend our analysis beyond the reach of the instrumental sphere altogether. For our solution we seek, in fact, a non-instrumental kind of knowledge acquisition. What would such a form look like and where in Adorno's work would we need to search in order to find it?

We explore areas of Adorno's philosophy that lie beyond his discussion of enlightenment or indeed of epistemological issues at all, and turn instead, to his work on aesthetics. We extricate a strand of thought from the main body of Adorno's aesthetics and examine the 'cognitive' potential of this. Hereby, we demonstrate a potential epistemological solution for enlightenment, one that takes us out of the instrumental sphere. We then pursue the ramifications of this for Subjectivity and for the enlightenment's aims.

In developing this positive thesis we follow Adorno's texts, although not in the sense of simply finding an already constructed thread of ideas. We in fact build upon thoughts that Adorno alludes to but has not himself systematically developed[1].

Chapter 5 discusses the *aesthetic* concept in Adorno's work which becomes the basis of our form of knowledge acquisition. Chapter 6 develops an actual conception of *aesthetic knowledge acquisition*. Chapters 7 to 9 pursue the positive ramifications of this. Chapter 7 develops a positive dialectic in the realm

[1] When I say 'systematic' I am, of course, aware that Adorno is not in the conventional sense of the term a 'systematic thinker' and that indeed the system is a focus of his critique.

of *epistemology*. It thereby addresses the problems raised in Chapter 3 and left unsolved in Chapter 4. Chapters 8 and 9 explore the consequences of this positive dialectic for Subjectivity. Chapter 8 addresses the problems raised in Chapter 1, namely those derived from the instincts. Chapter 9 addresses the problems raised in Chapter 2, that is, those associated with the structural boundary around the self.

5

The Aesthetic

Aura

INTRODUCTION

Within the realm of the aesthetic we will focus upon a strand of thought which has been marginalised to Adorno's aesthetic thesis about 'the New'[2]. However, as will become clear, this strand in fact informs a major part of Adorno's aesthetics and, indeed, is the very basis for a positive interpretation of his philosophy as a whole.

At the centre of this strand which we wish to extricate is the aesthetic concept of *aura*[3]. Aura is a concept that Adorno takes from Walter Benjamin. It is defined by three principal features which are as follows. First, it is *an appearance of distance however close an object might be*. Second, *it points beyond the giveness of an image*. Third, aura *induces proximity through distance*. My aim is to explain these three properties of aura and to show their relationship to each other. In so doing I will build, from the notion of aura, a foundation in aesthetic terms for a notion of a second, alternative form of knowledge acquisition. Distinct from that of the enlightenment, this will be an aesthetic form of knowledge acquisition[4].

The outline of this chapter is as follows. First, we will look briefly at Adorno's general concept of the aesthetic. Second, we will depict aura by utilising some of the influences behind Adorno's own analysis, such as

[2] I take his main aesthetic thesis to be, in line with the consensus, that art's 'role', through its autonomy of course, is social critique. This focuses upon notions like the concept of the New, issues of form centred around, for example, notions of unity and the particular. There are many discussions of this but, for instance, with respect to music, see Paddison (1993). For a discussion of aesthetics in general see Geuss (1998) or Pensky ed. (1997).

[3] This notion of aura is complex and elusive and one that, although having been much explored in some senses – principally in 'social', 'cultural' and 'aesthetic' contexts, see for instance Weber (1996), Ferris (1996) – has not been analysed in relation to what interests us, namely epistemological issues.

[4] This chapter focuses solely upon the aesthetic dimension. Epistemological issues are discussed in Chapter 6.

Benjamin: we will look at aura through Benjamin's depiction of it as an historically emergent category. Third, we will embellish this analysis by pursuing the properties of aura in the light of the aesthetic categories Adorno develops from German Idealism. Finally, we will depict aura through categories that Adorno adopts from Freud.

THE AESTHETIC

The realm of the aesthetic was of central importance to Adorno. His conceptualisation maps onto a more general perspective in German thought which locates the aesthetic as emerging at a particular point in history, with the work of Baumgarten[5]. Adorno reflects this as follows: initially, in the first stage of history, that which Adorno (and others) terms the 'aesthetic' was simply a part of everyday life. Eventually, however, it became marginalised into the religious sphere, where it was associated with ritual as well, of course, as religious belief. Later, such experience underwent a separation from religion. The aesthetic established itself as a distinct sphere of human experience, no longer associated with either ritual or religious belief: it became an autonomous sphere and this, indeed, is when the term aesthetic actually emerged, to reflect this transformation. Later, Adorno claims, the aesthetic realm itself split into what he terms 'high' and 'low' art (the latter being discussed by Adorno in his depiction of 'the culture industry'). Both these spheres were marginalised from 'everyday life'. The sphere of the 'aesthetic' proper, which for Adorno is 'high art', gradually declined, he claimed, representing an ever smaller portion of human experience.

THE HISTORY OF AURA

Within the overall evolution of the aesthetic in general, there evolved particular concepts. We turn to analyse one of these now, namely, the aesthetic concept of aura.

Adorno's own use of the concept aura is very important. Further to his own use, however, a detailed discussion is also offered by Benjamin, who, as we know, originated the concept. We will, in our discussion combine their analyses in order to most effectively develop our argument.

There will doubtless be some hesitation over the validity of doing this as most commentators draw our attention to the dispute that occurs between Adorno and Benjamin over this concept. And there is undoubtedly a dispute. However, this dispute concerns the historical occurrence of aura and the issue of a dialectical conception of history[6]. Outside of

[5] See Baumgarten (1735); (1750–1758).

[6] Adorno writes that, with respect to aura and mass reproduction of art works, Benjamin 'for the sake of simplicity neglected the dialectic of the two types' (Adorno, 1997: 56 [AT 89]). See also Adorno and Benjamin (1977: 110–141).

these concerns there is an important agreement between Benjamin and Adorno.

The essence of this agreement is that, according to both Adorno and Benjamin, aura is a kind of distance. This kind of distance has a history (like the aesthetic itself) which Benjamin's essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, depicts. He makes his analysis by demarcating three stages in the history of art, which are parallel to the stages described in the discussion of the 'aesthetic' above. These stages centre around Benjamin's claim that there is a progressive loss of aura.

The first historical stage Benjamin refers to as the auratic stage. This is when Objects of art are bound up with ceremony and ritual. As a result they are available only fleetingly to the viewer and so are invested with a sense of distance through their being dependent upon ritual. Ritual is, of course, a social experience so that in this definition art Objects are socially imbued with auratic distance (Benjamin, W., 1973b: 211–244).

The second stage Benjamin identifies is that of *autonomy*. Here art works retain a kind of aura but it is no longer, Benjamin argues, based upon their social dependency because they are now freed from ritual: they are on exhibition. However, they still retain a kind of distance. Art works in the age of autonomy are unique, uniqueness being understood as a distance in the following way. It is a kind of distance in the realms of time and space. Time, in two senses. First, the painting as an Object embodies the past within it: a painting smelt musty of old paint, its canvas and oils felt flaky to the touch and the image was perhaps a little faded. One could touch and smell the temporal distance in the sheer physicality of the painting. It was unique through its formation in the past. The second sense of its uniqueness in time was that, although available through exhibition, it was still confined to a momentary interaction because, quite simply, it was not permanently within one's presence. One had more control over viewing the work of art – unlike the era of dependency on ritual – but even so it was only momentarily experienced. With respect to space, the art work was unique because it was available only within one particular place: one had to travel to see it. Once we characterise uniqueness in this way, then we can see that this particular kind of temporal and spatial distance is also socially regulated. The Object of art is thus also socially imbued with this distance of uniqueness.

The third stage in history, according to Benjamin, is the present: the era of 'reproducibility'. In the reproduction stage, Benjamin claims, the art work has *lost* all forms of aura. This is so, because, firstly, it is freed from the social dependency of ritual – due to its reproducibility it is now available to everyone everywhere. Secondly, it has even overcome the aura that emerged as a consequence of its uniqueness because the ubiquitousness of reproductions means that reproductions of the art Object can be owned and so brought close in terms of time and space. Benjamin writes: 'Even

the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space' (Benjamin, W., 1973b: 214). For some media, for instance, photographs, Benjamin claims that the notion of uniqueness has vanished completely[7].

So far Benjamin offers us only socio-historical conceptions of aura. He goes on, however, to provide a further instance[8]. Benjamin cites the example of a mountain range on the horizon: 'if, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you may experience the aura of those mountains or that branch' (Benjamin, W., 1973b: 216). The image of the mountains on the horizon is distant, so too the branch touched only through its shadow. Here aura is a distance within a scene from nature. For Benjamin, it is not the 'natural' element to this scene that is of significance, the distance could equally well be a property of a painting that depicted a scene from nature. What is significant is that the distance in this case is a property within, that is internal to, the scene. This contrasts with the previous examples where the distance was 'external' – it was a property imbued through the social factors of ritual or exhibition.

Even if we can see the connection between the first two forms of auratic distance, and thus regard them as a distance of social dependency – an externally imbued property – when we are confronted with the internal image we surely arrive at an altogether distinct kind of aura. However, Benjamin, in fact, makes it quite clear that there is an overriding similarity between these. He writes that *aura is an appearance of distance*. If we apply this to the apparently distinct forms, we can see that both the socio-historical and the internal kinds are associated with an 'appearance'. This appearance in all cases is distinct from a mere physical distance. An Object which gains distance in a merely physical sense cannot be claimed to be auratic: once it has been brought physically close its distance vanishes. This contrasts with all three kinds of auratic distance where the property that they have in common is that they maintain their appearance of distance no matter how physically close they may be. Benjamin writes that: 'aura is an appearance of distance however close an Object might be' (Benjamin, W., 1973b: 216). Consider Benjamin's three instances of aura. During the historic era of dependency the art Object is only fleetingly available. Now what is important about this fleetingness is that it is insurmountable: the art Object can never be

[7] It is possible to criticise this idea: Adorno claims that Benjamin doesn't think dialectically here. If he did he would realise that no historical phenomenon can be replaced in its entirety. However, this point of dispute does not impair our discussion of the key features of aura (Adorno and Benjamin, 1977: 110–141).

[8] This is in fact the one which Adorno quotes as being representative of Benjamin's conception of aura (Adorno, 1997: 274).

brought close. Consider too, the second stage – autonomy. This also involves an untraversable distance: the art Object belongs in a unique space and time and cannot be extricated from that. Finally, the natural image again has this uncapturable element to it. It is intrinsic to Benjamin's example of the image on the horizon that the distance embodied is uncapturable. The appearance of distance evoked by the auratic Object is an appearance of distance that cannot be physically overcome[9].

Aura's first feature is distance in a work of art. This distance may be imbued externally through social factors or it may be an internal property of a scene or image from nature or a work of art. It is in essence an 'appearance of distance' which cannot be destroyed through physical proximity.

Let us look in more depth at this notion of distance. For simplicity's sake, for the remainder of our discussion we will take examples from Benjamin's third instance of aura, namely that which we have depicted as aura being internal to a work of art.

INTERPRETATION

Adorno discusses a second feature of aura. He describes the appearance of distance as some kind of 'departure' within the work of art wherein it departs from itself. That is to say, the appearance of distance is the element wherein the work of art somehow seems to 'leave', or become distant, from itself. Adorno writes that '*aura is . . . whatever goes beyond [the work of art's] . . . giveness*' (Adorno, 1997: 45 [AT 83]). Benjamin also writes of aura as 'pointing beyond the work's giveness'[10]. Let us try to understand this notion of *pointing beyond the work's giveness*. To understand this feature we first need to be clear what the 'giveness' of the image actually is. This has many facets to it, one of which is that the 'giveness' is the more determinate aspect of the work of art[11].

The appearance of distance is not reducible to any determinate, or potentially determinate aspect of the work of art. It is a departure from these elements. It is the part of the image that seems to remove itself or become distant from this 'giveness'. It is sometimes, rather simplistically, referred to as a kind of atmosphere surrounding the 'giveness of an image'. Sometimes,

[9] That is, aura is not in essence merely social.

[10] This has two important dimensions to it. We can see these by breaking Benjamin's clause into its two component parts. One part of the clause expresses the idea that aura entails 'pointing beyond' – where does it point to and how? This we will explore in the next chapter. The other aspect of the clause, however, expresses the idea that aura somehow goes beyond the 'giveness' of an image.

[11] The notion of 'given' is one which, in line with Adorno's non-analytic approach, is not pinned down to a particular definition but takes a term in its historical context of meaning. Note furthermore, that to say the 'given' is more determinate is not to say wholly determinate. How determinate will become clear below.

more simply still, it is referred to as a kind of halo. This depiction, in spite of being rather basic, is useful in that it conveys the idea that the appearance of distance is some kind of way in which the image emanates outwards from the 'giveness'. It is almost as if the concrete, determinate aspect of the image 'evaporates' to form a mist so 'going out from itself'. We can describe this property of the appearance of distance whereby it emanates outwards from the giveness of the image as being in some sense, 'indeterminate'. We can see a contrast between the more determinate aspects of the work of art and the indeterminate nature of the appearance of distance. We will refer to the capacity of aura to *point beyond the giveness of an image* as its indeterminacy.

To go on to analyse the dimension of aura whereby it *points beyond the giveness of an image* we need to turn to Adorno's theory of aesthetic experience. For Adorno aesthetic experience has an 'active' property of *interpretation* and a 'passive' element where the observing Subject is *receptive* to the work of art. Thus when Adorno talks about the realm of the aesthetic he refers to an act of engagement between the Subject and the work of art which consists both of *interpretation* and *receptivity*. Let us look first at interpretation.

For the purposes of our discussion here we will take the notion of interpretation to refer to the act of applying and reapplying concepts to a work of art in order to attempt to make a judgement as to what the work of art 'represents'. We will divide our analysis of the act of interpretation into two aspects. One aspect will be to look at that which is being interpreted, namely the 'representation'. Note that here we use the notion of 'representation' in a 'loose sense'; it is merely a means to examine a further property[12]. We will examine the phenomenon of representation in terms of the property of *indeterminacy*. To do this we will demarcate four forms of 'representation' in art and evaluate these according to their degree of indeterminacy (note that these are our heuristic categories developed as the best way of understanding Adorno's ideas about 'representation'). The second aspect of our examination will be the process of interpretation itself. We will see how the property of indeterminacy in representation relates to the capacity of the work of art to be interpreted.

The four categories of 'representation' that we develop are first, conceptual thought; second, Kant's concept of the beautiful; third, the concept of the Sublime; and finally, the concept of aura – these are all examples from Adorno's own work. These instances of 'representation' range from being highly determinate to being highly indeterminate. Moreover, their degree of indeterminacy is related to the kind of indeterminacy. The kinds

[12] Note that it is important not to confuse the notion of *representation* discussed here in relation to works of art with that discussed in relation to epistemological issues.

of indeterminacy for our purpose can be expressed as *not decided, not definite in extent or amount* and *not definite in nature*. Our categories in art are an instance of each kind of indeterminacy.

Our first example of 'representation' is not actually from the realm of art. It is an instance, not of indeterminacy, but of a high degree of determinacy. It is a hypothetical 'end case'. Such an example is invaluable because it allows us, through contrast, to illuminate the other instances in which we are interested. It is unfortunate that for such an example we have to venture momentarily outside the realm of the aesthetic but, as will become clear during this discussion, for Adorno, 'aesthetic determinacy' is a contradiction in terms: even the most apparently determinate forms of art, for instance forms of realism, are, for Adorno, riddled with indeterminate features (Adorno, 1997: 229–235 [AT 341–348]).

An example of the first category of extreme determinacy in representation is conceptual thought. Conceptual thought, as we have already seen, is highly determinate. An Object is *represented* with precision, clarity and distinctness. For example, the concept 'lake' is believed to capture with precision the Object 'lake'; similarly the concept 'chair' refers with clarity to a certain Object, etc. Concepts can be organised into theoretical structures (into arguments, explanations, etc.), and the features of precision, clarity and distinctness remain. Conceptual thought is intent upon a highly determinate representation of Objects.

The second category is a form of representation. It is less determinate than conceptual thought and takes us into the aesthetic sphere proper. It is a category that can be illustrated through Kant's notion of the beautiful.

An image is beautiful, for Kant, when it has the (essential) capacity to free the human imagination from 'cognitive necessity' – wherein it has to identify certain Objects with certain concepts in a determinate way (the conceptual mode of identification) and instead evokes the 'free play' of the imagination (Kant, 1952: I, 58)[13]. It evokes the free play of the imagination in the following way. A beautiful representation, according to Kant, could for instance be a series of marks which depict an image which appears like a number of possible definite Objects which we can 'capture' determinately through concepts. For instance a Subject observing an art work could discern a series of marks which to him could appear like a face. However it could also appear like a clock, a bridge or a building. It is possible to make a 'guess' as to what the work of art represents, each guess having the property of being determinate, but it is not possible actually to decide which guess applies. Thus the concept which captures the Object that the 'representation' refers

[13] The analysis given applies if the Subject is engaged in a genuine aesthetic experience. Kant's definition of beauty, although a property of the Object, depends upon a Universal Subjective Criterion (Kant, 1952: I).

to is *not decided*. The beautiful is therefore an instance of indeterminacy. Furthermore, it is a particular kind of indeterminacy, namely that which we referred to at the outset as 'not decided'.

The third category is the Sublime. Here Adorno diverges from Kant's conception of the Sublime. Adorno claims that Kant discusses the Sublime only in terms of its impact upon the observing Subject (as though it is in the role of serving human needs and aspirations even if these are, as in this case, moral). This detracts from the Sublime's role as a representation. This role is not, however, straightforward. The Sublime is a kind of representation which is paradoxical for it 'represents' that which is inherently 'unrepresentable'. The Sublime does not represent an Object. It represents, or, more strictly speaking, it refers to that which lies beyond human comprehension. It is an 'intimation of the divine'. It is useful for our purposes because it is an instance of a particular kind of indeterminacy. With respect to this particular feature Adorno agrees with Kant. We can compare the phenomenon of the Sublime in terms of its feature of indeterminacy with that of Kant's concept of the beautiful. Whereas for Kant the experience of the beautiful involved the free play of the Subject's imagination, in the Subject's aesthetic experience of the sublime the capacities of the human imagination are exceeded. A sublime aesthetic experience is one where the Subject is engaged with a natural image 'the representation of which determines the mind to regard the elevation of nature beyond our reach . . . '. (Kant, 1952: II, 119) The sublime image appears as something that, through sheer magnitude, lies beyond comprehension. As such it can not be conceived of as a definite entity. It is thereby indeterminate – its indeterminacy being one of size. This would be an instance of indeterminacy understood as *not definite in extent or amount*.

The fourth instance of representation is *aura*. Aura, like the Sublime, does not represent any Object. Again it attempts to represent that which is unrepresentable. We will discuss this later. In terms of the notion of indeterminacy, Adorno's notion of aura is like and yet unlike the Sublime. It is like the Sublime in that it is highly indeterminate. It is unlike the Sublime in the way in which it is indeterminate. The phenomenon of aura unlike the Sublime has an indeterminacy that is not a feature of its immensity but rather of its nature. Aura is indeterminate in the sense of being *not definite in nature*.

We have seen four kinds of representation viewed in terms of indeterminacy: concepts are determinate representations; the beautiful is an indeterminate representation; the sublime is 'beyond representation' and is indeterminate in extent or amount. Aura is non-representational and is indeterminate in nature.

Let us now move on from examining different kinds of indeterminacy in representation to assessing the actual process of interpretation itself. Aesthetic experience to be aesthetic, must, as we have stated, involve the process of interpretation. Interpretation is a phenomenon that, although a

product of the Subject's engagement with the work of art, must also actually arise out of the work of art itself. Adorno emphasises 'the need of artworks for interpretation' (Adorno, 1997: 128 [AT 184]). This need arises out of the work of art by virtue of what Adorno describes as the art work's enigma. He writes: 'all art works – and art altogether – are enigmas' (Adorno, 1997: 120 [AT 182]). Enigma is the capacity simultaneously to 'communicate' to and 'conceal' something from the observer: 'artworks say something and in the same breath conceal it' (Adorno, 1997: 120 [AT 182]). It is this capacity to 'speak' and 'conceal', the capacity to 'speak like elves in fairy tales' that is the capacity to be interpreted (Adorno, 1997: 126 [AT 191]). Within this capacity to be interpreted we can observe two distinctions – the capacity to *evoke* interpretation and the capacity to *allow* it. Let us now examine the act of interpretation involved in each of the four instances of 'representation'. We will look at the feature of indeterminacy in the work of art in the light of whether it evokes and/or allows interpretation.

Consider conceptualisation. The Object is represented in a determinate way. When the Subject engages with such a representation he can judge with certainty which Object the conceptual representation refers to. The conceptual representation does not 'hide' anything from the Subject. As a result it does not evoke interpretation, that being the process of applying and reapplying more concepts. In fact, for Adorno, not only does conceptual representation not evoke interpretation, it does not allow it[14]. For Adorno, in conceptual representation there is one single 'correct' concept. For this reason, conceptual thought can never be construed as aesthetic, in Adorno's terms, for it does not involve in either sense, the process of interpretation essential to the act of aesthetic engagement. Adorno writes: 'artworks that unfold to contemplation and thought without any remainder are not artworks' (Adorno, 1997: 121 [AT 184]). Let us look at an example of determinacy from a realm that Benjamin uses, that of the human gaze. The most 'determinate representation' in the realm of the gaze would be a direct look exchanged between two people which consists of a message or signal passed between them. There would be no need to interpret because the message would be clear. That is to say, the look would represent with determinacy the message. Adorno explains that: 'of no artwork is it possible to determine . . . what its so-called message is' (Adorno, 1997: 123 [AT 187]).

Determinate representations do not evoke or allow the process of interpretation.

Consider beauty. (Kant's general notion of beauty differs from Adorno's in that Kant believes the highest form of beauty is something non-representational). Adorno draws upon an aspect of Kant where Kant depicts an instance of beauty as representation. In Kant, such an instance of a

[14] For Adorno, the use of a concept about an Object limits what other things can usefully be said about it: this is a point which can be criticised.

beautiful representation could be in the form of a pattern (Kant, 1952). The pattern represents something in an indeterminate way. It is indeterminate in the sense of *not decided*. The pattern could, for instance, be a face. The observing Subject cannot judge the pattern, however, to be a face and as a result attempts to apply further possible concepts. The representation could be seen to be a clock. Again the Subject does not judge it to be a clock. This kind of indeterminacy leaves the Subject perpetually unable to grasp what the representation actually refers to. The pattern both 'communicates and hides something'. As a consequence the Subject is perpetually unsatisfied and is engaged in an on-going attempt to capture that which eludes him. In this way the beautiful pattern *evokes* interpretation.

This kind of indeterminacy of beauty has a further property. It produces possible concepts. Each concept is in and of itself determinate, a face, a clock, etc. – these are precise, clear, and distinct concepts. So although the observer is unable to decide with certainty which concept applies to the representation, he can say that it might be a face, it might be a clock. Thus the indeterminacy of beauty *allows* interpretation to occur.

This combination of evoking and allowing interpretation is on-going. The Subject's engagement with the beautiful pattern produces more and more concepts, none of which can actually be judged to be the representation. As a result the pattern evokes the attempt to apply more concepts. It thereby involves us in repeated attempts to 'map' concepts onto the representation in order to discern what it refers to.

Adorno develops a notion – *puzzle* – to depict this quality in an work of art whereby it evokes ever more interpretations. He writes: 'every artwork is a picture puzzle, a puzzle to be solved, but this puzzle is constituted in such a fashion that it remains a vexation' (Adorno, 1997: 121 [AT 184]).

An example of puzzle, continuing Benjamin's theme of the human gaze, would occur when one encountered a look which referred to something but what exactly it referred to remained unclear. Such a 'look' would evoke interpretation – as Adorno says: 'artworks . . . contain the potential for the solution' (Adorno, 1997: 121 [AT 184]). For instance, various possible messages could be attributed to a wink: it could be conspiratorial, an expression of friendship, it could be provocative or even a virtual sneer[15]. Each interpretation is determinate but we do not know which one applies.

The kind of indeterminacy of *not decided* has a dual property: it both *evokes* and *allows* interpretation.

The Sublime is, in Kant's words, 'an outrage on the imagination' (Kant, 1952: II, 91). It is an instance of the indeterminacy of *magnitude*. The sublime, although aesthetic, is a contrary example of the aesthetic to the beautiful, in that it *does not*, in fact, *evoke* interpretation. One reason for this is that the Sublime image, say, the grandeur of an ocean or a mountain, is of

[15] The wink is an example which Clifford Geertz uses (1993: Chapter 1).

a very *determinate nature*. That is to say, there is no indeterminacy as to the nature of the Object represented. In the literal sense it is quite clearly an ocean or mountain. The representation does not 'hide' what it represents. What is indeterminate is simply size. Thus, something remains hidden from view but this is of the same nature as that which is in view. Because nothing of a distinct nature is hidden, the Sublime does not evoke an attempt to apply concepts to capture something distinct and hidden. (Although not evoking interpretation, the Sublime is still an instance of the aesthetic, for Adorno, because it is not 'beneath' but in some sense 'beyond' the interpretative faculty – as will become clear below.)

However, there is, of course, something 'hidden from view' and this is size. Size, in the instance of the Sublime, is not merely hidden from view but is beyond our very capacities of comprehension. In this way the Sublime 'represents' something beyond us, or at least the idea that something is 'beyond us'. Because that which is intimated through size is wholly beyond us, and is intimated as wholly beyond us, then it is beyond our faculties to comprehend it in any way, and this includes being beyond our capacity to interpret it. The Sublime *refutes* interpretation.

The Sublime differs from concepts in that, although it does not evoke interpretation it is, nevertheless, indeterminate. Furthermore, whereas concepts neither evoke nor allow interpretation because of their 'explicit', 'literal' nature – that is, their determinacy – the Sublime does not evoke or allow interpretation because it is *beyond* the very faculty of interpretation. Thus we could say that concepts, in a sense, restrict the mind such that it does not have enough room to explore or deploy its capacities, whereas the Sublime goes beyond the outer reaches of the mind and beyond its capacities.

The Sublime is an instance of a kind of *indeterminacy* which *neither evokes nor allows* interpretation.

Aura is a extreme instance of indeterminacy. We might therefore expect this, like the Sublime, to mean that aura is 'beyond' interpretation. Aura is, however, distinct from the Sublime in the following way: whereas the Sublime is indeterminate through *size*, aura is indeterminate by *nature*. It, in fact, *hides* a distinctive 'nature'. Adorno would agree with Benjamin when he writes that aura is that aspect of a work of art 'which "remains true to its essential nature only when veiled"' (Benjamin, W., 1973a: 194). The fact that aura involves a kind of veiling leads to a particular kind of engagement, according to Adorno. The veiled nature entails a kind of 'neediness' in the observing Subject when he engages with the auratic work of art. As a result, the Subject 'through the neediness implicit in its enigmaticalness . . . turns toward interpretative reason' (Adorno, 1997: 128 [AT 193]). Thereby, the auratic work of art evokes the desire to interpret.

In that aura evokes the desire to interpret, it is distinct from the Sublime. However, it is similar to the Sublime in that interpretation is not possible.

Like the Sublime, aura does in fact have a kind of indeterminacy that is 'beyond' comprehension. Adorno writes that the 'auratic element has its model in nature' (Adorno, 1997: 274 [AT 409]) and that nature, in aesthetic terms, has an 'essential indeterminateness' (Adorno, 1997: 70 [AT 110]). This indeterminateness makes interpretation impossible. (Aura is neither determinate nor can it have any determinate concepts applied to it). Aura is wholly uninterpretable.

The response in the observing Subject to aura is referred to by Adorno as mystery[16]. Mystery differs from puzzle. In puzzle we could apply concepts to the indeterminate 'representation', we simply could not judge or 'decide' which concept applied. In mystery, however, the phenomenon to be interpreted is indeterminate in a way such that *we can not apply concepts to it at all*. We can merely *sense* something that is indefinite in nature and sense that it lies beyond our reach. Mystery refers to the experience the Subject has when he engages with a work of art which is indeterminate in nature, such that he, on the one hand wants to interpret it, yet on the other hand is unable to do so. Aura is mysterious[17]. It both *evokes* and *refutes* interpretation.

This perplexing quality of aura whereby it both *evokes* and *refutes* interpretation is central to its nature as *a kind of distance*. It is because of the existence of the desire to interpret that the awareness of the impossibility of interpretation is produced – if there were no desire to interpret one would not be made aware of the impossibility of interpretation. The distance of aura depends, curiously enough, on this feature of a desire to traverse it. Through the desire to interpret the impossibility of ever being able to do so becomes apparent.

The distance of aura evokes an awareness that it can never be brought close.

RECEPTIVITY

The fact that aura is 'an appearance of distance however close an object might be' is of central importance. However, this central point spans out in two apparently different directions. First, as we have seen, this distance

[16] I refrain from quoting this passage in the main text as Adorno eludes directly to the concept of mystery only twice in *Aesthetic Theory* and in both instances the quotation would introduce new concepts which we will not actually explore until later. Adorno writes here that 'the enigma of artworks is their fracturedness. If transcendence were present in them, they would be mysteries, not enigmas' (Adorno, 1997: 126 [AT 191]).

[17] In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno depicts *aura* as 'the atmosphere of the artwork, that whereby *the nexus of the artwork's elements points beyond this nexus* and allows each individual element to point beyond itself' (Adorno, 1997: 274 [AT 409]). Earlier in the same text Adorno had written that *mystery* resided in the artwork that 'was not fractured', which is to say *the elements form a nexus*. Furthermore, mystery resides in that with an element of 'transcendence', which is the same as 'to point beyond itself' (Adorno, 1997: 126 [AT 191]). This qualifies aura as mysterious.

is important because it can never be overcome and evokes a sense that it can never be overcome. This matters because it relates to the autonomous nature of the auratic Object. This is something we will discuss at length in the next chapter. What concerns us here is a second point.

An 'appearance of distance' is also important because it relates to a kind of *proximity*: the distance of aura evokes a desire in the Subject to become proximate. Aura, Benjamin argues, 'draws [the Subject] into the distance' (Benjamin, 1973a: 196). He refers to this proximity again when he writes that 'the closeness which one may gain from its subject matter does not impinge upon the distance it retains in its appearance' (Benjamin, 1973b: 237).

Benjamin's claim that aura has the capacity to 'induce proximity through distance' indicates a paradoxical feature of aura: aura is, in essence, 'an appearance of distance', yet, this very distance, according to Benjamin, induces the observing Subject to go *close*. How does it do this? What is it about the distance that has the capacity to induce the desire for proximity?

In the act of aesthetic engagement when the mind is stimulated to interpret but unable to do so, the act of engagement, in fact, loses its interpretative component. The mind remains stimulated. As a result of the fact that the interpretative faculty is closed off the receptive faculty, in fact, increases[18]. That is to say, receptivity becomes predominant. 'Predominance' here means that receptivity is a greater proportion of the aesthetic act – and also that it is intensified in and of itself. The aesthetic engagement with the auratic work of art, in fact, becomes solely one of intensified receptivity.

It would be a misunderstanding to assume that, for Adorno, receptivity in aesthetic engagement is solely passive. It is passive in the sense that the Subject does not deploy certain mental faculties, namely those associated with conceptual thought – be it in the process of instrumental knowledge acquisition or in the process of interpreting works of art that Adorno terms puzzle. Receptivity is passive in the sense that the faculties of conceptualisation are not deployed at all.

However, receptivity in aesthetic experience is also active. The Subject is highly receptive, which is to say that the part of the mind that is concerned with the 'reception' of stimuli is highly active. Adorno indicates the intensity of this condition of receptivity to stimuli by likening it to the intensity of pain. He writes of 'pain in the face of beauty' (Adorno, 1997: 73 [AT 114]). One would have to be wholly passive, that is anaesthetised, not to feel pain. The activity of receptivity is the intense reception of stimuli. Adorno writes that 'pain appears in relation to works of art . . . in the pledged receptivity of the observer' (Adorno, 1997: 73 [AT 114]).

We can highlight this point through comparing a condition of intense receptivity with an instance of mere 'blankness' which is a more 'anaesthetised' condition. Although not outwardly very distinct, receptivity differs enormously from any condition of mere blankness. Consider two examples of

[18] See later in this chapter.

blankness offered by Adorno. First, there is the instance which occurs in Beckett's plays. Here a work of art, for instance, through the feature of repetition, induces a condition of blankness in the mind of the observing Subject. An element of the work of art has the effect of 'anaesthetising' the mind. This involves switching off both the interpretative and the receptive aspects of aesthetic engagement. The mind is then wholly passive. It should be remembered, that this however, is only one aspect of Beckett's plays. Another aspect, according to Adorno, generates an awareness of such passivity in the observing Subject and so stimulates the interpretative faculties[19]. This generates a critical awareness in the Subject of the condition of passivity which the play creates – we, however, are interested in the first aspect. A second example is one which Adorno takes from Benjamin's discussion of Baudelaire. This is the instance of the 'empty gaze' which, for Baudelaire, was indicative of modern blankness. Benjamin claims that blankness arises from an adaptation to the conditions of modern urban life. That the eye of the city dweller is overburdened with protective functions is obvious . . . there is no surrender to faraway things in the protective eye (Benjamin, 1973a: 187)[20].

Because it is 'sealed over' and defensive the gaze is not engaged with anything: beyond the protective veneer lies nothing. As such, it consists of a kind of passivity. That is a passivity of emptiness. In fact, for Adorno, true passivity is this emptiness. It is a dullness of the mind which results from *a lack of engagement with anything.*

We can compare this blankness with an instance of auratic receptivity which Adorno also quotes from Baudelaire. His example is of the Subject's gaze into the distance. This gaze is intensely receptive. It may look to something 'far away', but nevertheless does look to something[21] Furthermore, it is an act, not simply of receptivity, but of intense receptivity with that which is very 'far away'.

There is a further kind of passivity which we ought to distinguish from 'auratic receptivity'. This is not an instance which Adorno depicts at any length and is not therefore something that we ourselves will depict in detail. However, it must be noted that the kind of tranquillity associated with certain *kinds* of 'religious experience' or certain *aspects* of certain kinds of religious experience, namely that which is sometimes perceived as a 'spiritual calm' or 'meditative emptiness' is very distinct from the receptivity induced by aura. 'Spiritual calm' is not, necessarily, an engagement with something and is often precisely a lack of engagement. It can be simply a mood and Adorno is very keen to disassociate any kind of aesthetic experience from mood or mere emotional response on the part of the viewer. He writes that

[19] I am not claiming that there are not other aesthetic elements to Beckett's plays.

[20] Benjamin makes an analysis of the social factors responsible for this transition but it is the transition itself that is of interest to us.

[21] See Benjamin (1973a: 187) quoted above.

'the concept of mood . . . is insufficient . . . because it' turns art into 'a spectator's mode of reaction' (Adorno, 1997: 275 [AT 410]). If this 'emptying' of the mind was not merely a mood but was connected to some kind of 'transcendence' – in the sense of transcending out of, or away from, 'experience' – then this could also take us away from any kind of engagement. It must always be remembered that receptivity in aura, as with any kind of aesthetic receptivity, is an *act of engagement*. That is, it has the features of being both an act and of being directed towards something.

ABSORPTION

This state of intense and complete receptivity will be referred to through the notion of *absorption*. In order to display its features we will depict an example of absorption from Adorno's discussion of natural 'beauty'[22]. Before doing so we need to see emphatically – we have already alluded to it – that natural 'beauty' is or can be auratic because, as we know, absorption can occur through the Subject's engagement with that which is auratic. In fact, natural 'beauty' is one of the most important instances of aura. Adorno expresses it thus: 'precisely the auratic element has its model in nature' (Adorno, 1997: 274 [AT 409]). He reiterates the general point: 'Benjamin's concept of aura is important: "The concept of aura proposed . . . with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of natural ones"' (Adorno, 1997: 274 [AT 408]). Furthermore, he explicitly alludes to the compositional properties of aura, for instance, indeterminacy, with respect to nature. He writes: 'its essential indeterminateness is manifest in the fact that every part of nature . . . is able to become beautiful, luminous from within' (Adorno, 1997: 70 [AT 110]). Nature is auratic – note that this is not a digression from a discussion of art works, for it must be remembered that for Adorno nature as an Object of aesthetic experience has many properties similar to a work of art (Adorno, 1997: 61–100 [AT 97–153]).

The first trait of absorption that we will examine is that which is central to it. It is an experience that entails a particular kind of 'loss of self'. The nature of this 'loss of self' has certain features. First, there occurs a loss of the Subject's conceptual thought processes. We can see this in Adorno's discussion of absorption in nature. He writes of 'the weakness of thought in the face of natural beauty' (Adorno, 1997: 73 [AT 114]). With the loss of the Subject's faculties of thought also comes the loss of speech. Adorno expresses this when he writes: 'to feel nature, and most of all its silence' (Adorno, 1997: 69 [AT 108]): the receptivity to nature is not one that stimulates

[22] Adorno uses the term beauty to refer to his discussion of nature as an aesthetic phenomenon and to distinguish nature in such a context from other discussions of nature with respect to issues of survival etc. It is not to denote nature as being beautiful in the strictly Kantian sense that we have already discussed.

concepts or words but rather evokes silence. Adorno continues to explain that: 'the disinclination to talk about it is strongest where love of it survives' (Adorno, 1997: 69 [AT 108]). That is to say, those Subjects who are most receptive to the aura of nature and thus most able to be absorbed into it, experience the effect of its silencing capacity. In contrast Adorno explains: 'The "How beautiful!" at the sight of a landscape insults its mute language and reduces its beauty' (Adorno, 1997: 69 [AT 108]). The point is that the state of 'loss of self' that occurs in absorption is a state of silence: the part of the mind that generates thought and language is momentarily 'lost'.

To see the further dimensions to the state of 'loss of self' we need to deploy a further strand of theoretical analysis. We can deploy Freud's theory of the self. It should be noted, however, that we will not actually depict Freud's own theory of aesthetics as this is not especially illuminating for the concept of 'loss of self'. Rather we will deploy the aspects of Freud's theory which we have already elaborated upon in Chapters 1 and 2.

Freud's theory of the self, as we have seen, depicts the self as comprised of two essential aspects, the ego and the id. The ego, in *instinctual* terms, is concerned with self-preservation which it achieves, among other ways, through conceptualisation. In *structural* terms, the ego provides the boundary around the self. The act of aesthetic engagement that is absorption has particular consequences for the ego.

We have seen that in absorption the 'loss of self' means that the conceptual faculties of the mind are not deployed at all. Let us pursue certain consequences that arise as the result of this. In fact, the loss of the Subject's conceptual faculties entails a loss of involvement of the part of the self that is the ego. This loss of involvement of the ego includes not only its loss in instinctual terms, but also its loss in structural terms. In the experience of 'loss of self' the ego as structure is diminished. The ego as structure provided the boundary around the self. Therefore, it is the boundary around the self that is lost. The boundary around the self, as we have seen in Chapter 2, provided the demarcation between the self and that which is distinct from the self. That is to say, it provided the sense of the self as a distinct entity, which is further to say that it provided the very fundamental feature of an actual 'sense of self'. With its loss, therefore, comes a momentary loss of the Subject's sense of self. Adorno describes this connection between the loss of the two roles of the ego when he depicts 'the weakness of *thought* in the face of natural beauty' as being 'a weakness of the *subject*' (Adorno, 1997: 73 [AT 114]) – the silencing effect of nature is a silencing of the Subject himself. The 'loss of self' which occurs in the aesthetic experience of absorption involves the momentary loss of a 'sense of self'.

This may seem perplexing. How, in the aesthetic experience of absorption, is the Subject able to gain a sense of the work of art or nature if he has forgone, albeit momentarily, a 'sense of self'? The answer to this is that he can do so because the loss of self is only *partial*. This momentary 'loss of

self' is partial for it only entails the loss of *certain* faculties which are those of the ego. That is, it only consists of a loss of the ego. It retains however the aspects of the self that are associated with the id[23]. Here, Adorno differs from Freud because for Freud the loss of the ego would have to entail a regression. For Adorno this is not the case. This state of a loss of the ego and a retaining of the id is not merely a retaining of the most primitive part of the self, for Adorno, because the id for Adorno is like the ego for Freud, in that it has varying degrees of sophistication. In the experience of 'loss of self' in absorption the aspects of the self associated with the id are highly stimulated and deployed at their greatest sophistication upon the work of art.

Although absorption entails a 'loss of self' which includes a loss of all conceptual faculties and a loss of a 'sense of self', it involves the greatest deployment of the id aspects of the self. Thus the condition of 'loss of self' in absorption is more accurately construed as a partial loss of self. We will explore the psychological details of this state later in Chapter 8.

Adorno describes this loss of self as being like an 'involuntary contract': 'involuntarily and unconsciously, the observer enters into a contract with the work [of art or nature]' (Adorno, 1997: 73 [AT 114]). He uses the simile of a contract because although the 'loss of self' involves the loss of the central aspect of selfhood (the 'conscious' thought processes and a sense of self) it also entails something being gained – the most intensely *pleasurable* experience of the work of art. Consider that the loss of the boundary around the self means that the Subject is no longer *separated* from the work of art. Adorno describes this loss of separation as resulting in an 'immersion' of the Subject into the work or art. He writes of 'the consciousness that immerses itself lovingly in [a work of art]' (Adorno, 1997: 70 [AT 110]). By 'immersion' Adorno refers to the process whereby the Subject is, in fact, momentarily 'at one' or united with the work of art. In losing the boundary that separates him from the work of art the Subject becomes 'united' with it. This, Adorno claims, is a deeply pleasurable experience. Therefore, although the Subject loses a 'sense of self' he gains the most intensely pleasurable 'sense of the work of art'.

The state of 'loss of self' involves a loss of the boundary around the self and a resultant loss of the sense of self. The loss of the boundary also involves a loss of a sense of separation from the work of art that the self is engaged with. It thereby involves a momentary unification with the work of art. This unification entails a particular kind of *proximity* to the work of art.

[23] This appears to be a departure from Freud. For Freud, the loss of the ego involves the loss of the psychological entity of the self, for the ego holds together the id. The id functions only with respect to selfhood through the existence of the (mediating) role of the ego. However, Adorno does actually concur with Freud on this particular point, but in a distinct way. To understand how, we need to view Adorno's conception of dialectics in relation to the self. We will do this later in the thesis. For now, however, we will (hypothetically) separate ego and id in order to understand the phenomenon of absorption.

Aura is an appearance of distance that induces absorption. Absorption involves a 'loss of self', an important aspect of which is unification with the work of art: this unification is a kind of proximity. We can now see why Adorno follows Benjamin in claiming that *aura induces proximity through distance*.

We have now offered an account of the aesthetic phenomenon of aura by providing an analysis of the three features of: *an appearance of distance*; *pointing beyond the work's giveness*; and *inducing proximity through distance*. These refer to a quality in aura of a kind of distance which is a distance of indeterminacy. This both evokes and refutes interpretation. The result of this is a condition of extreme receptivity known as absorption. Absorption results in the unification of the observing Subject with the Object of art, and this constitutes an extreme kind of proximity.

This analysis gives us the foundation from which to proceed to look for a form of aesthetic knowledge acquisition.

6

Knowledge Acquisition

An Aesthetic Form

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we develop the idea of an aesthetic kind of knowledge acquisition. We develop this from the notion of absorption.

First we extend the notion of *aura* to encompass Objects beyond the mere work of art. We thereby also can extend the concept of *absorption* to encompass the Subject's engagement with Objects beyond the mere work of art. Second, we examine Adorno's notion of knowledge acquisition. As we have seen in Chapter 3, Adorno's notion of what constitutes knowledge acquisition, is an act of engagement between the Subject and the Object which consists of two features. From his Hegelian inheritance, knowledge consists of an act of *identification* which occurs through the *representative system.*[1] Through providing an account of absorption as identification and representation we arrive at our aesthetic kind of knowledge acquisition.

AURATIC OBJECTS

Before beginning our discussion of the ways in which absorption may be a form of knowledge acquisition, it is important to make the point that absorption is a form of engagement with the Object that is not simply limited to works of art. As it is aura that evokes absorption, to show the extended

[1] Note that the 'cognitive' process of identification, in Adorno's use, is motivated by a psychological impulse and furthermore, it contains a psychological element. All 'epistemological' processes have this psychological element for Adorno. Adorno is against epistemology as distinct from psychology. He systematically refuses to seperate these. See Adorno, T. (1982a). Further, following his Hegelian-Marxist inheritence, he also refuses to distinguish individual epistemological processes from overall historical development. Thus, his notion of identification includes, on the one hand, elements of psychological identification between the Subject and the Object and, on the other hand, the historical development wherein a greater identification between Subject and Object (in the manner that Hegel suggests) is aimed for.

relevance of absorption, we need to show that aura can be a property of Objects beyond works of art[2].

In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno claims, following Benjamin, that aura can indeed be found in Objects more generally. We have already seen in Chapter 5 that aura extends to *natural* Objects: Adorno writes that 'Benjamin's concept of aura is important: "The concept of aura proposed . . . with reference to historical objects may usefully be illustrated with reference to the aura of *natural* ones"' and Adorno also reiterates, 'precisely this auratic element has its model in nature' (Adorno, 1997: 274 [AT 409]).

There is a further area wherein aura can occur. Adorno alludes to 'the concept of aura . . . with reference to *historical* objects'. For Adorno, Objects from the past are imbued with aura which is to say that Objects can be auratic by virtue of being old. Note that this is a separate point from claiming that Objects *in* the past were auratic to the viewers of the past. This, however, is a point that Adorno also makes. He writes: 'There may have been a time long ago when this expressive quality of the objective world generally was perceived by the human sensory apparatus' (Adorno, 1984: 164 [AT 171])[3]. Here Adorno suggests that there was a time in the past when Objects *in general* possessed the property of aura. He does not, however, provide a clear sense of the notion of 'objects in general' – whether this means that in the past all Objects were potentially auratic[4].

We can however deduce the following. Objects that can be auratic in the modern era, besides works of art, include natural and historical Objects. In the past it is clear that Objects more generally (although how generally is not clear) could be experienced as auratic.

As aura evokes absoprtion, these Objects beyond works of art such as natural and historical Objects can evoke absorption.

IDENTIFICATION

Bearing in mind that absorption extends to Objects more generally, we will now build a picture of Adorno's second kind of knowledge acquisition, with

[2] It should be noted that art works have 'cognitive' aspects, or aspects related to thought, beyond the auratic element – which, of course, may or may not be present in them. However, these other 'cognitive' or thought-associated aspects of art relate to the process of interpretation which deploys the same faculty of the mind as does conceptualisation. We are interested here in looking for a different kind of engagement between the Subject and the Object and thus are not interested in those 'cognitive' aspects of art that simply deploy interpretative faculties.

[3] I have used the old translation of *Aesthetic Theory* at this point because it more eloquently alludes to the point we wish to make. There is no disparity of actual content with the new translation, which reads: 'art is imitation exclusively as the imitation of an objective expression, remote from psychology, of which sensorium was perhaps once conscious in the world and which subsists only in artworks' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 171]).

[4] This is a point which is derived from Benjamin.

reference to Objects as discussed above. We begin with the most important of the two dimensions of knowledge acquisition (which were, recall, identification and representation), namely *identification.*

For Adorno (following Hegel), the acquisition of knowledge consists of a peculiar blend of *activity* and *passivity* within the Subject. It always entails a *raising of Subjectivity* to its highest form so that knowledge acquisition is a combination of the *highest forms* of both *passivity* and *activity*[5].

Furthermore, for Adorno, this raising of Subjectivity to the highest forms occurs when the Subject makes himself identical with the Object. That is to say, knowledge acquisition is founded upon the Subject becoming *identical* with the Object[6].

We can see these ideas forming the basis of Adorno's conception of enlightenment knowledge acquisition. Adorno holds that the enlightenment defines knowledge acquisition relative to the concept of identification[7]. Identification in the enlightenment takes a particular form, for Adorno, one whereby the Subject identifies the Object through his own priorly conceived concepts[8]. In so doing, Adorno claims, the Subject makes the Object like himself. This, Adorno believes, means that for the enlightenment, knowledge acquisition is a form of intensified subjectivity (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 18 [DA 34]).

Let us now examine the notion of absorption as a potential kind of identification. First, can absorption be considered a condition wherein Subjectivity is raised to its highest level?

We have seen that absorption is a condition of intense receptivity on the part of the Subject towards the Object. As we have seen in Chapter 5 this intense receptivity requires a high level of 'active-passivity'. This state of active-passivity can constitute subjectivity raised to a high level and, what is more, to a level, compatible with, if distinct from, the mental activity involved in enlightenment identification.

Can such a condition of active-passivity be considered as a form of identification? The answer to this is apparently 'no'. Although satisfying the first condition of identification, namely intensified subjectivity, it is difficult

[5] For more detail on this, see Hegel's Lectures on Aesthetics and also, of course, *Phenomenology of Spirit.*

[6] This notion of knowledge acquisition is so widely disseminated throughout Adorno's work that a particular reference is inappropriate. However, a good elucidation of these points is in Adorno (1973: 3–57 [ND 13–66]).

[7] Adorno's view of identification is one wherein identification of the enlightenment form of making the Object like the Subject entails a representative system. Note that Adorno is not careful to distinguish between conceptual and linguistic identification, because for him, words are categories in the same way that concepts are and thus, for Adorno, the features of linguistic identification are the same as for conceptual. Strictly speaking, Adorno would view language as involving a less precise form of representation than concepts.

[8] We have given a more detailed depiction of this in Chapter 3.

to see how absorption can satisfy the second condition of identification whereby the Subject makes the Object identical with himself. Consider that absorption is a state of the predominance of the mental faculty of receptivity and as such involves the total loss of the interpretative faculties. The interpretative faculties include the conceptual ones so that their loss encompasses a loss of the latter. It was only through the conceptual apparatus that the Subject was able to make the Object identical with himself (he made the Object like his priorly constituted conceptual system). As absorption lacks the conceptual faculties it thereby lacks the capacity for the Subject to make the Object identical with himself.

A second angle, from which we can reinforce this point, is through a consideration of the notion of the 'loss of self'. The process of absorption entails, as we saw in the last chapter, the loss of a 'sense of self' which consists, more precisely, of the 'loss of the ego'. It is the ego that holds the mental faculties of control and discrimination which constitute the process of enlightenment identification. Absorption's loss of self therefore involves a loss of the faculties of control and discrimination and so, viewed in this way too, it cannot be identificatory. Absorption appears to lack the capacity to be a kind of identification.

However, our argument that absorption cannot be a form of identification rests upon an assumption which we can see in the following way: the notion of identification we have so far discussed is only a particular kind of identification; that is, it does not encompass the category of identification in general. Its particularity is twofold: first, it involves the overcoming of the separation between the Subject and the Object in an *active* way; and second it involves the Subject achieving identification by making the Object *like* himself. We have seen that there is another possibility within the first criterion, namely there exists a second form of raised subjectivity which is not *active*, but 'active-*passivity*'. We will now see that there is also a second possibility within the second criterion – a second possible way for the Subject to become identical with the Object. To see how, in absorption, the Subject can become identical with the Object, consider the observing Subject's relationship to the particular kind of auratic Object, the work of art.

Adorno is adamant in emphasising that, in general, in aesthetic experience, the relationship of the Subject to the art work is one which precludes the idea of the Subject 'devouring' the work of art: 'the relationship to art was not that of its physical devouring' (Adorno, 1997: 13 [AT 27]). What does Adorno mean by 'devouring'? Devouring is in fact a kind of 'incorporation' of the Object into the self. What is interesting to us about this is what we will refer to as 'the direction of movement'.

Incorporation involves a 'direction of movement' whereby the Subject 'brings the Object over to himself'. This is also the same 'direction of

movement' to be found in enlightenment identification. In contrast, for Adorno, in (genuine) aesthetic experience, this is not the definitive 'direction of movement'. The Subject does not bring the Object of art into himself. In the most intense kind of aesthetic experience – absorption – the Subject does not bring the Object over at all. In fact, in absorption, it is the *Subject* himself who is *incorporated into the Object*. Adorno expresses this incorporation as a kind of 'disappearing' of the Subject into the Object. He writes, with respect to the instance of art, that 'the relationship to art was not that of its physical devouring, on the contrary, the *beholder disappeared* into the material' (Adorno, 1997: 13 [AT 27])[9].

We can see that absorption involves the 'disappearance' (or 'incorporation') of the Subject into the work of art. The Subject's 'incorporation' into the Object of art, in fact, overcomes the separation between the Subject and Object. Overcoming the separation between the Subject and the Object was the criterion of identification. Because absorption overcomes the separation between the Subject and the Object, then it can be considered to be a form of identification.

Compare this with enlightenment identification. In general, the separation between the Subject and the Object is bridged through a process of identification (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 11, 15 [DA 27, 31–32]). In the enlightenment this gap is bridged through a form of positive identification. The Subject invents a series of logical concepts and assimilates the 'Object' to these concepts. For example, he would have a concept, 'lake', which would locate the expanse of water within a set of other concepts, for instance 'water', 'landscape'. All the aspects of what constitutes a lake, its parameters, size, content, shape, etc. would be experienced through these concepts. The lake is experienced through being assimilated into man's categorising system (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 10 [DA 26–27]). That is, the Object is made like the Subject[10].

In absorption a form of positive identification also occurs. However, this is of a very different kind. In absorption rather than relating to the lake through a series of concepts, the lake is experienced with the most extreme receptivity. The Subject becomes incorporated into the lake. In this way the Subject becomes like the Object of the lake. In absorption there occurs therefore a form of identification which consists, not of the Subject making the Object like himself, but of *the Subject becoming like the Object*.

For Adorno *there exist two forms of identification*. The second form is the aesthetic one of absorption which consists in subjectivity raised to its highest level, not in terms of mental activity but in terms of 'active-passivity'.

[9] My emphasis.

[10] Of course, this claim itself is metaphorical because the lake does not actually become 'like' me – it does not wear clothes, read books, etc.

It entails identification not by the Subject making the Object like himself, but by *the Subject becoming like the Object*[11].

A KIND OF KNOWING

Let us now address the issue of how this kind of identification is a 'form of knowing' the Object. Recall from Chapter 3 that for Adorno, knowledge acquisition consists of two features. First, the act of identification wherein the separation between the Subject and the Object are momentarilly overcome. This identification has a psycholological and a historical dimension to it as well as an epistemological one. Second, it involves the use of a representative system of concepts.

In enlightenment knowledge acquisition, identification is of the nature wherein the separation between Subject and Object is overcome by the Object being made like the Subject. Further, identification is facilitated by the 'representational system' which occurs in the form of the conceptual system.

In absorption, an equally valid form of identification occurs, that is to say, one that has all the same features as enlightenment identification (for instance, a psychological and a historical dimension). Further, it contains the same momentary overcoming of the separation between the Subject and the Object. In fulfilling these criteria, for Adorno, it has some properties of knowledge acquisition. We can see this by comparing knowledge and art.

Art has both a *representative* dimension and a *non-representative* dimension. In the specific instance of the aesthetic of aura, art has only a non-representative element. So too, do we find these qualities in knowledge acquisition. Knowledge acquisition can have both a representative and a *non-representative element.* In the specific instance of absorption, knowledge acquisition has only a *non-representative element.*

Enlightenment knowledge acquisition has a strong representative (conceptual) element. Absorption contrasts to enlightenment knowledge acquisition. Absorption has no representational element at all, and thus, no conceptual element. However, just as non-representative, non-conceptual art is valid as art, so too for Adorno, *is non-representative, non-conceptual knowledge valid as knowledge.* Absorption reflects the most extreme instance of the non-representative kind of knowledge acquisition.

For Adorno, the process of knowledge acquisition must contain the act of identification involving the momentary overcoming of the separation between the Subject and the Object. However, acts of engagement do exist with 'cognitive' properties that involve no representations. As concepts are forms of representation, then, no representation also entails no concepts.

[11] Note that this form of identification is first, a form of identification of the same validity as enlightenment identification. (1) it has a psychological component. (2) it has a historical component. (3) it entails an act of overcoming the separation between Subject and Object.

For Adorno, acts of identification between Subject and Object do occur with 'cognitive' properties, that do not entail a conceptual element.

Absorption, for Adorno, is an equally valid form of knowledge acquisition to the enlightenment form: It has two striking differences. First, it entails the Subject 'becoming like' the Object. Secondly, it is not facilitated by the conceptual system[12].

What kind of way of knowing the Object is it for the Subject to be absorbed into it?

We can begin by focussing upon the preliminary feature of absorption that we discussed in Chapter 5. This is the (psychological) feature of a (partial) 'loss of self'. We know that this momentary (partial) 'loss of self' sets absorption apart from the enlightenment form of identification. Consider the following passage where Adorno discusses this as a 'disappearance of the Subject'. 'It counts among the most profound insights of Hegel's aesthetics that . . . it recognized . . . and located the subjective *success* of the artwork in the *disappearance of the subject* in relation to the artwork. Only by way of this disappearance . . . does the artwork *break through* merely subjective reason' (Adorno, 1997: 57 [AT 92])[13].

Adorno identifies the loss of self as the trait whereby aesthetic engagement is distinct from, and indeed 'breaks through', the engagement involved in 'Subjective reason' (in our terms enlightenment knowledge acquisition[14]). The loss of self, for Adorno, is essential in 'breaking through' any possible enlightenment form of identification because, through losing the self, the Subject loses the capacity to make the Object like himself: he loses the capacity for enlightenment identification. He thereby opens up the possibility for a different kind of identification – absorption.

[12] As will become clear later, neither of these two forms of knowledge acquisition, that is neither the enlightenment one nor absorption, can exist without the other. This dependent dialectical relationship constitutes the positive dialectic and is *in opposition to* the negative dialectic between enlightenment and myth.

[13] My emphasis. Note that in the following quotes from Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, I am not careful to distinguish between the *activity* of art-making and art-reception with respect to the issue of identification. The reason for this is that although there are many distinctions between art-making and art-reception, these do not pertain to the act of *identification* between the Subject and the Object of art. For Adorno, following Hegel, the kind of identification between the Subject and the Object in art-making and in art-reception are the same. See Hegel, 'The Work of Art as Product of Human *Activity*' [my emphasis] in Hegel, (1993), pp. 30–45. It is for this reason that Hegel, and Adorno following him, place so much emphasis upon the activity of reception in art. The artist making art must have the same intensely active receptivity to the Object he experiences aesthetically before 'transcribing it'. In this intense activity of receptivity, the artist momentarilly becomes absorbed into the Object he later 'depicts'. In just this same intense activity of receptivity, the audience to the artist's creation (his work of art) becomes momentarilly absorbed into that.

[14] We have already explained in earlier chapters that Adorno fails to distinguish between notions of cognition and reason so that we have used the term knowledge acquisition to encompass the broad nature of Adorno's notions.

Adorno also identifies the (partial) 'loss of self' as an indication of the success of the Subject's act of aesthetic engagement with the artwork. The loss of self is not merely a means to 'break through' enlightenment identification, but is a trait of the second kind of identification in its own right. In fact, the phenomenon of a loss of self is at the centre of the second way of 'knowing the Object'.

Through the loss of self the Subject can gain experience of the Object in a particular way. The Subject can 'become the Object'. 'Becoming the Object' is a kind of mental experience which is more than the Subject simply imagining himself to be the Object. It takes the form of the Subject's own habitual 'sense of self' momentarily being forgone and replaced by a 'sense of the Object'. What does it mean to have a sense of the Object?

Adorno explains that in what we have termed, the act of absorption, the Subject experiences the auratic Object *as if* it had a sense of self. He writes: 'thus the rhinoceros, that mute animal, seems to say: "I am a rhinoceros"'[15] (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 171–172]). The Subject's 'sense of the Object' is linked to the 'appearance' of this 'selfhood' in the Object.

Adorno goes further than this and argues that the auratic Object is not merely experienced *as if* it had a selfhood, but that the auratic Object *actually does* have a kind of 'selfhood'. Adorno writes of 'a selfhood not first excised by identification thought' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 171]). This is an unusual claim so let us depict the features of this so called 'selfhood' of auratic Objects. The first point that Adorno makes is that this 'selfhood' differs quite markedly from that of the Subject: it is more primitive. Adorno writes of this in a discussion of art works where he claims that: 'art works . . . reverberate the protohistory of subjectivity' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 172]). Adorno uses the notion 'protohistory' for the kind of 'selfhood' associated with auratic Objects – this term certainly suggests that this kind of 'selfhood' is indeed primitive[16]. Adorno offers further evidence of the distinctness of this kind of 'selfhood' from the Subject's. He writes: 'however much the [auratic Object[17]] resembles the subject, however much the impulses are those of the subject, they are at the same time *apersonal*, participating in the integrative power of the ego without ever becoming identical with it' (Adorno, 1997: 113 [AT 172]). The selfhood of auratic Objects is not the same as that of the Subject. It is more primitive.

[15] Note that although an animal seems a more obvious example of this point than an art work Adorno does go on to discuss this property with respect to art works.

[16] There may be further differences between the nature of the 'selfhood' of distinct kinds of auratic Object, for instance between artworks and natural Objects. However, the overall feature of a distinct and more primitive kind of selfhood than that of the Subject is true for all instances of aura.

[17] Adorno actually writes 'the expressed' – for 'the expressed' we read 'auratic Object' – we will see why below.

Having seen that Adorno depicts the 'selfhood' of auratic Objects as distinct from the Subject, let us go on to examine the features that are similar, that is to say, the features that lead him to depict these Objects as having a selfhood at all. Consider the following passage, which Adorno refers to, (Adorno, 1997: 112, 274–275 [AT 172, 408–409]), where Benjamin writes that the

> experience of aura rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return (Benjamin, W., 1973a: 184).

This passage refers to a quality in the auratic Object whereby it can in some sense relate to us: it can 'look back'. This actually relates to two features of the auratic Object. First, Adorno, following Benjamin, claims that the Object has the ability to 'communicate' in some sense to the Subject. This is one feature of the Object's selfhood: it can *communicate*. Second, the Object not only can 'communicate' in some way, it also can 'look back', which is to say that it has some awareness of the Subject looking at it. This is a further quality of the Object's 'selfhood': it has *awareness*.

Auratic Objects also have some kind of *meaning*. Adorno writes that 'to perceive the aura [of an Object] . . . requires recognising . . . a meaning' (Adorno, 1997: 274–275 [AT 408–409]). We will discuss this in more detail later.

A final feature of the auratic Object's 'selfhood' is *autonomy*. That is to say, as with all genuine works of art, the auratic Object's qualities are its own. It exists 'for itself' and not merely for the observing Subject's pleasure or indeed as a 'message' for his benefit: 'works [of art] exist as they do in themselves and not for the sake of the observer' (Adorno, 1997: 13 [AT 27]). Adorno talks of this quality in auratic works of art, natural and historical Objects (and Objects viewed in the past) (Adorno, 1997: 275 [AT 308–309]).

The auratic Object, be it a natural Object or a work of art (or indeed any kind of auratic Object) has a kind of 'selfhood' which is not of the same nature as that of the Subject. It is more primitive. However, like the 'selfhood' of the Subject it consists of a capacity to communicate, an awareness, a kind of 'meaning' and an autonomy. Adorno sometimes describes this 'selfhood' as a kind of 'presence'.

When the Subject gains a 'sense of the Object' he gains a 'sense of the Object's selfhood'.

The gaining of the Object's 'selfhood' occurs in a particular way. In absorption the auratic Object actually communicates this 'selfhood' to us. We have seen that Adorno talks about the auratic Object as being able to 'look'. For instance, he writes (with respect to art) of 'the gaze of artworks' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 172]). He further discusses their ability to

'speak' – for instance, he refers to (auratic) 'art's character of eloquence', and, in reference to auratic Objects more generally, he writes of a 'sensitivity to the . . . *language of objects*', explicitly depicting the auratic Object as having 'its own voice' (Adorno, 1997: 275 [AT 409]).

For Adorno, in what we have termed absorption, auratic Objects can *communicate*: the act of absorptive identification consists not just of the Subject's receptivity but also of the Object's 'communication' to the Subject. We need to see in what this communication consists. The first point is that auratic Objects do not communicate through *concepts*. We can see that this is the case since the overall act of absorptive identification is aesthetic such that whatever the mode of communication of the auratic Object it must be aesthetic, and, as we know, for Adorno: 'art militates against the concept' (Adorno, 1997: 96 [AT 148]). In fact the auratic Object's communication is non-propositional in every sense. Adorno writes that 'any claim that this is how nature speaks cannot be judged with assurance; for its language does not make judgements' (Adorno, 1997: 73 [AT 115])[18].

Second, Adorno goes further and argues that the communication of auratic Objects is entirely 'non-significative'. In fact, he writes explicitly of a 'nonsignificative language' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 171–172]). 'The true language of art is mute, and its muteness takes priority over poetry's significative element' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 172]). This notion of the non-significative, for Adorno, encompasses the idea that the auratic Object's communication does not involve any signs, symbols or indeed any kind of images at all. This includes, for Adorno, the fact that the auratic Object's form of communication is entirely *non-linguistic*. It can not even involve any sounds however primitive or guttural these might be. Benjamin captures this point when he refers to this language of auratic Objects as 'the dumb and nameless language of things' (Benjamin, 1974: 151). Adorno, in turn, refers to this 'dumb and nameless language' as the 'true language of art'. Adorno writes, as we have seen, that 'the true language of art is mute' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 172]). Auratic Objects have a capacity to communicate. This communication is however non-propositional and indeed 'mute'.

Does Adorno provide any positive depiction of the way in which auratic Objects communicate? He claims, first, that 'compared to significative language, the language of expression is older' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 172]). So we see first that it is a primitive language.

Second, we see in the same quotation, that it is a form of 'expression'. Adorno uses the term 'expression' in this context to indicate non-significative communication.

Third, consider the full version of our earlier quotation: 'The true language of art is mute, and its muteness takes priority over poetry's significative element, which in music too is not altogether lacking. That aspect of Etruscan vases that most resembles speech depends most likely on

[18] Note that 'judgements' is also translated as 'propositions' (Adorno, 1984: 109).

their . . . selfhood not first excised by identification thought from the interdependence of entities' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 171]). In a further passage he writes 'art works bear expression . . . where they reverberate the protohistory of subjectivity' (Adorno, 1997:112 [AT 172]). Adorno explains the auratic Object's communication as a kind of 'expression' of *selfhood*.

Fourth, consider the previously omitted section from our earlier quotation. It runs: 'That aspect of Etruscan vases that most resembles speech depends most likely on their *Here I am* and *This is what I am'* (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 171]). By a non-significative expression of 'here I am', Adorno means to say that the Object of art communicates its 'selfhood' *directly*.

Finally, we can visualise the nature of the auratic Object's communication. It consists of a 'Here I am' and a 'This is what I am'. Adorno gives a further example with respect to music: 'Schubert's resignation has its locus not in the purported mood of his music, nor in how he was feeling – as if the music could give a clue to this – but in the *It is thus* that it announces with the gesture of letting oneself fall' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 171]). The music communicates its 'selfhood' directly in an 'it is thus'.

For Adorno, the auratic Object communicates in a primitive, direct expression of selfhood. This is a 'This is what I am'. Adorno writes: 'This is its expression. Its quintessence is art's character of eloquence, fundamentally distinct from language as its medium' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 171]).

In absorption the Subject experiences the auratic Object's communication of its 'selfhood'. He does this in a particular way. Through intense receptivity he 'lets himself go'. He 'loses his own self'. Through this temporary loss he momentarily experiences the selfhood of the Object – communicated by the Object itself. In fact, his own sense of self is replaced. It is replaced by the 'selfhood' of the Object. Consider again Adorno's passage about music: 'Schubert's resignation has its locus . . . in the It is thus that it announces with the gesture of *letting oneself fall*' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 171])[19]. The Subject in 'letting himself fall' is letting go of his sense of self which the music is *replacing* with its own 'sense of self'.

Absorption

	Subject	Object
State of selfhood	Partial loss of selfhood	Retains selfhood
State of communication	Receptivity	Expression
Result	——————>	
Subject's selfhood replaced by that of Object.		

[19] My emphasis.

The 'loss of self' that occurs in absorptive identification allows us to be receptive to the fact that the Object has a sense of self; to be receptive to the Object's own communication of that 'selfhood' and to momentarily experience the nature of that selfhood instead of our own habitual sense of self. This provides a way of knowing the Object which is of the same nature as the way in which the Subject habitually knows his own 'sense of self'. His own feeling of 'I am thus' is replaced temporarily by a feeling of the Object's 'I am thus'. Absorptive identification gives a kind of knowledge of the Object of the form of the 'I am thus' of the Object[20].

ABSORPTION AND MYTHIC PROJECTION

We can gain further clarification of absorption as 'a way of knowing the Object' by comparing it, on the one hand, with mythic 'identification', that is projection, and, on the other hand, with enlightenment identification. First, let us compare absorption with the former.

Before doing so, we need to clarify what we mean by 'mythic'. In Chapter 1 we depicted the decline of the enlightenment through various distinct stages, one of which was 'Fantasy'. 'Fantasy' was similar, we explained in Chapter 2, to Adorno's notion of classical myth. Its similarity was twofold. First, in both fantasy and myth the Subject engaged with the Object (primarily) through that aspect of the self which Freud termed the id. Second, the Subject related to the Object in both instances through projection. Because of these two similarities we grouped fantasy and classical myth together under the single notion of classical myth itself. When we speak of myth, we therefore speak of fantasy and classical myth.

We can now compare classical myth with absorption. For Adorno, absorption, despite a certain similarity – one which has been overly emphasised by commentators – is by definition distinct from the kind of 'identification' that occurs in classical myth. The similarity which absorption bears to myth is that both involve the engagement of the mental faculties of the id upon the Object. We have outlined in Chapters 1 to 3 how this mental faculty is deployed in relation to the Object in myth and we have outlined in Chapter 5 how it is deployed in absorption. There is, more importantly, a crucial distinction between the processes of 'identification' in absorption and in classical myth. This is a distinction which commentators have failed to discern.

Let us remind ourselves of the concept of projection which occurs in classical myth by construing it in terms of being a form of 'identification'. In classical myth the separation between the Subject and the Object is 'bridged' through an attempt to make the Object like the Subject, as with

[20] There are obvious connections here between Adorno's and Benjamin's perspectives and earlier forms of mysticism.

enlightenment identification. However, in myth what actually occurs is a straightforward process of *projection*. The Subject projects his internal fears and desires onto the external Object. He then performs the act of identification with these projections rather than the Object itself. The Object thereby appears as the Subject's own fears and desires, that is as something demonic or divine.

We can compare projection with absorption. In fact, this has frequently been done by commentators, who often equate the Subject's absorption into the auratic image with projection. For instance, Ferris writes 'anthropomorphism is the experience of aura' (Ferris, 1996: 22). Ferris quotes, as evidence, Benjamin's by now familiar passage as indicating a kind of anthropomorphism on the part of the observing Subject (Ferris, 1996: 22):

> Experience of aura rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return (Benjamin, W., 1973a: 184).

For Ferris, Benjamin's passage is a clear admission of the 'anthropomorphic' nature of what we have depicted as absorption (which for Ferris would simply be the experience of 'aura'). For Ferris 'anthropomorphism' is basically understood as animism. It consists of the 'projection' of human characteristics onto the external world, or Object. Ferris' notion of 'anthropomorphism', like that of other commentators, basically refers to the animism which we have discussed as the projection of myth. Ferris arrives at the notion that the experience of aura is a kind of animism because of Benjamin's reference to the notion of the relationship between the Subject and the Object being conceived of as similar to an inter-Subjective one. However, this is mistaken. The (genuine) experience of aura, that is absorption, differs from mythic projection in the following important ways.

First, although Benjamin does indeed refer to the relationship of the Subject to the inanimate Object in 'auratic experience' as being similar to that between two Subjects, this does not automatically make such a relationship 'anthropomorphic'. In mythic projection it is certainly the case that the Subject relates to the Object as though it were another Subject, which means he identifies not the Object but his own fears and fantasies, that is his own Subjectivity. As such, in mythic projection, the Object is not, in fact, identified at all. This is to say that no genuine act of identification has occurred. Absorption by contrast involves no projection of Subjectivity onto the Object. It involves the deployment of Subjectivity in return for the deepest engagement with the *Object* itself. In mythic projection there is a loss of the Object, in absorption there is the deepest 'gaining' of it.

Second, the notion of 'selfhood' in relation to auratic Objects is distinct from the kind of 'selfhood' deployed in animism. In animism, Objects are

imbued with a human selfhood. They can feel, think, speak, and act as human beings do. For instance, they can become angry and generate storms of destruction, etc. The selfhood with which Objects are imbued in animism is a fully-fledged *human* selfhood. Objects have all the properties of the Subject: his emotions, thoughts, cultural attributes, ability to act and speak. In fact, these are magnified many times over, so that the selfhood is a kind of 'superhuman' selfhood. In contrast, the selfhood with which auratic Objects are imbued in absorption is not at all like a human selfhood. In absorption, auratic Objects do not feel, act or think at all and they do not speak in any human way whatsoever. The auratic Object's selfhood, then, is more like a kind of *presence* than a fully-fledged human selfhood.

Absorption and mythic projection have a further important distinction which is fundamental to the status of absorption as a 'way of knowing'. In mythic projection subjectivity is not raised to a high level – it remains low. In absorption, in contrast, Subjectivity is raised to its highest level.

Fourth, the way of knowing the Object in myth and absorption differs. In myth the 'direction' of identification is of the form of making the Object like the Subject. The Object is known through an image that makes it 'like us'. In absorption, in contrast, the 'direction' of identification is of the Subject 'becoming' the Object.

Finally, in mythic projection the Object is known through a series of images, be they divine or demonic. In absorption, in contrast, no images whatsoever are involved. The Object is known *directly* through its own 'selfhood'.

The point is that mythic projection is an unsophisticated way of knowing the Object. Absorption, in contrast, is sophisticated: The Subject engages with the Object in its own terms and through its own language so that the very 'selfhood' of the Object is known.

ABSORPTION AND ENLIGHTENMENT IDENTIFICATION

Let us now compare absorption with enlightenment identification.

First, enlightenment identification is distinct from the projection of myth in that it is an actual form of identification. It does not simply project fantasies and fears onto the Object. Like myth, however, it is a form of identification that relates to the Object through the Subject's concerns. It identifies the Object through an intention, an intention to deploy it for the Subject's use. As such the Object is known in terms of its use as a tool or instrument. In absorption, in contrast, the Object is related to entirely without reference to any *Subjective intention*, including any intended use.

Second, related to this, in enlightenment identification the Object is known as, in Adorno's words, a 'thinglike' entity: there is no possibility of the Object having any kind of 'selfhood' or 'presence' – with the corresponding

traits of autonomy etc. This contrasts with absorption's way of knowing the Object through its own autonomous *selfhood*.

Third, although Subjectivity is raised to its highest point in both enlightenment identification and absorption, in the former this is entirely a mentally *active* condition whereas in the latter it is a form of *active-passivity*.

Fourth, we know that in enlightenment identification the Subject makes the Object like himself whereas in absorption *the Subject becomes like the Object*.

Finally, enlightenment identification is more like myth with respect to the fact that it entails knowing the Object in a significative way – through concepts. Whilst these are more sophisticated than the *significative* imagery of animism, using concepts to identify the Object makes enlightenment identification closer to myth, in this respect, than absorption which involves no images of either a highly sophisticated or primitive kind.

To compare absorption with enlightenment identification is very different from comparing it with myth, because mythic projection is, according to Adorno, basically a false form of 'identification'. It is, in fact, for Adorno, a regressive version of enlightenment identification, that is, it is a regressive form of trying to make the Object like the Subject. To compare absorption with mythic projection is to compare it with a failure. It is also to defend it as a valid kind of identification against claims by commentators that absorption is 'anthropomorphic' like mythic projection. In contrast, to compare absorption with enlightenment identification is to compare it with, what for Adorno, is a potential success. enlightenment identification is a valid form of identification in its own right. In comparing these two our aim is less to defend absorption than to highlight its distinctive traits.

Let us therefore make a further set of comparisons whereby we can illuminate more specific traits of absorption. We will make a comparison in terms of the features we depicted in Chapter 3 as being definitive of enlightenment identification: control, discrimination and instrumental meaning.

First consider the property of control: enlightenment identification consists of the Subject controlling the Object. In absorption, in contrast the Subject, 'yields' or 'submits' to the Object. We will say that he abandons himself to the auratic Object. Abandonment to the Object entails the loss of the capacity for mental control over it. Furthermore, it includes not simply the loss of control of the Subject over a single Object, but the Subject's loss of control over Objects in relation to each other. As a consequence Objects cannot be identified as being in any coherent system of relations: they are experienced as abandoned in relation to each other. Absorption entails *abandonment* between the Subject and the external world of Objects and an identification of Objects as abandoned in relation to each other.

Second, consider the property of discrimination: enlightenment identification entails discrimination between the Subject and the Object. The

Subject experiences the Object as distinct from, that is clearly separated from, himself. In absorption, however, the Subject is (as its name implies) absorbed into the Object. The Object is not experienced as distinct from the Subject, not clearly separated from him. He experiences himself as merging with the Object. The experience of a separation between Subject and Object was the basis not only of discrimination between the Subject and external Objects but also between external Objects themselves. With the loss of the capacity to discriminate between the Subject and the Object comes the loss of the capacity to discriminate between external Objects. External Objects therefore appear to merge into each other. Absorption entails a *merging* of the Subject with the Object and of external Objects with each other.

Third, consider the property of meaning. According to Adorno, enlightenment identification is associated with an instrumental kind of meaning, which we termed instrumental meaning. An Object gains meaning of this kind according to the Subject's instrumental use of it. In absorption the Object is not related to through any kind of intention on the part of the Subject, including any instrumental intention, so that the Object *cannot* possibly be imbued with *instrumental meaning*.

Absorption also does *not* purvey a sense of the Object as meaningful due to any kind of *mood* or *emotions* evoked by the auratic Object. Adorno explains that Objects in absorption are not mere 'containers for the psychology of the spectator' (Adorno, 1997: 275 [AT 410]). This distinguishes them from Objects that are treated in this way, when, Adorno claims, the Subject 'reverses what Hegel calls the truth in the artwork into its own opposite by translating it into what is merely subjective – a spectator's mode of reaction' (Adorno, 1997: 275 [AT 410]). This kind of meaning would be kindred to the kind of 'meaning' of mythic projection where the Subject through his emotional projections simply discovers himself within the external world.

The meaning of the Object in absorption emerges out of the Object itself. It has two dimensions to it, both of which relate to the 'selfhood' of the auratic Object. On the one hand, there is a dimension to the meaning of the Object gained through absorption which includes some kind of *truth content* about the Object. This truth content emerges out of the 'selfhood' of the Object. It is of the nature of 'the way the Object is', that is, its '*I am thus*'[21].

On the other hand, the meaning gained through absorption relates to the aspect of the selfhood of the Object that is the autonomy of the Object. This is the Object's 'being in and of itself' whereby it is its own end and not part of any Subjective end. It is of the nature of a sense of the Object as having its *own inherent value*.

[21] This point is not unproblematic and could be discussed in more detail. We have taken our analysis as far as Adorno allows us to on the basis of his texts.

The Subject experiences the meaning of the auratic Object in the following way. When the Subject is absorbed into the auratic Object he gains some kind of truth about the Object through knowing the way the Object is. This tells him something about the Object. When he is absorbed into the Object he also gains a sense of the Object as an end in itself. This entails gaining a sense of the Object as inherently valuable.

These two aspects of the meaning of the auratic Object, the 'truth' content and its value, have implications for the way the Subject regards and behaves towards the Object. The first dimension of its meaning, the truth content, leads the Subject to feel a sense of 'mystery' about the Object. The Object tells the Subject something but this is in the form of the Object's selfhood and is not something that can be put into words. The second dimension of the Object's meaning, its value, leads the Subject to feel a sense of respect for the Object. This has implications about the way he feels he can treat the Object. However, again this is not a kind of meaning that can be articulated and so can not lead to a set of codes about how the Object should be treated.

This kind of meaning, because it relates to a sense of the Object as inherently valuable is *substantive*. It is a particular kind of substantive meaning. It has a truth and a value content, neither of which can lead to any set of propositions or codes of conduct in relation to the Object. It is therefore a positive kind of meaning in the sense that it is actually 'known'. It is, however, 'negative' in the sense that it cannot lead to any positive propositions or codes.

Before closing our discussion on the meaning of the Object gained through absorption, let us just link it up with our earlier discussion of the meaning of the Object which occurs in Chapters 1 to 3.

We have seen in Chapter 5 that absorption deploys the part of the Subject's 'mind' that, as we saw in Chapter 1, Freud terms the id. Through the satisfaction of the id upon the Object we saw, again in Chapter 1, that the Subject experiences the Object as pleasurable and meaningful. We termed this kind of meaning associated with the satisfaction of the id-instincts upon the Object, substantive meaning (see Chapter 1). The meaning gained through absorption is this substantive meaning. We will return to pursue the implications of this later.

Our point here is that enlightenment identification is associated with instrumental meaning and absorption is associated with substantive meaning.

REPRESENTATION

In our discussion as a whole we have depicted the overall process of knowledge acquisition as having two dimensions, identification and representation. Having examined the dimension of identification in aesthetic knowledge

acquisition, let us now look to the second dimension of representation. It is difficult to see how a 'way of knowing' the Object as 'I am thus' can be represented at all. However, if not exactly represented, this kind of knowledge does at least 'appear'.

It appears in works of art and also in other domains. Looking at its 'appearance' in works of art we see that this is not through concepts, propositions or linguistic signs. For instance, Adorno writes of aesthetic knowledge as the 'truest' language of art and then claims that 'the true language of art is mute' (Adorno, 1997: 112 [AT 171]). Moreover, aesthetic knowledge does not appear through images and does not, in fact, in any sense 'appear' as (what Adorno refers to) the 'given' aspect of art. All this means that it is not representational. The 'I am thus' of aesthetic knowledge acquisition 'appears' in a non-representational way.

Adorno claims that there is a mode of 'appearance' in art which can refer to an Object in a non-representational way. The 'I am thus' of the Object can appear as a 'presence' within the work of art (or indeed, in other domain).

Let us outline the features of this 'presence'. First, it differs from representational elements of art in that, whilst these have varying degrees and kinds of determinacy, it, on the other hand, is (almost) wholly *indeterminate*. Furthermore, it is indeterminate by nature.

Second, the presence is a kind of *emanation* out of the 'given', that is representational, elements of the work of art.

Third, this emanation is depicted as a kind of '*vanishing*', a 'vanishing from' the 'given'. Adorno writes that 'appearance in artworks is . . . [in part a] *vanishing*' (Adorno, 1997: 80 [AT 124]).

Fourth, the 'presence' although itself entirely non-representational is *dependent* upon the representational elements. Adorno's full quotation runs as follows: the presence 'in artworks is indeed the paradoxical unity or the balance between the vanishing and the preserved' (Adorno, 1997: 80 [AT 124]). The 'presence', 'the vanishing element', *depends* upon the representational element, which Adorno calls 'the preserved' because it preserves the image in order that anything might 'appear' at all, be it representational or otherwise.

Adorno offers us an example of the 'appearance' of aesthetic knowledge in the medium of music. He writes that aesthetic knowledge in music appears as a 'falling mute', or a 'flickering out'. We can see that a 'falling mute' is not representational.

'Falling mute' is, in fact, a kind of presence. Its features are as follows: first, it is clearly not determinate, but is in fact the most *indeterminate* aspect of the music. Second, it is an *emanation* of silence from the 'given', which is the dense texture of musical notes. Third, the emanation is a kind of *vanishing*. At its simplest it is a vanishing from sound and at a more complex level it is the vanishing from a particular form and density of sound. That is to say, it is the vanishing from a *particular* piece of music in a *particular* way and

as such is a *particular* instance of vanishing. Fourth, the 'appearance' of the vanishing in the music depends upon the 'given' elements of the dense tonal texture of the music itself. The 'falling mute' depends upon something to fall silent from[22]. Adorno's full quotation illustrates these points: 'Perhaps all expression . . . is as close to falling mute as in great new music nothing is so full of expression as what flickers out – that tone that disengages itself starkly from the dense musical texture' (Adorno, 1997: 79 [AT 123]).

Aesthetic knowledge 'appears' as a 'presence' which, in Adorno's words, is in the form of a vanishing from the given.

Aesthetic knowledge could also potentially appear in the domain of the representative system of enlightenment knowledge acquisition[23]. Let us give a brief indication of how. As with our example of music, the appearance of aesthetic knowledge would again be in the form of a 'presence' which is a 'vanishing'. It would appear in the silent, unarticulated elements of the system[24].

Adorno gives a number of allusions to how this might occur. One is that the system would not conclude – which would be a claim to completion, a claim to having grasped the Object. Instead it would end with a 'falling silent' which would not just be an admission of its incompleteness but of the 'appearance' of the presence of the Object that would allow for a more genuine 'completeness'. Furthermore, this 'falling silent' would arise from within the system and would not be merely a silence 'implanted'. It would arise out of the concepts and their situation and would be the moment at which the conceptual system could articulate no more.

A further possibility lies within contradiction. Contradiction itself is for Adorno the mere antithesis of logic and, as such, is part of the structure of the representational system. He writes: 'Contradiction is not what Hegel's absolute idealism was bound to transfigure it into: it is not the essence' (Adorno, 1973: 5 [ND 17])[25]. However, contradiction opposes the overall

[22] The work of art is a complex example because it is both a 'self', the communication of this 'self' and the appearance of this 'self'. We have here discussed it as the 'appearance' of that 'self'.

[23] This is a complex example for two reasons. First, because a proper evaluation of this connection leads us into a discussion of the dialectical relationship between these two forms of knowledge acquisition, something that we will discuss in the next chapter. Second, because, for Adorno, in enlightenment, the presence of the Object appears only in the realm of art, and even there has undergone shrinkage. In enlightenment, if this form of knowledge appears at all, it is restricted to the realm of the aesthetic (and thus not deemed 'knowledge' at all).

[24] These elements would convey the direct 'presence' of the Object that the system seeks to know. In Adorno's words 'the very Objects would start talking under the lingering eye' (Adorno, 1973: 28 [ND 38]).

[25] 'Essence' for our purposes refers to the 'essence' of the Object to be known. This, in turn, can be understood as its 'selfhood'. The appearance of this kind of knowledge is not manifest in contradiction.

seam of the system and creates ruptures which are spaces within the system. It is therefore possibly related to the admission of a 'falling silent' within the system.

Finally, Adorno's notion of the constellation is a further attempt to admit the possibility of the 'appearance' of the presence into the system. The single system can be replaced with a series of systems that attempt to grasp the Object. At the moment of their individual 'endings' they might allude to a presence: the representational elements point to the non-representational[26]. (These possibilities will be further explored in the next chapter).

These features of the *presence* as *indeterminate* by nature, an *emanation*, a *mute* '*language*', are all features of the auratic Object's voice. This, in turn, is a direct emanation of the auratic Object's selfhood. The presence therefore is a *direct* presence of the Object's 'selfhood' which is to say that aesthetic knowledge appears as a direct presence of the Object itself. For instance, the falling silent of the conceptual system - whether it be at its end in place of a conclusion, or within the system around the points of contradiction, or at the meeting point of a constellation of systems – is *the direct presence of the Object itself in the system.*

Although this form of knowledge appears in a direct form it would be a great mistake to think that this form of knowledge is *unmediated* by the Subject. On the contrary, it is *highly mediated.* It requires the most intense engagement of certain aspects of the Subject's mind in a certain way – the most sophisticated form of active-passivity. It requires the raising of Subjectivity to its highest level in order to gain this direct voice of the Object. It is for this reason that Adorno writes that gaining knowledge of the Object needs 'not less subjectivity but more' (Adorno, 1973: 40 [ND 50]). The direct form of knowledge of the Object requires, paradoxically it seems, the *most intense engagement of certain of the Subject's faculties.* Regressive traits such as mythic projection appear in knowledge precisely when the Subject's engagement is not at its highest and most sophisticated level.

A paradox occurs in that the direct presence of the Object can appear in the system, but not in a way that can be articulated. This leaves the system unfulfilled in its own terms. It can only attain the direct presence of the Object by denying its own voice. The conceptual system is caught in a paradox: *it can either articulate the Object but not grasp it fully, or it can grasp it fully but not articulate it.*

However, in spite of problems due to the non-articulate nature of aesthetic knowledge, it is nevertheless a positive form of knowledge acquisition: it allows us to identify the Object and provides a certain way of knowing it.

[26] For a discussion of 'the constellation' in Adorno's work, see my discussion in Sherratt, (1998b: 55–66).

7

A Positive Dialectic of Knowledge Acquisition

INTRODUCTION

The question we address in this chapter is: what relevance does aesthetic knowledge acquisition have for the enlightenment? We will restrict our discussion in this chapter to knowledge acquisition itself[1]. To see the relevance of this aesthetic 'kind of knowing' let us analyse the relationship between it and the enlightenment's 'own' instrumental kind of knowledge acquisition.

We must point out here that the existence of such a relationship (between these two forms of knowledge acquisition) is something that we can *deduce* from our interpretation of Adorno. It is not something that Adorno, in spite of many nuances, does himself explicitly depict.

First, we discuss the relationship between aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition. We show that this is *dialectical* and depict the various forms that this dialectic might take. Second, we examine this 'new' dialectic (between aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition) in relation to the 'old' (previously discussed) dialectic (between mythic and instrumental knowledge acquisition). We depict the 'new' dialectic as *positive* in contrast with the 'old' dialectic, which we have already shown as *negative*[2].

Third, we focus our discussion of knowledge acquisition upon the realm of *identification*. That is, we analyse the 'positive dialectic' between aesthetic and instrumental identification. To analyse this, we divide the overall discussion of the dialectic into two aspects: on the one hand, we examine the properties of 'opposition'; and on the other hand, those of 'connection'.

Fourth, we move on to answer our question. We try to explain how aesthetic identification forms a *positive dialectic* with instrumental identification. We analyse how aesthetic identification acts as a form of non-identity

[1] In the next chapter we will analyse its relevance to subjectivity.

[2] Note that the notion of a positive dialectic is itself drawn out of our interpretation of Adorno and as such is not something which he himself developed.

thinking and so prevents the regression of instrumental *identification* to animism.

Finally, we briefly depict the positive dialectic at the level of *representation*. We then offer some concluding remarks.

THE DIALECTIC

Let us begin by considering the nature of the relationship between aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition. In Chapters 5 and 6, we depicted aesthetic knowledge acquisition as being a form of knowledge acquisition in its own right. We have now to confess that this depiction is only partially true. This analytical separation was merely a heuristic device: we 'singled out' this form of knowledge in order to give a fuller account of its features. However, aesthetic knowledge acquisition, in fact, stands in a dialectical relationship with instrumental knowledge acquisition and is therefore, strictly speaking, not 'autonomous'. It is utterly dependent upon its dialectical 'counterpart' (Adorno, 1973: 31 [ND 41–42]).

For Adorno, this dialectical counterpart is instrumental knowledge acquisition. Adorno expresses the dialectic between the aesthetic and instrumental forms of knowledge acquisition when he writes: 'art and philosophy . . . both keep faith with their own substance through their opposites' (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 27]).

This dialectical relationship between instrumental and aesthetic knowledge acquisition can take one of several possible forms. The various forms that this dialectic might take are the following.

Consider that, first, with respect to instrumental and aesthetic knowledge acquisition, a possible form of the dialectic is a state of *predominance*, of one kind of knowledge acquisition being in the ascendent over the other[3]. On the one hand, we could have a state of the predominance of *aesthetic* over instrumental knowledge acquisition. Here the Subject would have a high degree of aesthetic and a low degree of instrumental knowledge acquisition. This would correspond to a state wherein the Subject has a high degree of *receptivity* towards the Object but a low degree of *conceptualisation*. The Subject's mind is highly activated in the one sphere but low in the other.

On the other hand, we could have a condition of the predominance of *instrumental* over aesthetic knowledge acquisition. Here the Subject would have a low degree of aesthetic but a high degree of instrumental knowledge acquisition. This would correspond to a state wherein the Subject has a low degree of *receptivity* towards the Object but a high degree of *conceptualisation*

[3] See the beginning of Chapter 4 for this discussion with respect to instrumental and mythic knowledge acquisition.

of it[4]. The Subject's mind is poorly activated in one sphere but high in the other. This, as shown previously, in Chapter One, is the predominance that the enlightenment has generated.

Second, the degree of *development* of these two kinds of knowledge acquisition may vary. That is, the two kinds of knowledge acquisition may be present in equal degrees of development in relation to each other but their overall level of development may be high, or it may be low. Consider that, on the one hand, there may be a condition of *minimal* development of instrumental and *minimal* development of aesthetic knowledge. This would take the form of a low degree of conceptual engagement with an Object coupled to a low degree of receptivity towards it. The Subject's mind in such a condition is simply poorly activated.

On the other hand, there may exist a condition of a *high level of development* of instrumental and a high development of aesthetic knowledge acquisition. This would take the form of a high degree of conceptual engagement with an Object coupled to a high degree of receptivity. The Subject's mind in such a condition is highly activated in both spheres.

The dialectical relationship between instrumental and aesthetic knowledge acquisition has important consequences for the dialectical relationship between mythic (animism) and instrumental knowledge acquisition. The nature of these consequences depends upon the forms that the dialectic between aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition takes.

Adorno shows that this 'new' dialectic, between aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition, can affect the 'old' dialectic, between mythic and instrumental knowledge acquisition. How the 'new' dialectic affects the 'old' one depends upon the *form* of the new dialectic.

Let us see what the impact of each of the four possible forms of the dialectic might be. First, we can assess the impact of *predominance*. We can deduce that, hypothetically, the predominance of either form, aesthetic or instrumental knowledge acquisition will, for Adorno, lead to a regression of instrumental knowledge acquisition into its mythic counterpart. For this reason Adorno believes that one of these forms of knowledge acquisition should *never* predominate over the other. As Adorno puts it: 'both keep faith with their own substance through their opposite', (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 27]), which is to say that should that opposite seriously increase or decrease in scale, then the particular kind of identification will not be able to 'keep faith' with its own substance, that is, it will deteriorate.

We say 'hypothetically' because one of the two possibilities is, in fact, infinitely more likely. In the case of his period in history, and as a tendency universal to Western culture, Adorno believes that the dialectic falls on the side of the *predominance of instrumental knowledge acquisition*. The issue is

[4] These characterisations represent only the initial stage of the dialectic, because, of course, predominance, for Adorno, is inherently unsustainable.

therefore, for Adorno, *always in reality* the predominance of instrumental knowledge acquisition over its aesthetic counterpart, the other instance is simply a logical possibility. The main point here for Adorno is that the predominance of instrumental over aesthetic knowledge acquisition entails a regression, most notably in instrumental knowledge acquisition, to myth (Adorno, 1973: 45 [ND 54–55]).

Second, let us see the impact of the form of 'equivalent degrees of *development*' in the two kinds of identification. Adorno is critical of the notion of a *minimal* degree of instrumental and aesthetic knowledge acquisition. This simply amounts to a poor degree of engagement with the external world and represents a condition in general of 'low Subjectivity'.

What Adorno is in fact interested in is a high degree of development in *both* forms of knowledge acquisition. For Adorno, when instrumental knowledge acquisition is at its most extreme, this corresponds to a high degree of conceptual engagement between the Subject and the external world of Objects. When aesthetic knowledge acquisition is at its most extreme, this corresponds to a high degree of receptive engagement between the Subject and the external world of Objects. In such a condition the Subject's mind is highly activated in both spheres (Adorno, 1973: 30–31 [ND 40–42]). Therefore, such a condition of extremity is one wherein both forms of knowledge acquisition are highly developed. We will henceforth talk about a 'high degree of development' rather than 'extremity'.

Adorno does not advocate the dialectical incorporation of aesthetic into instrumental knowledge acquisition so that the former somehow moderates, or, in some sense, 'tames' instrumental knowledge acquisition (and thereby prevents its regression into myth). He writes: 'Both attitudes of consciousness are linked by criticising one another, *not by compromising*' (Adorno, 1973: 31 [ND 42])[5].

A condition of equivalent, high degrees of development in both aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition *constitutes* a *positive dialectic*. It is positive because it results in a *decrease* in the force of the *negative dialectic*. The positive dialectic can lead to the prevention of the negative 'dialectic of enlightenment' (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 27]), which is why Adorno depicts: 'philosophy . . . [as] keep[ing] faith with [its] *own* substance' (that is, not regressing into myth) 'through [its] opposite' (namely aesthetic knowledge acquisition) (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 27])[6].

Although the prevention of the regression of instrumental knowledge acquisition into myth is perhaps the principal reason for depicting this dialectic as positive, it would be wrong to characterise Adorno's positive dialectic as positive solely on the basis of the fact that it can prevent myth. That is to say, there are further reasons for viewing this dialectic as positive.

[5] My emphasis.
[6] My emphasis.

Let us now move on to demonstrate and analyse how aesthetic knowledge acquisition forms a positive dialectic with its instrumental counterpart. We will focus upon the principal point which is how aesthetic knowledge acquisition can *prevent the regression of instrumental knowledge acquisition into animism.* However, we will also explore the further reasons as to why this dialectical relationship between instrumental and aesthetic knowledge acquisition is *positive.*

IDENTIFICATION

Let us contextualise our interest in the dialectic between instrumental and aesthetic knowledge acquisition in view of the overall point we wish to explore. For Adorno, instrumental knowledge acquisition if pursued in isolation regresses to animism in both the realms of representation and identification. In the realm of representation, we demonstrated, in Chapter 4, that Adorno has a potential solution, a means of rescuing instrumental knowledge acquisition from its decline. We depicted this solution – which was 'contradiction' – as a form of 'non-identity thinking'. However, we also showed that despite a similar regression in the realm of identification in instrumental knowledge acquisition, Adorno could offer no solution (in the form of contradiction, or non-identity thinking). We are therefore left with the problem of how to rescue instrumental knowledge acquisition from its regression into its mythic counterpart in the realm of identification.

Our principal purpose henceforth is to look for a way of solving the problem of the regression of instrumental knowledge acquisition in the realm of identification. We will therefore focus upon aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition at the level of identification.

A dialectical relationship between two phenomena means that they are *inextricably connected and in opposition.* We will divide our analysis of the dialectic between instrumental and aesthetic *identification* into a discussion of this *opposition* and '*connection*'[7].

Opposition

Let us first make an analysis of the opposition between instrumental and aesthetic identification. In order to discuss the opposition between these two kinds of identification we will just remind ourselves of the features of each kind of identification.

Instrumental identification between the Subject and the Object consists of making the 'Object like the Subject' and has the following three features:

[7] We must be careful to point out that this division is for heuristic purposes only (in point of fact the opposition is intrinsic to the connection). We must also be careful here not to lead ourselves into any false notion of determinacy.

first, the Subject's *discrimination* of the Object; secondly, the Subject's *control* of the Object; and thirdly *instrumental meaning*. In aesthetic knowledge acquisition identification consists of the Subject 'becoming like' the Object. This has the following three features: first, the Subject's merging with the Object; second, the Subject's abandonment to the Object; and third, substantive meaning. We can see the opposition between these two kinds of identification by regarding each of their features in turn (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 27]).

Instrumental identification involves making the Object like the Subject and it is not possible to make the Object like the Subject without opposing an attempt to make the Subject like the Object. The Subject, in attempting to overcome the separation between himself and the lake, for instance, in bringing the lake over to his concepts, is distancing himself from becoming like the lake. Instrumental identification thereby opposes absorption.

In absorption precisely the opposite occurs and the Subject in becoming like the Object cannot do so without opposing making the Object like himself. The Subject, in attempting to overcome the separation between himself and the lake, for instance, in going over to the lake is becoming like it, so preventing him from making the lake like his concepts. Absorption thereby opposes instrumental identification. These two forms of identification oppose one another.

Let us consider the opposition between each of the features of these two kinds of identification. First, discrimination opposes merging: to discriminate the Subject from the Object the Subject must oppose the tendency to merge with the Object. Adorno writes: 'the affinity which objects have for each other . . . is tabooed by scientific need' (Adorno, 1973: 25 [ND 36])[8]. The contrary is also true. In order for the Subject to merge with the Object he must oppose discriminating himself from it.

Consider too the feature of control. In order to control the Object the Subject must resist abandoning himself to it. Adorno writes of controlled 'theory [which] corrects the naive self-confidence of the mind . . . [in] its spontaneity' – for spontaneity read 'abandonment' – (Adorno, 1973: 30–31 [ND 41]). Again, the contrary is true. If the Subject is to abandon himself to the Object then he must resist any faculty of control (over himself or the Object): he must simply 'let go'. Thus control and abandonment are oppositional features.

Finally, consider the two kinds of meaning. Instrumental identification locates an instrumental meaning in the Object and this is to identify it in terms of its use to the Subject. Absorption locates a substantive meaning which is precisely to forgo any subjective deployment of the Object. The Subject cannot simultaneously relate to the Object with intention whilst

[8] The reference to Adorno here refers in fact to the merging between Objects, rather than the Subject and the Object, but this entails also the merging between the Subject and the Object as we showed in Chapter 2.

also relating to it through forgoing that intention, so that to attribute instrumental meaning to the Object is to oppose the possibility of gaining substantive meaning and to gain substantive meaning is to oppose the possibility of gaining any instrumental meaning of the Object. These two kinds of meaning are oppositional.

The Consequences of Opposition: Negation

There are several points that arise from the property of opposition in this relationship. First, let it be noted that writers on the concept of dialectics have had a tendency to misrepresent the notion and transform the concept of a dialectical relationship into something either inherently beneficial or detrimental. However, a dialectic has both dimensions to it.

The first point therefore about the effect of absorption upon instrumental identification is simply that it can be detrimental. Merging, after all *opposes* discrimination; abandonment opposes control; substantive meaning opposes instrumental meaning. It is not therefore the case that this opposition is simply straightforwardly beneficial – it can act to the detriment of each feature. For instance, if I see a tiger and am aesthetically absorbed into it, I will presumably be eaten. The instrumental mode of identification would, however, enable me to survive. Putting the two forms of identification side by side, the phenomenon of being absorbed is clearly detrimental to the experience of instrumental identification and control.

However, it is also clearly a mistake to think of the oppositional relationship as only problematic. A second dimension is that the property of opposition in a dialectical relationship is indeed *beneficial*. It can be beneficial to both parties so that the relationship in certain respects is mutually enhancing. This second aspect to the oppositional relationship is terribly important for Adorno. It entails the phenomenon of *negation*.

Absorption can negate instrumental identification successfully in a number of ways. In order to assess more clearly what it can and can not do, let us enrich our understanding of absorption as a means of negation by developing three categories.

First, absorption can be considered as a *process* of identification. That is, it is 'a way of identifying' the Object. Herein lie the features of *merging*, *abandonment* and the *Subject's becoming the Object*. Second, absorption can be regarded vis-à-vis the *form* of the identity it procures. The form of the identity in absorption is indeterminate. Third, absorption can be regarded through the *content* of the identity of the Object which it gleans. Herein it has the feature of producing an identity the content of which is *substantive meaning*.

Absorption can be considered as a kind of negation through each of these three categories. Absorption may act to negate as one *mode* of identification negating another. It may act to negate as one *content* of identity negating the content of another identity. Absorption may act to negate as one *form* of identity negating another form of identity.

In order to assess absorption as a negation of instrumental identification let us deploy these categories and combine this with the kind of analysis we used in Chapter 4. That is, let us examine absorption as a form of negation by considering it as a form of *non-identity thinking*.

Non-Identity-Thinking

In Chapter 4, when we depicted the notion of non-identity thinking we distinguished three possible uses of the term. These were, first, 'non-identity thinking' as '*not identity thinking*'. Second, 'non-identity thinking' as *the process of finding contradictions*. Third, 'non-identity thinking' *as the process of finding 'the non identity' (a) or 'the non identity' (b)*. Let us now analyse absorption as a form of non-identity thinking in regard to each use of the term.

(1) NOT IDENTITY-THINKING. First, consider absorption as a form of 'non identity thinking' understood as *not identity thinking*. Adorno uses the term identity thinking to encompass the instrumental kind of identity thinking. Thus to understand absorption as form of not identity thinking, we really mean not instrumental identity thinking (Adorno, 1973: 30–32 [ND 40–43])[9].

Absorption is, however a kind of identity thinking in its own right. In this sense it is similar to instrumental thought. Adorno expresses this when he writes that 'Common to art and philosophy is not the form, not [even] the forming process, but a mode of conduct' (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 26]). That 'mode of conduct' is identification.

Absorption is, however, as we know distinct from instrumental identity thinking. It is distinct in process, form and content. As a distinct *process* of identifying the Object, it consists of making the Subject like the Object, merging and abandonment. As a distinct *content* of identity, it is composed of substantive meaning. Finally, as a distinct *form* of identity, we can conceive of it as indeterminate.

Let us therefore clarify our terms. Absorption is, in fact, a kind of identity thinking. However, in Adorno's use of the terminology it would be regarded as non identity thinking because it is not instrumental identity thinking and he tends to restrict his usage of the term to this – principally because instrumental identity is the kind of identity thinking that is the target of his attack. We will henceforth use the term 'non-identity thinking' as Adorno does to mean strictly speaking, non instrumental identity thinking.

[9] Adorno depicts a kind of thought which is 'a free unbound one like a stepping out of dialectics' (Adorno, 1973: 31 [ND 41–42]). Here he refers to a kind of aesthetic 'thought'. He describes this as like stepping out of dialectics, because aesthetic 'thought' appears to be free from dialectical constraints, although, in fact, it is only 'as if' free of the dialectic because it is as constrained by the dialectic as any other mode. The dialectic is intrinsic to its being a kind of 'non-identity thinking' for instrumental identification.

The interesting point about absorption is that it can act as a kind of non (instrumental) identity thinking because it is a form of identity thinking, albeit aesthetic, in its own right. The question that interests us is therefore how absorption behaves as a kind of 'non-instrumental identity thinking'?

The analysis of non-identity thinking as 'not identity thinking' is not very helpful here. It merely serves as a means of clarifying our concepts. In order to examine how absorption behaves as a kind of non-identity thinking upon instrumental identification let us move on to assess it under the notion of 'contradiction'.

(2) CONTRADICTION. In Chapter 4, we depicted non-identity thinking as, in principle, a kind of contradiction of identity thinking. Let us therefore examine absorption as a kind of contradiction of instrumental identity thinking. How does absorption act as a kind of contradiction of instrumental identity thinking (in the realm of identification)?

Absorption gives us an identity of the Object which is distinctive. We have referred to this as the 'voice of the Object'. The voice of the Object is derived by a distinctive *process* of identification; it offers a distinctive *form* and *content* of identity.

Let us see how absorption contradicts instrumental identification. Let us see how it contradicts instrumental identification in process, form and content.

Process. First, consider the *process* of identification. In absorption, the Subject merges with the Object, abandons himself to it and thereby becomes the Object. This process of identification can be considered to be contradictory in nature to the process of identification of the instrumental kind, which, as we know, entails discrimination, control and making the Object like the Subject. Absorption contradicts instrumental identification at the level of the very *process* of identification (Adorno, 1973: 27 [ND 37–38]).

The effect of absorption's contradiction of instrumental identity thinking is *negation.* By negating instrumental identity thinking, absorption prevents *not* instrumental identity thinking *itself,* but its *regression* into animism (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 26–27]).

Let us remind ourselves that when instrumental identification regresses to animism, with respect to the *process* of identification, the feature of discrimination as we have seen regresses to *fragmentation*[10]; control regresses to *rigidity and domination*; making the Object like the Subject regresses to *projection.*

The process of negation entails the following:(a), the feature of merging in absorption negates the problem of discrimination regressing to fragmentation. Merging opposes the Subject's discrimination of the Object and opposes the Subject's discrimination between individual Objects in the

[10] 'Fragmentation' is discussed in Chapter 1 in both a psychoanalytic and epistemological context.

external world. It thereby opposes the trend of increasingly 'breaking apart' the world of Objects into smaller and smaller fragments by merging Objects together and 'presenting' the world of Objects as a unity, plus the Subject as united with the Object (Adorno, 1973: 25 [ND 36]).

(b) Instrumental identification's feature of control can regress into rigidification which leads to domination. Absorption, through its feature of abandonment, offsets this. An aspect entailed in the Subject's abandoning his mind to the Object is a 'submission' to it – in Adorno's wording 'the thought . . . *yields* to the object' (Adorno, 1973: 27 [ND 38])[11]. Thus the Subject is prevented from dominating the Object as he momentarily 'submits' or 'yields' to it.

(c) Consider projection. This emerges from the Subject's fantastical imagining of the Object rather than a genuine engagement with it. The trait in instrumental identification of 'making' the Subject like the Object regresses to a mere fantasizing that the Subject is like the Object. Absorption is the process in which the Subject becomes the Object. In becoming the Object the Subject is lost in the Object rather than his own fantastical imagination (Adorno, 1973: 27–29 [ND 37–39]). (This is a centrally important trait of absorption for Adorno and one that distinguishes it most emphatically from any kind of fantasy). In being lost in the Object, the Subject cannot, in fact, be lost in his own fantasy and in this way, absorption negates the Subject's ability to fantasize about the Object. It thereby prevents the 'making the Object like the Subject', that is, the actual identification itself, from regressing to projection.

Form. Second, let us consider absorption as a kind of contradiction in the *form* of instrumental identity thinking. The form of the identity of the Object derived from absorption is indeterminate[12]. In this way the Object's voice is entirely distinct in form from that of the Subject's concept. The form of the instrumental identity of the Object is determinate. Absorption thereby contradicts the very form of the conceptual identity.

This is a point that we will discuss later in this chapter within an analysis of the realm of 'representation' in knowledge acquisition (rather than identification) – we will highlight how the indeterminate voice of the Object can negate the determinate concept. The reason why we mention the form of the identity here is because it helps shed light upon an understanding of contradiction through content.

Content. Third, let us consider absorption as contradiction with reference to the *content* of instrumental identity thinking.

The content of the identity of the Object derived from instrumental identification is instrumental meaning. In the regression of instrumental identification to animism, projection entails that the Object is 'imbued' with

[11] My emphasis.

[12] We will discuss indeterminacy later in this Chapter as a feature of representation.

instrumental meaning. The imbued instrumental meaning consists of two aspects:

(a) the claim that the Object has only instrumental meaning. In imbuing the Object with *only* instrumental meaning, projection occurs because the Object is denied the possibility of having substantive meaning. This denial of the possibility of substantive meaning is a product of the Subject's own instrumental imagination and thus as much part and parcel of projection as any fantastical imbuement with substantive meaning would be, for instance, as in fantastical myth.

(b) the claim that the Object has a particular instrumental meaning. This consists of a regression in that the Subject does not actually engage with the Object in order to derive instrumental meaning, but simply 'imagines' the Object to be imbued with this particular instrumental meaning. The *content* of instrumental meaning therefore regresses to become a mere projected content, which may, of course, be false.

Absorption in some sense negates both these aspects of the regression of the content of instrumental identity. On the one hand, absorption produces substantive meaning and therefore, quite straightforwardly, negates the notion that the Object has only instrumental meaning. We can say that substantive meaning contradicts the claim that the Object exhibits only instrumental meaning. Thus the content of absorption's identification of the Object, substantive meaning, contradicts the content of the Subject's concept which claims to identify the Object as instrumental meaning.

On the other hand, absorption also goes some way to negating the other aspect of projection, that of false instrumental meaning. This is because the substantive meaning gained through absorption refutes the claim of the concept that there is only instrumental meaning. By refuting the concept's first claim then absorption also calls into question the validity of the concept's second claim, namely, its claim about the nature of the instrumental meaning (Adorno, 1973: 44 [ND 54]).

However, this 'negation' is not straightforward. substantive meaning is limited in its ability to contradict instrumental meaning. We can see this limitation by considering the two kinds of identification through the notion of form. The form of the Object's voice, being distinct from the form of the concept means that the two contradictory contents of identity of the Object can not be compared in any determinate kind of way. We can not use an indeterminate identity to contradict a determinate identity. Thus, we can not say 'exactly' – ie. determinately – what aspects of the concept the 'voice of the Object' contradicts. Substantive meaning cannot contradict the actual content of the instrumental meaning.

Absorption can therefore act as a kind of contradiction upon the content of instrumental identity in that it can contradict the claim that only instrumental meaning exists. However, it can not contradict the actual projected content of instrumental meaning.

Absorption acts as a kind of contradiction. This is a distinct kind of contradiction from the conceptually determinate contradiction (which directly contradicted the content of the identity). Absorption contradicts through process, through form and the nature of content. It does not directly negate the content itself.

Adorno offers us criteria for 'a dialectic of cognition'[13], which the dialectic between absorption and instrumental identity thinking satisfy. Adorno writes that: 'the task of dialectical cognition is not, as its adversaries like to charge, to construe contradictions from above and to progress by resolving them' (This would be the instrumental form.) 'Instead, it is up to dialectical cognition to pursue the inadequacy of thought and thing, to experience it in the thing' (This is what absorption can achieve) (Adorno, 1973: 153 [ND 156]).

Aesthetic identification contradicts the very process of conceptual identification. In this way aesthetic identification acts as a kind of *critique* of instrumental identification. It thereby satisfies Adorno's criterion of dialectical thinking as *internally critical*. Adorno writes that: 'dialectical contradiction "is" . . . philosophy's self-criticism' (Adorno, 1973: 153 [ND 156]).

(3) FINDING NON-IDENTITY A OR B. At the same time as being a critique of instrumental identity thinking, absorption itself acts as a kind of identity thinking in and of itself. As a kind of identity thinking it identifies aspects of the Object that lie beyond the concept. Let us explore this facet by continuing an examination of absorption as a kind of non-identity thinking. We will consider absorption through the final (and rather more crude) sense of non-identity thinking as a means of 'finding' 'non-identity', (a) the 'superfluous part of the concept', or 'non-identity' (b) the 'missing part of the Object.

Consider 'finding' non-identity (a). Absorption might, in principle, be able to discern what is superfluous about the concept because it can gain the most pure and complete identity of the Object. It could thereby know what the Object is *not* as well as what it is. However, absorption finds the content of the identity of the Object in an indeterminate form. This means that it can not 'communicate' this content to the concept.

Consider finding non-identity (b) the 'lost' part of the Object, namely that aspect of the Object that lies beyond the concept. Absorption can find this because it is the 'pure' voice of the Object. However, the problem of *form* remains. Absorption finds the content of non-identity (b) in an indeterminate form. This means that it can not 'communicate' this content to the concept.

Nevertheless, absorption, as we argued in Chapter 6, can find the 'pure' voice of the Object. The most 'pure' entails, for Adorno, the most 'complete'

[13] I use 'cognition' as this is the term from the quotation. By 'cognition' in this context, I mean the aspect of the acquisition of knowledge that is identification.

voice of the Object so that absorption finds the aspects of the Object beyond the concept: we can say, that absorption finds the *content* of non-identity (b).

Adorno notes the impossibility of instrumental knowledge yielding the 'pure voice' of the Object. He criticises Hegel's dialectic for failing to go beyond the constraints of this form of 'thought': 'the thought [Hegel] discusses always extracts from the objects only that which is a thought already. Despite the program of self-yielding, the Hegelian thought finds satisfaction in itself; it goes rolling along, however often it may urge to the contrary' (Adorno, 1973: 27 [ND 38]). Adorno then alludes to the possibility of attaining this 'pure voice': 'If the thought really yielded to the object, if its attention were on the object, not on its category, the very objects would start talking under the lingering eye (Adorno, 1973: 27–28 [ND 38]).

Through our depiction of absorption we have tried to show that although absorption can not 'communicate' to the concept that which lies beyond the concept's reach, it can, however, in its 'own' voice, find this, that is non-identity (b). Although it cannot communicate the lost part of the Object to us in any conceptual way, it can do so in a non-conceptual way as we have discussed in Chapter 6 and will mention again at the end of this chapter when we discuss the realm of 'representation'.

The dialectical relationship between absorption and instrumental identification has two dimensions. The first is that absorption conflicts with instrumental identification and this is simply *problematic* for instrumental identification. The second, and by far the most important for Adorno, is that absorption *acts as a form of 'non-identity thinking'* whereby it *negates* instrumental identification, so helping to prevent the latter from regressing into animism and this is beneficial for instrumental identification.

Connection

Having examined the positive dialectic vis-à-vis its dimension of opposition, we will now move on to look at the dimension of this relationship which is *connection*. In so doing we can continue to explore the dialectic as positive through its ability to negate the regression of instrumental identification into animism. However, we can also begin to see further dimensions to the positive nature of this dialectic.

The aspect of the dialectical relationship that is '*connection*' is as follows[14]. From the perspective of aesthetic knowledge acquisition, in order to achieve identification the Subject must become like the Object, say for instance that he must become like a lake. In order to 'become like' the lake, the Subject must first however distinguish the Object 'lake' from the other Objects, such as the trees and the sky, around it. In order to distinguish the particular Object the Subject needs the concept. The Subject must conceptualise the

[14] See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: xvi [DA 16].

lake. In so doing he performs the process of *instrumental identification*: he identifies the Object with a concept. In the process of instrumental identification the Object is of course made like the Subject. Thus in the very process of aesthetic identification, ie. of 'making himself like' the Object, the Subject has to make the Object a little like himself[15].

This is also true from the opposite perspective, that is, from the perspective (which interests us) of instrumental knowledge acquisition. In order to achieve instrumental identification the Subject must make the Object like himself, say for instance he must make the 'lake' like himself in the sense that he must make the Object like his concept 'lake'. For Adorno, in order to bring the lake close to himself, the Subject cannot avoid embodying an 'image' of the lake in the concept. His concept must refer to the lake, it must represent it and in this sense it must 'absorb' something of the lake within it. Thus, for Adorno, in the process of trying to make the Object like the Subject, the Subject has to make the Object a little like himself[16]. We can see therefore that the two ways of identifying the Object are inextricably connected (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 26–27])[17].

The inextricable connection between the two forms of identification entails that their various features are also inextricably connected. Let us redescribe the connection, highlighting this. First there is in absorption the feature of '*merging*' and in instrumental identification the corresponding feature of '*discrimination*'. Consider that, in order to merge into the Object, for instance the lake, the Subject needs first to recognise the Object, the lake, and this involves *discriminating* it from the other Objects around it. The opposite is also true, to discriminate the Object of the lake, the Subject, according to Adorno, needs to absorb some of it within his conceptual schema, that is to become a little like it which involves a degree of *merging* into the Object. Merging and discrimination are inextricably connected (Adorno, 1973: 53 [ND 62–63]).

Consider the second features of identification, namely in absorption *abandonment* and in instrumental identification, its counterpart – *control*. On the one hand, the inextricable connection between the two forms of identification means that, according to Adorno, in order to abandon oneself to the Object one has first to conceptualise it which entails a certain amount of (mental) control of the Object. On the other hand, in order to control the Object one has first to make oneself a little like it, which entails a degree of abandonment to it. Control and abandonment, for Adorno, are also inextricably connected (Adorno, 1973: 53 [ND 62–63]).

A final aspect of the connection between the two forms of identification concerns meaning. In instrumental identification, in making the Object

[15] See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15, 21 [DA 31, 37].
[16] See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 15, 21 [DA 31, 37].
[17] See Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 18 [DA 34].

like the Subject one gains instrumental meaning. In order to gain instrumental meaning, however, one has to become a little like the Object, which involves gaining substantive meaning. The opposite is also true. In absorption, in becoming like the Object, the Subject gains substantive meaning. In order to gain substantive meaning, however, one also has to make the Object a little like the Subject and therefore imbue it with instrumental meaning. Instrumental meaning and substantive meaning are inextricably connected.

The aspect of connection in the dialectical relationship between these two forms of identification leads us to see that for Adorno any genuine identification of the Object will always involve both the instrumental and the 'aesthetic' mental processes. These are important claims in Adorno's work for they entail certain consequences.

The Consequences of Connection

Let us now view the consequences of connection. These are, first, that both forms of identification are dependent upon each other in such a way that if one is without the other both regress. Second, if one is coupled to the other, both are strengthened – that is, each becomes more fully itself. Third, each form of identification adds a dimension to the other, so *enriching* it – that is, adding something (external) to it. As a result of these consequences of the *connection*, we can see why the dialectical relationship between aesthetic and instrumental identification can be viewed as positive.

First, instrumental identification's dependency upon absorption means that through its connection with absorption instrumental identification is *prevented from regressing into myth*. Adorno expresses this 'negatively' when he writes that: 'if this [aesthetic] moment were extinguished altogether, it would be flatly incomprehensible that a subject [could] know an object; the unleashed rationality would be irrational' (Adorno, 1973: 45 [ND 55])[18]. This irrationality would be myth.

For each feature of instrumental identification the dependency upon absorption can be seen. Each feature would regress without its connection with the corresponding feature of absorption. Discrimination is dependent upon merging – the Subject, for Adorno, cannot discriminate an Object without having first merged to some extent with it – thus without the experience of merging with the Object the Subject's ability to discriminate it *regresses*. Consider also that the feature in instrumental identification of control is dependent upon abandonment. The Subject, for Adorno, can not (mentally) control an Object without having first abandoned himself to some extent to it. Thus without the experience of abandonment to the Object the Subject's ability to control it regresses.

[18] The translation uses the term 'can' which, for grammatical reasons, I have replaced with 'could'.

Furthermore, when we assess the interdependency of meaning, we see one of Adorno's most profound points. Instrumental and substantive meaning are interdependent for Adorno. For instrumental meaning this amounts to the following. Instrumental meaning *depends* upon substantive meaning: we cannot gain *a genuine* sense of the instrumental meaning of the Object without a degree of substantive content. That is to say, we need to relate to an Object without intention in order, paradoxically, to gain an ability to deploy it effectively with intention. It is not enough to pursue merely an Object in terms of its usefulness to us: without experience of the substantive meaning of the Object, instrumental meaning regresses.

Put positively, absorption strengthens instrumental identification so that it can become highly developed. Adorno expresses this as: 'art and philosophy . . . both keep faith with their own substance through their opposites' (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 26–27]). Thus, the feature of merging in absorption actually *strengthens* the feature of discrimination in instrumental identification. The feature of abandonment in absorption actually strengthens the feature of control in instrumental identification. Substantive meaning in absorption actually strengthens the instrumental meaning in instrumental identification. We can make a second point about why the connection is positive, which is that through its connection with absorption, instrumental identification can 'keep faith with its own substance' and become more highly developed, that is, more 'truly itself'.

There is a final reason as to why instrumental identification's connection with absorption is positive. Absorption is a form of identification that is positive *in and of itself.* For Adorno, absorption is a positive, life-enhancing way of relating to the world and here it is most unlike the animism of myth which can never be positive. The inextricable connection of instrumental identification with absorption means that it benefits from a positive 'addition' to its own form of identification. We can say that instrumental identification is enriched, for absorption adds a new dimension to the previously only instrumental engagement with the Object. Thus, an experience limited to discrimination is now enriched with the experience of merging; that of control enriched by the added dimension of abandonment. Most especially, a merely instrumental identification is now *enriched* with a *substantive* dimension. Through absorption the Subject gains a richer, substantive identification with the Objects in the external world.

Note that *enrichment* of instrumental identification is distinct from *strengthening*, for in strengthening absorption helps instrumental identification to become more fully itself – it does not add anything external to it. Enrichment, in contrast, is the phenomenon whereby one form of identification adds something *external* to the other. In this instance, absorption enriches instrumental identification but does not actually increase the effectiveness of instrumental identification itself. This is important because Adorno sees absorption as good in and of itself. His argument for its

importance to us is only in part based on its capacity to strengthen instrumental identification. However, if this were its only positive role it would itself become a mere means to the end of instrumental identification.

Absorption acts both as a form of non-identity thinking towards instrumental identity thinking (at the level of identification) and is simultaneously a positive form of identification in its own right. Adorno captures these two facets of absorption when he writes: 'dialectically, cognition of nonidentity lies . . . in the fact that this very cognition identifies – that it identifies to a greater extent, and *in other ways*, than identitarian thinking' (Adorno, 1973: 149 [ND 152])[19].

REPRESENTATION

Before concluding let us give an outline of the dialectic between instrumental and aesthetic knowledge acquisition at the level of representation.

In Chapter 4 we depicted Adorno's notion of non-identity thinking in the representative realm and we showed how this *could* prevent the regression of instrumental representation into animism. Therefore, in a sense, we are not faced with a problem to solve in the realm of representation, for we have already depicted Adorno's (instrumental) notion of non-identity thinking as effective here. This is very much in contrast to the domain of identification where Adorno's notion of non-identity thinking as depicted in Chapter 4 had no effect. However, although aesthetic knowledge acquisition may not seem so essential in solving the problems within the representative system, it nevertheless can have a certain effect. We will therefore give a schematic view of how the positive dialectic might work at the level of representation[20]. We will leave it as schematic as this is a less essential aspect of the positive dialectic.

In the realm of representation, aesthetic knowledge acquisition, as we have shown in Chapter 6, appears as *aura* itself. Aura is the Object's voice which appears through intense aesthetic receptivity (the extreme mediation of the Subject in an apparently 'unmediated' form).

At the level of representation, the *positive dialectic* consists of aesthetic representation – aura – dialectically related to its instrumental counterpart – the conceptual system. Therefore *aura* is inextricably connected and in opposition to the *conceptual system.*

The most important aspect of this dialectic to examine here is that aspect which prevents instrumental representation from regressing into animism.

[19] My emphasis.

[20] Also, note that for Adorno, it is very important that concepts can criticise concepts – that is, that at the level of representation there is a kind of conceptual (that is, instrumental) non-identity thinking. This relates to Adorno's very significant faith in the possibility of a kind of conceptual criticism such as internal critique.

This is *opposition*. In opposition, aura negates instrumental representation so as to prevent its regression. In this way, aura acts as a form of non-identity thinking upon instrumental representation.

Aura acts as a form of non-identity thinking in the realm of representation in a similar way to that in which absorption acts as a form of non-identity thinking in the realm of identification. In both the representative and identificatory realms of knowledge acquisition, aesthetic knowledge acts as a version of non-identity thinking that is dissimilar to the instrumental version depicted in Chapter 4. Let us see how aura can act as a kind of non-identity thinking in the realm of representation[21].

The instrumental-representative system is, as we saw in Chapter 3, *determinate*. It is due to its determinacy that it regresses. We showed in Chapter three how it regresses into *hypostasis*. Aura, as we showed in Chapter Five, is non-representative and is *indeterminate*. It is indeterminate 'in nature' – see Chapter 5. It is the indeterminacy of aura that, in fact, negates the determinacy of the instrumental representative system. This prevents the regression of the determinacy of the system into hypostasis (Adorno, 1973: 28–29 [ND 39–40]).

We can describe this negation in the following way. Aura, as indeterminate by nature, leaves the Subject with a sense of the 'elusive' nature of the Object. In so doing aura prevents any possibility of the Subject's 'capturing' of the Object through the determinate system. If the Subject can not capture the Object, it is, of course, also true that he also can not replace it. Thereby aura prevents the possible replacement of the Object by the system. That is, aura prevents *hypostasis* (Adorno, 1973: 53 [ND 62–63]).

Our main point about the positive dialectic at the level of representation is that it is due to the feature of *indeterminacy* that aura can oppose the determinacy of the instrumental-representative system and so prevent it from regressing into hypostasis and so becoming animistic.

Hypostasis as the replacement of the Object by the Subject entails the fantastical, collapse of the distance between the Subject and the Object (that is, the distance is not actually traversed).

The Object, because of the non-conceptual nature of its voice can not have its voice replaced by the concept, provided we maintain a sense of that voice. As Adorno advocates it: 'the actual cognition of things which are, so to speak, *atheoretical*' (Adorno, 1973: 28 [ND 38]). Aura, through forcing us to maintain an atheoretical, indeed wholly non-conceptual mode of 'representing' the Object, prevents us from replacing the Object by the Subject.

[21] Note that this continues the point which we left suspended in our discussion of absorption as non-identity thinking in the context of contradiction – within which we looked at the 'form' of the identity. The 'form' of the identity in absorption is the 'representational' aspect of aesthetic knowledge.

Adorno believes that the Subject is always tempted to collapse the Object into the Subject because, in his words: 'Men are afraid'. They are afraid, he claims, that 'they would lose everything, because the only happiness they know even in thought, is to be able to hold on to something' (Adorno, 1973: 33 [ND 43]). In the same passage he also writes of the burden of maintaining a sense of the Object as distinct from the Subject: 'What differs from the existent will strike the existent as witchcraft' (Adorno, 1973: 33 [ND 43]).

The most important aspect that the positive dialectic between aesthetic and instrumental representation highlights is the importance of auratic *distance*. This distance of 'indeterminacy by nature' leaves us with a sense of the inherent difference of the external world from us, that is, of the Object from the Subject. This distance does not prevent us from knowing the external world, indeed 'it draws us in'. The existence of this distance is not incompatible with the claim that there are increasing levels of sophistication to our knowledge of the external world however indeterminate that knowledge might be. What it does do is preserve an inherent sense of the mysterious distinctness of the external world from ourselves (Adorno, 1973: 33 [ND 43])[22]. In this way aura maintains a sense of the distinctness of the Subject from the Object and thereby prevents us from'magically' or 'mythically' traversing – and so collapsing – that distinctness, be it through replacing the Object with 'mythic demons', 'crystal balls' or the instrumental version of scientific theorems such as our latter-day explanations of the entire origin of the universe through the 'big bang' or 'string theory'.

Adorno makes a point that the world is 'atheoretical' and that we must maintain a sense of its distinctness from us. Of course, one way of doing this is to criticise our own theories. However, this is still within the confines of theory. To step outside of theory and into the Object itself through an *aesthetic* approach is a more powerful means of establishing a sense of that distinctness. All theory, including critical theory, needs criticising and this can only be done by that which is atheoretical, namely the Object itself. And the only way to achieve this critique is through aesthetic engagement[23].

CONCLUSION

From Adorno's claim about knowledge acquisition in general, we can now contextualise his critique of enlightenment. Enlightenment, for Adorno, makes the fundamental mistake of assuming too narrow a conception of knowledge acquisition. Enlightenment considers only the instrumental form

[22] Adorno writes that the 'vertigo which this causes is an *index veri*; the shock of inconclusiveness' (Adorno, 1973: 33 [ND 43]).

[23] After all, for Adorno: 'common to art and philosophy is not the form . . . but a mode of conduct' (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 26]).

of knowledge as valid and for this reason, according to Adorno, knowledge acquisition regresses into myth.

From our discussion of the positive dialectic we can not only see Adorno's criticism that the enlightenment gives a mistaken view of knowledge acquisition, but we can also see that Adorno offers a way forwards. To rescue enlightenment entails broadening the foundational conception of what constitutes knowledge acquisition. Increasing the presence of aesthetic knowledge acquisition is the step towards this goal.

In advocating the importance of aesthetic knowledge acquisition, Adorno makes a claim about the notion of the process of acquiring knowledge in general. Adorno offers us a notion of the acquisition of knowledge which entails an 'interlocking' of the Subject's aesthetic and instrumental engagement with the Object. In this respect Adorno proposes, on the one hand, a far broader conception of the epistemological processes than that which is ordinarily assumed. On the other hand, he offers a view that knowledge acquisition is an integrated process. The aesthetic and instrumental faculties work together and form a kind of 'unity' of the nature of integration. The notion of the dialectic, however, means that, although integrated, the aesthetic and instrumental aspects are oppositional and interact in a variety of ways including criticising each other. Adorno's positive 'model' of knowledge acquisition is that knowledge acquisition is a broad, oppositional and integrated process.

With this positive 'model' Adorno offers a way in which the enlightenment can not only enrich its own substantively impoverished kind of knowledge acquisition, but also prevent its own instrumental kind from regressing into myth. Herein, Adorno's positive dialectic provides a way in which enlightenment can achieve its first and foremost aim, the acquisition of knowledge. Furthermore, enlightenment can achieve its aim vis-à-vis what it regards as knowledge acquisition, namely the instrumental kind. Through helping enlightenment to potentially achieve its first aim, the 'positive' dialectic starts to become positive: it starts to rescue enlightenment from its internal decline to myth.

8

A Positive Dialectic of Subjectivity

The Instincts

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will return to address the problems raised in Chapter 1. We will view the consequences of the positive dialectic in epistemology for Subjectivity. First we show that Adorno's notion of aesthetic knowledge acquisition means that the id-instinct has a 'cognitive' role. Second, we argue that the id and the ego instincts are dialectically related. Third, we explore the implications of this opposition and inextricable connection by focussing initially upon the opposition between the id and ego-instincts. Fourth, we then look at the implications of the inextricable connection between the id and the ego-instincts. Finally, we show how this positive dialectic of Subjectivity redeems the narrative of regression of enlightenment depicted in Chapter 1.

INSTINCTS

Adorno in offering an aesthetic kind of knowledge acquisition differs dramatically from anything that the enlightenment would consider as knowledge. He also therefore differs from anything that Freud would accept. Adorno's view of instrumental knowledge acquisition with its features of control, discrimination and instrumental meaning clearly builds upon Freud's view of knowledge acquisition as stemming from the ego instinct. Aesthetic knowledge acquisition, however, with no capacity for control or discrimination and no ability to gain the instrumental meaning of the Object can not be derived from the ego. It would not, for Freud, be 'cognitively' valid at all.

Adorno, however, deploys Freud's theories in general in order to understand the foundation of knowledge acquisition in the Subject. Given this immense rupture with Freud's epistemological views, how does Adorno conceptualise the foundation of this 'new' kind of knowledge acquisition in the human psyche?

Adorno criticises as overly (and indeed dangerously) narrow, Freud's view that knowledge acquisition can *only* stem from the ego instincts. In holding such a view, Freud, according to Adorno, is part and parcel of the intellectual short sightedness of enlightenment itself. 'Freud's unenlightened enlightenment plays into the hands of . . . disillusion' (Adorno, 1974: 60 [MM 66]). Adorno argues that the problem with Freud's work is not at all what many critics reproach Freud for, namely, Freud's psychological approach to epistemological questions. Freud's weakness, according to Adorno, is 'not – as official philosophy maintains – on account of his psychologism' (Adorno, 1974: 61 [MM 66]). On the contrary, Freud's account of reason is problematic due to a different inadequacy. Adorno writes that: 'reason is for [Freud] a mere superstructure . . . because he rejects the end, remote to meaning, impervious to reason, which alone could prove the means' (Adorno, 1974: 61 [MM 66]). Adorno claims that Freud's account of 'reason' is inadequate[1]: 'because he rejects [that] which alone could provide the means [for] reason to be reasonable: pleasure' (Adorno, 1974: 61 [MM 66]). Adorno provides an ironic twist here on a conventionally Marxist notion of 'superstructure': it is not the socio-economic 'base' that is missing from Freud's account of reason, as Marxists would have us believe, but the human foundation, namely the basis of 'reason' in the instincts themselves. The concept of 'reason' in Freud is thereby, according to Adorno, left 'floating' as a mere superstructure forgetting its basis in 'human nature'.

Freud, according to Adorno, forgets the foundation of 'reason' in one half of the self's instincts. He writes: 'there is 'in Freud's work . . . [a] dual hostility towards mind and pleasure' (Adorno, 1974: 61 [MM 66]). In fact this hostility towards mind and pleasure is a hostility towards the mind *having a grounding in* pleasure. Adorno therefore answers our question. Although abandoning Freud's limited notion of the acquisition of knowledge, he does not abandon Freud's notion of instincts. Rather, he elaborates upon it to argue that knowledge acquisition has a broader instinctual foundation than Freud ever conceived as possible. Let us specify exactly what this is.

For Freud, the id-instinct is responsible for the (absolutely non-cognitive) pleasurable engagement of the Subject with the Object. This pleasurable experience, for Freud, consists of very distinct features from instrumental engagement.

1. The Object is experienced as meaningful in the sense of *substantive meaning*.
2. The way of relating to the Object through the id entails *abandonment*.
3. The id has neither a capacity to discriminate between individual Objects in the external world, nor an ability to discriminate the Subject

[1] Although the quotation uses the concept 'reason', it is nevertheless valid for our discussion of 'knowledge acquisition' because these two epistemological notions, whatever their distinctions, share, for both Freud and Adorno, the same instinctual foundation.

> from the Object. Therefore in engagement with the Object through the id the Subject is not separated from it. Rather, he *merges* with it.

For Adorno, these features, substantive meaning, abandonment and merging, are the very constitutive features of aesthetic knowledge acquisition. Therefore, for Adorno, aesthetic knowledge acquisition has its basis in the aspect of the self that is the id-instincts[2].

Note that Adorno not only sees the pleasure instinct as absolutely vital to the Subject's mental processes: the id-instincts are not merely part of the process of knowledge acquisition – in the sense of being auxiliary. For Adorno, the id instincts are actually the basis of a form of knowledge acquisition that is a valid form of knowledge acquisition in its own right.

Note also that we need to qualify Adorno's overall notion of the id. For Adorno, the id is a complex entity. The complexity of the id entails that there are different facets of experience derived from it. Thus, not all of the id, for Adorno, is related to the acquisition of knowledge. Moreover, the aspects of the id that are related to the acquisition of knowledge may themselves vary. For instance, it is clear that Adorno does not consider the kind of knowledge that is derived from the id to be simply a result of sensual gratification (this could be a 'use' of the Object for the Subject's own sensual gratification and would be an undeveloped id drive in this context). Desire may feature, for Adorno in some form in combination with other aspects from the id. The predominant dimension to the engagement of the id instincts upon the Object in the acquisition of knowledge is not however, for Adorno, straightforward desire. It is a 'higher' kind of engagement, more akin to the experience that Freud describes as 'religious', although, for Adorno it is rather more complex than this too. The point we wish to make here is that although Adorno regards aesthetic knowledge acquisition as deriving from the id, this neither relegates it to the status of something primitive nor does it mean that aesthetic knowledge acquisition is bound up with any straightforward engagement of desire with the Object. In fact, for Adorno, there are scales of sophistication within instrumental and aesthetic knowledge acquisition: so too are there scales of sophistication within the ego's development and most importantly, for Adorno, within that of the id. In this respect, Adorno also differs from Freud. That is to say, Adorno regards the id as a far more sophisticated instinct than Freud credits.

DIALECTIC OF THE INSTINCTS

What are the ramifications of Adorno's argument that the id instincts can gain knowledge for the concept of Subjectivity? In order to answer this we

[2] Note that although the id can gain 'knowledge' of reality, this is not the only aspect of what the id can do.

turn to view the relationship between instrumental and aesthetic knowledge acquisition. We know that they are dialectically related. Instrumental knowledge acquisition arises from the ego, aesthetic knowledge acquisition arises from the id. Therefore, the instinctual drive of the ego is dialectically related to that of the id.

It is not at first apparent what we might mean by saying that instincts are dialectically related one to the other. What does it mean to suggest that, as Adorno does, the ego instincts are inextricably linked and in opposition with the id instincts (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 18 [DA 34])? For Adorno, this dialectic at the instinctual level encompasses views about how the instincts work in relation to each other both vis-à-vis their interaction with each other and vis a vis their strength of engagement upon the Object. Adorno considers that the instinctual drives may vary in their strength relative to each other and that this in fact has consequences for the strength of their engagement upon the Object.

The dialectic between the instincts takes the same potential forms as that between the two kinds of knowledge acquisition. The initial possible form of the dialectic between instrumental and aesthetic knowledge acquisition is one of the *predominance* of one form of knowledge acquisition over the other. The instinctual counterpart to this consists of the predominance of one set of instincts over the other.

First, we could have a state of the predominance of *aesthetic* over instrumental knowledge acquisition. Here the id instincts would come to predominate over those of the ego. This would entail the predominance of the pleasurable engagement of the Subject with the Object at the expense of instrumental control. There is a potential 'narrative' of regression involving the predominance of the id instincts over the ego instincts. It will consist of the ego as less developed than the id so that the ego regresses to eventually undermine the highly developed id instincts and the latter will regress to their own regressive counterpart, namely the condition of fantastical myth. However, as we have explained in Chapter 7, this particular narrative is not one that, according to Adorno, has ever occurred in Western history and is furthermore not one that Adorno ever considers to be likely, so we will not depict this in any detail here[3].

Second, we could have a condition of the predominance of *instrumental* over aesthetic knowledge acquisition. Here the ego instincts would come to predominate over those of the id. This, as shown in Chapter 1, is the condition of predominance that Adorno believes the enlightenment has

[3] As we advocate a positive dialectic which entails increasing the aesthetic form of knowledge acquisition this could hypothetically become the new 'negative dialectic' should that form of knowledge acquisition outgrow its sphere in the same way that the instrumental version has. However, this is so hypothetical when this form of knowledge acquisition is currently under such threat that it is not worth analysing at this particular time.

generated. It entails, according to Adorno, the eventual regression of both sets of instincts. Of particular relevance is the fact that the sphere of enlightenment proper, namely that of the ego instincts, regresses. These regress to become mythic.

It is clear that for Adorno the predominance of one set of instincts over the other leads to an eventual regression of both sets of instincts. That is to say, predominance is a condition of a 'negative dialectic' between the instincts. It entails an inevitable decline to a condition of myth.

The next overall form that the dialectic between the two kinds of knowledge acquisition may take is one where the overall *degree of development* varies. That is, the two kinds of knowledge acquisition may be present in equal degrees in relation to each other but their overall level of development may be high, or their overall level of development may be low. The two sets of instincts that correspond to the two kinds of knowledge are therefore at an overall low or high level of development.

Consider the initial possibility, a condition of *minimal* instrumental and *minimal* aesthetic knowledge. This would take the form of a low degree of engagement of both sets of instincts upon the Object and simply amounts to an overall condition of 'low Subjectivity'.

The latter possibility, however, constitutes a condition of highly developed instrumental and highly developed aesthetic knowledge acquisition. This would take the form of a high degree of engagement of both sets of instincts upon the Object. This, in fact, constitutes Adorno's Positive Dialectic.

POSITIVE DIALECTIC

The positive dialectic of subjectivity for Adorno would be one of equal and opposite levels of high development in the instinctual drives. *There would be a maximum engagement of both the ego and the id-instincts upon the external world* (Adorno, 1973: 30–31 [ND 41–42]).

This dialectic of equivalent degrees of *high development* in the instinctual drives is *positive* because it results, on the one hand, in a *decrease* in the force of the '*negative dialectic*': it can prevent subjectivity from regressing to become mythic (Adorno, 1973: 15 [ND 26–27]). On the other hand, as with the positive dialectic in knowledge acquisition, there are further reasons for viewing this dialectic as positive in and of itself.

In order to explore the dimensions of the positive dialectic of Subjectivity, let us recall that the conception of a dialectic between two phenomena means that they are oppositional and inextricably linked (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: xvi [DA 16]). The id-instincts and the ego-instincts are oppositional and inextricable linked. We will examine first 'opposition' and then 'connection'.

Opposition

Consider the opposition between the two sets of instincts. This has a *problematic* element to it. These two drives oppose each other such that they can interact destructively one upon the other. Adorno writes that 'the wish must not be father to the thought' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 57 [DA 75])[4]. Adorno explains that 'in this contradiction [between the id and the ego] something of the Janus-character . . . exists objectively, and no amount of praise for healthy sensuality can wish it away' (Adorno, 1974: 60 [MM 66]). For instance, Odysseus' pleasure instinct would lead him to dive into the ocean and 'drown' in the Siren's music. His impulse for survival prevents this desire: these two instincts involve themselves in a head on collision. The solution that Odysseus finds in Homer's myth is to have himself bound to the mast. This is a compromise, it simply oppresses Odysseus' instinct from full expression, and for the duration of the passing of the Sirens the music presents a distraction to his control of the ship. Both instincts are moderated. This solution expresses the very real tension that exists for Adorno between the instincts: 'it is true that knowledge breaks down where its effort of objectification remains under the sway of desire' (Adorno, 1974: 79). Moderation is not, however, Adorno's solution at all, for it neglects to take into account the other aspect of the oppositional relationship between these two drives.

There is a *constructive* dimension to the opposition between the two instinctual drives. This, for Adorno, far outweighs in its significance the destructive element. One drive *negates* the other; from the perspective of the ego, the id-instinct negates the ego drive. Through negating the ego drive, the id prevents the regression of the ego.

Let us see how the id-instinct negates the ego-instinct. We will do this by depicting a positive narrative to reply to the negative one depicted in Chapter 1.

Consider the first stage of enlightenment that we depicted in Chapter 1. This we termed impoverishment. Here the enlightenment Subject, although highly developed in the sphere of the ego instincts, was depleted in his pleasurable and substantive experience of the Object, that is he was undeveloped in the sphere of the id. As a result the substantive sphere of experience of the id was 'impoverished'. Aesthetic knowledge acquisition consists of the full deployment of the id-instincts upon reality. Therefore, in the positive epistemological dialectic aesthetic knowledge acquisition becomes highly developed such the Subject's id-instincts become constituted in a high degree of sophistication upon the Object. This obviates the problem of impoverishment in the substantive sphere of the id, which in turn prevents the problem of the first stage of enlightenment, that is, impoverishment.

[4] Compare this with the later quote from Minima Moralia where Adorno claims that the thought must not murder the wish that fathered it.

However, how is this an instance of the id-instinct *negating* the ego-instinct? In fact, this constitutes a negation of the ego-instincts in so far as impoverishment in the sphere of the id *leads to* further stages of decline. These consist in regression in the sphere of the ego itself. Therefore, by preventing the id's impoverishment in the early stages, the later stages of decline which break down the ego instinct, are prevented. We can therefore say that the deployment of the id-instincts in this early stage indirectly negates the ego, thereby preventing its regression.

The substantive sphere is, however, in itself, 'external' to that of the ego-instincts. We cannot therefore see the prevention of 'impoverishment' as a direct negation of the ego-instincts by the id.

Let us turn to examine the next stage of the decline of enlightenment. We termed this *fantasy*. Here the substantive sphere of the id had not merely become impoverished but had actually regressed to a condition of myth. That is, the id-instincts were not merely depleted but had regressed to encompass the mythic traits of projection and narcissism. We will examine narcissism in Chapter 9. Let us consider here projection.

The impoverished id-instincts, unable to relate to reality, had generated their own illusions to satisfy themselves upon. These illusionary Objects constituted the phenomena of projection, for the id began to experience them as 'real'. In the positive dialectic the id-instincts are engaged upon the Object and therefore have no need to generate a substitute Object. They are satisfied by reality itself and so do not generate their own illusionary 'Object'. The id-instincts once satisfied upon the Object do not generate projections. In this way, the positive dialectic prevents fantastical projection and so prevents the regressive stage of fantasy. This constitutes a negation of the ego-instincts in so far as fantasy (like 'impoverishment') in the sphere of the id leads to further stages of decline. Again we can say that the deployment of the id instincts in this early stage indirectly negates the ego. It is a kind of 'preventative' negation.

The sphere of the id, is however, in itself, 'external' to that of the ego-instincts. We cannot therefore see the prevention of 'fantasy' as a direct negation of the ego-instincts by the id. We are interested in the way in which the id might directly negate the ego-instincts. We can, in fact, see this in the (initial) stage of *totalisation*.

In totalisation the weakened id instincts become unable to generate illusionary 'Objects' themselves and, as a substitute, latch on to the ego's products. This 'perverts' the ego's *products* because it imbues them with substantive meaning which, in actual fact, they lack. Through imbuing them with a false substantive dimension, the id-instincts generate illusions about the ego's products. In this way, they generate a kind of 'projection' within the domain of the ego[5].

[5] As yet this is not a distortion of the actual ego instinct itself.

In the positive dialectic this 'projection' in the ego's sphere is counteracted because, when the id-instincts engage with reality as their Object they have no need to latch onto a substitute Object. The ego's products are therefore left intact. The Subject has no need to construe his own mechanical systems as substantively meaningful, for instance, genetic explanations cease to be imbued with some great insight into the human condition: the Subject has re-discovered a dimension of substantive and pleasurable experience within reality itself. The reinstatement of the id instincts upon reality prevents the ego's products from being used for illusion. This encompasses a more direct negation of the ego by the id as it entails the prevention of the onset of regression in the ego's products.

The final stages of totalisation and of *fragmentation* mark the stage where the id-instincts in the positive dialectic actually negate the ego-instincts in a direct fashion. In the final stages of totalisation, the ego had regressed to mythic projection. This projection arose on the one hand because the ego had become the only way of knowing reality; it dominated the self's relationship with reality. On the other hand, it arose due to the ego's particular way of knowing reality. The id instincts negate both the domineering and particular nature of the ego's engagement and thereby intercept its projection.

With respect to the ego's domination, this entailed that the Subject had no other 'comparison' with which to distinguish between the ego's 'experience' of reality and reality itself. The Subject had no 'critical perspective', at the level of the experience of reality (rather than mere 'theoretical critique' generated by the ego's thought processes which would amount to a mere 'ego-critique') and so, for Adorno, the ego could do no other than replace the Object of reality with its own 'Object' of illusion (of reality). Adorno writes: 'once the last trace of emotion has been eradicated, nothing remains of thought but absolute tautology' (Adorno, 1974: 123 [MM 137]). By 'the last trace of emotion', Adorno refers to those aspects of experience derived from the id. In his notion of 'tautology' Adorno captures the actual nature of the regression of (the ego's) thought: tautology articulates the nature of projection. The ego when it regresses is a 'turning in' upon itself so that all that is left is the tautology of the ego relating to the ego. Thus the ego, deprived of the id, begins to project itself onto reality. Instrumental projection ensues.

In the positive dialectic, the satisfaction of the id-instincts upon reality negates the ego's possibility of domination. The id-instincts provide an alternative experience of reality to that which was previously only instrumental. In so doing, they reveal dimensions to the Object distinct from those revealed by the ego's instincts. They therefore reveal that the Object is not the equivalent of the ego. The ego can not therefore merely project itself onto the Object as its equivalent. For example, an aesthetic engagement with works of art gives the Subject a sense of them which differs from that articulated in a socio-economic explanation. The works of art can not therefore

be merely reduced to an instrumental theory. Or, for instance, the Big Bang theory may offer a view of the 'origin' of the universe which it claims encompasses or disproves the existence of God, but when the Subject engages aesthetically with the night sky, he senses something qualitatively distinct from the instrumental explanations and so realises that an instrumental theory can not disprove something (like the non-existence of God) 'outside of its sphere'. The Object, be it the work of art or the night sky, cannot be replaced by the ego. In providing the Subject with a broader experience of the Object, the id negates the instrumental projection of the ego.

With respect to the particular mode of engagement of the ego, this consists of the particular *way* in which the ego acquires knowledge of reality. The ego knows the Object through the type of identification whereby the Object is made like the Subject. This has an inherent tendency, according to Adorno, as we have seen in Chapter 3, to regress to projection. Adorno writes: 'the castration of perception by a court of control that denies it any anticipatory desire, forces it thereby into a pattern of *helplessly reiterating what is already known*. When nothing more may actually be seen, the intellect is sacrificed' (Adorno, 1974: 123 [MM 137])[6].

The ego's particular mode of engagement results in Adorno's words in 'helplessly reiterating what is already known', namely into a projection onto the Object of its own 'knowledge'. Adorno believes that the id-instincts can negate the projection hereby derived too. Whereas the ego 'makes the Object like the Subject' the id-instincts engage with the Object in order to 'make the Subject like the Object'. This provides an experience of the Object which reveals the actual 'voice of the Object' itself (see Chapters 5 and 6). This opposes the ego. For instance, the Subject's aesthetic engagement with the night sky provides a sense of it which simply clashes with the instrumental ego's theory. Through this opposition the id negates the ego's tendency to projection and so prevents the regression of the ego to myth in this sense.

We have so far focussed our discussion of the positive dialectic upon the notion of the prevention of the negative dialectic. Within this, moreover, we have further focussed upon only one feature of the negative dialectic, namely that of the regression of the Subject's relationship with the external world to projection. We will move on in our next section to look at the prevention of other dimensions to the negative dialectic. Furthermore, we will also examine ways in which the dialectic is positive in and of itself.

Connection

The second property of the dialectical relationship between the id-instincts and the ego-instincts is that of their inextricable connection. As with the

[6] My emphasis.

oppositional element to the dialectic, this connection is also positive. We can depict its positive nature through adding a layer to the positive narrative already begun vis-à-vis the oppositional element.

The first feature of the inextricable connection between the id-instincts and the ego-instincts that results from the connection between aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition concerns *enrichment*. The Subject's overall condition of Subjectivity is enriched by the full deployment of the id-instincts upon their Object that occurs when aesthetic knowledge acquisition is highly developed.

For Adorno, the full deployment of the id-instincts is a good in and of itself. He writes of 'that moment in pleasure which transcends subservience to nature [survival]' (Adorno, 1974: 61 [MM 66]). That is, the pleasure drive is something *positive* independent of its effect upon any other aspect of Subjectivity. We will go on to see how the id enhances other aspects of Subjectivity, but it is important to note that if pleasure were reduced to this role it would become a mere means to another end. Adorno explains, '[when pleasure] has been disparagingly consigned to the repertoire of tricks for preserving the species, and so itself exposed as a cunning form of reason' (Adorno, 1974: 61 [MM 66])[7], it lose its own purpose.

Once the pleasure drive is realised as good in and of itself it can then be seen, in relation to the survival drive, to create enrichment. In this way, the dialectic between the two drives is positive, in that the id instinct enriches the narrow experience of the ego instinct.

Substantive experience enriches instrumental experience. In this way the addition of the experience of the id counters the first stage of the negative dialectic of enlightenment, namely impoverishment. The substantive sphere is enriched if Odysseus should gain the full experience of the Siren's song[8].

However, for Adorno, it is not enough to satisfy both drives in a compartmentalized fashion. Adorno despises what he refers to as 'the admonitions to be happy, voiced in concert by the scientifically epicurean' (Adorno, 1974: 62 [MM 68]). Scientific epicureanism is an expression, for Adorno, of the two faculties artificially separated when each then becomes banal. Moreover, each is, as a result of such a 'split', suspended before immanent decay. Adorno writes: 'the faculties, having developed through *interaction*, *atrophy* once they are *severed* from each other' (Adorno, 1974: 122 [MM 136])[9]. For Adorno, the two instinctual drives need to *interact*. One dimension of

[7] Adorno also gives another example of the pleasure drive relegated to instrumental use when he talks of "love-making taken like medicine as 'sex'" (Adorno, 1974: 62 [MM 67–68]).

[8] Note that I am somewhat reluctant to use this example as the Sirens on the one hand do represent pleasure but their 'reality' as an Object is dubious. I have deployed them as an example as Adorno does.

[9] My emphasis.

this interaction is their mutual negation. The other is their inextricable connection.

The inextricable connection between these two instincts means that these two oppositional instincts are *inter-dependent*. They can not be completely separated one from the other. 'Is not indeed the simplest perception shaped by fear of the thing perceived, or desire for it?' (Adorno, 1974: 122 [MM 136]).

If the instincts *start* to become separated in any fundamental way, they each *regress*. For example, the ego's thought processes deteriorate if separated from the id. Adorno writes: 'if the impulses are not at once preserved and surpassed in the thought which has escaped their sway, then there will be no knowledge at all' (Adorno, 1974: 122 [MM 136–137]). He continues to depict the regression that occurs if the instincts are separated, with a pun on the Oedipal complex: 'the thought that murdered the wish that fathered it is overtaken by the revenge of stupidity' (Adorno, 1974: 122 [MM 137]). For Adorno, the instrumental aspect of engagement, the 'thought', if it should try to deny (that is, try to extricate itself from) the accompanying pleasure impulse that 'fathered it', will itself disintegrate. The instrumental dimensions of experience, namely those that derive from the ego, can not persist without their dialectical counterpart, the experiences derived from the id.

Although these two instincts regress if separated, the more positive angle to the fact of their connection is that when properly integrated the id and the ego drives *strengthen* each other. This means that for Adorno the Subject's ego is strengthened by the experience of pleasure, not, as Freud would have it, merely torn in two. 'The assumption that thought profits from the decay of the emotions, or even that it remains unaffected, is . . . an expression of stupefaction' (Adorno, 1974: 122 [MM 136]). For Adorno, pleasurable experience of the Object enhances survival and survival, of course, enhances pleasurable experience. For example, for Adorno, Odysseus can jump overboard, 'drown' in the pleasure of the Siren's song and then return to his ship.

The fact that these two impulses are not simply antagonistically self-destructive, but mutually enhancing has several facets to it. These are the following:

First, there is a point about the *drives to the Object*: Adorno claims that through increased pleasure in an Object the survival instincts are more strongly drawn towards it. The more one aesthetically appreciates the ocean, the more one is driven to survive in it.

Second, there is a point about the *Object* itself. The awareness gained through pleasure of the Object enhances technical sensitivity to it. As the music of the ocean gains aesthetic complexity, so too are its tidal patterns and currents illuminated.

Third, there is a point about the *actual drives* themselves. One drive being strong makes the other drive strong. The stronger Odysseus' pleasure drive,

the stronger his drive for survival. His experience of the world as pleasurable enhances the strength of the instincts to survive: 'the knowledge which enables him to survive, draws its content from . . . digression . . . and abandonment to nature' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 47–48 [DA 65–66]). An example construed the other way round is given when Adorno describes how 'as long as I have been able to *think*, I have derived happiness from the song' (Adorno, 1974: 200 [MM 225])[10]. The process of thought, derived from the ego, enhances the pleasure of music, derived from the id. Thus, the ego's drive enhances the pleasure drive.

These points each add up to an important argument about Subjectivity for Adorno. The high development of the id-instinct enhances the strength of overall Subjectivity. By strong Subjectivity Adorno means the capacity of the self to preserve itself which includes the idea of both physical and psychological survival. We can see how both the id-instinct as well as the ego-instinct is, for Adorno, essential in securing psychological and physical self-preservation[11].

(a) The strong ego instinct is essential for the preservation of the *psychological self*. In Adorno's words: that 'which comprises [Odysseus'] *identity* . . . draws its content from . . . becoming strong and unyielding' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 47 [DA 65]). To be 'unyielding' is to be in control and this requires the ego. Psychological identity requires the ego.

(b) As we would expect, the strong ego instinct procures *physical survival* of the self. Adorno also writes that the: '*survivor* is . . . the man who . . . [is] strong and unyielding when life continues' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 48 [DA 65]).

(c) We see Adorno's more surprising point that the id-instinct directed towards the Object paradoxically strengthens the selfhood of the *psychological self*. Adorno writes: that 'which comprises his *identity* . . . draws its content from . . . digression . . . and abandonment to nature' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 47–48 [DA 65–66])[12]. As we know, abandonment to nature can only occur through the id. Therefore the id-instinct helps procure psychological identity. Adorno makes the same point even more explicitly: 'Odysseus loses himself in order to find himself' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 48 [DA 66]).

(d) Most surprisingly of all, Adorno shows that the self-abandonment derived from the id-instinct also facilitates the *physical survival* of the self. Adorno writes that 'which enables him to *survive*, draws its content from . . . digression . . . and abandonment to nature' (Adorno and

[10] My emphasis.

[11] For a different view of Adorno's solution to the problems of the 'ego' as inherited from Freud, see Whitebook, J. (1995), pp. 119–164.

[12] My emphasis.

> Horkheimer, 1979: 47–48 [DA 65–66])[13]. Odysseus can yield to pleasurable experience – for instance jump overboard and 'drown' in the music of the Sirens – and then return, strengthened by the experience, to exert control and survive – that is, climb back aboard and steer his ship safely home.

Adorno's point is: the substantive experience provided by the id instincts is a *sine qua non* for the preservation of the self. The positive dialectic by providing this substantive experience, therefore preserves the self against the collapse of selfhood which occurred in the negative dialectic.

The inextricable connection between the id-instinct and the ego-instinct has another positive outcome. It entails consequences for the enlightenment's ability to achieve its aims.

Consider first, the enlightenment's aim of maturity. Two strong instinctual drives directed towards reality as their Object constitute the opposite of a condition of weakened drives turned inwards towards the self. This latter is constitutive of infantile narcissism. The contrary, *two strong drives* driven outwards towards reality as their Object constitute the condition of *maturity*.

In the aspect of the dialectic that is the inextricable connection of the instincts we see the following. The id-instincts do not merely *negate* the ego-instincts so preventing immaturity. Through their inextricable connection with the ego-instincts they thereby help to *re-engage* these upon the Object. Therefore we can see that the id-instincts (when engaged upon reality as their Object) strengthen the engagement of the ego-instincts upon reality. This re-engaging of the ego-instinct upon reality constitutes their maturity. The id-instincts therefore enhance the maturity of the ego-instincts.

In this way the positive dialectic of aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition, through consisting of the engaging of the id-instinct upon reality in equivalent degree to the ego-instincts, enhances the possibility of the enlightenment attaining its goal of *maturity*.

Second, consider the impact of the inextricable connection between the id-instincts and the ego-instincts upon the enlightenment's further aim of *freedom*.

Odysseus through the two coexistent strong drives has a strong capacity to preserve his selfhood. This leads to the following: Odysseus, in his encounter with the Sirens is no longer threatened by their song. He can therefore untie himself. He thereby frees himself from bondage. Furthermore, if the crew are similarly developed, he can unplug their ears and free them from 'slavery'. Odysseus can steer his ship safely home without compromising his own freedom or that of his crew.

For Adorno, as we have illustrated through Odysseus, the enlightenment through the dialectical relationship between aesthetic and instrumental

[13] My emphasis.

knowledge acquisition produces a dialectic between the id-instincts and the ego-instincts which provides a basis in subjectivity which does not necessitate the restriction of freedom and allows the possibility of the enlightenment securing its aim of freedom.

Third, consider the enlightenment's aims of *security* and *peace*. The mutually beneficial effect of the id-instincts and ego-instincts upon each other means that when the ego is directing itself towards the external world to seek security, because the id-instincts maintain their connection with reality, the world is no longer solely threatening. The Subject can gain the control he needs over both himself and the external world in order to procure his security, physical and psychological, against a backdrop of appreciation of the world around him. He can gain the security against, for instance, the physical forces of nature and disease, etc. and the psychological forces of distraction, other lives, etc. without being completely fearful of these things. In this way, he can *secure* himself in the world without total fear.

Similarly, because the external world is not threatening to the Subject (for instance another race) it is not regarded as solely dangerous but potentially Meaningful (B). The Subject does not therefore respond to the external world as solely threatening; he does not need to be aggressive and destructive towards the world. This helps to offset the problem of barbarism and lays the foundation in the human psyche for the possibility of peace.

What Adorno is trying to point out here is that fear and barbarism result from an infantile relationship with the world wherein it seen as solely dangerous. Maturity entails a more balanced relationship with the world wherein it is substantively rich as well as potentially dangerous. This balanced awareness of pleasure and danger actually allows the individual to survive more effectively than if he were to be preoccupied only with fear. The balanced awareness of pleasure and danger, for Adorno, constitutes the genuine 'reality principle'[14].

CONCLUSION

The positive dialectic at the level of knowledge acquisition entails a positive dialectic at the level of the two instinctual drives. Adorno's whole quotation concerning the beneficence of the interaction of the two instinctual drives upon each other is as follows:

> The knowledge which comprises his identity and which enables him to survive, draws its content from experience of the multitudinous, from digression and salvation; and the knowing survivor is also the man who takes the greatest risks when death threatens,

[14] For a very different kind of argument and one which arrives at quite distinct conclusions from my own, but which addresses some of the same issues, directly through Freud, see Lear, J. (1990).

thus becoming strong and unyielding when life continues . . . Odysseus . . . in the process of abandonment to nature . . . returns home [and] triumphs' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 48 [DA 65–66]).

In counterbalancing the instrumental with the pleasurable and substantive, both are preserved. Odysseus reaches Ithaca. Enlightenment has the instinctual basis within Subjectivity with which to achieve its aims.

9

A Positive Dialectic of Subjectivity

The Structure of The Self

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we reply to the problems raised in Chapter 2, namely the regression of the enlightenment self to narcissism. We show how a dialectic at the level of the instincts implies a similar dialectic at the structural level of the self. We explore Freud's single notion of psychic unity and Adorno's derivation of three conceptions of unity from this. One of these is *positive*. We give an account of the inter-relationship of *unity* and *separateness* in Adorno's work and show how this provides a *positive dialectic* in the *structure* of the self.

UNITY

We have seen in Chapter 2 that Adorno builds upon Freud's notion of what constitutes the most important *structure* of the self, namely the *boundary* around it. A strong boundary, for Adorno, following Freud, is essential for the maintenance of a strong sense of self (indeed any sense of self). It provides these interconnected features: (a) a sense of self; (b) a sense of the demarcation between the self and external Objects; (c) a capacity to discriminate between Objects.

As with Freud, Adorno perceives the loss of this boundary as regressive, as leading to narcissism. Narcissism as the deterioration of this boundary entails: (a) a weakening of the sense of self; (b) a weakening of a sense of the demarcation between the self and external Objects; (c) an inability to discriminate between Objects.

Adorno criticises the enlightenment for entailing a loss of the self's boundary. In the course of his criticism, Adorno makes a distinction within Freud's single notion of narcissism and depicts instead two kinds of narcissism: fantastical and instrumental. The former is a condition wherein

the id-instinct turns towards itself. The latter one wherein the ego turns towards itself.

Both these conditions demonstrate that for Adorno, as for Freud, the regressive condition of narcissism consists of a loss of demarcation between the self and that which is not self, the Object. This regressive condition, consisting as it does in a loss of demarcations, is one of *unity*. Adorno, although agreeing with Freud that narcissism is always regressive and is an instance of psychic unity, makes a departure from Freud. Adorno, unlike Freud, does not consider that psychic unity is always regressive. In fact, we can find in Adorno's work a kind of psychic unity that is positive. This kind of unity is distinct from both fantastical and instrumental narcissism. Indeed it is not a narcissistic kind of unity at all but one that, far from being regressive, partakes of a very sophisticated level of development.

We have already hinted at the existence of this kind of unity in Chapter 6. It is the unity that occurs in absorption. We will henceforth refer to it as 'absorptive unity'.

ABSORPTIVE UNITY

Absorptive unity occurs in the experience of aesthetic knowledge acquisition. This kind of knowledge acquisition, as we know, stems from the id-instincts. Absorptive unity therefore is a result of the Subject's deployment of the id-instincts. The id-instincts, however, can also result in a regressive kind of unity – fantastical narcissism. What makes absorptive unity distinct from this brand of narcissism?

Absorptive unity involves the Subject, through the deployment of the id-instincts, being absorbed into the *Object of reality*. That is: 1, it occurs as a result of the most intense deployment of the id-instincts; 2, it consists of these being deployed upon the Object of *reality*. Although in the first respect absorptive unity is the same as the fantastical variety, in the second aspect, it differs. Fantastical narcissism consists of a unity of the id-instincts turned in upon the self. We can say the id relates to the id. In contrast, in the psychic unity of absorption the id relates to external reality. For this reason, *absorption is not a condition of narcissism at all.*

In absorptive unity we can see the following features: 1, Absorptive unity occurs as a result of the satisfaction of the id-instincts; 2, it is a condition of unity of the Subject with the Object; 3, as a condition of unity it entails the loss of the boundary between the self and the Object; 4, as a result of 3, absorptive unity entails a loss of the distinction between the self and the Object; 5, as a result of 3, absorptive unity entails a *virtual* 'loss of self'; 6, it consists of the most intense experience of the Object.

An instance of absorptive unity appropriate to Adorno would be that of Odysseus drowning in the music of the Sirens. Adorno writes: 'the Sirens.

Their allurement is that of losing oneself' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 32 [DA 49]). 'Odysseus loses himself' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 48 [DA 66]), to the music of the Sirens[1].

This experience has the following features: 1, Odysseus engages with the music through the id-instincts; 2, Odysseus becomes 'united with' the music; 3, Odysseus loses the boundary between himself and the music; 4, Odysseus can no longer distinguish between himself and the music; 5, Odysseus loses his sense of self'; 6, Odysseus gains the most intense experience of the music.[2]

DIALECTIC

The dialectical relationship between aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition implies, at the level of the instincts, a dialectic between the id-instincts and the ego-instincts. The engagement of the Subject with the Object through the id-instincts is unbounded whilst the engagement of the Subject with the Object through the ego-instincts is bounded. Therefore we can say that at the level of the structure of the self, the dialectic between the id-instinct and the ego-instinct implies a dialectic between the unbounded and bounded self. The dialectic between the id and the ego is in turn implied by the dialectic between aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition. Therefore we can say that the positive epistemological dialectic implies a dialectic between unbounded and bounded selfhood. That is to say, absorptive unity and instrumental separation are dialectically related.

This dialectical relationship can take several forms. It can be one of the predominance of either unity or separateness over the other. This is always negative. On the one hand, too great a sense of instrumental separation results in the decay of separation to the instrumental narcissistic unity, and thus to instrumental myth. This we saw in Chapter 2. It is, for Adorno, the decline of the enlightenment self. On the other hand, hypothetically, too great a sense of absorptive unity with the Object could also lead to decay. As this is simply hypothetical it is not something which Adorno analyses.

The positive dialectic between these two phenomena, unity and separation, is positive only in so far as they each counterbalance the other. That is, each phenomenon, unity and separation, must be highly developed and as highly developed as its counterpart.

[1] There is always, of course, a remnant sense of self because of the dialectic, as we will explain. For this reason, the Subject can retain enough Subjectivity to actually experience the Object itself.

[2] For a discussion of unity in Adorno and Freud, and a distinct view of a solution, see Whitebook, J. (1995), pp. 114, 151.

However, even when these two forms are counterbalanced, there is an *antagonistic tension*. Adorno expresses the enormity of this tension: 'The dread of losing the self and of abrogating together with the self the barrier between oneself and other life, the fear of death and destruction, is intimately associated with a promise of happiness which threatened civilization in every moment' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 33 [DA 51]).

Let us see its various elements.

(a) The tension involves the pull of two very different impulses. There are strong impulses to attain both states. One state, that of instrumental separateness, is the very foundation of the sense of self, such that the ego's impulse for (psychological) survival attempts to maintain this at all costs. However, fighting this is an equally strong impulse of the self to simply 'let go'. 'Letting go' is an experience accompanied by the most intense pleasure and is thus a very strong drive of the id. The Subject cannot give in to one impulse whilst also satisfying the other. Adorno writes: 'The strain of holding the I together adheres in all stages; and the temptation to lose it has always been there with the blind determination to maintain it' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 33 [DA 51]). The positive dialectic involves these two antagonistic and equally strong impulses to unity and separation.

(b) Unity opposes separation. Becoming at one with something opposes separating oneself from it.

(c) An important dimension to this antagonism relates to the structural boundary of the self. It is not possible for the Subject to be both unbounded and bounded at the same moment.

(d) This antagonism also relates to the feature of discrimination. Losing the boundary around the self entails losing the ability to discriminate between the self and the Object. Retaining the boundary entails retaining the capacity to discriminate between the self and the Object. The antagonism between these two psychic states involves an antagonism within the feature of discrimination.

(e) Perhaps the most important dimension to this antagonism for Adorno is that it involves a tension within the Subject's very sense of self. One can't lose one's sense of self at the very same time as maintaining it. Absorptive unity involves losing the sense of self and so threatens the maintenance of it: Adorno writes: 'whoever . . . heeds the Siren's song . . . risks the . . . threat [of] oblivion' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 62 [DA 81]).

(f) The final dimension to the antagonism relates to the Object. There is an apparent incompatibility in having the most intense sense of the Object at the same time as retaining a strong sense of self. The above quotation could well be paraphrased as: 'whoever heeds the threat of oblivion, risks losing the Siren's song'.

POSITIVE DIALECTIC

Let us now move on to assess how this dialectic can work as positive. Absorptive unity is opposed to and inextricably linked with instrumental separateness. First, we will focus on the dimension of the dialectic that is opposition.

Negation

There is, in fact, a dimension to the oppositional relationship which is entirely positive. This is that of negation. The absorptive unity between the Subject and the Object negates the instrumental separation between them. It thereby prevents the regression of the instrumental separation into a *narcissistic unity*.

We have already seen, in Chapter 2, how instrumental separation regresses to narcissistic unity. This regression arises as a result of the withdrawal of the instincts from external reality as their Object. Initially, in enlightenment, the id-instincts withdraw and then the ego-instincts themselves follow suit.

The result of the withdrawal of the self's instincts is the loss of the sense of the external world of Objects. Consequently, the self loses that which it differentiated itself against. The boundary around the self begins to weaken. We have a regression of the self to the narcissistic unity. At its extreme, the boundary is lost altogether and the very existence of any kind of selfhood is threatened. Adorno writes that 'deprived of the object [we have] the decay of the self' (Adorno 1974: 65 [MM 72]), thus, the 'self-assertion' which the narcissist attempts to make by turning inwards away from the distinct Object, 'is [in fact] self-denial' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 68 [DA 87]).

We can see how absorptive unity negates the regression of enlightenment separation into narcissistic unity, in an indirect fashion, because it re-engages the Subject's id-instincts upon reality. This counters the first stage of regression to narcissism. The first stage, the regression to fantastical narcissism heralded the eventual decline into further stages of regression and thereafter the regression of the ego-instincts themselves.

Absorptive unity also negates the regression of separation to narcissism in a more direct way. Because absorptive unity contains a high level of engagement of the Subject's id-instincts upon the Object of reality, it provides a strong sense of external reality as an Object. The strong sense of external reality generated by the id-instincts actually provides a potential Object for the ego-instincts themselves to turn to and in this way absorption can prevent these ego-instincts from turning away from the external world as their Object. It thereby helps prevent instrumental narcissism[3].

[3] This vivid sense of external reality is, of course, a sense of something external to the Subject. This is a resource for the self to demarcate itself from. It provides an 'other' for the self to

The unity of *absorption* can *negate* the unity of *narcissism*.

There is a consequence for the self of absorption's ability to negate narcissism. The unity of narcissism consists of a weakening of the boundary around the self. The very existence of the sense of self is thereby eroded. In preventing narcissism, absorption helps prevent this erosion of the self. We can therefore say that absorption helps preserve the sense of self.

This point is quite striking. Adorno writes: 'Odysseus loses himself in order to find himself' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 48 [DA 66]). Adorno's point is that the self, through absorption in the external Object, negates the *dissolution* of the self that occurs when the self seeks withdrawal. The kind of 'loss of the self' of absorption which 'appears' like a threat to the self, actually negates the possibility of the loss of the self of narcissism which is an actual destruction of the self.

Connection

The second aspect of the dialectical relationship is that of connection. Instrumental separation and absorptive unity are inextricably connected. The Subject, in each psychic condition always retains something of the opposite. For instance, at the moment of intense separation, the Subject retains a minimal sense of the Object, otherwise, of course, the sense of self would deteriorate. Likewise, at the moment of intense absorptive unity, he retains a minimal sense of self, otherwise, of course, there would be no self with which to have the experience of the Object.

There is a negative potentiality due to this connection. Any attempt to extract one from the other results in their mutual decay. Having solely an experience of absorptive unity or of separation is regressive. This is not simply a point about imbalance – that is, we know that the predominance of one psychic condition will lead to regression, first, in the other and then in the predominant psychic state itself. The point is that each condition must interconnect. If they do not interconnect, they will each regress.

To interconnect is, for Adorno, to be integrated. Adorno wishes to highlight the importance of integration. Just as with the instinctual drives, the structural dimensions of Subjectivity must be integrated. The condition of boundedness must be integrated with that of unboundedness in order to mutually enhance them both. Adorno's notion of the self is neither therefore one of a simple unity nor one of a straightforwardly separate 'entity'. It is one of an integration of unity and separation.

Moreover, through unity and separation being integrated, the self is integrated in that it attains both an appropriate unity with and an appropriate separation from the Object. That is to say, through their integration,

form a boundary against and thus create a sense of separateness. That is to say, absorptive unity provides a resource which the self needs to maintain the boundary for separateness.

the self can become integrated in its relationship with the external world. The self for Adorno is always united and separate in relation to the Object of external reality.

There is a positive dimension to the connection between unity and separation. This occurs when they are properly integrated, at which point each *strengthen*s the other. Unity strengthens separation, and paradoxically, separation also strengthens unity.

Absorption can strengthen separation because losing oneself in absorption to the Object entails gaining a greater sense of the Object than any mere separation would allow. The greater awareness of the Object so gained reinforces the ability of the self to demarcate itself from the external Object. This, in turn, strengthens separation.

Because of this interconnection, absorption can actually enhance the strength of the sense of self. That is to say, losing the sense of self in the experience of absorption can actually strengthen the overall sense of self. For Adorno, absorbing oneself in the Objects one encounters in life is the surest way to prevent losing one's self in the regressive self-withdrawal of narcissism. This is why Adorno writes that 'absorption' allows 'the vanquished to rediscover himself'. Adorno describes what we have termed the phenomenon of absorption as: 'the unrestricted openness to experience amounting to self-abandonment in which the vanquished rediscovers himself' (Adorno, 1974: 200 [MM 224]).

There is a qualifying point that we need to make. The connection between unity and separation has a temporal dimension to it. The Subject in unity, although retaining a minimal sense of a separate self; and in separation, although retaining a minimal sense of the Object, is either almost wholly 'united with', or almost entirely 'separate from' the Object. The connection between these two states therefore alters over time. That is to say, at one moment the Subject is united with the Object and at another he is separated from it. Therefore, he crosses back and forth between a strong sense of unity with the Object and a strong sense of separation from it. It is this perpetual crossing of the boundary that strengthens it. Subjectivity, for Adorno, is strengthened through alternation over time between unity with, and separation from, the Object[4].

There is a crucial point about the importance of the connection between unity and separation. As we know, the boundary around the self not only maintains psychological 'survival', a strong identity. It also enables the discrimination between distinct Objects in the external world. Without this, the Subject would not be able to exert any kind of instrumental discrimination between the Objects in the external world, for instance between a tiger

[4] I have discussed the state of the self as being one of unity or separation. This could be construed as a *process* of unification or a *process* of separation. My focus, however, has not been upon the 'dynamic' nature, but 'structural' features.

and a domestic cat. This ability to discriminate is essential to physical survival. The strong boundary around the self is therefore essential to physical survival. Absorption, therefore, in being essential to the maintenance of the boundary around the self is essential to physical survival.

This sheds further light upon Adorno's claim that: '[That] which comprises his identity and which enables him to survive, draws its content from experience of the multitudinous, from digression and salvation; and the knowing survivor is also the man who takes greatest risks when death threatens, thus becoming strong and unyielding when life continues' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 47 [DA 65]). This is a strong point against Freud and the enlightenment for Adorno. The idea that unity is regressive and detrimental to survival is simply one-sided and wrong. Drowning in Beethoven is not, in an overall sense, detrimental to survival. We could say that to believe otherwise is a 'myth of the enlightenment'. Without the unity of absorption there is no survival.

There is a final point about the absorptive unity. This is a 'Good' in and of itself. It is therefore valuable in its own terms and is not merely a means to the end of enhancing psychological survival. If it were only valuable as a means to survival this would make the latter the highest aim of life and this is not at all what Adorno regards as the solution for the enlightenment. It is, rather, what he criticises. Put simply, absorptive unity, for Adorno, is an experience of aesthetic joy which enriches life. Drowning in Beethoven is a good in and of itself.

CONCLUSION

One element belonging to the *external* substantive sphere of the enlightenment, is a form of aesthetic knowledge acquisition. This way of knowing the Object entails a moment of unity between the Subject and the Object. The marginalisation of the substantive sphere as a whole incurrs a diminution of this absorptive unity. This results, paradoxically, in a regression of Subjectivity to a different kind of unity, the mythic one of narcissism. In the positive dialectic between aesthetic and instrumental knowledge acquisition, absorptive unity is rehabilitated. This helps prevent the enlightenment Subject from regressing into the opposite kind of unity.

For Adorno, enlightenment is fuelled by a strong sense of self. Without this it can neither achieve its aims, nor even ensure mere physical survival. Intrinsic to that strong sense of self, and so too to survivial, is aesthetic absorption. Thus, for Adorno, Homer's Odyssey is a 'myth of enlightenment': Odysseus will never reach Ithaca if he ties himself to the mast every time he encounters the possibility of aesthetic absorption.

In Adorno's positive dialectic we see how the enlightenment sense of self can be strengthened so that Subjects do survive, that they are strong enough to reach the goals of enlightenment and furthermore, that they are enriched

in and of themselves. For Odysseus to reach Ithaca, for the enlightenment Subject to achieve his aims, each must drown in their respective song. As Adorno puts is, quoting Hölderlin: 'where there is danger, there salvation [grows] too' (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979: 47 [DA 65])[5].

[5] 'Grows' is written as 'lies' in the English translation of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. However, this is a mistranslation of Adorno and Horkheimer's quotation from *Patmos*. They use the word 'grows' (which is sometimes also translated as 'sprouts'). This is important in so far as it indicates the *proportional* nature of the relationship between danger and salvation. See for instance, Hölderlin, trans. in Schaffer, 1980: 296.

Concluding Comments

UTOPIANISM

Our interpretation *Adorno's Positive Dialectic* reveals five interconnected dimensions to Adorno's Utopianism. First, it shows a Utopian history; note that this is very particular, in three principal ways. Distinct from his German forefathers, Adorno's Utopian history is not one of progress towards an end point. It does not map a trajectory of competing forces which develop towards a 'Utopian' conclusion. Adorno's positive view of history does not entail progress, development and is not a prediction. Instead, it is a speculative image of the entire course of Western history.

Adorno's vision of history is positive in one key way. Instead of the negative dialectic between enlightenment and myth – history characterised by an ever regressive element – Adorno offers the possibility of a distinct trajectory wherein Western history can become close to realising its aim. Composed of a dialectic between *enlightenment* and *absorption*, history can be positive in the sense that, it can come closer to, attaining enlightenment.

Adorno's positive history is composed, at root, between modes of engagement between the Subject and the Object. The dialectic between enlightenment and myth, was negative because it consisted of the same mode of identification between the Subject and the Object, namely, forms of anthropomorphism. (Enlightenment is the most sophisticated kind of anthropomorphism.) The dialectic of enlightenment and myth, therefore is simply one of enlightenment competing with a regressive counterpart of the *same* mode of identification between Subject and Object. In contrast, Adorno's utopian history is the dialectic between enlightenment and absorption, wherein absorption is the very contrary of anthropomorphism. Adorno's *positive dialectic* offers a trajectory of Western history characterised by two genuinely distinct competing modes of identification between the Subject and the Object.

The second element of Adorno's utopia is a vision of enlightenment itself. Herein, enlightenment, rather than regressing, consolidates its identity. Moroever, in that consolidation is a richer, broader enlightenment encompassing aesthetic, pleasure driven and spontaneous forms of behaviour. Enlightenment society is dualistic and dialectical. This contrasts with the 'monistic' (internal) dialectic with myth which is internally regressive.

Third, *Adorno's Positive Dialectic* also contains a Utopian image of 'reconciliation'[1]. As befits his theory of history, reconciliation is an ongoing condition between Subject and Object, not one of a movement towards a final stage of completion wherein the Subject achieves a 'oneness' with the Object. A unity would be merely static, and lead to internal collapse (as we have argued in the final chapter). Adorno's 'reconciliation' consists of a movement between two oppositional moments of 'unity'. The enlightenment unity of the Subjective 'illusion' of capturing the Object, (anthropomorphically) – at the expense of the Object. And the opposite, the absorptive unity of losing oneself, (aesthetically) in the Object (at the expense, at its most extreme moment, of the Subject). Adorno's Utopian reconcilation is an ongoing dialectic between these two forms of unity. A reconciliation which consists, on the one hand, in moments of apparent completeness and unity; on the other hand, in an overall thread of reconciliation which is the integration of oppositional modes of engaging with the Object. Reconciliation is an ongoing dialectical unity wherein absorption and enlightenment can preserve themselves.

Fourth, Adorno's Utopia also includes knowledge. His utopian notion of knowledge is against both the enlightenment and mythic kinds of knowledge (ie. sophisticated and crude anthropomorphism, respectively – wherein the sophisticated must give way to the crude). Adorno depicts a form of knowledge which depends neither on language nor on concepts, but one wherein (the silent, taboo of Adorno's Judaistic mystical faith expresses itself, and) the Object can be known, in itself, non-linguistically. The dialectic between the most sophisticated conceptual 'language' of enlightenment and the nonnaming mode of knowing within absorption, represents Adorno's Utopian view of knowledge. It represents the greatest degree of knowledge of the Object possible for human society.

Fifth, and most importantly for our study here, *Adorno's Positive Dialectic* contains a Utopian image of Subjectivity. The enlightenment mode of engagement (including enlightenment identification), with the external world deployed only half of the Subject's drives. This resulted in a retracted relationship with the external world and eventual weakening of the other half of the drives. The deployment of only half the self led to the collapse of

[1] For a detailed analysis of the concept of 'reconciliation' in Hegel and Marx, see Hardimon, M. (1994). For illuminating discussions of this concept in Adorno, see Dews, P. (1995), p. 20.; Whitebook, J., p. 79; and Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 276–290.

the whole self; including weakening Subjectivity and a loss of the external world.

The Utopian notion of Subjectivity is one which deploys the whole self. Both drives are *equally* engaged. This engagement is directed *towards* the *Object* – mainly the external world. This strengthens both the drives and the overall 'identity' of the self. The Utopian notion of the strong ego is one counterbalanced with a strong id drive. The utopian notion of the strong self, is one highly engaged upon the external world. Adorno's Utopian image of the Subject is a dialectical unity of the drives, the id and ego, and a counterbalance between a strong sense of self, and a strong sense of the external world.

DEBATES

Adorno's Positive Dialectic could be brought into debate with five important philosophical traditions, first, the Kantian one of Enlightenment, second, the Hegelian-Marxist one of philosophy of history; third, 'traditional' Freudian psychoanalysis; fourth, the trend for 'deconstruction' 'associated' with various 'offshoots' of 'postmodernism', and, finally, the Later Frankfurt School's attempt to rehabilitate enlightenment.

First, like the Later Frankfurt School, Adorno supports Kant's aims of Enlightenment, namely reason, knowledge, and the idea of critique. Also, like the later Frankfurt School, he is critical of the Kantian project of how to achieve these enlightenment aims. Unlike the Later Frankfurt School, however, Adorno finds Kant problematic due to the tacit psychological assumptions underlying his concepts of reason and knowledge acquisition[2]. For Adorno, unravelling these psychological assumptions reveals an insecure grounding of Kant's 'epistemological' project. For Adorno, enlightenment as conceived by Kant, is bound to fail because it relies on a tacit, misplaced notion of 'human nature'; one that can not support his notion of 'rationality' and indeed, undermines it such that, that which was conceived as rational, once grounded in 'human nature', emerges as itself, 'irrational'[3].

[2] This also sets Adorno, in my reading, apart from Wellmer's utopianism, based, as it is, upon what I would see here as a rehabilitiating enlightenment without counterbalancing it with its genuine opposite; but rather, incorporating an 'abstract' and hence ego-bound form of aesthetics from within enlightenment itself. This difference between mine and Wellmer's view relates to the distinction between Wellmer's notion of 'later enlightenment' (modernism and postmodernism) as critical of, and dialectically related to, 'enlightenment proper'. My interpretation of Adorno argues that, from his perspective, 'modernism', that is 'the New' is the most radical form of enlightenment aesthetics, whilst post-modernism represent's enlightenment's internal degeneration. See Wellmer, A. (1991).

[3] 'Human nature', herein, as throughout our discussion, does not imply 'character'. Adorno refers only to what he believes to be 'natural' human psychological makeup – as taken from Freud.

Second, in its revisiting of enlightenment's aims, and in its reappraisal of the role of the human self in history, Adorno offers a challenge to a second tradition namely the German tradition of philosophy of history, to both its Idealist and materialist advocates. Against the Idealists, he couples the aspirations of rationality to psychological features, and gives the latter equal historical determining force. Against the materialists, he complicates the notion of historically determining activity. He attacks the notion that historically meaningful human activity is reduced to the socio-economic sphere. Adorno argues that human psychology is central to historical determination, and he builds upon many deep assumptions, from Hegelian-Marxism in order to challenge this tradition from within.

Adorno's speculative Utopian philosophy of history represents a break with early 'positive' (that is, realised teleological) German philosophies of history, for it remains bound to his overarching melancholy. Adorno does not really believe that we can have 'heaven on earth'. His Utopian image of enlightenment, counterbalanced with absorption, is historically unrealisable. It remains however something which in his view, we should always aspire to. That is, it is neither an empirically bound interpretative nor predictive view of Western history, but a value-laden analysis and vision.

The inherent worth of Adorno's positive dialectic lies not in its feasability or indeed any naïve optimism. It resides instead in a deepening of certain deliberate criticisms of the project of enlightenment. For enlightenment, he feels, sets out with certain deeply misguided premises, in spite of its noble aims.

Adorno's utopian view of knowledge (and reason) emphasises the importance of the aesthetic in this realm. He accuses enlightenment of disguarding essential features of rationality in its overly zealous attempt to define too precisely, and hence too narrowly, what constitutes reason. As a consequence, enlightenment loses track of important psychological features that constitute the strong Subject.

Third, like Freud, enlightenment constructs a dualistic but undialectical vision of the self. Herein the aim of maturity is equated with the stong ego wherein the *strong* ego in turn is equated with the *dominant* ego. This is a fallacious psychological view, according to Adorno. The dominant ego in contrast is the weak ego. To be truly strong, Adorno argues, it needs to retain the counterbalance with its opposite, not simply as a colourful optional extra, a possible enrichment of life: the strong self is *dependent* upon a productively employed pleasure drive and this is what enlightenment fails to realise. The enlightenment project, to succeed, needs to bring into its very set of aims a concept of this productive pleasure drive. For Adorno, maturity cannot be gained through repression and can not be equated with mere control. This is as fantastical a notion of maturity as any childhood

fantasy itself could concoct: hence, we see Adorno's critical engagement with Freud[4].

Fourth, Adorno's speculative Utopia is also in opposition to later psychoanalysis and its inspirational source, namely forms of post-structuralism, deconstructionism, and related offshoots of post-modernism[5]. Without pursuing any detailed analysis of the various facets of these later movements, we can say that a trend they all have in common is a suspicion of coherent 'identities', that includes any kind of unity. As a result, many embark on gloomy projects of deconstructing and fragmenting identities that were once perceived as coherent.

This fragmenting of coherent identities occurs on a number of fronts, first, in knowledge and reason. These 'postmodernist' styles of thought are all suspicious of coherent systems of knowledge and reason, or indeed, of systematic thought itself. They regard these as dominating and fictional[6].

Moreover, these 'schools' attack the concept of a unified self, a coherent identity, and sometimes any conception of the self or identity at all. Whilst they found their attack of the self upon notions like 'integration' and 'unity', our interpretation of Adorno demonstrates that these attacks upon unity and coherent identities are not radical and do not provide us with anything new, in contrast, they are built upon an increasingly narrow and frustrated conservatism. They remain within the narrow confines of enlightenment: enlightenment fails, Adorno argued, precisely because the self was never properly or fully integrated in the first place[7].

Post-structuralist and deconstructionist arguments in psychology and epistemology, in spite of seeing themselves as critical of enlightenment, are not. To deconstruct, or to dismantle something, is not to criticise it but simply break it apart. Further, in spite of seeing themselves as 'new', they are, in fact, for Adorno, no more than an *inevitable* stage of enlightenment[8]. For Adorno,

[4] Contrast this to the view taken by Whitebook, J. (1995).

[5] I use this term generally to refer to theorists such as Derrida who emphasises the 'deconstruction' of knowledge and the Subject. See Dews, P. (1995), Part IV, for more details of other post-structuralist schools of thought and for the distinctions within these. See also, Critchley, S. and Dews, P., eds. (1996); and, finally, Zuidervaart, L. (1991), pp. 248–274, may also be usefully consulted.

[6] See Derrida, (1974).

[7] Some important comparative points are made between post-structuralists, the Later Frankfurt School, Lacan, and the Early Frankfurt School, on Subjectivity: herein, our view could be profitably compared and contrasted. See Dews P. (1987), pp. 45–86; 150–160; 234–244.

[8] This claim about Adorno's difference from, and potential hostility to, post-structuralism, etc., follows the thread of Dews' own view, which, in his words, is that: 'In short . . . far from being merely a harbinger of post structuralist and post modernist styles of thought, Adorno offers some of the conceptual tools with which to move beyond . . . a self-destructive, indiscriminate and politically ambiguous assualt on the structures of rationality and modernity in *toto*,'

these 'schools' can't step outside of enlightenment, and so they dismantle it from within: if they were successful, we would be left with nothing. The challenge from post-structuralism and related schools, is less a radical alternative, less anything new, than a frustrated outburst from a fundamentally unchallenging position, an increasingly narrow cage. For Adorno it represents nothing more than the most degenerate stage of enlightenment itself.

Adorno sees the failings of the tradition of enlightenment as stemming not from a false coherency or unity but from an initial separation and an undialectical vision. This separation is apparent nowhere more than in a half-formed concept of reason and semi-depleted view of human maturity.

Adorno in contrast to later post-structuralist and deconstructionist schools of thought, seeks to rehabilitate projects of coherency. He advocates precisely the rehabilitation of certain kinds of unity. In 'epistemology', for example, Adorno does precisely the opposite of post-structuralism, deconstructionism and other 'post-modern' epistemologies. In his view, deconstruction can only do just that – deconstruct the system. It can not genuinely get outside of the system – for that, according to Adorno, we need to *add* an extra distinct dimension to our knowledge. It is not that we need to dismantle systems, but that we need to interweave them with an alternative. We have, in fact, not to deconstruct but to *reconstruct* our knowledge[9].

Furthermore, our interpretation of Adorno advocates a rehabilitation of certain kinds of unity in psychology too. Enlightenment fails, Adorno argues, precisely because the self was never properly or fully integrated in the first place. 'Integration' and 'unity' become forces for the *reconstruction* of the Subject. Psychologically, we need not to continue to fracture the whole, but rebuild it by counterbalancing it with its opposite. Specifically, we need to interweave the ego with its positive opposite, and combine a strong capacity for detachment with an equally strong ability to be 'absorbed'.

Note that Adorno in regard to the question of unity is a dialectical thinker. On the one hand, he is against what he would regard as a 'naive' advocacy of unity; that is a unity without internal opposition. In his view this would simply collapse, as in the Romantic fallacy – that we can be permanently and irretrievably be at one with the world. We would simply die. We need separation in order to survive.

On the other hand, Adorno is also equally against what he would regard as an equally naïve opposite to the Romantic fallacy, namely the post-structuralist or deconstructionist view, that we can rescue ourselves, or 'free' ourselves by simply separating, deconstructing, or dissolving identities. Separation taken by itself is unsustainable. Separation without unity would collapse – this is the post-structural fallacy. Separation needs its dialectical

Dews, P. (1995), p. 31. See also Dews, P. 'Adorno, Poststructuralism and the Critique of Identity' in (1995), pp. 19–38.

9 See Derrida, (1974); Dews, P. (1995), Part IV.

opposite, unity, in order to survive. In all respects, Adorno advocates dialectical unity.

Finally, Adorno's speculative Utopia is in opposition to the fundamental thrust evoked by the later generation of the Frankfurt School, who from his perspective as advocated here, could have done nothing to rehabilitate enlightenment. Habermas, for instance, sought to strengthen enlightenment with no real response to the main points raised by Adorno. Habermas offers no deep psychological analysis of enlightenment, demonstrates no awareness of its psychological pitfalls and thus reiterates the same psychologically narrow concepts of reason which Adorno had sought to shatter. The pleasure drive, the balanced self, the importance of half of human experience falls by the wayside in Habermas' analysis as much as it did with his German predecessors. As a result, Habermas rebuilds enlightenment on the same sandy foundations as his predecessors and so does nothing to prevent the decline into myth. No amount of rational discourse in any new context, will generate the foundations for the deeper human rationality that Adorno is talking about. No amount of 'communicative' rationality will succeeed if the very nature of that rationality is itself depleted. And until the whole self, with all its contradictions, is brought fully into the play of reason, that which is communicated, however frequently, with whatever degree of good intention, will be bound to decay into myth. Habermas' solution, for Adorno, remains (in spite of all the aims of 'civility' of the coffee houses) not one of rehabilitating enlightenment, but one of inevitable 'communicative myth'[10].

For Adorno, reason and its concomitant maturity live in the whole self, not just part of it. And it is that whole self which needs to communicate with its external world and with other subjects. Only then, can we lay the foundations for a genuine rationality.

For Adorno, we live in paradox, and enlightenment needs to recognise that paradox in order to be truly enlightened. Reason, to be reasonable, must counterbalance itself with its opposite. The self to be whole must melt its boundaries, the mind to be rational, drown in pleasure, the self to maintain control, abandon itself, and the identity to remain distinct, become absorbed. Enlightenment, to be enlightened, needs Subjects who can communicate rationally, and to do so, they need not to attempt to 'transcend' their own humanity, or attempt to 'civilise' it in coffee houses, they need to be so intensely receptive to their world, that they can be, in one moment fully rational and in the other, fully absorbed.

[10] See Habermas, J. (1970).

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