

NIETZSCHE, ADORNO, AND THE PARADOXES OF
ENLIGHTENMENT

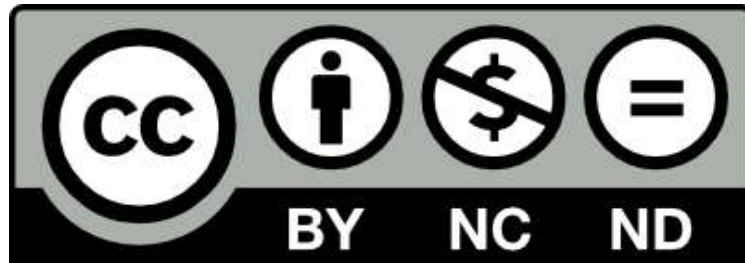
by

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Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study of Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) and Theodor W. Adorno's (1903-1969) paradoxical understandings of enlightenment. Distinguishing between the ahistorical process of enlightenment and the epoch of the Enlightenment, the thesis will show that both thinkers view enlightenment as a double-edged sword that has come to undermine itself. Far from leading people to new heights, Nietzsche and Adorno believe that enlightenment has enslaved humanity and produced a dry cultural life that is in urgent need of change. This analysis will identify a fundamental difference between Nietzsche's and Adorno's paradoxical understandings of enlightenment as they develop different models of enlightenment: Nietzsche's is antithetical, and Adorno's is dialectical. They maintain these understandings of enlightenment when writing on different topics, and the aesthetic and cultural spheres are important areas in which the paradoxes of enlightenment are on display. Their aesthetic thought includes examinations of artists. The most prominent of these common case studies is Richard Wagner (1813-1883), and Chapter Five of this study will highlight how Nietzsche and Adorno maintain their paradoxical understandings of enlightenment in a practical examination of art. However, neither Nietzsche nor Adorno gives up hope for a new kind of enlightened future. Both thinkers seek to reshape enlightenment by ridding it of what they think caused its downfall. For Nietzsche this process involves redressing what he considers to be an imbalance between reason and non-reason, which he states has removed vigour and vitality from human existence; and Adorno wishes to overcome instrumental reason and intellectual rigidity, which he believes have led to the establishment of a pernicious system of cultural and economic control. Enlightenment is not doomed, but it must be freed from the forces that have restricted its potential to liberate humanity.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Text	Year	Author
AC	<i>Der Antichrist. Fluch auf das Christenthum</i>	1888/1895	Nietzsche
Aktualität	<i>Die Aktualität der Philosophie</i>	1931	Adorno
ASZ	<i>Also sprach Zarathustra</i>	1883/1884/1885	Nietzsche
AK	<i>Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka</i>	1953/1955	Adorno
AT	<i>Ästhetische Theorie</i>	1970 (posthumous)	Adorno
BA	<i>Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten</i>	1872	Nietzsche
DA	<i>Dialektik der Aufklärung</i>	1947	Adorno ¹
DS	<i>David Strauss, Der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller</i>	1873	Nietzsche
EH	<i>Ecce homo. Wie man wird, was man ist</i>	1888	Nietzsche
Fortschritt	<i>Fortschritt</i>	1962	Adorno
FrOK	<i>Frankfurter Opern- und Konzertkritiken</i>	1922-1934	Adorno
FW	<i>Die fröhliche Wissenschaft ("la gaya scienza")</i>	1882/1886	Nietzsche
GD	<i>Götzen-Dämmerung, oder, Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt</i>	1889	Nietzsche
GM	<i>Zur Genealogie der Moral</i>	1887	Nietzsche
GS	<i>Gesammelte Schriften</i>	N/A	Adorno
GT	<i>Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik</i>	1882	Nietzsche
GTVS	<i>Versuch einer Selbstkritik</i>	1886	Nietzsche
HL	<i>Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben</i>	1884	Nietzsche

¹ Citations from *Dialektik der Aufklärung* will be taken from the version found in Max Horkheimer's collected works, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. See Max Horkheimer, 'Dialektik der Aufklärung', in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften in 19 Bänden*, ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, Vol. 5, 4th edn (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2014), pp. 13-290.

<i>IM</i>	<i>Idyllen aus Messina</i>	1882	Nietzsche
<i>JGB</i>	<i>Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft</i>	1886	Nietzsche
<i>Logik</i>	<i>Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften</i>	1962	Adorno
<i>MAM I</i>	<i>Menschliches, Allzumenschliches. Ein Buch für freie Geister I</i>	1878	Nietzsche
<i>MAM II</i>	<i>Menschliches, Allzumenschliches. Ein Buch für freie Geister II</i>	1886	Nietzsche
<i>MAph</i>	<i>Musikalische Aphorismen</i>	1927-1937	Adorno
<i>MM</i>	<i>Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben</i>	1951	Adorno
<i>ND</i>	<i>Negative Dialektik</i>	1966	Adorno
<i>MR</i>	<i>Morgenröthe. Gedanken über die moralischen Vorurtheile</i>	1881	Nietzsche
<i>NF</i>	<i>Nachgelassene Fragmente</i>	1869-1888	Nietzsche
<i>NüW</i>	<i>Notiz über Wagner</i>	1933	Adorno
<i>NW</i>	<i>Nietzsche contra Wagner. Aktenstücke eines Psychologen</i>	1888	Nietzsche
<i>Résumés</i>	<i>Résumés der Kapitel 2 bis 5 und 7 und 8 aus der »Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung«</i>	1939	Adorno
<i>VO</i>	<i>Vernunft und Offenbarung</i>	1957/1958	Adorno
<i>VW</i>	<i>Versuch über Wagner</i>	1952	Adorno
<i>WA</i>	<i>Der Fall Wagner. Ein Musikanten-Problem</i>	1888	Nietzsche
<i>WAk</i>	<i>Wagners Aktualität</i>	1963	Adorno
<i>WB</i>	<i>Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen. Viertes Stück: Richard Wagner in Bayreuth</i>	1876	Nietzsche
<i>WL</i>	<i>Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne</i>	1873	Nietzsche
<i>WuB</i>	<i>Wagner und Bayreuth</i>	1966	Adorno

Notes: Adorno

All quotations from Adorno's works will be taken from the standard German-language critical edition of his works, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, unless stated otherwise. Citations from Adorno's works will be provided in parentheses directly after the quoted text. Each citation will contain the abbreviation of the work cited; the volume of the *Gesammelte Schriften*; and the relevant page number. For example, *Versuch über Wagner* is found in *GS* volume 13. A quotation from page 84 of *Versuch über Wagner* would be cited as (VW, *GS* 13, p. 84). Whenever a section or aphorism is numbered, the number will be provided directly after the abbreviation of the work. For example, aphorism eight of Adorno's *Musikalische Aphorismen*, found on pages 15-16 of *GS* volume 18, would be cited as (MAph 8, *GS* 18, pp. 15-16).

Notes: Nietzsche

All quotations from Nietzsche's works will be taken from the digital critical edition (KGW), following Nietzsche's orthography. Quotations from these works will provide the relevant abbreviation and section number. For example, section seven of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* would be cited as *GT* 7. Additional information will be provided where necessary, such as when a work is divided into many sections and sub-sections. For example, section three of the second treatise of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* would be cited as *GM* II 3; and section 8 of the section 'Warum ich so weise bin' in *Ecce Homo* would be cited as *EH* 'Weise' 8.

All references to Nietzsche's letters will be taken from the digital KGW. Citations will provide the year and number of the relevant letter, and the abbreviation *Briefe* will be used to refer to letters from Nietzsche. For example, letter number 569 from the year 1885 would be cited as *Briefe*, 1885, 569.

Chapter One: Introduction

To carry out a comparative study of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) is by no means a radical undertaking. The link between the two thinkers is so strong that Adorno, by his own admission, owes more to Nietzsche than to any other so-called great thinker:

Es ist aber, und bitte verstehen Sie das nicht falsch, wirklich nicht im leisesten Sinne meine Absicht, auf Nietzsche herumzuhacken, dem ich, wenn ich aufrichtig sein soll, am meisten von allen sogenannten großen Philosophen verdanke – in Wahrheit vielleicht mehr noch als Hegel. (*Probleme der Moralphilosophie*, '17. Vorlesung, 25.07.1963', p. 255)

Adorno's claim does not automatically validate the strength of the link between him and Nietzsche, and the commentator must draw out the relationship between the two thinkers by means of distanced analysis. However, the fact that a dialectician such as Adorno felt it necessary to make this claim in the first place reveals that Nietzsche occupied a not insignificant space in Adorno's mind. It is therefore all the more surprising that full-length comparative studies of Nietzsche's and Adorno's thought are few and far between; only a small handful of commentators have dedicated themselves to investigating where, how, and why Nietzsche and Adorno converge with, and diverge from, one another. This study will target this gap in scholarship by comparing Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective thought in light of a phenomenon that will be referred to as the 'paradoxes of enlightenment'.

The paradoxes of enlightenment refer to the idea that enlightenment undermines itself. Whilst enlightenment can bring about clarity, liberate human beings from oppression and generate new scientific developments, the paradoxes of enlightenment suggest that enlightenment simultaneously works against the intellectual, social, and

scientific progress it has created, and these paradoxes will be examined in greater detail below. Nietzsche and Adorno both view enlightenment as a double-edged sword, and this study will document and compare the contradictions that they identify at the heart of enlightenment. In addition, this study will examine how Nietzsche and Adorno attempt both to rescue enlightenment from undermining itself and to reshape enlightenment for the future. We will tackle each of these issues through close, comparative textual analysis. Adhering to this method will ensure that Nietzsche's and Adorno's works remain the focal point of discussion, although the wider intellectual and cultural contexts of these works will be discussed where appropriate. It is also crucial to note that our analysis will not address Adorno's reception of Nietzsche in any significant detail. We will instead compare how Nietzsche's and Adorno's attitudes towards enlightenment developed independently of one another. Although a valuable topic, reception risks placing too much emphasis on Adorno, potentially sacrificing depth of analysis of Nietzsche's works. This study therefore calls for a balanced comparison of each thinker.

This study is needed for several reasons. First, as mentioned above, comparative scholarship on Nietzsche and Adorno is lacking. Critics have not passed over the affinities between the two thinkers entirely – the literature review below will discuss previous commentators' approaches to Nietzsche and Adorno – but full-length comparative studies of the two are rare. Additionally, Nietzsche and Adorno lived in different eras and their thought had significantly different origins. Approaching Nietzsche and Adorno through a common theme will not only allow us to appreciate how thinkers with generally different methodologies and emphases approach the topic of enlightenment, but it will also facilitate an analysis of how issues of enlightenment were perceived in two different eras by using Nietzsche and Adorno as related landmarks in German intellectual history.

Finally, and most pertinently, the topic of enlightenment is an almost omnipresent undercurrent in both Nietzsche's and Adorno's works. Whether writing on enlightenment explicitly or interrogating aesthetic issues, questions of enlightenment, as well as Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective understandings of the Enlightenment, occupied both thinkers for their entire writing careers. This combination of factors means that this study is rooted in extremely fertile ground. Before delving further into an analysis of Nietzsche and Adorno, we must first address the vocabulary of enlightenment that will be central to the analysis to follow.

1.1 E/enlightenment

Two key terms lie at the heart of this study: 'the Enlightenment', referred to in German as 'die Aufklärung'; and 'enlightenment', whose German-language equivalent is 'Aufklärung', lacking the definite article in both languages.² It is vital to distinguish carefully between the two. Commentators in recent years have differentiated between the two forms with commendable consistency, but this approach has not always found favour in academic writing. Critics such as Graeme Garrard have addressed others' occasional lack of terminological consistency. In his discussion Garrard highlights, using previously published work in the field, just how easily terminology can become mixed and inconsistent. He draws the reader's attention to the previously widespread use of four related terms: 'the Enlightenment'; 'the enlightenment'; 'Enlightenment'; and 'enlightenment'. He then suggests that 'Enlightenment' and 'the enlightenment' are best

² 'The Enlightenment' is a nineteenth-century translation that glossed the French term 'Le siècle des Lumières' and the German noun 'Aufklärung' into English. See John Robertson, *The Enlightenment: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 2.

avoided because they add “nothing but confusion” to academic debate.³ Garrard proposes that the commentator instead restrict themselves to using only ‘enlightenment’ and ‘the Enlightenment’; the former denotes “a generic concept referring to both the general goal and the process of replacing darkness with light, taken metaphorically to refer to wisdom or insight” and the latter denotes “one historically specific conception of this process”.⁴ The latter definition will be discussed further below.

In this study, the distinction will be maintained between ‘the Enlightenment’ and ‘enlightenment’, while the term ‘Enlightenment’ will be used only as the adjective derived from the Enlightenment. This approach will ensure that discussion remains precise and unambiguous. In essence, the Enlightenment is a period in history, or in the history of ideas, and enlightenment is an intellectual process. Garrard’s choice of terminology reflects this crucial difference, emphasising how the Enlightenment is tied to a particular historical period, whereas enlightenment denotes a timeless process that is not tied to an epoch. We must not create a binary distinction between the two terms – enlightenment was, after all, key to the Enlightenment, meaning that the Enlightenment and enlightenment coexisted – but differentiating between the two in this way will ensure that the fundamental concepts behind this study remain clear. Furthermore, Garrard is correct to discard the terms ‘the enlightenment’ and ‘Enlightenment’. It is unclear what these two pieces of terminology should refer to, given that ‘the Enlightenment’ and ‘enlightenment’ cover both the historical epoch and the intellectual process. Drawing on Garrard’s work, this investigation’s use of the vocabulary of the Enlightenment and enlightenment does not seek to reinvent the wheel. Instead, it aligns itself with a simple

³ Graeme Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 5.

⁴ Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments* (2006), both p. 5.

yet significant differentiation between these two key terms, a difference that will be key in assessing how Nietzsche and Adorno address both the process of enlightenment and the epoch known as the Enlightenment.

Garrard's work should be commended for its clarity of thought and expression. However, his definition of enlightenment as "a generic concept referring to both the general goal and the process of replacing darkness with light, taken metaphorically to refer to wisdom or insight" should not be accepted at face value.⁵ Although this understanding of enlightenment summarises its basic premise – that human knowledge is advanced by alerting humanity to new ways of thinking about and viewing the world – his assessment does not go far enough in describing how light metaphorically replaces darkness. It is undoubtedly correct that humans sought to replace intellectual darkness with light, but the mechanism of this process remains unclear in his analysis. This missing element is crucial because enlightenment should not be seen as a passive process. Instead, it relies on active participation and effort, and it is by no means inevitable. In this regard, Ritchie Robertson's appraisal of the process of enlightenment serves as a strong summary:

[...] the Enlightenment stands for the endeavours of thinkers, writers and practical administrators [...] to increase the well-being of humanity [...] by the process called [...] 'enlightenment'. For them, to enlighten humanity is to clear away the false beliefs which have blinded people to their own interests; to oppose the power of institutions, especially the organized churches, which have encouraged such blindness; to arrive at a true understanding of human nature, and of the political and economic societies in which people live; to increase people's well-being and happiness; and to do so by close attention to empirical facts and the use of reason.⁶

⁵ Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments* (2006), p. 5.

⁶ Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness 1680-1790* (London: Allen Lane, 2020), xv.

Robertson's description of enlightenment emphasises the active efforts of human beings to usher in, and sustain, the process of enlightenment over extended periods of time in numerous areas of culture and society. Furthermore, his analysis describes the ways in which enlightenment can permeate a society and increase human wellbeing, such as through the spheres of religion and politics, in addition to philosophical insight. On this basis, two key features of enlightenment emerge. Firstly, enlightenment is a gradual process and that it must be given time to reach different areas of society. Secondly, it follows that humans must actively appropriate the process of enlightenment both as private individuals and through their public roles in wider society. This understanding of enlightenment recalls the seminal essay on the topic by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant was arguably the German-speaking lands' most prominent German-speaking representative of the Enlightenment. Both Nietzsche and Adorno would certainly have been familiar with his 1784 essay *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*, which both defines Kant's understanding of the nature and purpose of enlightenment, and addresses the distinction between the public and private use of reason. Additionally, Kant's essay corroborates the idea of enlightenment as a gradual, incremental process. In light of its significance, we will return to Kant's essay later in this introduction.

Robertson's summary of enlightenment's essential elements incorporates features that have become commonplace in critical literature. For instance, Peter Faulstich has argued that critique is found at enlightenment's core, and that existing structures of power and knowledge are scrutinised in the process of enlightenment.⁷ Annette Meyer's assessment of enlightenment in the public sphere similarly draws attention to the

⁷ Peter Faulstich, *Aufklärung, Wissenschaft und lebensentfaltende Bildung: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer großen Hoffnung der Moderne* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2011), p. 16.

significance of critique and questioning established practices: “Der Gegensatz zwischen dieser öffentlichen Debattenkultur und dem Politikverständnis des absolutistischen Fürstenstaates ist offenkundig.”⁸ Both Faulstich and Meyer note that public discussion and debate are key components of enlightenment, and both commentators link their assessments of enlightenment to a questioning of political power. In this regard enlightenment assumes a liberalising role and it seeks to address power imbalances in numerous societal spheres. Further critics have expanded this political horizon to include cultural practices that are not necessarily embedded in political power. Anthony Pagden’s survey exemplifies this approach, and Pagden shines a light on the influence of tradition and custom,⁹ which can be, but do not necessarily have to be, components of political influence. Questioning religion, especially its institutions, was another common critique linked to political critique, although few Enlightenment thinkers wished to eradicate religious belief entirely.¹⁰ With these studies in mind, it becomes clear that enlightenment permeates numerous spheres in a society and is not restricted to specific places or people.¹¹

The studies cited above make major contributions to scholarship, and their approach of describing the evolution from an unenlightened state to an enlightened one has shaped the starting point of this study. However, they do not address the process whereby human beings realise that enlightenment is possible in the first place. Critics

⁸ Annette Meyer, *Die Epoche der Aufklärung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), p. 114.

⁹ Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment and Why It Still Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 7.

¹⁰ Jon Stewart, *An Introduction to Hegel’s Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: The Issue of Religious Content in the Enlightenment and Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 25.

¹¹ Peter Faulstich, cited above, also notes that early debates about public enlightenment and education spread concerns about farmers leaving crops to rot in fields after abandoning them for books: “Schon bei den ersten Debatten um Volksaufklärung und Bildung wurde gewarnt vor dem gebildeten Bauer, der sich über das Buch beugt, während sein Korn verfault.” See Faulstich, *Aufklärung, Wissenschaft und lebensentfaltende Bildung*, p. 15.

such as those cited above are primarily concerned with the process and goal of enlightenment in a political, cultural and social sense. The mechanisms that bring human beings to this point are typically not addressed, and enlightenment is thus presented as a one-step process from an unenlightened to an enlightened condition. Although this study will neither claim nor attempt to answer the question of how humans become conscious of the possibility of enlightenment, it is essential to have this question in mind going forward. As will be discussed below, enlightenment will therefore be understood as a two-step process. The first step involves human beings realising that something called enlightenment, internal to each human being, can be unlocked or unleashed by the individual. The second step refers to the process of defining, refining, and working towards a state of enlightenment, as described by the studies cited above. This two-step understanding of enlightenment encompasses both the striving towards enlightenment and comprehending the very possibility of enlightenment in the first place.

This process of enlightenment is not tied to the Enlightenment; enlightenment can also take place outside the epoch of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, synonymous with the Age of Enlightenment, denotes a series of cultural, scientific, and political movements in the late seventeenth, and the eighteenth centuries. Any periodisation is subject to revision, and it may seem arbitrary to assign any epoch a start and end date. Nonetheless, it is useful to provide a rough chronological span for the Enlightenment so as to determine what, and who, it denotes. Dorinda Outram's chronology, for example, states that the Age of Enlightenment spans the period from 1686 to 1793. It includes contemporaneous cultural, scientific, and political developments on the European continent. Outram includes the founding of Yale University in 1718 in her understanding

of the Enlightenment,¹² which suggests that the Enlightenment reached beyond Europe's borders,¹³ and other commentators have identified similar, or equivalent, Enlightenments outside of Europe.¹⁴ Although Outram's chronology is disputable – Francis Bacon (1561-1626), for instance, has been described as the founder of the “empiricist strain” of the Enlightenment,¹⁵ despite having lived before the period defined by Outram – it is still an invaluable tool in establishing the Enlightenment's historical context. The periodisation of the Enlightenment will be a significant issue for Nietzsche (Chapter Two) and Adorno (Chapter Three) as both thinkers problematise the history of the Enlightenment versus the history of enlightenment.

Nonetheless, few would deny that the Enlightenment saw its heyday in the eighteenth century, even if the Enlightenment itself is not the “beginning of a narrative”, as Genevieve Lloyd explains.¹⁶ The Enlightenment's precise chronology need not concern us here, given that Nietzsche and Adorno lived outside of this epoch. However, one significant issue is the composition of the Enlightenment. Given that it is viewed as a series of cultural, scientific, and political movements, the Enlightenment should clearly

¹² Outram, *The Enlightenment* (2013), ix.

¹³ The increasing mobility of people and objects in this period contributed to cultural and intellectual exchange. Charles W. J. Withers makes this point by “thinking about the Enlightenment working geographically over space, as something dynamic, mobile, and varied.” Charles W. J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 43. Multilingualism also became more prevalent with the increased movement of people. See Vladislav Rjéoutski and Willem Frijhoff, ‘Introduction’, in *Language Choice in Enlightenment Europe: Education, Sociability, and Governance*, ed. by Vladislav Rjéoutski and Willem Frijhoff (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), pp. 7-14 (p. 7).

¹⁴ Sebastian Conrad argues that the Enlightenment should be viewed “as a response to cross-border interaction and global integration”, citing the emergence of “markets and capital accumulation” globally as evidence of a global Enlightenment. See Sebastian Conrad, ‘Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique’, *The American Historical Review*, 117(4) (October 2012), 999-1027 (pp. 999 and 1020). Christopher de Bellaigue also identifies an “Islamic Enlightenment”, dedicating chapters of his study to Cairo, Istanbul, and Tehran respectively. See Christopher de Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment: The Modern Struggle Between Faith and Reason* (London: The Bodley Head, 2017), (xxiv).

¹⁵ William Bristow, ‘Enlightenment’, *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023), ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/enlightenment/>> [accessed 19th April 2024].

¹⁶ Genevieve Lloyd, *Enlightenment Shadows* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 161.

not be considered a single, unified phenomenon. The composition of the Enlightenment is an important question to address for this study as Nietzsche and Adorno both refer to the Enlightenment, or at least their understandings of it, repeatedly throughout their writing careers, and commentators such as Dan Edelstein have expanded on the idea of the Enlightenment as a series of movements. Edelstein presents the Enlightenment as a collection of different movements and ideas that produces an “aggregate of ideas, actions, and events.”¹⁷ This argument’s strength is that it accounts for disagreements and divergences between different Enlightenment movements. Furthermore, Edelstein also accounts for differences between different Enlightenment movements that took place in the same nation,¹⁸ and he thus dissuades the reader from viewing the Enlightenment as a single, monolithic movement. He instead portrays a multi-faceted Enlightenment that was not necessarily comprised of unified movements with identical goals and ideas.¹⁹

Based on the introductory descriptions of enlightenment and the Enlightenment above, the reader would be forgiven for assuming that the Enlightenment was an all-encompassing series of movements. It seems that the Enlightenment left no area of society untouched, from political structures to institutions, art, and the economy. However, scholars’ opinions on the Enlightenment’s goals and scope vary, and several have attempted to narrow down the aims of Enlightenment movements. Terence James Reed’s description of the Enlightenment, for instance, places emphasis on specific freedoms that, in his opinion, the Enlightenment sought to enable citizens to achieve for themselves.

¹⁷ Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 13.

¹⁸ Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*, p. 13.

¹⁹ It was not uncommon for Enlightenment writers to attack others for their perceived shortcomings. For example, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) targets Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) in section of chapter five in her *A Vindication on the Rights of Woman* (1792) for his attitudes towards women, and their supposed character and nature. See Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Miriam Brody (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 99-114.

Reed names freedom of belief, thought, and speech, along with human rights, tolerance, and peaceful, secular values as the Enlightenment's central tenets.²⁰ This description depicts the Enlightenment as a socio-political movement deriving from humans' achieving intellectual autonomy. Reed's image of the Enlightenment frames it as a collective, public undertaking with a liberalising thrust,²¹ and his Enlightenment provides the intellectual foundations for modern freedoms. In this light, the Enlightenment represents a step towards establishing both the unwritten and written (in the form of law) contracts between citizen and citizen, and citizen and state that encourage one another to act in a rational, fair manner.

In summary, several characteristics of enlightenment and the Enlightenment have emerged from the discussion above. In the case of the process of enlightenment, it has become clear that its central pillar is reason. An intellectual tool, reason seeks to enable people to think and behave independently, and the influence of this rational impulse slowly spreads into areas of wider society, such as administration, law, and government in order to improve society at large. It should also be emphasised that enlightenment represents a timeless intellectual process that is not tied to a particular epoch, unlike the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment denotes a variety of eighteenth and nineteenth-

²⁰ Terence James Reed, *Mehr Licht in Deutschland: Eine kleine Geschichte der Aufklärung* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009), p. 12.

²¹ The Enlightenment's liberalising thrust is sometimes associated with republicanism and the downfall of monarchies. Some critics have, however, added nuance to this position by showing how some Enlightenment thinkers saw monarchies as solutions rather than problems. See Hans Blom, Christian Laursen and Luisa Simonutti, 'Introduction', in *Monarchisms in the Age of Enlightenment: Liberty, Patriotism, and the Common Good*, ed. by Hans Blom, Christian Laursen, and Luisa Simonutti (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 3-16 (p. 3); and Michael Sauter, 'The Prussian Monarchy and the Practices of Enlightenment', in *Monarchisms in the Age of Enlightenment: Liberty, Patriotism, and the Common Good*, ed. by Hans Blom, Christian Laursen, and Luisa Simonutti (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 217-239. Furthermore, Eva Piirimäe has noted that European monarchies were forced to transform due to the pressures of commerce. See Eva Piirimäe, *Herder and Enlightenment Politics* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023), p. 2.

century intellectual and cultural movements comprising of many different thinkers and, crucially, it was not a rigid monolith. The movements comprising the Enlightenment did not always agree with one another, and debate and disagreement were common.²² The background to some of the vocabulary central to this study has therefore been elucidated, but the more fundamental question of how the collective movement of the Enlightenment entrenches itself in the mind, via the process of enlightenment, has not yet been addressed. In order to address this issue, we must turn to the mind of the individual and the role of reason in Enlightenment movements, two topics that will be central to this study.

1.2 Mind and Reason

Although this study is not an investigation into the philosophy of mind, the mind nonetheless forms a related area of interest. Reason, one of enlightenment's key components, is a product of the intellect. Discussing the topic of the mind in this context will allow us to appreciate a significant aspect Nietzsche's and Adorno's attitudes towards enlightenment. Both thinkers question, and seek to develop, the ways in which humans understand and use reason, and the mind is therefore a major site of Nietzsche's and Adorno's views of enlightenment. While the analysis of the Enlightenment above has presented the epoch as an era of socio-political movements, these movements would not be possible without the ability of the individual mind to produce critical, independent thought. Consequently, both the Enlightenment and enlightenment more broadly contain a tension between the forces of the collective movement, and developments in the individual mind. Even if these developments occur on a mass scale, there is still a gulf to

²² For instance, Dan Edelstein (cited above) has analysed how the Quarrel of the Ancients in France developed into a "full-blown culture war" that spread beyond the walls of the academy. This example illustrates how Enlightenment discourse engaged with the past in order to develop a cultural self-understanding in the present and for the future. See Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*, p. 37.

be bridged between collective thought, and the subjectivity of the individual mind. This tension between the collective and the individual is one to which we will return repeatedly, in different contexts, in this study, such as in Chapters Two, Three, and Four.

When it comes to locating enlightenment in the individual mind, few Enlightenment figures carry more weight than Immanuel Kant. Although it is important not to attribute too much to one individual, especially given the extent to which Kant lived, thought, and wrote amongst a network of German Idealists,²³ Kant's name has become synonymous with the Enlightenment. Furthermore, Kant's writing career spanned several decades; his first published work *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte* appeared in 1747, and his *Über Pädagogik* (1803) was published the year before his death. Kant is one of the most widely read philosophical representatives of the Enlightenment. More crucially in the context of this study, Kant can be considered the most important Enlightenment influence that both Nietzsche and Adorno have in common. Kant was especially pivotal for Adorno from his teenage years onwards, as we shall see in Chapter Three. Kant is also a recurring figure in Nietzsche's writings and he is mentioned over 290 times, not always flatteringly, in Nietzsche's corpus of private letters, published works, and unpublished fragments.²⁴ Kant's investigation into the nature of enlightenment is consequently the most productive way to start to draw together Nietzsche and Adorno against the background of the Enlightenment and questions of enlightenment more broadly.

²³ Andrea Wulf has documented such intellectual and literary networks. Her discussion shows not only that Kant and his works were linked to other German Idealists, but that his reception was as critical as it was admiring. See Andrea Wulf, *Magnificent Rebels: The First Romantics and The Invention of the Self* (London: John Murray, 2022), esp. pp. 41-46.

²⁴ Some would view Kant less as a recurring figure, and more of a key player in the background of Nietzsche's intellectual milieu. For example, see Kevin R. Hill, *Nietzsche's Critiques: The Kantian Foundations of His Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2003).

Kant's essay *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* provides one of the most succinct summaries of the issues at hand when bringing enlightenment to the mind of the individual. He summarises enlightenment in the following way: "Sapere aude! Habe Mut, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung."²⁵ This summary calls on the individual to trust their own intellectual faculties rather than relying on received wisdom. This intellectual self-reliance is the first step in a two-step understanding of enlightenment that will be traced below: the individual thus acknowledges that independent thought is possible, and then takes the first steps to realising their intellectual independence. The key feature of Kant's summary is its placing of agency in the hands of the individual, reflecting the liberalising thrust of the Enlightenment discussed above. However, the individual must be able to think, speak, and behave independently, without fear of repercussion. Kant writes that individuals must be afforded this freedom: "Der öffentliche Gebrauch seiner Vernunft muß jederzeit frei sein, und der allein kann Aufklärung unter Menschen zustande bringen."²⁶ The individual therefore relies on wider society to create the conditions in which this kind of enlightenment, meaning that individual enlightenment is a function of enlightenment as a communal, social endeavour. For Kant, enlightenment is a balancing act between the "active and critical engagement of the individual"²⁷ and society at large.

The opening two sentences of Kant's essay form the other prong in his definition of enlightenment. He states that humans are to blame for their hitherto unenlightened state, and that this state involves relying heavily on others: "Aufklärung ist der Ausgang

²⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Erste Abtheilung: Werke*, Vol. 8 (Berlin: Reimer, 1912), pp. 33-42 (p. 35).

²⁶ Kant, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*, p. 37.

²⁷ Thomas Munck, *The Enlightenment: A Comparative Social History, 1721-1794* (London/Arnold, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 7.

des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen.”²⁸ Here, Kant depicts enlightenment as a change in state of the individual mind. As was the case above, the individual must separate their thought and behaviour from the whims of others and must be brave enough to think and act as they see fit through the free use of reason. This individual decoupling of thought and behaviour from that of others leads to people metaphorically coming of age by leaving their previously immature state (“Unmündigkeit”). It is implied that this process gradually spreads through a society,²⁹ with collective freedom of discussion and individual freedom of thought supporting each other over an extended period of time. The enlightened transformation of society that Kant envisages here therefore relies on both the individual and the collective use of reason, which work in conjunction with one another.³⁰ Kant’s definition is significant as both Nietzsche and Adorno were certainly aware of it, and it formed a major part of the intellectual background against which they positioned their own discussions of enlightenment.

In his essay, Kant uses two key terms: “Vernunft” (reason) and “Verstand” (understanding). It is crucial to differentiate between these important nouns correctly, given how frequently they feature in Enlightenment texts, and how they also form part of Nietzsche’s and Adorno’s enlightenment vocabulary. ‘Vernunft’ is the tool of rational thought internal to every human mind. Although it can exist in different forms – such as

²⁸ Kant, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (1912), p. 35.

²⁹ In his essay, Kant emphasises that enlightenment must be a gradual process: “Daher kann ein Publikum nur langsam zur Aufklärung gelangen. Durch eine Revolution wird [...] niemals wahre Reform der Denkungsart zustande kommen; sondern neue Vorurteile werden, ebenso als die alten, zum Leitbände des gedankenlosen großen Haufens dienen.” See Kant, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (1912), p. 36.

³⁰ Robert C. Bartlett has observed that, for Kant, “the free use of public reason must accompany strict obedience in “private’ capacities”. See Robert C. Bartlett, *The Idea of Enlightenment: A Post-Mortem Study* (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 5.

instrumental reason, which will be a central feature in our discussion of Adorno's approach to issues of enlightenment – reason can generally be understood as the means to an end by which human beings think, interpret the world, make decisions, and consider their choices.³¹ Reason is rightly viewed as a focal point of the Enlightenment, as well as being an important tool in questions of enlightenment. Regardless of the purpose, reason can be deployed in any circumstances in order to reach intellectual and behavioural decisions. Understanding also has a major role in this first of two steps towards enlightenment, and the German term 'Verstand' designates the sum of rational knowledge or insight that has been gained through the calculated use of reason. Reason therefore produces understanding, and they are linked as part of the same process. Reason can produce understanding, however this form of understanding cannot exist without the insights of reason.

The image of enlightenment presented so far is extremely optimistic in the sense that it tells us that reason is a tool for (perpetual) progress. However, this understanding of enlightenment and the Enlightenment is somewhat naïve. As well as the definition of progress being open to change over time and from society to society, it would be unrealistic to expect continual progress in every aspect of a society. Key Enlightenment thinkers, such as Kant, were aware that progress was by no means inevitable. For instance, Kant himself depicts humans as flawed beings that could never be perfect, and for whom the idea of a total enlightenment remains an ideal, rather than a reality.³² This failure, or

³¹ We should acknowledge that reason differs from reasoning. Whereas reason is a tool, reasoning instead focuses on the logical process of taking "multiple inputs to create one output" in a "combination of prior knowledge and new information", as Daniel Krawczyk notes. See Daniel Krawczyk, *Reasoning: The Neuroscience of How We Think* (London: Academic Press, 2018), p. 4.

³² In his essay *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, published in the same year as his *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784), Kant likens human beings to crooked wood that cannot grow into a perfectly upright tree: "[...] aus so krummem Holze, woraus der Mensch gemacht ist, kann nichts ganz Gerades gezimmert werden. Nur die Annäherung zu dieser Idee ist uns von der Natur auferlegt." See Immanuel Kant, *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher*

at least a lack of success, of enlightenment is this study's central concern. We shall take the failure of enlightenment one step further, though, by examining what happens when enlightenment actively undermines itself and thus brings about its own failure. The idea of enlightenment paradoxically undermining itself is a fundamental premise for both Nietzsche and Adorno because both thinkers believe that enlightenment has somehow gone wrong, albeit in different ways and for different reasons. This paradoxical understanding of enlightenment (and the Enlightenment) will be a major feature of this study and, along with Nietzsche and Adorno, the paradoxes of enlightenment will form its three main pillars.

The term 'paradoxes of enlightenment' is one of this study's central tenets. It refers to a contradiction that Nietzsche and Adorno identify at the heart of enlightenment and the Enlightenment. In essence, this term refers to the paradox that enlightenment and the Enlightenment may be their own worst enemy, even if they succeed in realising at least some of their goals. Whilst Nietzsche and Adorno believe that both enlightenment and the Enlightenment have, to varying degrees, been forces for good, they are equally of the opinion that both phenomena have undermined themselves by working against their own principles, ideologies, and ultimately their own interests. Enlightenment consequently becomes a source of both progress and regression, and as a phenomenon it is inherently contradictory and paradoxical. Indeed, the paradoxes of enlightenment presuppose contradiction as a philosophical method. Both thinkers embrace the productive tensions of this contradiction and, far from representing a barrier to understanding, Nietzsche and Adorno use it productively in order to better understand

Absicht, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Erste Abtheilung: Werke*, Vol. 8 (Berlin: Reimer, 1912), pp. 15-32 (p. 23).

how and why enlightenment went wrong, in their respective opinions. The paradoxes of enlightenment are therefore both the problem for Nietzsche and Adorno, as well as the starting point for finding the solution to enlightenment's self-imposed downfall.

Two further sets of terms will be key to our understanding of Nietzsche, Adorno, and the paradoxes of enlightenment: the noun 'antithesis' and its derived adjective 'antithetical'; and the noun 'dialectic' and its derived adjective 'dialectical'. These terms speak to opposing forces Nietzsche and Adorno identify and employ in their understandings of enlightenment. In doing so, they summarise the images of enlightenment Nietzsche and Adorno develop and, in essence, they accurately describe why each thinker believes that enlightenment is a paradox. Nietzsche's basic philosophical method involves establishing contradictory oppositions,³³ and his approach to enlightenment is no exception. In this study, the term 'antithesis' will be understood as referring to a phenomenon that consists of two opposing forces that form a whole by paradoxically complementing each another. For example, in an antithetical system of light and dark, both phenomena compete against one another for supremacy. They may never reach a final, stable point, and they coexist in a state of constant, flux-like competition. The term 'dialectic' also refers to two opposed phenomena, except in a dialectic they do not coexist in productive tension with one another. Instead, the elements of a dialectic directly contradict each another, and they seek to overcome contradiction by synthesising the two opposites to create a truth.³⁴ Whereas an antithesis upholds contradiction, a dialectic wishes to eventually move beyond it.

³³ Wolfgang Müller-Lauter's study *Nietzsche: Seine Philosophie der Gegensätze und die Gegensätze seiner Philosophie* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1971) explores this approach, and it will be examined in more detail below for its detailed analysis of Nietzsche's philosophical method.

³⁴ Numerous types of dialectics have been developed over the course of intellectual history. This understanding is based on Peter Singer's commendably accessible description of Hegelian dialectics because, as we shall see, Hegel influenced Adorno's dialectical philosophical method more than any other

Having established the topic and the parameters of this study, and having discussed its key terminology, there now follows a focused literature review that will pair Nietzsche and Adorno. The aim of this literature review is not to provide a chronological overview of how critics have approached Nietzsche, Adorno, and their works. Instead, this survey will discuss the work and insights that have impacted this study's approach, and whose viewpoints will either be challenged or developed further. This method provides a clearly defined scope, and the following literature review will therefore be broken down into four sections: 'Reforming Enlightenment'; 'Intellectual Milieux and Nietzschean Links'; 'Paradoxes of Enlightenment'; and 'Enlightenment and Culture, Enlightenment and Life'. These four topics represent the trends in commentators' views that are most pertinent to this study, and they will help to build the final foundations that are required for an analysis of Nietzsche's and Adorno's works. As mentioned above, there are very few studies that compare Nietzsche and Adorno at length. It will consequently be necessary to bring into dialogue with one another studies that consider Nietzsche alone; studies that consider Adorno alone; and studies that consider both thinkers alongside each another. This combination of critical approaches will synthesise commentators' views on Nietzsche and Adorno, and it will thus ensure that a comparative approach to each thinker is established from the outset.

1.3 Reforming Enlightenment

For both Nietzsche and Adorno, reforming enlightenment is as crucial as criticising it. Relatively few scholars have examined in depth the reform of enlightenment in

dialectical thinker. See Peter Singer, *Hegel: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), especially pp. 102-103.

Nietzsche's or Adorno's thought, yet this subject matter warrants its own discussion for its central place in our analysis. Peter Sedgwick, for instance, has approached this topic indirectly by describing Nietzsche as an "iconoclast" whose works "refuse to conform to the normative requirements that are taken to define the proper use of philosophical language."³⁵ Sedgwick implies that Nietzsche's philosophical method is one of destruction that seeks to eradicate orthodoxy by demolishing the world as we know it, thereby inducing dramatic change. It is, however, crucial to note that this method is paradoxically constructive and destructive: Nietzsche deploys a metaphorical hammer both to destroy received wisdom, and to construct a world of new ideas.³⁶ This investigation will draw upon Sedgwick's assessment by showing that this model of destruction and reconstruction applies to Nietzsche's paradoxes of enlightenment, and it will be shown that he both dismantles and rebuilds the models of enlightenment he received. Adorno's thought will be analysed with this same paradoxical method as it will not only allow for methodological consistency between these two thinkers, but it will also bring Adorno's paradoxical understanding and redefinition of enlightenment into direct dialogue with Nietzsche's, fulfilling this study's main aim of comparing their respective approaches to enlightenment.

Sid Simpson's analysis of Nietzsche, Adorno, and Max Horkheimer views Nietzsche's critique of enlightenment as an iconoclastic act. Simpson's description of how Nietzsche engages with reason mirrors Sedgwick's image of dramatic change, and

³⁵ Peter Sedgwick, 'The Nietzsche Legend: A Genealogy of Myth and Enlightenment', in *Ecce Opus: Nietzsche-Revisionen im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Rüdiger Görner and Duncan Large (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), pp. 181-192 (p. 191).

³⁶ The subtitle of Nietzsche's *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1889) refers to 'philosophising with a hammer' ("wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt"), and it provides a powerful metaphor for Nietzsche's philosophical method. This subtitle and method gain in significance alongside the many references to hammers in Nietzsche's notes, particularly whilst drafting *Also sprach Zarathustra*. For example, see *NF* 1883, 21[6]; *NF* 1884, 25[249]; and *NF* 1884, 29[27].

Simpson writes that Nietzsche “seems to condemn reason *in toto*.”³⁷ Simpson concludes by stating that, unlike Adorno and Horkheimer, Nietzsche does not attempt to “reformulate” enlightenment.³⁸ Simpson thus views Adorno as a reformer of enlightenment, but he does not believe that Nietzsche wished to rehabilitate enlightenment in the same way. Simpson brings Nietzsche into dialogue with Adorno (and Horkheimer) and he is correct in claiming that Nietzsche criticises certain models of enlightenment he inherited from his philosophical predecessors. However, this study disagrees with Simpson’s assessment of Nietzsche as a thinker uninterested in reforming enlightenment. Simpson’s assessment creates a black and white image of Nietzsche’s relationship with enlightenment, and it implies that Nietzsche was overwhelmingly negative towards enlightenment and its direction. This study will instead view Nietzsche as neither a committed proponent, nor a dogmatic opponent, of enlightenment. By acknowledging that Nietzsche promoted some elements of enlightenment and rejected others, we will show that his nuanced thought on enlightenment does not correspond to the binary image that emerges from Simpson’s discussion. Nietzsche is aware of enlightenment’s positive and negative features, and he constructively engages with them to shape a new kind of enlightened future.

Remaining with Simpson’s assessment, it is important to also qualify the extent to which Adorno is willing to reform enlightenment, given that Simpson portrays Adorno as a steadfast reforming critic. The strength of Simpson’s claim is that it emphasises how Adorno is not just committed to critiquing enlightenment but is also keen to reshape it for the future. However, this conclusion runs into a similar issue to the one just discussed;

³⁷ Sid Simpson, ‘Nietzsche, Irrationalism, and the Cruel Irony of Adorno and Horkheimer’s Political Quietude’, *Contemporary Political Theory*, 20(3) (2021), 481-501 (p. 494).

³⁸ Simpson, ‘Nietzsche, Irrationalism, and the Cruel Irony of Adorno and Horkheimer’s Political Quietude’, p. 495.

Adorno cannot be viewed as committed to reforming every iteration of enlightenment. Our discussion in Chapter Three will show, for instance, that Adorno is opposed to instrumental reason, yet he does not necessarily seek to reform this manifestation of enlightenment. In other words, we must acknowledge that Adorno's intention to reform enlightenment does not involve reshaping its every aspect. The extent to which Adorno abandons, rather than reforms, certain expressions of enlightenment will be a point of discussion in Chapter Three. Just as this study will reject the image of Nietzsche as an unflinching opponent of enlightenment, it will also depart from the portrayal of Adorno as someone who reforms it at every opportunity. This thesis locates both thinkers in the middle ground between these two poles. Viewing them in light of the paradoxes of enlightenment will help us to develop a nuanced, balanced understanding of both thinkers.

Although Simpson's view of Adorno as a thoroughgoing enlightenment optimist needs to be qualified, other assessments of Adorno's relationship with enlightenment provide the impetus to search for Adorno's positive image for its future. For example, James Schmidt has stated that *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947), a text Adorno co-wrote with Horkheimer and to which we will return in detail later in this study, contains hints of a new utopia towards the end of its first chapter.³⁹ Schmidt continues by arguing that *Dialektik der Aufklärung* is not necessarily concerned with the Enlightenment, but instead addresses its promise.⁴⁰ Schmidt's argument is valuable in the context of our investigation because he demonstrates that, while *Dialektik der Aufklärung* seeks to highlight the flaws of enlightenment (as will be shown later), Adorno also searches for a way to rehabilitate

³⁹ James Schmidt, 'What, if anything, does Dialectic of Enlightenment have to do with "the Enlightenment"?', in *Aufklärungskritik und Aufklärungsmythen: Horkheimer und Adorno in philosophiehistorischer Perspektive*, ed. by Sonja Lavaert and Winfried Schröder (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), pp. 11-28 (p. 26).

⁴⁰ Schmidt, 'What, if anything, does Dialectic of Enlightenment have to do with "the Enlightenment"?', p. 26.

enlightenment. This study will therefore identify ways in which Adorno seeks to either modify enlightenment or to develop a new kind of enlightened future, and we will establish a narrative of hope in Adorno's approach to enlightenment and the Enlightenment. This narrative will be developed by viewing *Dialektik der Aufklärung* as one of many texts that aim to reform enlightenment, which will highlight how Adorno's thought on this topic is, like Nietzsche's, a paradoxical story of destruction and construction.

Espen Hammer provides further detail on the trajectory of Adorno's thought on enlightenment, writing that Adorno's process has no clear end.⁴¹ Hammer highlights Adorno's views on how enlightenment develops, which are just as significant as how enlightenment may be reached. This study will endorse Hammer's insight into Adorno's enlightenment for its emphasis on how enlightenment evolves, rather than it being an unshifting intellectual concept. Developing his discussion, Hammer notes that Jürgen Habermas (1929-) "fails to distinguish between a dialectical critique of enlightenment from within, which is Adorno's position, and a counter-enlightenment rejection from without, which would be Nietzsche's [...] position."⁴² We will depart from this view. Adorno critiques the Enlightenment from 'within' in that the key Enlightenment representative Immanuel Kant is a major source of inspiration for him, but Adorno is otherwise temporally and intellectually removed from the Enlightenment. Nietzsche, conversely, engages with the Enlightenment from a greater temporal proximity than Adorno, yet he also engages more intensely with individual Enlightenment thinkers. Moreover, Nietzsche offers counter-currents to the Enlightenment in the spirit of

⁴¹ Espen Hammer, *Adorno & the Political* (London/New York: Routledge 2006), p. 83.

⁴² Hammer, *Adorno & the Political*, p. 153.

intellectual reform, rather than as an outright, irrational rejection of it. He implements the key Enlightenment method of reasoned argument often, thus rendering him more of an Enlightenment insider than Adorno. Each thinker's position relative to the Enlightenment forms useful context for this study, and it allows us to understand the angles from which they approach it.

Both Nietzsche and Adorno will be considered below as reformers of enlightenment. Their goal is not only to highlight the flaws of enlightenment and the Enlightenment, but also to demonstrate how iterations of enlightenment in their respective eras may be rescued for the future. In Adorno's case, critics such as Rolf Wiggershaus have emphasised Adorno's wish to reform enlightenment with reference to *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in particular. However, Wiggershaus notes that *Dialektik der Aufklärung* was not meant to be a stand-alone text, and that Adorno and Horkheimer had intended to compose a sequel in which they would develop a positive case for enlightenment.⁴³ This sequel never materialised, yet Adorno does attempt to rescue and reform enlightenment elsewhere. If anything, this lack of a sequel to *Dialektik der Aufklärung* should encourage us to paint a picture of Adorno's reformed image of enlightenment, and this thesis will therefore show how Adorno is committed to redefining enlightenment for the future. Using *Dialektik der Aufklärung* as a stepping-stone, we will demonstrate not only that Adorno embarks on this mission to reformulate in the years following the publication of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947), but also that he was already laying the foundations for this reformulation as early as the 1930s.

⁴³ Rolf Wiggershaus, *Die Frankfurter Schule: Geschichte, theoretische Bildung, politische Bedeutung*, 2nd edn (Munich/Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1986), pp. 371-372.

As alluded to above, Adorno co-authored *Dialektik der Aufklärung* with Max Horkheimer. The collaborative nature of the text, combined with this study's focus on the text's foundations and its reaction to enlightenment, leads us to another significant issue that has been the subject of a significant amount of scholarship, namely, Adorno's intellectual milieu. This topic is often examined with reference to the sources upon which Adorno drew, and Nietzsche is frequently mentioned, at least in passing, in many such studies. In this next stage of our literature review we will bring together scholarship on Nietzsche and/or Adorno in order to locate both thinkers within specific lineages of thought. This approach will furnish a greater appreciation of the people and texts that had a bearing upon Nietzsche's and Adorno's thought, both on enlightenment and on other topics, as well as providing an insight into the ways in which critics have assessed the resonance of Nietzsche in Adorno's works. It should be stressed that this thesis is not a study of Nietzsche's influence on Adorno. This issue will be addressed, but it is worth bearing in mind that Adorno's reception of Nietzsche is not the principal concern of this study.

1.4 Intellectual Milieux and Nietzschean Links

Many commentators locate Adorno within the context of the so-called Frankfurt School. Before turning to these critics, we must first address the term 'Frankfurt School' as this terminology is potentially misleading. Often used to refer to members of the Institut für Sozialforschung at the Goethe Universität in Frankfurt am Main in the first half of the twentieth century, the term 'Frankfurt School' suggests that its associates represent a unified body of thought. Viewing Adorno and his colleagues in this way tends to gloss over the differences in their individual works. Collaboration was at the heart of the Institut

für Sozialforschung, yet its members did not reach unanimous conclusions. Furthermore, although the Institute was founded in Frankfurt am Main, its members were forced into exile in the 1930s and 1940s, and many of them eventually settled alongside German-speaking émigré(e)s in California's Pacific Palisades. The experience of exile was crucial to the development of their thought, and the scars of exile are evident in texts such as Adorno's *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (1951). The so-called Frankfurt School is not the main concern of this thesis, and nor is the terminology used to refer to it.⁴⁴ However, the Frankfurt School will be referred to from time to time in this study, and it is therefore important to acknowledge the limitations of the term as Adorno spent several decades in its orbit.

Nonetheless, it is still useful to acknowledge that Adorno's interest in questions of enlightenment stems at least in part from a collective interest in Nietzsche. For example, Vincent Pecora notes that Adorno and Horkheimer follow Nietzsche in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in the sense that both authors associate enlightenment with domination, just as Nietzsche himself does.⁴⁵ The strength of Pecora's article is that it sketches the context in which Adorno's interest in Nietzsche developed. By demonstrating that there are tangible links between Nietzsche and *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Pecora highlights how Nietzsche was an influence on both Adorno and his colleagues, and we thus appreciate that Adorno was not an exception in his intellectual milieu in turning to Nietzsche's thought. However, in this study Adorno will be decoupled from Horkheimer wherever possible so that Adorno the individual can be brought into

⁴⁴ It is nonetheless worth noting that the 'Frankfurt School' is not the only way in which some critics have referred to this group of thinkers. Thomas Wheatland, for instance, alludes to the "Horkheimer Circle" throughout his 2009 study. See Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

⁴⁵ Vincent Pecora, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, Critical Theory', *New German Critique*, 53 (Spring-Summer 1991), 104-130 (p. 120).

dialogue with Nietzsche's thought. We will do so by examining a wide range of Adorno's sole-authored works in order to develop a more detailed understanding of how Adorno's individual thought on enlightenment relates to Nietzsche's. The foundation Pecora establishes for comparing Nietzsche's and Adorno's thought on enlightenment is strong, and we will bolster it by analysing a diverse selection of Adorno's single-authored works in order to isolate him from his colleagues' collective interest in Nietzsche.

Commentators have acknowledged not only Adorno's interest in Nietzsche's thought, but also links between the two thinkers when situating their respective works in wider German intellectual history. For instance, Vanessa Vidal Mayor has noted that Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* belongs to a lineage of thought that runs from Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807) to Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887) to *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947).⁴⁶ Mayor locates *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in a wider network of texts that extends beyond its immediate exile context. Additionally, although the origins of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* – or any of Adorno's works – cannot be reduced to a small handful of texts, it is useful to bear in mind that it has common roots with at least some of Nietzsche's writings. Mayor continues by implying that Hegel is the key influence on Adorno's divergence from Nietzsche's thought: "Mittels Hegel ist Adorno dialektischer als Nietzsche".⁴⁷ Hegel is undoubtedly a key influence on Adorno – we shall see that the basis of Adorno's paradoxes of enlightenment is dialectical – but we will not view Hegel as an intermediary between Nietzsche's and Adorno's thought. Instead, all intermediaries between Nietzsche and Adorno in the context of the paradoxes of enlightenment will be removed so as to maintain a strict focus

⁴⁶ Vanessa Vidal Mayor, 'Die Idee der Philosophie als Kritik bei Nietzsche und Adorno', *Nietzscheforschung*, 13 (2006), 193-200 (p. 195).

⁴⁷ Mayor, 'Die Idee der Philosophie als Kritik bei Nietzsche und Adorno', p. 197.

on these to thinkers and their works, which will in turn afford our analysis a more secure comparative basis.

Mayor is not the only commentator to discuss links between Hegel, Nietzsche, and Adorno. Richard White, for instance, identifies a “productive tension” between Hegel and Nietzsche that serves as inspiration for Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*.⁴⁸ White’s assessment is less precise than Mayor’s as White does not link specific works by Hegel to Adorno’s thought, which makes it difficult to identify precisely Hegel’s influence on Adorno’s writing. Furthermore, White’s argument risks oversimplifying the genesis of *Minima Moralia*, as the text arose from several years of work in exile, and deals with an array of subjects that go beyond traditional philosophical concerns. Nonetheless, White contributes to the foundations of this study by linking Nietzsche and *Minima Moralia*, and our analysis will build on White’s discussion by adding to the list of texts that bridge Nietzsche’s and Adorno’s respective individual thought. Additionally, White argues convincingly that neither Nietzsche nor Adorno promote philosophical systems that seek to implement a standardised “universal method”, lest these systems impose artificial limits on thought.⁴⁹ This valuable insight suggests that any solution to the paradoxes of enlightenment that Nietzsche and Adorno propose will avoid developing philosophical systems. It will instead promote fluid solutions that are open to change over time. As we shall see, both Nietzsche and Adorno seek to solve the paradoxes of enlightenment in this way.

Stefano Giacchetti has also viewed Nietzsche and Adorno in the context of specific lineages of thought. Whereas Mayor (cited above) establishes a link between

⁴⁸ Richard White, ‘Thinking about thinking in Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*’, *The European Legacy*, 27(2) (2022), 160-175 (p. 172).

⁴⁹ White, ‘Thinking about thinking in Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*’, p. 168.

Nietzsche, Adorno and Hegel, Giacchetti writes that Nietzsche builds upon Arthur Schopenhauer's (1788-1860) critique of rationality in order to expose the flaws of reason, and that Adorno later seeks to "develop their critique into a Marxist theory of structural change of society."⁵⁰ Giacchetti correctly links Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, given that both thinkers consider the invigorating nature of art an antidote to an overly rational life.⁵¹ As we will explore in Chapter Three, Adorno indeed links the downfall of reason with economic issues via his theory of the Culture Industry, which aims to uncover hidden links between the downfall of enlightenment and the economic domination of art and wider society. However, it would be reductive to view his critique of rationality in a solely economic framework as his interest in enlightenment is also linked to the flexible nature of knowledge, and to the continually evolving issue of truth. This study will therefore reject this aspect of Giacchetti's argument because it falsely limits the scope of Adorno's otherwise wide-ranging interest in questions of enlightenment. Chapter Three will lend credence to this claim by exploring how Adorno links enlightenment to more than Marxist and Marxian critique alone.

Whereas Mayor, White and Giacchetti locate Nietzsche and Adorno in specific constellations in German intellectual history, others examine the Nietzsche-Adorno relationship in terms of influence. Susanna Zellini's examination of Nietzsche's place in an early draft of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* explores how Nietzsche's influence on the text – as well as on Adorno more broadly – remains an undercurrent that rarely surfaces explicitly.⁵² The basis for Zellini's claim is a 1943 working draft of what would become

⁵⁰ Stefano Giacchetti, *Critique of Rationality in Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Adorno: Aesthetics and Models of Resistance* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Loyola University Chicago, 2009), p. 5.

⁵¹ Nietzsche's attempts to rebalance reason and non-reason in art will be examined in detail in Chapter Two, with a focus on *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872).

⁵² Susanna Zellini, 'Nietzsche, die homerische Frage und die *Dialektik der Aufklärung*', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 48 (2019), 1-25 (p. 3).

‘Exkurs II’ of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, which uses Nietzsche as the starting point of its argument.⁵³ Although Nietzsche’s name appears less frequently in the published version of 1947, the fact that a working version of the text drew so heavily on Nietzsche tends to vindicate Zellini’s claim. Consequently, we will accept Zellini’s depiction of Nietzsche as an undercurrent in Adorno’s works, and build upon it by acknowledging that links to Nietzsche are often present when his name is not. Furthermore, Zellini acknowledges how various thinkers have viewed Nietzsche as an enlightenment theorist (“Theoretiker einer Aufklärung”).⁵⁴ Zellini does not use the term ‘the Enlightenment’ and instead depicts Nietzsche as a theorist of ‘an enlightenment’, a less specific term, and she correctly does not restrict Nietzsche’s interest in issues of enlightenment to the Enlightenment. This study will therefore consider Nietzsche’s interest in both phenomena in order to produce a detailed image of Nietzsche’s paradoxes of enlightenment.

The exile period of the 1940s was a pivotal time for Adorno’s interest in Nietzsche. Indeed, at this time Nietzsche was subject to scrutiny from other associates of the so-called Frankfurt School. Rolf Wiggershaus describes how, in a seminar in which Herbert Marcuse spoke on Nietzsche, Adorno was the “dominant and most interested participant” and that Horkheimer supported Adorno’s views on Nietzsche.⁵⁵ Wiggershaus thus shows that Adorno’s interest in Nietzsche was reinforced by a collective interest in him, as Adorno’s colleagues produced independent assessments of Nietzsche over several decades.⁵⁶ However, as noted above, the Frankfurt School’s interest in Nietzsche is not

⁵³ Zellini, ‘Nietzsche, die homerische Frage und die *Dialektik der Aufklärung*’, p. 8.

⁵⁴ Zellini here refers to Thomas Mann’s *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918); Oswald Spengler’s *Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918-1922); and Karl Löwith’s *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche* (1950). See Zellini, ‘Nietzsche, die homerische Frage und die *Dialektik der Aufklärung*’, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Rolf Wiggershaus, ‘The Frankfurt School’s ‘Nietzschean Moment’’, translated by Gerd Appelhaus, *Constellations*, 8(1) (2001), 144-147 (p. 144).

⁵⁶ For instance, Max Horkheimer *Egoismus und Freiheitsbewegung: Zur Anthropologie des bürgerlichen Zeitalters* (1936) explicitly discusses Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*. Herbert Marcuse’s *An Essay on Liberation* (1969) also explicitly draws on Nietzsche, as Sid Simpson discusses. See Sid Simpson, ‘The Gaya Scienza

our main concern, and Adorno will be treated as far as possible in isolation from his colleagues' thought in order to maintain a strict focus on him and Nietzsche. Wiggershaus later claims that Horkheimer and Adorno view Nietzsche as the philosopher in whom "their own desires are confirmed and accentuated."⁵⁷ This view suggests that Adorno instrumentalises Nietzsche as a confirmation of his own philosophical beliefs. Adorno owes much to Nietzsche, but he does not blindly accept every element of his thought, and he develops a model of enlightenment that differs from Nietzsche's. Moreover, our goal is to identify parallels between Nietzsche and Adorno in order to compare their thought, rather than analysing Adorno's reception of Nietzsche. This investigation will therefore not engage with this aspect of Wiggershaus' assessment of Nietzsche and Adorno.

Nonetheless, the historical context of Adorno's works is still a valuable topic to which Wiggershaus draws our attention, and it is one that other scholars have also drawn out. Andreas Huyssen, for instance, posits that we must maintain a "historical understanding of Adorno's position" given that Adorno often avoided historical specificity, even though some aspects of his thought were motivated by particular historical events.⁵⁸ Whereas commentators such as Giacchetti and Zellini explore the historical background of Adorno's (and Nietzsche's) works in terms of the thinkers to whom their thought relates, Huyssen focuses on the wider historical events that shaped Adorno's thought, of which the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust are amongst the most significant. Huyssen is correct to acknowledge that Adorno often does not refer to these historical events explicitly, and at times the reader must make these links independently. However, as our focus will be Nietzsche and Adorno –whose lives did not overlap – we

and the Aesthetic Ethos: Marcuse's Appropriation of Nietzsche in *An Essay on Liberation*', *Constellations*, 24(3) (September 2017), 356-371.

⁵⁷ Rolf Wiggershaus, 'The Frankfurt School's 'Nietzschean Moment'', p. 145.

⁵⁸ Andreas Huyssen, 'Introduction to Adorno', *New German Critique*, 6 (Autumn 1975), 3-11 (p. 3).

will not dwell on the historical circumstances that motivated either thinker's thought. Where necessary the specific historical motivating factors behind each thinker's works will be acknowledged, such as the French Revolution in Nietzsche's case and the development of the film industry in Adorno's (to be explored in Chapters Two and Three), but the historical context of Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective thought will not play a major role in this study.

Huyssen's discussion is an outlier in the sense that it is a historical overview of Adorno's thought that does not relate Adorno to specific thinkers, although we should also acknowledge that it is an introductory section rather than a full-length investigation. Nonetheless, other critics are keen to link Adorno and the genesis of his thought to his philosophical predecessors. Although Hegel will not be viewed as an intermediary between Nietzsche and Adorno, as established in the discussion of Mayor's views above, it is important to note that Hegel was a significant influence on Adorno. Alison Stone has expanded upon the relationship between Hegel and Adorno in the context of dialectical thought and enlightenment. Stone writes that Adorno's critique of enlightenment both supports and refutes Hegel, and that Adorno's engagement with Hegel is thus "ambivalent".⁵⁹ As well as continuing the trend of viewing Adorno alongside his philosophical predecessors, Stone highlights one paradoxical component of Adorno's thought in that his critique of enlightenment is both pro and contra Hegel. Stone correctly shows that there is a paradox in the foundations of Adorno's approach to issues of enlightenment. This observation provides grounds to expand upon the paradoxical nature of Adorno's thought on enlightenment, and Stone's insight will be developed further by

⁵⁹ Alison Stone, 'Adorno, Hegel, and Dialectic', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 22(6) (2014), 1118-1141 (p. 1120).

showing how paradoxes inform every element of Adorno's (and indeed Nietzsche's) attitude towards enlightenment.

By revealing Adorno's approach to Hegel, and by extension to enlightenment, as paradoxical, Stone touches upon the most significant theme of this study: paradoxes. It will be this investigation's main task to elucidate the tensions and contradictions that both Nietzsche and Adorno identify at the heart of enlightenment, Stone's invaluable discussion of the paradox at the core of Adorno's approach to enlightenment draws attention to this foundational topic for this study. As the paradoxes of enlightenment are the key subject matter for this comparative survey of Nietzsche and Adorno, we will now examine critical literature on this topic in more detail.

1.5 Paradoxes of Enlightenment

Relative to other areas of their thought, there is not a significant amount of scholarship on paradoxes in Nietzsche's and Adorno's works. The existing scholarship on this topic has fortunately produced fruitful discussions, and previous commentators' insights provide an excellent initial framework for our investigation. As is a trend in critical approaches to Adorno, as well as in comparative examinations of Nietzsche and Adorno, critics' discussions have focused primarily on *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. This focus is welcome as it identifies a key text and a central time period for approaching the intellectual relationship between Nietzsche and Adorno, and this approach is particularly helpful in identifying a starting point for an investigation. As will become clear in this study, though, our investigation will expand the list of texts by both writers that allow for a comparative discussion of their respective paradoxes of enlightenment. One major subject of investigation in this regard has been Nietzsche's often contradictory

philosophical method, and these studies will be considered below, particularly as there is more scholarship on paradoxes in Nietzsche's thought than in Adorno's. Existing discussions of Nietzsche are also more varied as they often focus on Nietzsche the individual (and his place in intellectual history) as much as they do on his works, whereas scholarship on Adorno's paradoxes typically focuses exclusively on his works.

Beginning with Nietzsche, commentators such as Janko Lavrin have viewed Nietzsche the man as a paradox. Lavrin writes that Nietzsche "occupies one of the most provocative and at the same time paradoxical positions [in European thought] [...]; paradoxical, because his work has proved misleading and yet highly stimulating on account of its very inconsistencies and contradictions."⁶⁰ Lavrin's study, first published in 1948, treats Nietzsche the thinker as a paradox rather than identifying one particular paradoxical element of his thought. However, this approach provides the impetus necessary to home in on specific paradoxes in Nietzsche's thought, and Lavrin's insight will be used as a starting point for focusing on the paradoxes of enlightenment. Lavrin underpins his method by identifying contradictions in Nietzsche's works, which means that other critics have mirrored our approach of viewing Nietzsche as a paradoxical thinker. Lavrin later argues that Nietzsche does not get trapped in paradoxes, though, and that he seeks to find solutions to the (cultural) woes he identifies, which Lavrin presents via metaphors of illness and health.⁶¹ This observation is crucial as it shows that Nietzsche uses paradoxes as a way of shining a light on problems, but he then seeks to go beyond them by finding a cure for cultural and intellectual flaws. This study will underscore

⁶⁰ Janko Lavrin, *Nietzsche: An Approach* (London/New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 1.

⁶¹ Lavrin, *Nietzsche: An Approach*, p. 12.

Lavrin's observation by showing that Nietzsche ultimately offers solutions to the paradoxes of enlightenment.

Not every commentator has viewed Nietzsche and his approach to enlightenment as a paradox. For example, Brian Leiter instead describes Nietzsche as an irrationalist, in other words as a thinker with a non-paradoxical approach to reason and enlightenment: "[...] he [Nietzsche] almost never tries to persuade through the power of rational argument".⁶² Leiter's claim suggests that Nietzsche seeks to seduce the reader via non-rational forms of argument, and thus departs from enlightenment's and the Enlightenment's promotion of reasoned argument and discussion. However, viewing Nietzsche in this way risks painting an overly simple picture of Nietzsche and his thought. Leiter's argument creates a binary between reason and non-reason. However, we will see that Nietzsche simply cannot be placed neatly into one of these two categories by virtue of his paradoxical approach which, as will be demonstrated in this thesis, promotes both reason and non-reason. We will therefore depart from Leiter's interpretation in order to create a more nuanced and balanced image of Nietzsche's approach to questions of reason, which are inseparable from issues of enlightenment. Additionally, Nietzsche's paradoxical approach to enlightenment establishes methodological consistency when it comes to comparing his thought with Adorno's. Both thinkers create clear, deliberate paradoxes of enlightenment, and this consistency between their approaches facilitates this comparison between their thought.

Walter Kaufmann also believes that Nietzsche engages with enlightenment in a paradoxical yet productive manner. Kaufmann's now classic study of Nietzsche, first

⁶² Brian Leiter, 'Nietzsche (1844-1900)', in *The Oxford Handbook of German Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Michael N. Forster & Kristin Gjesdal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.187-206 (p. 190).

published in 1950, depicts Nietzsche as a thinker who criticises reason via rational means, and thus rejects the image of Nietzsche as an irrationalist, Kaufmann presents him as a paradoxical thinker who seeks to marry reason with non-reason, as the following excerpt suggests: “Nietzsche considers both the man who acts on impulse and the man who deliberately counteracts his impulses inferior to the man who acts rationally on instinct.”⁶³ By interpreting Nietzsche and his attitude to (non-)reason in this way, Kaufmann implies that Nietzsche’s thought not only contains contradictions, but also that these contradictions are productive and therefore central to Nietzsche’s philosophical method. Kaufmann is not the only critic to present this view, and we will turn to Wolfgang Müller-Lauter’s well-known 1971 study later in this literature review, but Kaufmann’s argument is admirable for its appreciation of the nuance at the heart of Nietzsche’s views on enlightenment. Consequently, there is a strong basis for viewing Nietzsche’s thought on enlightenment as a paradox because, as Kaufmann argues, Nietzsche’s arguments cannot be neatly categorised as either rationalist or irrationalist. A paradoxical model of enlightenment offers a way to bridge the gap between these two poles, and this study’s approach will therefore develop Kaufmann’s insight further.

Kaufmann soon makes another statement that addresses the foundations of this study. He writes that Nietzsche’s thought is based around a rejection of the dualism of “reason and passion” and of any similar antithesis derived from it, describing this rejection as one of the “leitmotifs of Nietzsche’s thought.”⁶⁴ Kaufmann thus implies that Nietzsche does not take an antithetical view to issues surrounding enlightenment. However, this study will argue against Kaufmann’s position. It will instead be

⁶³ Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013 (first published 1974)), p. 233.

⁶⁴ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, p. 234.

demonstrated that Nietzsche's paradoxical model of enlightenment develops from holding an antithetical approach to issues such as reason and non-reason, and that he then applies this model in a range of his works. Antitheses are essential to Nietzsche's thought, and they form the basis of his approach to enlightenment. Not only does our approach seek to modify Kaufmann's view of Nietzsche, but it will also enable us to bring Nietzsche into closer dialogue with Adorno. The paradoxical nature of Adorno's dialectical approach is more widely accepted by critics, and viewing both thinkers' methods as fundamentally paradoxical will allow for a closer, more nuanced comparison of their thought on issues of enlightenment. This element of Kaufmann's argument will therefore be disputed, and this thesis will highlight how Nietzsche's antithetical view of enlightenment is replicated in different areas of his thought on enlightenment, ranging from theoretical enlightenment to aesthetics and Richard Wagner, amongst others.

Remaining with Kaufmann, he later makes a third key observation upon which this study will draw. He writes that there are not two Nietzsches, and he implicitly relates this argument to questions of enlightenment by referring to rationalism: "Historically, [...] his [Nietzsche's] high esteem of rationality has been largely ignored. Yet there are not, as it were, two Nietzsches – one an irrational "psychologist", the other a Platonist."⁶⁵ We should note that Kaufmann, writing originally in 1950,⁶⁶ here attempts to rescue Nietzsche from the legacy of National Socialism, and as a result he may be, perhaps understandably, overemphasising the rational qualities of Nietzsche's works. Kaufmann's comment is nonetheless valid with regards to Nietzsche's thought on enlightenment. Indeed, viewing Nietzsche as a thinker without split allegiances to

⁶⁵ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, p. 268.

⁶⁶ The first edition of Kaufmann's study was published in 1950. The fourth edition, cited here, was published in 1974.

particular philosophical schools, whether rationalist, irrationalist or otherwise, allows him to be framed as a thinker in between reason and non-reason as he bridges the gap between these two extremes. Rather than there being a rationalist Nietzsche and a non-rationalist Nietzsche, there is one Nietzsche whose approach to enlightenment is deliberately complex. We will use Kaufmann's insight to argue that Nietzsche wishes for his reader to embrace both their rational and non-rational side simultaneously rather than seeking to be rational in some situations and irrational in others. In other words, Nietzsche wishes for us to embrace antitheses.

Wolfgang Müller-Lauter's study on Nietzsche's philosophical method is also crucial to our investigation. Müller-Lauter notes that contradictions are a productive feature of Nietzsche's approach.⁶⁷ He continues by arguing that these contradictions form part of a whole that must constantly be reassessed, and that it is Nietzsche's goal to synthesise the deliberate contradictions in his thought.⁶⁸ Müller-Lauter's analysis should be commended for its willingness to accept that contradictions in Nietzsche's thought are not a flaw in his rhetorical or argumentative skill, but are instead a deliberate intellectual technique. This study will likewise treat contradictions in Nietzsche's paradoxes of enlightenment as productive elements of his thought. Doing so will show how Nietzsche develops a nuanced view of enlightenment, rather than taking a one-sided approach. However, this study will depart from Müller-Lauter's assessment by arguing that Nietzsche does not try to synthesise the contradictions of the paradoxes of enlightenment because Müller-Lauter's description of Nietzsche's method risks presenting him as a dialectician, for whom the process of synthesis is part of their philosophical method.

⁶⁷ Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche: Seine Philosophie der Gegensätze und die Gegensätze seiner Philosophie* (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 1971), p. 7.

⁶⁸ Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche*, p. 7.

Instead, we will show that Nietzsche embraces the antithesis of the paradoxes of enlightenment without seeking to synthesise enlightenment as a new middle ground between reason and unreason. Adorno's approach is admittedly informed by Hegelian dialectic, but Nietzsche broadly does not replicate Hegel's dialectical ways in the way Müller-Lauter suggests.

Müller-Lauter also discusses philosophical systems. He argues that, although Nietzsche relies on contradictions, this method does not mean that he gives up hope of systematisation (“Systematisierung”).⁶⁹ Systematisation usually denotes an organised structure whereby shifts in one idea impact other ideas, suggesting that individual ideas rely on others for their meaning. This thesis rejects this argument. Our analysis will show that Nietzsche develops an antithetical model of enlightenment, yet this antithesis is not a system as it does not provoke an equal reaction in other ideas. This change in influence between reason and non-reason may cause temporary shifts in thought, but they do not necessarily provoke chain reactions in every other element of Nietzsche's thought as a connected system would do. Nietzsche's paradoxical antitheses are not part of a rigid system, as our analysis of *Also sprach Zarathustra* in Chapter Two will demonstrate, Nietzsche's redefined enlightenment is by no means systematic. Systems are also a significant element of Adorno's enlightenment. Here, he locates truly enlightened thought in constantly evolving constellations of ideas in which concepts are contingent on others for their meaning. This model suggests that Adorno's enlightenment revolves around continually evolving systems, despite his distaste towards systematised thought, and Adorno thus departs from Nietzsche's more open redefinition of enlightenment. Our

⁶⁹ Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche*, p. 3.

approach will thus highlight a key difference between Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective new enlightenments.

Graeme Garrard's discussion of Nietzsche and the Enlightenment complicates our understanding of Nietzsche, the Enlightenment, and of enlightenment more broadly. Garrard writes that Nietzsche "had some difficulty knowing what to do with the Enlightenment in his epic schema of history", and he argues that Nietzsche performs a *volte face* in his attitude towards it.⁷⁰ Garrard thus emphasises how Nietzsche views the Enlightenment first and foremost as a historical epoch rather than primarily as a cultural and intellectual movement. Although it falsely downplays the extent to which Nietzsche appreciated and engaged with the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, this argument shows how Nietzsche views the Enlightenment in numerous ways, locating it within complex networks of history, culture, and intellectual history. However, Garrard's claim that Nietzsche's thought on the Enlightenment is confused does not stand up to scrutiny. Nietzsche discusses several representatives of the Enlightenment in his assessment of its trends, notably Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as will be analysed in Chapter Two. Furthermore, he looks to re-periodise the Enlightenment by including thinkers such as Martin Luther (1483-1546) within its boundaries. These areas of focus highlight how Nietzsche has a critical grasp on the Enlightenment and its place in history, which is especially prominent given his attempt to revise the Enlightenment's parameters. Nietzsche was an active recipient of the Enlightenment, and his engagement with its representatives and legacy is rich and productive.

⁷⁰ Graeme Garrard, 'Nietzsche For and Against the Enlightenment', *The Review of Politics*, 70 (2008), 595-608 (both p. 596).

Turning to Adorno and enlightenment, Micheal J. Reno complicates Adorno's paradoxical attitude towards enlightenment. Reno writes that the "standard interpretation" of Adorno on enlightenment is that he "succumbs to paradoxical scepticism [...] regarding reason and enlightenment, and he thus argues that Adorno has nothing to offer in terms of a practical orientation to the world".⁷¹ As our analysis will show, Adorno is sceptical towards enlightenment in texts such as *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and he is aware of enlightenment's paradoxical limitations. However, this study will counter Reno's summary of the typical approach to Adorno and enlightenment by arguing that Adorno's paradoxical approach to enlightenment does not prevent him from developing a new form of enlightenment. This argument will not downplay the scepticism that Adorno evinces towards enlightenment as it has been modelled by his predecessors, and nor will it reframe enlightenment as a wholly positive phenomenon in Adorno's thought. Instead, it will be shown that Adorno holds a sceptical, paradoxical view of a specific manifestation of enlightenment. On this basis, we will use *Dialektik der Aufklärung* – the text where Adorno is at his most sceptical and ambivalent towards enlightenment – as a stepping stone from which he develops a new enlightenment that seeks to avoid the pitfalls of the model he has inherited. Adorno is sceptical towards enlightenment, but he ultimately undertakes to remodel it.

Andrew Bowie has also engaged with the paradoxical nature of Adorno's thought, and he correctly notes that the possibility of paradoxical thought is an issue Adorno pursued throughout much of his writing career.⁷² Bowie's emphasis on the central role of paradoxes in Adorno's thought more broadly is welcome. Additionally, Bowie's

⁷¹ Michael J. Reno, *Adorno and the Possibility of Practical Reason* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Michigan State University, 2011), p. 7.

⁷² Andrew Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy: From Kant to Habermas* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2003), p. 236.

assessment of the paradoxical basis of Adorno's thought confirms that his paradoxical views of enlightenment are not an exception in his wider philosophical method, which is often paradoxical by virtue of his dialectical method. Adorno thus maintains a high degree of intellectual consistency, and we can therefore better understand how his approach to issues of enlightenment aligns with his broader philosophical method. Bowie's understanding of Adorno's paradoxical approach will be developed further in this study to show how Adorno does not merely identify paradoxes in enlightenment. Instead, he uses these paradoxes as a springboard for solving the very tensions that the paradoxes of enlightenment produce. Identifying the paradoxes of enlightenment is therefore one step in the wider process of reforming enlightenment, and we will therefore argue that Adorno's paradoxical assessment of enlightenment and its inherent contradictions form part of his wider attempt to use tensions productively. The paradoxes of enlightenment therefore have a function in Adorno's thought: they serve not simply to confound, but to shine light on how they can be dismantled and overcome.

Bowie, like others before him, frames his discussion of Adorno with reference to the so-called Frankfurt School. He correctly notes that the individual thought of this group is varied,⁷³ and thus implicitly casts doubt on the plausibility of speaking of a unified group of thinkers. Without delving further into this issue lest discussion veer away from Nietzsche, Adorno, and questions of enlightenment, it is once more important to bear in mind that Adorno's thoughts will be decoupled from those of his associates in this study. Additionally, the paradoxes of enlightenment may at first glance seem like an abstract, theoretical topic. However, the goal of this investigation is to compare Nietzsche and

⁷³ Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy*, p. 224.

Adorno, two thinkers known for their wide-ranging cultural criticism. Given that their thought frequently reverts to an examination of their respective contemporary cultures, it will be necessary to examine how their critiques of theoretical enlightenment feed into their more tangible cultural criticism. Doing so will show how both thinkers treat enlightenment as more than an abstract phenomenon, as well as highlighting how enlightenment underpins many areas of Nietzsche's and Adorno's thought. This study will not be the first to link enlightenment with culture in Nietzsche's or Adorno's thought, and this literature review will close by considering commentators' approaches to this topic.

1.6 Enlightenment and Culture, Enlightenment and Life

As mentioned previously, Nietzsche and Adorno relate enlightenment to cultural questions of their respective times. The temporal differences between their lives and works therefore do not hinder our investigation because both thinkers create a firm cultural basis for their views on the paradoxes of enlightenment, and this cultural basis has not gone unnoticed in critical literature. David Owen's examination of how Adorno views Nietzsche is an excellent example of how critics have bridged the gap between Nietzsche and Adorno. Owen states that Adorno considers Nietzsche a "critic of modern bourgeois culture and, more importantly, one who provides resources for criticism that are missing from Marxist thought."⁷⁴ Although this study is not a reception study, Owen's observation helps the reader appreciate how Adorno approaches Nietzsche. By accepting that Adorno considers Nietzsche a critic of (bourgeois) culture, Owen encourages us to

⁷⁴ David Owen, 'Nietzsche and the Frankfurt School', in *The Routledge Companion to the Frankfurt School*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 251-265 (p. 252).

locate any comparison of the two thinkers in or around the sphere of culture. This study will not go as far as basing its entire discussion on cultural questions (such as aesthetics), but given that both Nietzsche's and Adorno's redefinitions of enlightenment call for at least some form of cultural change, questions of culture will form a major part of this study, and Owen's discussion prepares the ground for the discussion in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis.

There are also clear links between Adorno, culture, and enlightenment. Tom Huhn, for instance, has noted that Adorno contributed to over 150 radio broadcasts in West Germany after returning to Europe in 1949.⁷⁵ Huhn hereby highlights how Adorno locates himself and his thought in a specific set of historical and cultural circumstances. Although no thinker's thought should be tied solely to their culture of their time, it is helpful to have the cultural circumstances of post-war Germany in mind as Adorno frequently reckons with Germany's recent past in his works. Huhn reinforces the links between Adorno, enlightenment and culture later in his discussion, stating that art for Adorno is an "enlightening force" as it resists "the spell its artifacts are complicit in weaving over us."⁷⁶ As will be discussed in Chapter Four, Adorno believes that the 'enlightened' industrialisation of art has flooded culture with unenlightened trends, but he still believes that art can resist enlightenment's paradoxical pitfalls, and thus act as a force for good. Huhn's appraisal will be developed further in Chapter Four, where texts in which Adorno praises specific artworks for resisting the totalising forces of paradoxical enlightenment will be identified and analysed. For Adorno, art is a form of cultural resistance, as well as resistance to a false form of enlightenment, and our analysis will

⁷⁵ Tom Huhn, 'Introduction: Thoughts Beside Themselves', in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Tom Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-18 (p. 3).

⁷⁶ Huhn, 'Introduction: Thoughts Beside Themselves', p. 15.

therefore demonstrate how enlightenment is both an intellectual and a cultural issue in Adorno's eyes.

Huhn's approach to Adorno, culture, and enlightenment has, however, not been universally accepted by critics. Huhn addresses the era in which Adorno lived and wrote, as well as events and activities other than Adorno's written works that influenced him. Jay Bernstein, on the other hand, focuses instead on building a theoretical bridge between Adorno, culture and enlightenment. He writes that enlightenment can generally be viewed as a form of critique,⁷⁷ and that this critique is dependent on the things it seeks to destroy: "Adorno and Horkheimer thus continually underline the dependence of critique on the objects it seeks to desecrate".⁷⁸ Bernstein argues correctly that enlightenment requires objects to critique; without objects, it remains a detached theoretical model. Once this model has been developed it must be applied to objects, such as art, to gain in meaning and in function. It will therefore be necessary in this study to treat enlightenment not only as an abstract tool but also to show how Adorno applies it as a critical method to wider culture. This approach is underpinned further by Bernstein's argument that disenchantment – a phenomenon Adorno associates with rationalised enlightenment – destroys subjectivity.⁷⁹ On this basis enlightenment represents an attempt to create an objective world, and it is therefore all the more necessary for this study to relate it to wider culture in order to understand it and its impact beyond the individual.

Deborah Cook interprets the collective context upon which enlightenment rests in Adorno's works. For Cook, Adorno critiques the present by "scrutinizing prevailing

⁷⁷ Jay Bernstein, 'Adorno on Disenchantment: The Scepticism of Enlightened Reason', in *German Philosophy Since Kant*, ed. by Anthony O'Hear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 305-328 (p. 319).

⁷⁸ Bernstein, 'Adorno on Disenchantment', p. 322.

⁷⁹ Bernstein, 'Adorno on Disenchantment', p. 317.

socio-economic conditions”.⁸⁰ This interpretation highlights how any discussion of Adorno and enlightenment must at least acknowledge his commitment to linking society’s economic conditions with the culture that these conditions create. Enlightenment will be no exception to this rule in our study, and Cook’s analysis will be advanced by showing how economic questions are inseparable from culture and enlightenment in Adorno’s thought. His emphasis on economics is one area in which his approach departs from Nietzsche’s because the latter had little or no interest in economic issues. Cook does, however, link Adorno to Nietzsche, writing that Adorno shared Nietzsche’s aversion to the supposedly “prevailing herd mentality” of their eras.⁸¹ This comment implies that any solution to cultural or intellectual woes in Adorno’s thought must encourage individuals to think and act independently. Chapter Three of this study will draw upon Cook’s claim to show how Adorno’s solution to the paradoxes of enlightenment does not promote mass movements. This view of enlightenment will oppose Nietzsche’s redefinition of it, which promotes a mass movement of individuals as he encourages individuals to forge their own path to enlightenment. Adorno, conversely, considers the individual mind the main site of his new enlightenment.

Nietzsche’s focus on the conditions of the wider world is only reinforced when considering Günter Abel’s comments on Nietzsche’s concept of eternal recurrence. Abel notes that immanence is a key component of Nietzsche’s understanding of this issue: “Alles wird, ist unabwertbar und kehrt ewig wieder – dieser Gedanke Nietzsches stellt die höchste überhaupt nur mögliche Sicherung der Immanenz der Welt dar.”⁸² Abel’s interpretation emphasises how Nietzsche’s individual must engage with the world

⁸⁰ Deborah Cook, ‘Adorno, Kant and Enlightenment’, *Kantian Review*, 25(4) (2020), 541-557 (p. 542).

⁸¹ Cook, ‘Adorno, Kant and Enlightenment’, p. 548.

⁸² Günther Abel, *Nietzsche: Die Dynamik der Willen zur Macht und die ewige Wiederkehr* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1984), p. 32.

immediately in front of them, whether that be with other people, events, phenomena or ideas. This claim is not to say that Adorno's focus on the mind entirely rejects this kind of worldly engagement, but it is stressed more obviously in Nietzsche's works than in Adorno's. Chapter Two of this study will develop Abel's argument by demonstrating how Zarathustra, the prophet of Nietzsche's new enlightenment, seeks to have people embark on a journey towards enlightenment by engaging authentically and spontaneously with their surroundings. We must be cautious not to insist too strongly on viewing the basis of Nietzsche's new enlightenment as a practical engagement with the world because this conclusion suggests that theoretical models of enlightenment did not interest Nietzsche, which would be both misleading and reductive. Nonetheless, our discussion of Zarathustra will underscore that enlightenment in Nietzsche's works must have at least a foundation in practical experience.

Later in his study, Abel's focus moves away from the arena of 'culture', and instead shifts towards the sphere of 'life'. Again using the concept of eternal recurrence to illuminate his point, Abel argues that eternal recurrence discourages the individual from retreating from the reality of the world in front of them, and it instead has them affirm reality by engaging with the world in a Dionysian manner:

Weiterhin geht es in der Wiederkunftslehre gerade nicht darum, sich der Zeit und dem Augenblick zu entziehen, unterzutauchen, sich zu entweltlichen, sondern vielmehr darum, in dionysisch-tragischer Bejahung aller Realität ohne Abzug und Ausnahme zu dem Äußersten vorzudringen, was [...] von innen her zu erlangen ist [...].⁸³

Nietzsche indeed promotes cultural changes as part of his scheme of enlightenment. However, Abel highlights how these cultural shifts must be accompanied by changes in

⁸³ Abel, *Nietzsche: Die Dynamik der Willen zur Macht und die ewige Wiederkehr*, p. 352.

how individuals live their lives. In this case Abel emphasises how, for Nietzsche, the individual must live in a life-affirming manner that intensifies their engagement with the world around the human being rather than withdrawing from what may at times be harsh realities. Abel's focus on life will be expanded to show that Nietzsche's redefinition of enlightenment centres on this-worldly phenomena. Nietzsche does not wish to transcend this world in the search for enlightenment, and he encourages his reader to live an affirming life that does not shy away from challenges. Adorno, on the other hand, does not share this emphasis on the vitality of life-affirmation. We will not seek to show otherwise, and this difference between the two thinkers will be embraced. As will be shown in Chapters Two and Three, which address their respective redefinitions of enlightenment, Nietzsche's and Adorno's approaches to individuality are key. Nonetheless, despite their different attitudes to the vitality of life, we will draw upon Abel's focus on life to show how a redefinition of enlightenment is, for both thinkers, a change in how individuals engage with the world, whether intellectually, culturally, or in terms of lifestyle.⁸⁴ For both Nietzsche and Adorno, enlightenment is as much a daily practice as it is an intellectual change.

One recent analysis that supports Abel's method is Benoît Berthelier's discussion of Nietzsche in the Anthropocene. Berthelier writes that Nietzsche approaches science through the lenses of life, and its earthly value: "Nietzsche often – if not always – looked at science through the lens of life by raising the question [...] of its value."⁸⁵ Berthelier draws attention to the fact that Nietzsche promotes those things that have value for

⁸⁴ For example, Nietzsche wishes for us to go beyond the 'Last Man' who is content with the comforts of everyday life. For an analysis of this individual and how their lifestyle can be transcended, see Paul Katsafanos, 'The Fanatic and the Last Man', *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 53(2) (2022), 137-162.

⁸⁵ Benoît Berthelier, 'The Meaning of the Earth: Reading Nietzsche in the Anthropocene', *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 54(2) (Autumn 2023), 133-150 (p. 145).

humans' earthly existence. We will expand the scope of Berthelier's claim by including Nietzsche's search for, and redefinition of, enlightenment in the scheme of things that Nietzsche promotes for their value to humans' lives. Nietzsche nudges his reader towards phenomena that have intrinsic value for human life rather than those that fulfil a non-existential role, and any new enlightenment identified in his thought must therefore be intrinsically valuable. Conversely, the issue of earthly value does not concern Adorno, who rather considers the redefinition of enlightenment an opportunity to liberate humans from seemingly endless cycles of destruction by rescuing enlightenment from its self-imposed dialectical downfall. For Adorno, reforming enlightenment will help humans break out of a vicious historical cycle of rise and decline. His redefinition of enlightenment therefore has a specific goal in mind, unlike Nietzsche's more open-ended approach to reforming enlightenment.

Berthelier's article, alongside Paul Katsafanos' study (cited above), provides momentum to view enlightenment as a life process. This approach is more obvious in Nietzsche's case than in Adorno's; Nietzsche views many topics as existential issues, and enlightenment is no exception. Even though Adorno does not explicitly view enlightenment as an existential issue in the same way as Nietzsche, there is undoubtedly scope to view Adorno's interest in enlightenment as an existential matter. As indicated above, Adorno redefines enlightenment – amongst other reasons – in order to avoid the pitfalls of dialectical enlightenment, which means that human thought must fundamentally change. Consequently, enlightenment will be viewed in this study as an existential matter for both thinkers, even if Adorno's redefinition of enlightenment does not have the same existential thrust as Nietzsche's. This approach will underscore the diversity of ways in which Nietzsche and Adorno view the question of enlightenment.

Both thinkers identify issues of enlightenment in every sphere of life, whether aesthetic, cultural, or intellectual, and daily life becomes the stage on which the paradoxes of enlightenment play out. This observation, which outlines the breadth of our investigation, closes this literature review. Having situated this study in a wider body of scholarship and having outlined how it will contribute to this corpus, we can now turn to the shape of our own argument.

1.7 Shape of the Argument

Before discussing how this thesis will proceed, it is worth mentioning what this investigation does not seek to do. First, it does not aim prove or disprove Nietzsche's or Adorno's theories or approaches. The purpose of this investigation is to document the arguments and insights that Nietzsche and Adorno present and thus to contribute to understanding of how their individual thought develops, as well as to chart a new element of the intellectual relationship between them. It is therefore not our task to develop or diminish their ideas. Where necessary, contradictions or inconsistencies in Nietzsche's and Adorno's works will be discussed, but the aim of doing so is to provide a nuanced overview of their thought rather than to assess the quality or validity of their arguments. This thesis also does not aim to provide an exhaustive overview of every paradox in Nietzsche's or Adorno's thought. The paradoxes of enlightenment will therefore remain the sole paradoxical subject of this investigation, and this thesis will not seek to bring the paradoxes of enlightenment into dialogue with any other paradoxes. It is, however, hoped that it will provide momentum for future researchers to identify further paradoxes in Nietzsche's and Adorno's works, or conversely to confirm that the paradoxes of enlightenment are the only (deliberately) paradoxical elements of their thought.

Having established what our investigation does not aim to achieve, we can introduce the topics that will be addressed over the course of this study. Chapters Two and Three will shine a light on Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective understandings of enlightenment. These two chapters will interrogate how each thinker understood the Enlightenment, and the conceptions of enlightenment that they inherit from their intellectual predecessors. They will also describe the different models of enlightenment that each thinker develops in response to those they receive, and these models will be the source of one of the most fundamental differences between Nietzsche's and Adorno's paradoxes of enlightenment. Whereas Nietzsche develops an antithetical model of enlightenment, Adorno's model is dialectical, which means that both thinkers embrace paradoxical enlightenment in different ways. We will then proceed by analysing how Nietzsche and Adorno critique enlightenment, and reason (one of the key components of enlightenment). These critiques will once more draw out several crucial differences between each thinker's approach to questions of enlightenment, and our discussion will therefore show how each thinker departs from the other. However, both Nietzsche and Adorno seek to redefine and reshape the process of enlightenment, and Chapters Two and Three will close with an analysis of how each thinker aims at saving the process of enlightenment, securing its place in humanity's future intellectual arsenal.

Using the insights developed in Chapters Two and Three, Chapter Four of this thesis will address the topic of how the paradoxes of enlightenment relate to Nietzsche's and Adorno's aesthetic thought. In this discussion on aesthetics and enlightenment, we will see that Nietzsche and Adorno both maintain the models of enlightenment outlined in Chapters Two and Three. This analysis will show that their paradoxical models of enlightenment are therefore present in their aesthetic thought, with their aesthetics often

reflecting the paradoxical models of enlightenment they develop. Here, a fundamental difference between Nietzsche's and Adorno's (aesthetic) priorities will also emerge. Nietzsche's aesthetic thought – and his own aesthetic undertakings in the form of poetry – align with his wider mission of living a dynamic life in which philosophy and art are central features, and we will consider how Nietzsche uses his redefined paradoxes of enlightenment to promote a new type of philosophy. Adorno, on the other hand, relates his discussion to the industrialisation of art and aesthetic experience, and the impact that this industrialisation has on daily life. Chapter Four will then close by showing how Adorno aims to free art from the paradoxes of enlightenment, to allow for increased artistic innovation in the future.

Chapter Five will show how Nietzsche and Adorno put their paradoxes into practice when examining the works of Richard Wagner, the most significant artistic figure they have in common. Once again, both thinkers maintain their respective paradoxes of enlightenment in their work on Wagner, highlighting how these paradoxes are theoretical and practical models for both thinkers. Nietzsche uses his paradoxical approach to promote the rebirth of mythology through Wagner's musical output, and he critiques the rationalised role of language in works of art. Adorno's analysis of Wagner touches upon the same topics, but his discussion leads in a different direction. Rather than critiquing Wagner for the purpose of cultural rejuvenation as Nietzsche does, Adorno's critique of Wagner addresses many of the subjects of Adorno's critique as established in Chapters Three and Four (hyper-rational, dialectical enlightenment; and the industrialisation of art). Nietzsche weaponizes Wagner in order to promote his own goals, and Adorno identifies features of wider culture in Wagner's works that he wishes to expose via critique. After Chapter Five, the findings of each chapter will be summarised in more

detail before turning to the main conclusions to be taken from our investigation, as well as identifying possible areas of future research. Now that the groundwork for our investigation is in place, we can turn to Nietzsche's enlightenment to commence our comparison of Nietzsche, Adorno, and the paradoxes of enlightenment.

Chapter Two: Nietzsche's Enlightenment

Several influential observers have been quick to brand Nietzsche an irrationalist. Marxist polymath György Lukács (1885-1971), for instance, who took a keen interest in Nietzsche and Adorno, repeatedly charges the former with promoting irrationalism. He accuses Nietzsche of transforming an irrational philosophy into a philosophy of life (“*Philosophie des Lebens*”),⁸⁶ in other words, one that should be implemented in everyday life, and suggests that Nietzsche deliberately departed from the rationalistic elements of German thought that he inherited. Similarly, Lukács dedicates the third chapter of his work *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (1954) to combating Nietzsche's thought and his legacy. Here, Lukács attempts to establish an inextricable link between Nietzsche and the history of imperialism, calling Nietzsche the “founder’ of the imperialistic period” (“*Begründer der imperialistischen Periode*”).⁸⁷ Lukács thus ascribes to Nietzsche a central role in the philosophical and political manifestations of irrationalism, suggesting that Nietzsche's influence was felt beyond the realm of philosophical theory. Lukács' reading of Nietzsche's legacy, however, risks categorising him as an overtly political thinker. Critics such as Hugo Drochon have carried out admirable readings of Nietzsche in this vein,⁸⁸ but the political use and abuse of Nietzsche's name in the twentieth century illustrates the pitfalls of seeking to apply aspects of his thought to politics.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, Lukács

⁸⁶ Georg Lukács, ‘Der deutsche Faschismus und Nietzsche’, in Georg Lukács, *Schicksalswende* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1948), pp. 5-36 (p. 19).

⁸⁷ Georg Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (Luchterhand: Neuwied am Rhein, 1962), p. 270, in Georg Lukács, *Werke*, Vol. 9 (Luchterhand: Neuwied am Rhein, 1962).

⁸⁸ See Hugo Drochon, *Nietzsche's Great Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

⁸⁹ Commentators have drawn attention to the abuse of Nietzsche's legacy and works in the twentieth century politics. For an overview of the political misappropriation of Nietzsche's thought, see Jacob Golomb and Robert S. Wistrich (eds.), *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism? On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002). For an example of how Nietzsche was (mis)appropriated in the First World War, see Nicholas Martin, ‘“Fighting a Philosophy”: The Figure of Nietzsche in British Propaganda of the First World War’, *The Modern Language Review*, 98(2) (April 2003), 367-80.

portrays Nietzsche in the 1950s as the source of widespread irrationality in politics and culture, presenting Nietzsche as the source and origin of modern irrationalism.

Lukács is not the only high-profile thinker with an interest in Adorno who has criticised Nietzsche's supposedly irrational tendencies. Jürgen Habermas (1929-), who studied under Adorno,⁹⁰ had a significant influence on the reception of Nietzsche and his thought. The fourth of the twelve lectures in his *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (1985), entitled *Eintritt in die Postmoderne: Nietzsche als Drehscheibe*, was an influential work that presents Nietzsche as a reactionary thinker who contributed to the decline in respect for reason. Habermas argues that Nietzsche, when faced with the necessity of subjecting the subject-oriented conception of reason to fresh critique, chose to abandon the Enlightenment's programme of reason:

In dieser Konstellation hatte Nietzsche nur die Wahl, entweder die subjektzentrierte Vernunft noch einmal einer immanenten Kritik zu unterziehen – oder aber das Programm im ganzen aufzugeben. Nietzsche entscheidet sich für die zweite Alternative – er verzichtet auf eine erneute Revision des Vernunftbegriffs und verabschiedet die *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. [...] Wohl wendet Nietzsche die Denkfigur der *Dialektik der Aufklärung* noch einmal auf die historische Aufklärung an, aber mit dem Ziel, die Vernunftthülse der Moderne als solche aufzusprengen.⁹¹

Not unlike Lukács, Habermas here implies that Nietzsche diminished and abandoned reason. He writes that Nietzsche was simply unwilling to revise the concept(s) of reason he inherited, thus depicting him, at best, as ambivalent to rationality. Nietzsche's solution to the ambivalence of reason, Habermas writes, was to dismantle the rational basis of modernity by emphasising what Habermas describes as an inextricable relationship

⁹⁰ See Matthew G. Specter, *Habermas: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 33-34.

⁹¹ Jürgen Habermas, 'Eintritt in die Postmoderne: Nietzsche als Drehscheibe', in Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen*, 3rd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), pp. 104-29 (pp. 106-107).

between reason and unreason in the form of the dialectic of enlightenment. In Habermas' view, even Nietzsche's attempt to include reason in his intellectual system ultimately aimed to depart from his rationalistic predecessors. Nietzsche consequently comes to represent a clear break from the Enlightenment tradition's generally positive attitude towards reason, and Habermas' most damning condemnation of Nietzsche's purported rejection of reason confirms this: "Nietzsche benützt die Leiter der historischen Vernunft, um sie am Ende wegzuwerfen und im Mythos, als dem Anderen der Vernunft, Fuß zu fassen".⁹² Here, Habermas argues that Nietzsche, having used reason in order to construct his argument, then chose to reject it. As a result, in Habermas' influential opinion, Nietzsche represents an extreme of irrationality.

Binary interpretations of Nietzsche and rationality misrepresent his paradoxical understanding of enlightenment. It is true that, at times, Nietzsche's thought promotes unreason and irrationality. His aesthetic thought, for example, advocates the power and necessity of unreason, whether through his theoretical examinations in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (see Chapter Four) or his later critique of Richard Wagner (see Chapter Five). Additionally, given Nietzsche's frequent focus on the role of phenomena such as internal, natural drives and humanity's relationship with elements of the animal kingdom (to be examined later in this chapter), it is easy to see why thinkers such as Lukács and Habermas have shown a keen interest in Nietzsche's moments of unreason. However, Nietzsche's reservations towards reason and its representatives are accompanied by an extensive, and often positive, engagement with the Enlightenment and several key European Enlightenment thinkers. Nietzsche was therefore not the irrationalist that Lukács and Habermas claim to identify. His relationship with reason, as well as with

⁹² Habermas, 'Eintritt in die Postmoderne', p. 107.

enlightenment, was a paradoxical balancing act between rational and non-rational thought and behaviour. His views on enlightenment account for reason and non-reason, and they shift depending on the issue at hand. Consequently, he simply cannot be assigned to a pro-reason or anti-reason camp, and below we will entertain the possibility that Nietzsche paradoxically critiques enlightenment on “rationalistic grounds”,⁹³ to quote Nektarios Kastrinakis.

Using the dual terminology of enlightenment (an ahistorical intellectual process) and the Enlightenment (an epoch), Chapter Two will interrogate Nietzsche’s attitudes towards enlightenment and the Enlightenment. This investigation will contribute to existing debates on Nietzsche and enlightenment by demonstrating that Nietzsche, far from being pro- or anti-Enlightenment, holds paradoxically mixed views towards it. Whilst he occasionally attacks representatives of the Enlightenment, he admires others for their critical approaches to intellectual questions, and for their ability to stand up to figures of authority. Though many of his engagements with the Enlightenment are productive, Nietzsche sometimes uses the term ‘Aufklärung’ as a means of attacking people and events that he dislikes, and such instances reveal some of Nietzsche’s wider intellectual concerns. These engagements with the Enlightenment maintain a focus on its real-world implications, but Nietzsche did not ignore theoretical approaches to this topic. His appraisal of theoretical elements of enlightenment highlight that he was keen to redefine enlightenment in line with his antithetical conception of reason and unreason, which places non-reason and non-rational behaviour on a equal footing with reason. From these theoretical observations Nietzsche’s individualistic model of enlightenment

⁹³ Nektarios Kastrinakis, *Deleuze’s and Nietzsche’s Adorno: Nietzsche as the Philosopher of the Unconscious and as Inconsistent, Nonidentity, Dialectical Thinker* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 2022), p. 59.

emerges, which places the responsibility for enlightenment in the hands of every individual member of a culture. This individualistic model is ultimately best represented by Zarathustra, one of the very few fictional figures in Nietzsche's works, whose words, deeds, and prophecies render him Nietzsche's new model 'enlightener'.

2.1 Nietzsche's Model 'Enlighteners'

When engaging with enlightenment, Nietzsche not only discusses philosophical theories that emerged from the Enlightenment movement. He also frequently, and characteristically, mentions by name those he views as its central representatives. These instances should not be viewed as serious attempts to create a historically accurate image of these personalities. After all, Nietzsche admits that he exploits the names of known historical figures in order to shed light on the movements and intellectual tendencies they represent: "Ich greife nie Personen an, — ich bediene mich der Person nur wie eines starken Vergrößerungsglases, mit dem man einen allgemeinen, aber schleichenden, aber wenig greifbaren Nothstand sichtbar machen kann." (*EH* 'Klug' 7). At first glance this quotation may push the reader towards dismissing Nietzsche's descriptions of historical figures as arbitrary because he admits that his depictions do not necessarily reflect the truth. Yet, this quotation provides us with a key insight into why these attacks should be taken seriously. However farfetched his descriptions of others may seem, Nietzsche writes in this way in order to probe what broader intellectual and cultural tendencies that his targets represent. Although his images of historical figures thus appear to be more like caricatures than strictly accurate depictions, Nietzsche does not intend simply to ridicule

individuals with uncompromising ad hominem attacks.⁹⁴ His hostility instead often highlights his underlying intellectual and cultural concerns.

The French Revolution, and what it represented in cultural terms, is one such concern. References to the Revolution occur repeatedly in Nietzsche's works,⁹⁵ especially in those of his so-called middle period in the late 1870s and early 1880s, and he often discusses it with reference to representatives of the Enlightenment. For instance, in the third section of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I* (1878), Nietzsche accuses Jean-Jacques Rousseau of encouraging optimism and in turn awakening the spirit of the Revolution: "Rousseau's leidenschaftliche Thorheiten und Halblügen haben den optimistischen Geist der Revolution wachgerufen [...]. Durch ihn ist der Geist der Aufklärung und der fortschreitenden Entwicklung auf lange verscheucht worden" (*MAM I* 463). This quotation demonstrates that Nietzsche had, at best, an aversion towards this element of Rousseau's thought, arguing that Rousseau's apparent optimism works against the spirit of the Enlightenment.⁹⁶ Consequently, Nietzsche suggests that Rousseau should not be considered an exemplar of the Enlightenment. By making this argument Nietzsche implies that he himself is a true enlightener as he opposes Rousseau, who is presented here as an antipode to the Enlightenment. We should acknowledge that Nietzsche does not dismiss the Enlightenment as a whole on account of Rousseau's supposedly flawed

⁹⁴ Although Nietzsche is rightly viewed as a perpetrator of ad hominem attacks, he has also been examined as a victim of them. See Robert C. Solomon, 'Nietzsche *ad hominem*: Perspectivism, Personality, and *Ressentiment*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 180-222.

⁹⁵ For analyses of Nietzsche's thought on the French Revolution, see Urs Marti, 'Nietzsches Kritik der Französischen Revolution', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 19 (1990), 312-357; and Adrian Del Caro, 'The Hermeneutics of Idealism: Nietzsche versus the French Revolution', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 22 (1993), 158-164.

⁹⁶ Paul Franco has argued that, for Nietzsche, any continuation or development of the Enlightenment must disentangle itself from the violence of the French Revolution. See Paul Franco, *Nietzsche's Enlightenment: The Free-Spirit Trilogy of the Middle Period* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 52-53.

thinking. Instead, he draws the reader's attention to the lasting damage he attributes to Rousseau alone, implying that Rousseau represented the wrong type of Enlightenment.

Nietzsche pairs Rousseau with the French Revolution on numerous occasions.⁹⁷ Significantly, this pairing is maintained until the end of Nietzsche's writing career in the late 1880s. In a revealing passage from *Götzen-Dämmerung* (1889), Nietzsche phrases his distaste towards Rousseau's works in very explicit terms:

Aber Rousseau — wohin wollte d e r eigentlich zurück? Rousseau, dieser erste moderne Mensch, Idealist und canaille in Einer Person; der die moralische „Würde“ nöthig hatte, um seinen eignen Aspekt auszuhalten; krank vor zügelloser Eitelkeit und zügelloser Selbstverachtung. Auch diese Missgeburt, welche sich an die Schwelle der neuen Zeit gelagert hat, wollte „Rückkehr zur Natur“ — wohin, nochmals gefragt, wollte Rousseau zurück? — Ich hasse Rousseau noch i n der Revolution: sie ist der welthistorische Ausdruck für diese Doppelheit von Idealist und canaille. Die blutige farce, mit der sich diese Revolution abspielte [...] geht mich wenig an: was ich hasse, ist ihre Rousseau'sche M o r a l i t ä t — die sogenannten „Wahrheiten“ der Revolution, mit denen sie immer noch wirkt und alles Flache und Mittelmässige zu sich überredet. (*GD* 'Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen' 48)

Nietzsche's attack on Rousseau here assumes an aggressive, personal character. As well as believing Rousseau to be mistaken, Nietzsche denotes him a scoundrel (“canaille”) and accuses him of unbridled vanity. Yet Nietzsche also seeks to justify what he candidly explains is his hatred of Rousseau by linking the Genevan Enlightener, as well as the French Revolution, with a form of morality that in Nietzsche's view promotes mediocrity. The above quotation demonstrates that Nietzsche believes Rousseau to be the representative of both mediocrity and untruth, dangers which manifested themselves in the form of the French Revolution, in Nietzsche's view. Rousseau and the French Revolution therefore endorse what Nietzsche believes to be a falsified view of the world

⁹⁷ For a study of Nietzsche in a political context, with reference to Rousseau, see Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche contra Rousseau: A Study of Nietzsche's Moral and Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

that will constrain the progress of humanity. By portraying the French Revolution as the direct, practical consequence of Rousseau's thought, Nietzsche ultimately seeks to discredit Rousseau's Enlightenment.

Nietzsche maintains a similarly negative view of Rousseau's legacy in many other places in his writings. To give one more example, in *Morgenröthe* (1881) Nietzsche calls Rousseau a 'moral tarantula' for allegedly helping to shape the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant: "Auch ihn [Kant] hatte die Moral-Tarantel Rousseau gebissen, auch ihm [Kant] lag der Gedanke des moralischen Fanatismus auf dem Grunde der Seele, als dessen Vollstrecker sich ein anderer Jünger Rousseau's fühlte" (MR 3). As well as attacking Rousseau, this quotation seeks to discredit Kant and his moral thought. By depicting Kant as an intellectual disciple of Rousseau, Nietzsche seeks to tar them both with the same brush. Additionally, this description of Kant suggests that he was either unable or unwilling to break from Rousseau's influence, implying that Kant was not an independent, free-thinking intellectual. However, Rousseau remains the central target of this attack as he is described as the original cause of Kant's flaws. The dehumanising description of Rousseau as a tarantula portrays him as a wild animal with the potential to evoke fear in, as well as cause considerable harm to, a great number of people. Rousseau is thus presented as more than just a foolish thinker; Nietzsche depicts him as an existential threat to humanity whose legacy should be avoided at all costs.

Rousseau and his Enlightenment are thus rejected for the lasting damage Nietzsche believes they inflicted upon intellectual and human history. However, Nietzsche does not reject the Enlightenment as a whole, and he indeed admires several exemplary Enlightenment figures. The most significant of these is Voltaire (1694-1778). The same works that contain dismissive remarks towards Rousseau exhibit a positive

attitude towards Voltaire and his thought.⁹⁸ For example, in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I*, which is dedicated to Voltaire (“Dem Andenken Voltaire’s geweiht zur Gedächtniss-Feier seines Todestages, des 30. Mai 1778”), Nietzsche praises Voltaire for being the last in a series of great dramatists:

Voltaire war der letzte der grossen Dramatiker, welcher seine vielgestaltige, auch den grössten tragischen Gewitterstürmen gewachsene Seele durch griechisches Maass bändigte, — er vermochte Das, was noch kein Deutscher vermochte, weil die Natur des Franzosen der griechischen viel verwandter ist, als die Natur des Deutschen (MA I 221).

Nietzsche’s praise of Voltaire contrasts sharply with his comments on Rousseau. Nietzsche admires Voltaire’s ability to withstand great turmoil and stress and, by describing Voltaire’s soul as diverse (“vielgestaltig”), Nietzsche notes that Voltaire was a well-rounded, flexible thinker who did not limit himself by specialising in a specific subject or field. Furthermore, Nietzsche emphasises the fact that Voltaire was French, creating a positive link between French thinkers and the ancient Greeks he revered. This comment is significant because it demonstrates that, for Nietzsche, the Enlightenment was a peculiarly French-speaking movement. However, a tension emerges here as Rousseau, Nietzsche’s negative Enlightener, and Voltaire, whom Nietzsche admired, were both Francophones. This tension can nonetheless be resolved by acknowledging that Nietzsche identifies in Rousseau and Voltaire two different strands of Enlightenment. Whereas he considers Rousseau’s enlightenment misguided, Nietzsche views Voltaire’s enlightenment as one that is characterised by inner intellectual strength and flexibility of mind, rather than weakness and dogmatism.

⁹⁸ For a full-length study of the intellectual relationship between Nietzsche and Voltaire, which analyses both published and unpublished materials, see Guillaume Métayer, *Nietzsche et Voltaire: De la liberté de l’esprit et de la civilisation* (Paris: Flammarion, 2011).

Though Nietzsche considers the Enlightenment a primarily Francophone phenomenon, he acknowledges that the influence of the French-speaking ‘Enlighteners’ spread beyond the Francophone world.⁹⁹ However, when Voltaire’s enlightenment arrived in Germany, Nietzsche argues, it was rejected. In section 197 of *Morgenröthe*, named ‘Die Feindschaft der Deutschen gegen die Aufklärung’, Nietzsche states that German natural scientists broke from Voltaire’s intellectual spirit by modifying his view of nature: “Drittens die Naturforscher: sie kämpften gegen Newton’s und Voltaire’s Geist und suchten, [...] den Gedanken einer vergöttlichten oder verteufelten Natur [...] aufrecht zu stellen.” (MR 197) Nietzsche names Isaac Newton (1643-1727) alongside Voltaire for the former’s purportedly unbiased observations of natural phenomena and his wish to advance human knowledge.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the above quotation suggests that Nietzsche admires Voltaire because he did not judge nature. Instead, Nietzsche implies, Voltaire (and Newton) observed and documented the world around them without trying to impose moral or social standards on natural phenomena. Conversely, Nietzsche accuses German natural scientists of judging nature and attributing natural phenomena to a deity, thus

⁹⁹ Nietzsche’s interest in Enlightenment focuses primarily on European sources. However, it is important to note that he was also aware of intellectual traditions from outside of Europe, and the most significant of these in Nietzsche’s works is Buddhism. For examinations of Nietzsche and Buddhism, see Christopher Janaway, ‘No-self and Compassion: Nietzsche and Buddhism’, *European Journal of Philosophy*, 31(4) (December 2023), 950-966; Antoine Panaïoti, *Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and Robert G. Morrison, *Nietzsche and Buddhism: A Study in Nihilism and Ironic Affinities* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997).

¹⁰⁰ It is unknown whether Nietzsche had read Voltaire’s comments on Newton, which are documented most notably in a chapter on Newton and the discovery of gravity. However, as Voltaire claims to have been informed of Newton’s now infamous apple tree fable by Newton’s niece, Catherine Barton (1679-1739), this pairing appears to be more than a coincidence: “Un jour de l’année 1666 Neuton [...] en voyant tomber des fruits d’un arbre, à ce que m’a conté sa nièce [...] se laissa aller à une méditation profonde sur la cause qui entraîne ainsi tous le corps dans une ligne qui, si elle était prolongée passerait à peu près par le centre de la Terre.” (‘One day in 1666, Newton, [...] upon seeing an apple fall from a tree, his niece told me [...] was led to think deeply about the cause of what draws all things in a line which, if it were extended, would pass roughly through the centre of the earth.’) Translation my own, with original French found in Voltaire, *Elémens de la philosophie de Newton*, ed. by Robert L. Walters and W.H. Barber in *The Complete Works of Voltaire*, ed. by W.H. Barber and Ulla Kölving, Vol. 15 (Oxford: Alden Press, 1992), pp. 181-542 (p. 418).

distorting understanding of the natural world. This spurious claim likely emerges from Nietzsche's growing Germanophobia, which developed rapidly after his feud with the composer Richard Wagner. Nonetheless, Nietzsche believes that Voltaire's enlightenment combats these tendencies and promotes unpartisan documentation in place of biased observation. He concludes that Germany has rejected Voltaire's enlightenment and that German natural scientists have broken from the critical spirit of Voltaire and Newton.

Many of Nietzsche's favoured representatives of enlightenment, that is, those who lived outside of the Age of Enlightenment, are also non-Germans. In a positive comment towards the Enlightenment Nietzsche mentions the Renaissance scholars Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch, 1304-1374) and Erasmus (1466-1536) alongside Voltaire: "Erst nachdem wir die historische Betrachtungsart, welche die Zeit der Aufklärung mit sich brachte, in einem so wesentlichen Punkte corrigirt haben, dürfen wir die Fahne der Aufklärung — die Fahne mit den drei Namen: Petrarca, Erasmus, Voltaire — von Neuem weiter tragen." (*MAM I* 26) This comment offers a significant insight into Nietzsche's understanding of the Enlightenment. He here locates the Enlightenment's origins in the Renaissance, suggesting that he considers the Enlightenment to form its own macro-epoch rather than the Age of Enlightenment's shorter-lived cultural and intellectual movements. Nietzsche hints at this idea elsewhere, such as in his praise of Martin Luther (1483-1536) in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I* 237: "Ohne diess seltsame Zusammenspiel der Absichten wäre Luther verbrannt worden wie Huss — und die *Morgenröthe* der Aufklärung vielleicht etwas früher und mit schönerem Glanze, als wir jetzt ahnen können, aufgegangen." Though Nietzsche states that Luther did not trigger an early Age of Enlightenment, he does suggest that Luther had the ability to do so, and

Nietzsche's Enlightenment is thus not tied to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is instead linked to figures who defied dogma by means of free, independent thought.

It is worth briefly returning to Nietzsche's identification of Petrarch and Erasmus as the forefathers of Enlighteners such as Voltaire in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I* 26. As indicated above, this observation is one of Nietzsche's most positive towards the Enlightenment. This passage is one of the rare instances where he explicitly promotes the project of the Enlightenment, and he explains that the Enlightenment's critical impulse must be maintained. Yet Nietzsche takes this stance on condition that its way of viewing the world be modified first:

Es ist gewiss einer der grössten und ganz unschätzbaren Vortheile, welche wir aus Schopenhauer gewinnen, dass er unsere Empfindung zeitweilig in ältere, mächtige Betrachtungsarten der Welt und Menschen zurückzwingt, zu welchen sonst uns so leicht kein Pfad führen würde. Der Gewinn für die Historie und die Gerechtigkeit ist sehr gross: ich glaube, dass es jetzt Niemandem so leicht gelingen möchte, ohne Schopenhauer's Beihülfe dem Christenthum und seinen asiatischen Verwandten Gerechtigkeit widerfahren zu lassen: was namentlich vom Boden des noch vorhandenen Christenthums aus unmöglich ist. (*MAM I* 26)

In this passage, Nietzsche states that the Enlightenment must lead people back towards timeless, more powerful ways of viewing the world and humanity. Nietzsche's ideal Enlightenment therefore paradoxically seeks progress in regression. Before seeking to extend the Enlightenment's legacy by developing new ways of thinking, Nietzsche appeals to the reader to embrace received wisdom and to reject contemporary thought, and only then can the critical project of the Enlightenment progress further. Nietzsche also notes that the thought of his idol turned nemesis Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) has the potential to push humans into developing their thought further, which would otherwise be a challenging task, he notes in the excerpt above. This comment can be read as another positive assessment of the Enlightenment's aim. Although he believes its

methods need altering, Nietzsche suggests that the Enlightenment ultimately challenges humans into expanding the boundaries of their knowledge, and in turn their capacity to think. The Enlightenment thus becomes an emancipatory phenomenon that has the power to transform humanity. Nietzsche embraces the Enlightenment for this very reason.

In summary, Nietzsche develops a mixed view of the Enlightenment and its key representatives. Though he shows distaste for the German Enlightenment, he is often positive towards the French-speaking Enlightenment. However, a tension emerges even here as Nietzsche is hostile towards Rousseau and sympathetic to Voltaire. This mixed attitude embodies the ambivalence at the heart of Nietzsche's views of the Enlightenment. He is not a pro-Enlightenment rationalist, yet neither is he an anti-Enlightenment irrationalist. Though at times strong and leaning seemingly towards one extreme or the other, Nietzsche's views on the Enlightenment are found in shades of grey between the poles of pro and contra. This inconsistency can be accounted for by acknowledging that Nietzsche uses the Enlightenment as a means of attacking the things and people views as his intellectual enemies. The most obvious of these phenomena from the discussion above is the French Revolution, which Nietzsche considers an embodiment of Rousseau's Enlightenment. Another example is also found in the quotation from *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I* 26 provided above: Christianity. Nietzsche here uses Schopenhauer as a foil to promote an Enlightenment that departs from religion, and especially from Christianity. Christianity is thus not only incompatible with Nietzsche's Enlightenment, but it is also the Enlightenment's antonym. Nietzsche develops this attack on Christianity in the context of the Enlightenment throughout his writings, and it is to these that we will now turn.

2.2 Enlightenment and Christianity

Nietzsche makes no effort to conceal his animosity to Christianity and the Church. His work *Der Antichrist* (1888/1895),¹⁰¹ the title of which means both ‘the Antichrist’ or ‘the anti-Christian’, is a visceral polemic which aims to expose what Nietzsche views as the mendacious foundations of Christianity, and to demonstrate that its worldview is mistaken and misled. Nietzsche denounces Christians for having become spiritually, even mentally ill, and thus having come to represent an existential threat to humanity as Nietzsche saw it: “Das Hausthier, das Heerdenthier, das kranke Thier Mensch, — der Christ...” (AC 3) In light of these comments, it comes as no surprise that Nietzsche had developed this attack on Christianity at earlier stages in his life, and references to religion and its adherents are found throughout his works of the 1880s. Crucially in the context of this study, many of these instances make direct reference to the Enlightenment, and enlightenment more broadly. As alluded to above, Nietzsche often uses the Enlightenment and enlightenment as means of attacking Christianity and its followers. He portrays Christianity, and enlightenment and the Enlightenment as polar, ultimately incompatible opposites, taking a positive stance towards enlightenment and the Enlightenment in the process, which evidences how his position on the Enlightenment shifts depending on the target in his sights.

The origins of Nietzsche’s attack on Christianity and its institutions can be found in the early 1870s, over a decade before *Der Antichrist* was written and over two decades before it was published. In *David Strauss: Der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller* (1873), the first of the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (1873-1876), Nietzsche examines the life,

¹⁰¹ For an introduction to *Der Antichrist*, see Dylan Jaggard, ‘Nietzsche’s *Antichrist*’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. by John Richardson and Ken Gemes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 344-362.

works, and ideas of the theologian David Strauss (1808-1874), whom Nietzsche dubs a philistine (“David Strauss, ein [...] typischer Philister” (DS 2)).¹⁰² However, Nietzsche primarily attacks Strauss’ theological and intellectual views. In section seven of the essay, Nietzsche states that Strauss was mistaken to believe that the world is governed by a rational God: “Strauss selber müsste sich dann doch zugeben, dass unsere Welt eben nicht der Schauplatz der Vernunft, sondern des Irrs sei, und dass alle Gesetzmässigkeit nichts Tröstliches enthalte, weil alle Gesetze von einem irrenden und zwar aus Vergnügen irrenden Gott gegeben sind.” (DS 7) In this quotation Nietzsche blames this God for deliberately creating an irrational world, and thus suggests that rational thought and behaviour are impossible. Though he does not name the Enlightenment here, Nietzsche subtly aligns himself with pro-reason Enlighteners by arguing against what he considers to be Christianity’s irrational tendencies, implying that Christianity impedes the Enlightenment’s progressive aims. When faced with a choice between Christianity and the Enlightenment, Nietzsche sides with the latter.

Further evidence for Nietzsche’s favouring of the Enlightenment over Christianity is found throughout *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I*. In section 110, for instance, Nietzsche creates a more explicit tension between the Enlightenment and religion, arguing that religion and the Enlightenment are incompatible:

Religionen sollen also — diess war die Behauptung aller Gegner der Aufklärung — [...] jene uralte Weisheit aussprechen, welche die Weisheit an sich sei, insofern alle wahre Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit immer zu ihr hin, anstatt von ihr weg, geführt habe [...]. Diese ganze Auffassung von Religion und Wissenschaft ist durch und durch irrthümlich (*MAM I* 110).

¹⁰² Nietzsche uses the term ‘philistine’ in his works not to dub someone who is uncivilised or uneducated. Instead, he uses it to describe people he views as over-educated.

Nietzsche here implies that those with religious faith oppose the Enlightenment. Religious people are therefore presented as an impediment to intellectual and cultural progress as, in Nietzsche's view, religious belief prevents thought from developing further. In addition, in this example Nietzsche states that people of religious faith believe that religion will always lead towards the findings of modern scholarship ("die Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit") instead of away from it, a view which he considers to be mistaken. This conception of religion places religious belief at odds with the progress of human knowledge. Though Nietzsche does not explicitly promote the Enlightenment in this example, he again takes its side when faced with the choice between it and religion. Nietzsche consequently uses the Enlightenment as a foil through which to discredit religious belief.

Nietzsche affirms his belief in the opposition between religion and the Enlightenment later in the same text. In section 150 he writes that the Enlightenment challenged the authority of religion and religious institutions: "Aber die wachsende Aufklärung hat die Dogmen der Religion erschüttert und ein gründliches Misstrauen eingeflößt" (*MAM I* 150). This image of the Enlightenment contains the same emancipatory urge found in Kant's 1784 definition of enlightenment.¹⁰³ In both cases the individual is encouraged to think independently, and Nietzsche openly extends this understanding of the Enlightenment to include a scepticism towards large religious institutions. It is therefore beyond doubt that Nietzsche's Enlightenment discards religion and religious thought. Although he uses the more general term of 'religion', we can infer

¹⁰³ This definition, explored in the introduction to this study, reads as follows: "Sapere aude! Habe Mut, dich deines *eigenen* Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung." See Immanuel Kant, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* in Kants Gesammelte Schriften, ed. by the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Erste Abtheilung: Werke, Vol. 8 (Berlin: Reimer, 1912), pp. 33-42 (p. 35).

that Nietzsche is referring specifically to Christianity. This hypothesis is supported by further extracts from *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*. For example, in the eighth section of the text Nietzsche presents Jewish thinkers as the upholders of the Enlightenment: “[...] waren es jüdische Freidenker, Gelehrte und Aerzte, welche das Banner der Aufklärung und der geistigen Unabhängigkeit unter dem härtesten persönlichen Zwange festhielten” (*MAM I* 475). Nietzsche praises these Jewish figures for maintaining their intellectual independence in situations of significant pressure.¹⁰⁴ He generally produces no such praise of Christian figures – the opposite is in fact true – meaning that references to religion in Nietzsche’s works can be read as shorthand for Christianity.

Despite his hostility to Christianity, Nietzsche occasionally praises it, albeit ironically as he emphasises how Christianity paradoxically contributes to its own downfall. In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, for instance, the reader encounters this approach: “Auch das Christenthum hat einen grossen Beitrag zur Aufklärung gegeben: es lehrte die moralische Skepsis auf eine sehr eindringliche und wirksame Weise: anklagend, verbitternd, aber mit unermüdlicher Geduld und Feinheit” (*FW* 122). Here Nietzsche states that Christianity furthered the Enlightenment’s promotion of a healthy scepticism towards dogma and authority. This description maintains the tension Nietzsche establishes between Christianity and the Enlightenment. He states that Christianity’s contribution to the Enlightenment is unintentionally self-destructive because it leads the individual away from a Christian understanding of the world. The reader consequently gains an insight into Nietzsche’s conception of progress, which was a central concern of

¹⁰⁴ For further examples of Nietzsche’s praise for Jewish independence of thought, see *JGB* 250 and 251.

many major Enlighteners,¹⁰⁵ and he does not view history as a story of linear progress. He instead suggests that regression is necessary as it will eventually lead to progress. This concept, which implies that hardship is necessary in the long term, features heavily in Nietzsche's wider thought. He writes elsewhere that temporary difficulties must be endured, then overcome, in order for humanity to progress, summarising what he considers to be the necessity of suffering in a now famous aphorism from 'Aus der Kriegsschule des Lebens': "Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker." (*GD*, 'Sprüche und Pfeile' 8).

It would appear, then, that Nietzsche takes a positive stance towards the Enlightenment when attacking Christianity, setting up an opposition between Christianity and the Enlightenment in order to discredit the former and promote the latter. However, this neat appraisal does not tell the whole story. If we examine Nietzsche's attitude towards different elements of the Enlightenment when discussing Christianity, we observe that Nietzsche's attitude towards the Enlightenment becomes more negative in places. One such element is reason. For example, near the start of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche makes the following comment about certain pious individuals: "Ich fand bei gewissen Frommen einen Hass gegen die Vernunft vor und war ihnen gut dafür: so verrieth sich doch wenigstens noch das böse intellectuelle Gewissen!" (*FW* 2) Though Nietzsche would disagree with these pious people's religious views, he praises the apparent hatred for reason he identifies in them. This quotation demonstrates that Nietzsche was at times prepared to put aside, or at least soften, his hatred for Christianity and its adherents. Furthermore, this instance represents an exception to Nietzsche's pro-

¹⁰⁵ For a detailed analysis of the idea of progress in Enlightenment thought from Europe and North America, see Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress, With a New Introduction by the Author* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 179-296.

Enlightenment stance in the context of his disapproval of Christianity. Here he is neither pro-Enlightenment nor pro-Christianity. He instead uses this excerpt as an opportunity to attack both phenomena at once, emphasising the often ambivalent nature of Nietzsche's attitude towards the intellectual influence of the Enlightenment.

In the above example from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* Nietzsche's focus shifts from the Enlightenment and its representatives to one of the Enlightenment's most important intellectual tools: reason. This shift is significant because it once again demonstrates that Nietzsche was prepared to engage seriously with the Enlightenment and its legacy rather than, as is sometimes alleged, descending into irrationality when faced with the challenge of (re)evaluating his predecessors' ideas. This engagement is underpinned by Nietzsche's own intellectual method: whether arguing against for or against the Enlightenment, he uses the tool of reason in order to expand on his thoughts via the pinprick jab of the aphorism. He has no choice but to employ the rational Enlightenment method in his writings, which limits the extent to which we can denote Nietzsche an unbridled irrationalist in the first place; even an appeal to unreason and irrationality would have to come via reasoned argument. More importantly it underscores the fact that Nietzsche was just as interested in the theoretical elements of the Enlightenment as he was in the individuals that for him embody the Enlightenment. Nietzsche's engagement with reason, which is perhaps the most significant remainder of the Enlightenment, is both extensive and sustained throughout his works. As such, it warrants an investigation of its own.

2.3 Wrestling with Reason

As explored in Chapter One, reason represents one of the central tenets of enlightenment and the Enlightenment. The ability to think rationally and without fear of repercussion is the key tool that leads to individual and societal enlightenment in key Enlightenment texts. We may thus assume that an individual's attitude towards reason would reflect their views on the Enlightenment. In Nietzsche's case this assumption would suggest that his views on reason would be as changeable as his views on the Enlightenment, and individuals such as Rousseau and Voltaire. Yet, his comments on the phenomenon of reason paint a different picture. Nietzsche's engagement with reason is the source of some of his most explicitly negative comments towards the central principle of the Enlightenment. In this respect, Nietzsche starts to resemble something more of the irrationalist that Lukács and Habermas describe. However, as hinted at above and as will be discussed in greater detail below, Nietzsche does not simply reject reason or enlightenment. Instead, we will see that Nietzsche's views instead form a paradoxical position that both rejects and embraces enlightenment as he has inherited it. He ultimately welcomes the paradoxes of enlightenment, borrowing from the strengths of the Enlightenment and adapting enlightenment where he sees fit. This analysis will return to Nietzsche's adaptation of enlightenment later in this chapter.

The preface to *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I* provides an early indication that Nietzsche is sceptical towards, or even dismissive of, reason. When addressing criticisms of him and his previous works at the start of the text, Nietzsche subtly links reason and self-deception:

Gesetzt aber, dies Alles wäre wahr und mit gutem Grunde mir vorgerückt, was wisst i h r davon, was k ö n n t e t ihr davon wissen, wie viel List der Selbst-Erhaltung, wie viel Vernunft und höhere Obhut in solchem Selbst-Betrüge enthalten ist — und wie viel Falschheit mir noch n o t h t h u t , damit ich mir immer wieder den Luxus m e i n e r Wahrhaftigkeit gestatten darf?... (*MAMI* 'Vorrede' 1).

Though this comment does not address the concept of reason directly, Nietzsche here suggests that reason is a fundamental component of self-deception. Additionally, he implies that the truth is not necessarily the most important factor in such debates. These two ideas are significant because Nietzsche thus suggests that shared, rational knowledge is subordinate to the individual's irrational perception of a situation; the latter interpretation is supported by Nietzsche's claim that admitting this supposed truth would cause him pain. Even though reason may produce a shared truth, Nietzsche considers this truth to be painful and less valuable. This critique of reason contradicts the Enlightenment's general commitment to rational enquiry and the use of reason to "discern" the truth, as Ronald S. Love writes.¹⁰⁶ In light of this observation, Nietzsche appears to deliberately depart from the Enlightenment's commitment to the rational development of shared knowledge.

He pursues this line of thought later in the text. When discussing the development of modern music Nietzsche emphasises what he considers to be the distorting effect of reason:

[...] weil wir viel besser eingeübt sind, auf die V e r n u n f t i n i h m [dem Lärm] hinzuhorchen, als unsere Vorfahren. Thatsächlich sind nun alle unsere Sinne eben dadurch, dass sie sogleich nach der Vernunft, also nach dem „es bedeutet“ und nicht mehr nach dem „es ist“ fragen, etwas abgestumpft worden (*MAMI* 217).

¹⁰⁶ Ronald S. Love, *The Enlightenment* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), p. 43.

This quotation raises the issue of distortion in two ways. Firstly, Nietzsche suggests that the use of reason has weakened the senses, which he depicts as the opposite to reason. Creating this tension between reason and the senses highlights the fact that, in Nietzsche's view, reason is not a natural tool. It is instead an artificial phenomenon that is alien to human nature, which distorts what Nietzsche considers to be the natural way of the human thought. Secondly Nietzsche states that reason distorts the individual's interpretation of music on a more theoretical level. He writes that reason causes humans to interpret the meaning behind specific phenomena, rather than focusing on the objective characteristics of the phenomenon at hand. Nietzsche disapproves of this tendency because he believes that this method leads to over-interpretation, rather than a description of the object in question. For Nietzsche, then, rational investigation can lead humans away from truth, rather than helping them to uncover it and move towards the rational state of enlightenment his Enlightenment predecessors imagined.

As well as indicating that Nietzsche does not consider reason to be a natural tool, his description of the opposition between reason and the senses in the above example suggests that reason alters the senses. Nietzsche here does not state that reason negates the senses entirely, but instead that it weakens them. A decade later, in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, Nietzsche develops this argument further. In this text he dedicates a section of the text, too short to be named a chapter but too long to be considered a mere side note, to the question of reason in philosophy. Of the six miniatures found in this section, the second one contains his most telling comment on the relationship between reason and the senses, with Nietzsche now arguing that reason falsifies the findings of the senses: "Die „Vernunft“ ist die Ursache, dass wir das Zeugniß der Sinne fälschen. Sofern die Sinne das Werden, das Vergehn [sic], den Wechsel zeigen, lügen sie nicht..." (GD, 'Vernunft',

2). Once more, Nietzsche presents the senses as the source of unalterable, objective truth, and thus as the true source of enlightenment. Reason, on the other hand, functions as the antithesis to this truth, and by extension as the opposite to enlightenment, suggesting that Nietzsche wishes to redefine enlightenment by dissociating it from reason. We will return to this significant observation later in this chapter.

The image of reason as the source of illusion extends into Nietzsche's writings on Christianity, and it also emerges in later texts such as *Der Antichrist*. In section ten, for instance, Nietzsche states that reason can create false understandings of the world: "Die Vernunft, das Recht der Vernunft reicht nicht so weit... Man hatte aus der Realität eine „Scheinbarkeit“ gemacht; man hatte die erlogene Welt, die des Seienden, zur Realität gemacht..." (AC 10) The first clause of this quotation does not dismiss reason entirely; Nietzsche merely writes that reason's influence is not as effective or widespread as many believe. However, the rest of the excerpt represents an attempt to deny the efficacy of reason as a means of understanding existence. Nietzsche suggests that reason produces a false alternative reality which does not afford the individual access to objective truth, and it is not a means of better understanding the world. Furthermore, this attack on reason is one of Nietzsche's most explicit as the adjective 'erlogen' implies that the advocates of reason and rational thought have deliberately misled their readers and calls into question the intellectual integrity of its proponents. Rather than representing a means of intellectual, social and political emancipation as it did for key Enlightenmenters, Nietzsche conceives of reason as a tool that hinders the individual in making sense of their existence.

In the above example from *Der Antichrist*, Nietzsche does not dismiss reason entirely. Instead, he highlights what he views as its limits. We can thus infer that Nietzsche, despite his scepticism towards reason, nonetheless conceives of it as a

necessary part of the individual's intellectual composition. This suspicion is supported by the antithetical image of reason that emerges from Nietzsche's writings. This paradoxical model denotes reason and non-reason as opposite forces that operate in constant conflict with one another.¹⁰⁷ Nietzsche underscores the necessity of this duality in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I*, a text which once again proves crucial in highlighting Nietzsche's thought on enlightenment. He writes that even the most rational individuals occasionally require non-reason: "Auch der vernünftigste Mensch bedarf von Zeit zu Zeit wieder der Natur, das heisst seiner unlogischen Grundstellung zu allen Dingen." (*MAM I* 31) Nietzsche here equates non-reason with nature. This description implies that reason is an artificial intellectual tool which must be acquired, rather than occurring naturally in human being. As reason was one of the Enlightenment's central components, the above quotation also suggests that, in Nietzsche's view, the Enlightenment sought to exert a moderating influence on non-rational human behaviour. As well as stating that reason and non-reason must paradoxically work with one another, Nietzsche thus creates an image of the Enlightenment as a movement that sought to temper the extremes of human behaviour.

Nietzsche takes this argument a step further later in the same text. In addition to arguing that reason and non-reason must complement one another, he states that the two phenomena have no other option but to do so. We encounter this argument in section 450,

¹⁰⁷ Dialectical thought, as represented by Adorno, also pits opposites against each other. However, Nietzsche's thought on enlightenment is not dialectical because it seeks to balance reason and non-reason, rather than moving beyond them via a dialectical synthesis that arrives at a new conclusion. Other elements of Nietzsche's thought, though, have been read as dialectical. For one recent analysis that identifies parallels between Nietzsche's views of Modernity and those of the Young Hegelian, see José Crisóstomo de Souza, 'Dialectics and Drama: Nietzsche as a Young Hegelian and *Maître à Penser*', *The European Legacy*, 28(1) (2023), 1-24.

where Nietzsche expands on what he views as the reasonable nature of Otto von Bismarck's (1815-1898) political manoeuvring:

Wenn zum Beispiel Bismarck die constitutionelle Form als einen Compromiss zwischen Regierung und Volk bezeichnet, so redet er gemäss einem Princip, welches seine Vernunft in der Geschichte hat (ebendaher freilich auch den Beisatz von Unvernunft, ohne den nichts Menschliches existiren kann). (*MAM I* 450)

It should first be noted that this quotation represents a rare example of Nietzsche praising political life. Nietzsche's usual focus is culture, yet here he shows a readiness to consider the political developments of his lifetime, at least in passing. More poignantly, the latter half of this quotation reinforces his view that non-reason cannot be avoided. Its effects may be offset by rational thought, but non-reason is depicted to be just as necessary as reason. This appraisal suggests that Nietzsche displays an acute awareness of what he views as reason's limits. Reason may be an extremely useful intellectual tool at times, however it cannot be relied upon to answer every question or to solve every problem, he implies. Instead, non-reason plays a not unimportant role in Nietzsche's understanding of the human condition. By stating that nothing human can exist without non-reason, he underscores his belief in the importance of irrationality alongside rationality. In other words, he believes that irrationality is as much a part of the human being as rationality is. This promotion of non-reason contradicts the Enlightenment appeal to reason, indicating that Nietzsche wishes to modify the definition of enlightenment that he has inherited.

Nietzsche clearly considers that reason and non-reason act in paradoxical, productive opposition to each another. However, the precise details of how this model works remain unclear in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I*. For instance, the reader may ask whether reason and non-reason operate simultaneously to one another or whether one temporarily takes the upper hand before the other then takes effect. Though *Menschliches*,

Allzumenschliches I (1878) provides no clear answers to these questions, some of Nietzsche's writings of the 1880s do. In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, for instance, he approaches this issue through the example of two fictional orators. Here, one of the orators is only able to realise the full rational potential of their subject matter by handing themselves over to passion, a non-rationalised phenomenon: "Von diesen beiden Reden erreicht der eine die ganze Vernunft seiner Sache nur dann, wenn er sich der Leidenschaft überlässt: erst diese pumpt genug Blut und Hitze in's Gehirn, um seine hohe Geistigkeit zur Offenbarung zu zwingen." (FW 96) This description, which promotes passion's productive ability, implies that reason and non-reason do not operate simultaneously. Instead the orator must first employ reason and then allow non-reason to complete their speech.¹⁰⁸ This description shows that Nietzsche's antithetical model treats reason and non-reason as separate steps in the same process. Reason regulates non-reason, and vice-versa; the two forces do not operate in simultaneous conflict.

This antithetical approach to reason and non-reason calls into question Nietzsche's understanding of truth and knowledge. Commentators on Nietzsche's so-called middle period,¹⁰⁹ which has been conceived of as running from the publication of *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches I* in 1878 to the first four books of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882), have drawn attention to a short phase in this period in which Nietzsche seems to favour a positivistic outlook.¹¹⁰ Without wishing to enter into discussion of the periodisation of Nietzsche's works, it is true that he makes numerous

¹⁰⁸ Nietzsche uses the noun 'Sache' (thing, affair), rather than 'Rede' ('speech') in this passage. However, given that orators are used as an example in this example, we can interpret 'Sache' as referring to a speech.

¹⁰⁹ For a detailed study of the so-called middle period, see Ruth Abbey, *Nietzsche's Middle Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁰ Sebastian Gardner has recently echoed this viewpoint. See Sebastian Gardner, 'Nietzsche on the Arts and Sciences', in *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Tom Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 302-26 (p. 303).

favourable comments the natural sciences and their empirical method in the late 1870s. Indeed, section three of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I* exemplifies this approach by promoting the natural sciences for their rigour, in contrast to what he portrays as the misleading ways of metaphysics and art: “Es ist das Merkmal einer höhern Cultur, die kleinen unscheinbaren Wahrheiten, welche mit strenger Methode gefunden wurden, höher zu schätzen, als die beglückenden und blendenden Irrthümer, welche metaphysischen und künstlerischen Zeitaltern und Menschen entstammen.” (*MAM I 3*) Though caution is required when assigning Nietzsche to any philosophical camp – his works firmly resist categorisation – this brief “fling” with positivism,¹¹¹ as Jonathan Cohen describes it, did involve a promotion of the scientific method and of the natural sciences’ ability to produce enlightened empirical truths.

However, Nietzsche’s paradoxical, antithetical conception of reason and non-reason soon represents a departure from his fleeting trust in empirical knowledge. This claim is supported in two ways. Firstly, empiricism and the natural sciences are mentioned less frequently over the course of the 1880s. They are simply no longer the pressing issues that they were for Nietzsche in the late 1870s and early 1880s, and his focus shifts progressively towards morality and religion. Secondly, Nietzsche’s comments on the generation of knowledge account increasingly for what he believes to be the necessity of non-reason. For instance, in book five of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886) Nietzsche highlights the harmony he thinks can be found between reason and instinct (non-reason): “Man muss [...] auch der Vernunft zum Recht verhelfen [...] man muss den Instinkten folgen, aber die Vernunft überreden, ihnen dabei mit guten Gründen nachzuhelfen.” (*JGB*

¹¹¹ Jonathan Cohen, ‘Nietzsche’s Fling with Positivism’, in *Nietzsche, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Science II*, ed. by Babette Babich and Robert S. Cohen (Dordrecht: Springer, 1999), pp. 101-07

191) Here Nietzsche promotes the unity of reason and non-reason by suggesting that reason can supplement, and support, non-rational instinctual needs. This description means that, for Nietzsche, knowledge is generated by non-rational means and then furthered by rational thought. Rather than operating in tension with one another, Nietzsche presents reason and non-reason as a paradoxically productive harmony. This antithetical conception is a long way from the positivistic model that he promotes in the late 1870s and early 1880s.

In the latter half of the decade Nietzsche becomes increasingly sceptical towards rationality in human behaviour. Though he does not abandon fully his paradoxical conception of reason and non-reason, he focuses more intensely on the irrational side of human behaviour towards the end of the 1880s. Through this change in focus, Nietzsche contends that human behaviour is determined to a large extent by natural, unavoidable internal drives.¹¹² This stance suggests that human behaviour cannot be determined by reason alone, which limits the extent to which humans can be considered rational beings. Nietzsche establishes this stance in detail in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. He does so in the text's second treatise, using punishment as a conduit through which to carry out this investigation. For instance, in the sixth section of the treatise, Nietzsche writes that seeing, and making, others suffer provides the individual with pleasure: "Leiden-sehn thut wohl, Leiden-machen noch wohler — das ist ein harter Satz, aber ein alter mächtiger menschlich-allzumenschlicher Hauptsatz, den übrigens vielleicht auch schon die Affen unterschreiben würden" (*GM* II 6). From this quotation it becomes clear that Nietzsche considers humans to be driven by their feelings and subconscious desires, which often

¹¹² This claim is not to say that Nietzsche's focus on internal drives is exclusive to the latter half of the 1880s. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, humans' inner drives play a central role in the conception of art that Nietzsche develops over the course of the 1870s and the early 1880s.

contradict what is acceptable in civil society.¹¹³ Nietzsche thus emphasises what he views as an uncomfortable yet necessary truth: humans are driven by irrational desires that can override reason.

This quotation is one of several from this section of *Zur Genealogie der Moral* that seek to show that humans are subject to inescapable inner drives.¹¹⁴ However, the quotation discussed above is the most significant. By emphasising the role of non-rational inner drives in human behaviour, Nietzsche states that humans are, despite the civilisation process, animals.¹¹⁵ By drawing a parallel between humans and monkeys Nietzsche implies that the Enlightenment has failed in its attempt to promote progress in humanity. Moreover, he suggests that the Enlightenment could simply never have succeeded as humans are ultimately no different to primates by nature. Here Nietzsche does not reject the Enlightenment – after all, he admires the intellectual bravery of several of its representatives – but he does implicitly doubt whether its agenda of rationality can ever be realised, referencing humans’ supposedly animalistic nature as evidence. It would be a step too far to consider Nietzsche the arch-irrationalist that Lukács considers him to be, especially as Nietzsche neither attacks nor rejects the Enlightenment here, but this passage nonetheless represents one of Nietzsche’s clearest departures from the Enlightenment’s spirit of rationality. Instead of promoting rational investigation, he here implies that human society can be no different from life in the animal kingdom. For Nietzsche, irrationality is a fundamental part of human existence.

¹¹³ Nietzsche was not a psychoanalyst, but critics have long identified parallels between his thought and psychoanalysis. For one early example, originally published in 1924, see Charles Baudouin, *Contemporary Studies*, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul (London/New York: Routledge, 2015), especially pp. 40-44.

¹¹⁴ Others include: *GM* II 7; 11; 12; 15; 16; 17; 18; 22; and 24.

¹¹⁵ Nietzsche’s comments on humans, monkeys, and evolution have Darwinian undertones. For a study of Nietzsche and Darwinism, see John Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Nietzsche's comparison between humans and monkeys is one of numerous references to animals in his works. The most obvious example of such a reference comes in the form of Zarathustra's speech 'Von den drei Verwandlungen' from the first book of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, in which he describes how the human soul becomes a camel, then a lion, and finally a human baby. This description draws parallels with theories of natural evolution by underscoring humanity's links to its animal ancestors. Nietzsche's use of animals in his writing intensifies towards the end of his writing career, though, with *Zur Genealogie der Moral* containing some of his most explicit references towards the animal kingdom.¹¹⁶ For instance, in section thirteen of the text's first treatise Nietzsche uses the example of birds of prey and lambs in an attempt to seemingly render natural selection palatable for human society:

Dass die Lämmer den grossen Raubvögeln gram sind, das befremdet nicht: nur liegt darin kein Grund, es den grossen Raubvögeln zu verargen, dass sie sich kleine Lämmer holen. Und wenn die Lämmer unter sich sagen „diese Raubvögel sind böse; und wer so wenig als möglich ein Raubvogel ist, vielmehr deren Gegenstück, ein Lamm, — sollte der nicht gut sein?“ so ist an dieser Aufrichtung eines Ideals Nichts auszusetzen, sei es auch, dass die Raubvögel dazu ein wenig spöttisch blicken werden und vielleicht sich sagen: „w i r sind ihnen gar nicht gram, diesen guten Lämmern, wir lieben sie sogar: nichts ist schmackhafter als ein zartes Lamm.“ (*GM I 13*)

This passage is located amongst a wider examination of the origins of the terms 'good' and 'evil'. Nietzsche defends the birds' instinct to eat the lambs by stating that doing so is a natural desire. Rather than simply terrifying the lambs, they do so in order to survive, but the lambs perceive this action as evil because it represents a threat to their lives. As is often the case in Nietzsche's works, it is not possible to know whether his words are serious, and therefore whether he is genuinely promoting this model as one that is suitable

¹¹⁶ See T.J. Reed, 'Nietzsche's Animals: Idea, Image, and Influence', in *Nietzsche. Imagery and Thought: A Collection of Essays*, ed. by Malcolm Pasley (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 159-219.

for human society. On balance, the latter seems more likely. He wishes humans to recognise the reality of their irrational selves rather than dressing their animalistic nature in a cloak of rationality. With this and the preceding example from *Zur Genealogie der Moral* in mind, we note that the later Nietzsche increasingly moves away from the Enlightenment's promotion of reason, and towards an impulse-based culture that privileges the biological needs of the individual.

Nietzsche's shift towards prioritising the needs of the individual is reflected in his attitude towards enlightenment more broadly, as evidenced in his published works and unpublished fragments. References to enlightenment are found as early as 1869, but Nietzsche's comments on enlightenment from the 1880s move towards an individualistic model of enlightenment. One telling instance is from 1884, where Nietzsche drafts what appears to be a structure for a future text on eternal recurrence. Here he refers to a 'new' enlightenment, which he juxtaposes against the 'old' Enlightenment: "Die neue Aufklärung — die alte war im Sinne der demokratischen Heerde. Gleichmachung Aller. Die neue will den herrschenden Naturen den Weg zeigen" (*NF*, 1884, 27[80]). In Nietzsche's view, the 'old' Enlightenment (i.e. the Age of Enlightenment) limits the individual by turning society into a 'herd', leading to equality between all people. In other words, Nietzsche believes that the Age of Enlightenment focused too heavily on society's collective needs, thus downplaying those of the individual. Conversely, his 'new' enlightenment provides room for individuals to pursue their own desires, irrespective of the consequences for wider society. Nietzsche's new enlightenment thus prioritises individuals over groups. He encourages individuals to behave and live as they please, and consequently privileges the role of the individual genius in cultural and intellectual change. One such genius, namely Zarathustra, will be examined below.

Reading the unpublished note above alongside Nietzsche's published works demonstrates that Nietzsche not only emphasises the importance of the individual's needs over those of the collective, but he also believes that individuals must take responsibility for their own enlightenment, mirroring the social model of enlightenment Kant developed in *Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784) almost a century prior to the publication of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*. This shift in responsibility towards the individual is exemplified in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches II*, where Nietzsche implies that individuals have the agency to choose whether to become enlightened: "Unsere Aufgabe ist es nicht mehr, solche Menschen zu lehren, was ein Scirroco-Wind ist; sie haben Mosen und die Propheten des Wetters und die Aufklärung: wollen sie diese nicht hören, so-" (*MAM II* 182). By leaving this sentence incomplete, a pervasive stylistic feature of his later writings, Nietzsche implies that those who do not wish to listen to the ways of enlightenment should be ignored. In his view the enlightened should not waste their words on those unwilling to follow in the footsteps of enlightenment. The enlightened, forming a group of autonomous, free-thinking individuals, should instead expend their energy furthering their own enlightenment. This description demonstrates that, for Nietzsche, enlightenment is an active choice rather than a historical inevitability. People must therefore actively work towards enlightenment and not wait for it to come around.

Near the end of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I* Nietzsche illustrates this concept of a new, participatory enlightenment via the image of a wanderer. In section 638, entitled 'Der Wanderer', he writes that those who use reason freely can identify only with the wanderer who has no destination in sight or in mind:

Wer nur einigermaassen zur Freiheit der Vernunft gekommen ist, kann sich auf Erden nicht anders fühlen, denn als Wanderer, — wenn auch nicht als Reisender n a c h einem letzten Ziele: denn dieses giebt es nicht. Wohl aber will er zusehen und die Augen dafür offen haben, was Alles in der Welt eigentlich vorgeht; desshalb darf er sein Herz nicht allzufest an alles Einzelne anhängen; es muss in ihm selber etwas Wanderndes sein, das seine Freude an dem Wechsel und der Vergänglichkeit habe. (MAM I 638)

The image of the wanderer likens enlightenment to a journey without an end. The individual must, once again paradoxically, continually search for enlightenment in the knowledge that a final state of enlightenment cannot be found. Meaning and contentment are instead to be discovered on this continuous search, and the individual assumes a position of instability and incessant change. Nietzsche, however, encourages this way of being. The description above emboldens people to enjoy the “endless flux of things”,¹¹⁷ as Andrew Cusack writes, that is caused by this constant search for meaning. As a result, Nietzsche’s enlightenment can be understood as a continuous, ever-evolving process. Just as the wanderer walks from place to place, the definition of Nietzsche’s enlightenment changes based on the circumstances of the unique individual at hand. This lack of a precise definition is the hallmark of Nietzsche’s new enlightenment: rather than prescribing ways to live and think, Nietzsche seeks to liberate the individual from received wisdom, and to encourage them to live and think freely. This attitude is best summarised by Nietzsche’s promotion of the independent philosopher in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*:

¹¹⁷ Andrew Cusack, *The Wanderer in Nineteenth-Century German Literature: Intellectual History and Cultural Criticism* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), p. 51.

Unsre Aufgabe ist und bleibt zuerst, uns nicht selber zu verwechseln. Wir [Philosophen] sind etwas Anderes als Gelehrte [...]. Wir haben andre Bedürfnisse, ein andres Wachsthum, eine andre Verdauung: wir brauchen mehr, wir brauchen auch weniger. Wie viel ein Geist zu seiner Ernährung nöthig hat, dafür giebt es keine Formel; ist aber sein Geschmack auf Unabhängigkeit gerichtet, auf schnelles Kommen und Gehn, auf Wanderung, auf Abenteuer vielleicht, denen nur die Geschwindesten gewachsen sind, so lebt er lieber frei mit schmäler Kost, als unfrei und gestopft. (FW 381)

Nietzsche here urges the independent critic, whom he views as a spearhead for cultural change,¹¹⁸ to remain true to themselves and not to confuse themselves with any other type of person. This call to authenticity to one's unique self represents Nietzsche's view that philosophers, and by extension individuals more broadly, should trust themselves and their thoughts, and that they should not be unduly swayed by others. He promotes this independent way of life even if it means that the philosopher must live humbly and simply. In Nietzsche's view the agency of the individual is worth the effort required to obtain and maintain it, and he writes that the philosopher must not be tempted to sacrifice their independence for a more comfortable, yet less free, lifestyle. Individual sovereignty is key for Nietzsche.

In the monograph cited above, Andrew Cusack describes Nietzsche's wandering individual alongside the figure of the wanderer as the subject of education in nineteenth-century literary fiction.¹¹⁹ Nineteenth-century works including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749-1832) *Wilhelm Meister* novels (1795, and 1821/1829 respectively); Gottfried Keller's (1819-1890) *Der grüne Heinrich* (1855 and 1879); and works of children's literature like Johanna Spyri's (1827-1901) two *Heidi* texts (1881) featured wandering protagonists whose journeys aimed to provide them with a wide-ranging social

¹¹⁸ R. Kevin Hill, *Nietzsche: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London; New York: Continuum, 2007), p. 30

¹¹⁹ See Andrew Cusack, *The Wanderer in Nineteenth-Century German Literature*, pp. 13-59.

and moral education. These protagonists sought to learn about the world through first-hand experience. It is thus no coincidence that Nietzsche uses the image of the wanderer to describe his new enlightenment. Echoing this trend, he aligns himself with a common nineteenth-century literary trope, which he however seeks to radicalise as part of his enlightenment mission. Furthermore, this link is significant because many of Nietzsche's works are highly literary.¹²⁰ *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, for instance, closes with a collection of poetry entitled 'Lieder des Prinzen Vogelfrei'; and his Dionysos-Dithyramben of 1888 contains nine stand-alone poems. His writing also contains copious imagery, with the title of *Morgenröthe* exemplifying Nietzsche's keen eye for images and metaphorical meanings by hinting that the work is the dawn of a new cultural and intellectual era. Finally, Nietzsche's constant use of aphorisms demonstrates an awareness for how the form of a work can affect the way it is read.¹²¹

Perhaps Nietzsche's most literary work, though, is *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Though the text cannot be considered a philosophical novel, it does employ novelistic techniques to convey a philosophical message. This reading follows Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins' observation that *Also sprach Zarathustra* employs "literary tropes and genres to philosophical effect."¹²² These tropes include the text's plot and its numerous fictional, though two-dimensional, characters. Additionally, the work is narrated from several narrative perspectives and through numerous narrative voices

¹²⁰ For a discussion of Nietzsche's relationship with the term 'literature', see Peter R. Sedgwick, 'Nietzsche as Literature/Nietzsche as 'German' Literature', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 13 (Spring 1997), 53-71.

¹²¹ Nietzsche's style has been subject to critical investigation. For example, Babette E. Babich's analysis focuses on the relationship between text and reader. See Babette E. Babich, 'On Nietzsche's Concinnity: An Analysis of Style', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 19 (1990), 59-80; Joel Westerdale's monograph, however, investigates Nietzsche's use of aphorisms. See Joel Westerdale, *Nietzsche's Aphoristic Challenge* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013).

¹²² Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins, 'Nietzsche's Works and their Themes' in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 21-68 (p. 39).

which, as Paul S. Loeb has noted, are separate from Nietzsche's voice.¹²³ Furthermore, the text employs language in a creative, ambiguous way. The references to Zarathustra's "Untergang" found in the text, for example, could either refer to his downfall or to his descent from the mountains.¹²⁴ Finally, *Also sprach Zarathustra* ascribes symbolic meanings onto objects, spaces, and places, such as Zarathustra's cave, bodies of water, and light and darkness. However, above all, Zarathustra is a wanderer who embarks on a search for meaning identical to the one outlined above in the quotation from *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I* 638. As Zarathustra is idolised by the text's omniscient narrator at many points, the reader can infer that his way of life, or at least his search for meaning, should be viewed as an example to be emulated. We will therefore now turn to Zarathustra and consider his key role in representing Nietzsche's new enlightenment.

2.4 Zarathustra as Nietzsche's Model 'Aufklärer'

Before examining Zarathustra more closely, it should first be acknowledged that this investigation is not the first to identify a connection between *Also sprach Zarathustra* and Nietzsche's new enlightenment. For instance, Stanley Rosen's 1995 study offers a detailed reading of each of the text's four parts. Rosen also discusses its genesis, its place in Nietzsche's wider works, and its links to the intellectual history of Enlightenment. In the introduction to his commentary Rosen crucially observes that Nietzsche does not seek to provide the reader with "a philosophical system as an alternative to the traditional

¹²³ See Paul S. Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 207.

¹²⁴ The opening section of *Also sprach Zarathustra* closes with the phrase "Also begann Zarathustra's Untergang", marking Zarathustra's descent from his mountain cave to those who live below him. See *ASZ I* 'Vorrede' 1.

systems of the great Western philosophers” in *Also sprach Zarathustra*.¹²⁵ Instead, Rosen argues, Nietzsche “offers us an alternative to philosophy”.¹²⁶ This interpretation highlights how Nietzsche, though not seeking to overthrow all previous forms of thought, uses *Also sprach Zarathustra* to promote new ways of thinking and living. Our reading of the text below will contribute a new understanding of the work, its role in Nietzsche’s understanding of enlightenment, and his approach to enlightenment more broadly. We will show how Nietzsche uses the text to develop a new model of enlightenment that builds upon the paradoxical model of reason and non-reason that Nietzsche develops elsewhere, as analysed above. The model Nietzsche promotes in *Also sprach Zarathustra* is based primarily on acting and experiencing rather than developing universal theoretical systems.

Returning to *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the question arises of why we should consider a work with a small audience in Nietzsche’s lifetime,¹²⁷ that he wrote in the middle of his career, to best represent his new enlightenment. There are two answers to this question. Firstly, as elucidated above, *Also sprach Zarathustra* is a unique work in Nietzsche’s corpus of writings. Though many of his works are literary, only this one can be read as a wholly fictional text. Its significant divergence from Nietzsche’s typical mode of writing warrants a detailed discussion. Secondly, as Michael Tanner notes, Nietzsche “insisted that everything he wrote after TSZ [Thus Spake Zarathustra] was a commentary on it.”¹²⁸ Though Tanner moderates this point by writing that Nietzsche likely held this

¹²⁵ Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche’s Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 8.

¹²⁶ Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment*, p. 8.

¹²⁷ Nietzsche was reluctant to publish the fourth book of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Eventually only forty-five copies were printed and distributed to a close circle of Nietzsche’s associates, as Julian Young documents. See Julian Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 383.

¹²⁸ Michael Tanner, *Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 59. Quoted in Paul S. Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra* (2010), p. 208.

view as a form of “self-assurance”,¹²⁹ Nietzsche clearly favoured this work over others. Moreover, he believed that it was a text of unsurpassed greatness. In the foreword to *Ecce Homo* he describes it as the greatest gift to humanity that has hitherto been made: “Ich habe mit ihm [*Also sprach Zarathustra*] der Menschheit das grösste Geschenk gemacht, das ihr bisher gemacht worden ist. Dies Buch, mit einer Stimme über Jahrtausende hinweg, ist nicht nur das höchste Buch, das es giebt [...], es ist auch das tiefste, [...] ein unerschöpflicher Brunnen” (*EH* ‘Vorwort’ 4). Nietzsche’s admiration for his own text encourages us to probe its significance further.

This significance is not to be downplayed as Nietzsche ultimately presents Zarathustra as the hero of his new enlightenment. It is worth noting, though, that the word ‘Aufklärung’ is not used in the text at all. However, the exclusion of this term may be a deliberate choice. Nietzsche uses the term ‘Aufklärung’ with relative frequency in his works of the early 1880s; it appears fourteen times in the first book of *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches*; seven times apiece in *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches II* and *Morgenröthe*; and six times in his unpublished notes from 1884 alone.¹³⁰ Redefining enlightenment, to be achieved by sketching his own alternative model, was therefore a central priority for Nietzsche at this stage in his career. Though he does not use the term ‘Aufklärung’ in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, we can still view this work as the template for Nietzsche’s new enlightenment as this enlightenment first and foremost departs from the language and basic conceptions of enlightenment that he inherited from the Age of Enlightenment’s canon. The enlightenment that Zarathustra comes to represent is instead based upon three basic principles: independence; a promotion of the body and of

¹²⁹ Michael Tanner, *Nietzsche*, p. 59. Quoted in Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*, p. 208.

¹³⁰ See *NF* 1884, 25[296]; 26[293]; 26[298]; 27[79]; 27[80]; 29[40].

unmediated, instinctual behaviour; and education via experience, rather than through the traditional educational institution. Each of these principles will be examined in turn below.

It is made clear at the beginning of the text that Zarathustra is a solitary figure. In the opening paragraph the reader learns that Zarathustra, having left his homeland aged thirty, has spent the past ten years living alone in the mountains. Zarathustra's solitary, independent lifestyle is presented as a positive example to be followed as the narrator states that Zarathustra was extremely content living this way: "Hier genoss er [Zarathustra] seines Geistes und seiner Einsamkeit und wurde dessen zehn Jahre nicht müde." (ASZ I 'Zarathustra's Vorrede' 1) Two aspects of this description stand out as particularly significant. Firstly, in writing that Zarathustra enjoyed his own spirit the narrator implies that Zarathustra lives an introspective life. He is implicitly aware of, and closely in touch with, his own emotional and intellectual state. The inner welfare of the human being is therefore presented as the individual's primary concern, rather than the concerns of a wider collective. Secondly, this description of Zarathustra's life favours solitude, which is here presented in a positive light. Zarathustra's solitary lifestyle allows him to learn to trust and enjoy his own thoughts without being swayed by a larger group of people. Conversely, loneliness enables Zarathustra to think, behave and live independently, thus creating the conditions necessary for his individual intellectual liberation.

The empowerment of the individual is emphasised over the course of the text and the image of the wanderer is used repeatedly to depict this process. For example, in the fourth book of *Also sprach Zarathustra* Zarathustra implores individuals to take responsibility for their own enlightenment by encouraging them to walk on their own and

to avoid being carried forward in this process by others: “Wollt ihr hoch hinaus, so braucht die eignen Beine! Lasst euch nicht empor t r a g e n , setzt euch nicht auf fremde Rücken und Köpfe!” (ASZ IV ‘Vom höheren Menschen’ 10) By using the image of the wanderer Zarathustra implies that the process of enlightenment is a journey. Though he does not specify where this journey starts or ends, he implies that the process of enlightenment requires fundamental changes to the individual’s (intellectual) surroundings, which the individual alone must initiate. This point is reinforced by Zarathustra’s maxim that individuals should not rely on the thoughts or deeds of others (“[...] setzt euch nicht auf fremde Rücken und Köpfe!”). Zarathustra’s insistence on independence puts the individual at risk of getting lost on their journey towards enlightenment, as well as increasing the likelihood that they will make mistakes along the way. However, the individual must be bold enough to take this step. The risk is high,¹³¹ but the reward of enlightenment is even higher.

Not only does Zarathustra encourage this kind of enlightenment but he also seeks his own enlightenment in the same way. Zarathustra leaves, and returns to, his mountain cave several times over the course of the text. He descends from his cave to seek out contact with others yet he retreats to the isolation of the mountains after having spent time amongst other people. In the second book the narrator describes how retreating to his cave for several years was extremely beneficial for Zarathustra:

¹³¹ Keith Ansell-Pearson and Rebecca Bamford have correctly noted that, in Nietzsche’s view, “the search for new knowledge in his new enlightenment must have its hazards and dangers”. Ansell-Pearson and Bamford here refer to an unpublished note from 1880, which highlights how the relationship between enlightenment and risk in Nietzsche’s thought was established several years before the publication of any part of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. See Keith Ansell-Pearson and Rebecca Bamford, *Nietzsche’s ‘Dawn’: Philosophy, Ethics, and the Passion of Knowledge* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021), p. 136.

Hierauf gieng Zarathustra wieder zurück in das Gebirge und in die Einsamkeit seiner Höhle und entzog sich den Menschen: wartend gleich einem Säemann, der seinen Samen ausgeworfen hat. [...] Also vergiengen dem Einsamen Monde und Jahre; seine Weisheit aber wuchs und machte ihm Schmerzen durch ihre Fülle. (*ASZ I* 'Das Kind mit dem Spiegel')

Isolation helps Zarathustra's wisdom to grow, the narrator explains. Neither the narrator nor Zarathustra expands upon this process of isolation in any great depth, however the reader can infer that these conditions free Zarathustra from the opinions of the majority that he encounters when he descends from the mountains. Consequently, introspection and self-reflection become necessary components of Zarathustra's model of enlightenment. The individual must retreat from society in order to think and act on their own, and Zarathustra is thus characterised as a sage who is not afraid to live an independent life. A healthy critical, and literal, distance from others is therefore a critical component of his, and by extension Nietzsche's, new enlightenment.

Furthermore, the quotation above places emphasis on the value of patience in seeking enlightenment. By likening Zarathustra to the sower of seeds the narrator presents the enlightenment of a culture as a long-term process that cannot be rushed. Instead, a culture's enlightenment must be cultivated, nurtured, and given the necessary time to grow, to extend the metaphor of Zarathustra as the sower of seeds. Neither Zarathustra nor the narrator indicates how long this process should take, nor do they suggest how frequently it should happen. Nonetheless, based on the image of Nietzsche's unending enlightenment discussed earlier in this chapter, we can assume that this process should be repeated in perpetuity, creating an image of enlightenment as a process that always returns to the same stages. In addition, the above description of Zarathustra depicts him as a lone genius who leads others towards enlightenment. This image may appear to contradict Zarathustra's (and Nietzsche's) emphasis on empowering individuals to fulfil their own

enlightenment. However, Zarathustra can be considered an intellectual guide. His task is not to force people along a path to enlightenment. Instead, he sets an example as to how such a journey may be undertaken. Zarathustra may guide individuals along the way, yet it remains the task of each individual to accept, and act upon, the guidance and model he provides.

The issue of behaviour leads us to the second feature of Zarathustra's new enlightenment: the role of the body, which Nietzsche believes has been downplayed by an over-reliance on reason,¹³² and instinctual behaviour. Zarathustra does not reject reason outright, but neither does he promote it as the sole means of enlightenment. He instead presents unreason, in the form of instinctual behaviour, as a necessary component of enlightenment. Zarathustra describes the body as harmonious and suggests that its instinctual behaviour should be prioritised over rational thought: "Aber der Erwachte, der Wissende sagt: Leib bin ich ganz und gar [...]. Der Leib ist eine grosse Vernunft, eine Vielheit mit Einem Sinne" (*ASZ I 'Von den Verächtern des Leibes'*). Zarathustra here reduces human behaviour to organic functions, which implies that human behaviour as determined by socialisation, or the civilisation process is unnatural and that it contradicts humans' animalistic nature. On this basis Zarathustra believes that the Enlightenment distorted human nature through its promotion of reason. He links instinctual behaviour to his new enlightenment by stating that this unmediated, instinctual behaviour is a form of reason. This significant statement encourages the reader to reconsider the meaning of reason. Instead of linking it with rational thought, Zarathustra insinuates that reason should be understood as synonymous with 'instinctual'. He thus attempts to repurpose

¹³² Kilian Jörg, 'Nietzsche and Ecological Reason(s) in the Anthropocene', *The Trumpeter*, 35(1) (2019), 22-40 (p. 25).

the language of the Enlightenment, instead of developing a new vocabulary for his new epoch.

In promoting the body, Zarathustra also anticipates the vocabulary of psychoanalysis that would gain momentum in the following decades.¹³³ Though neither Zarathustra was not the first to use the term ‘Triebe’ to describe internal, instinctual bodily drives, Zarathustra promotes such drives in the first book of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. For example, he states that bodily drives shape the behaviour of the most knowledgeable individuals: “Wissend reinigt sich der Leib; mit Wissen versuchend erhöht er sich; dem Erkennenden heiligen sich alle Triebe; dem Erhöhten wird die Seele fröhlich.” (ASZ I ‘Von der schenkenden Tugend’) Zarathustra here implies that the most knowledgeable people are those who submit themselves to bodily drives, rather than repressing them. The language used in this statement of Zarathustra’s seems, however, to create a tension. Whereas ‘Wissen’ can be viewed as typically referring to rationalised forms of knowledge, drives (‘Triebe’) refer to non-rationalised (or pre-rationalised) behaviour. This apparent tension is resolved by acknowledging that Zarathustra once again seeks here to redefine the vocabulary of enlightenment he has inherited. He links the body’s natural drives with knowledge, suggesting that knowledge must be redefined to include instinctual perceptions and actions. In promoting the body’s unmediated self-

¹³³ In his concise introduction to psychoanalysis, Daniel Pick notes that the initial development of psychoanalysis took place between the 1880s and the 1900s. See Daniel Pick, *Psychoanalysis: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199226818.003.0002>>. The turn of the century in particular saw the publication of major texts in psychoanalysis, such as Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1939) now canonical *Die Traumdeutung* (1899/1900). The impact of psychoanalysis also permeated into wider culture. Works such as Arthur Schnitzler’s (1862-1931) *Leutnant Gustl* (1900), the first known literary text in German to be narrated in a stream-of-consciousness style, helped to bring elements of psychoanalytic thought into the cultural mainstream.

understanding as a form of knowledge, Zarathustra privileges the non-rational body over the rational mind and thus promotes a way of living that promotes feeling over thinking.

The significance of the body for Zarathustra and his new enlightenment is seen more literally in the repeated references he makes to the wanderer, and to enlightenment as a journey. Such references form a bridge to the third feature of Zarathustra's new enlightenment: a rejection of institutional education. Nietzsche's scepticism towards the educational institutions of his day is found in the background of this issue. In previous years he had written explicit critiques of grammar schools (Gymnasien) and universities, with this mistrust being formulated most clearly in his lectures of 1872 entitled '*Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*':

Wohl sehe ich eine Zeit kommen, in der ernste Menschen, im Dienste einer gänzlich erneuten und gereinigten Bildung und in gemeinsamer Arbeit, auch wieder zu Gesetzgebern der alltäglichen Erziehung — der Erziehung zu jener neuen Bildung — werden: wahrscheinlich werden sie dann wiederum Tabellen machen — aber wie ferne ist die Zeit! [...] Vielleicht liegt zwischen ihr und der Gegenwart die Vernichtung des Gymnasiums, vielleicht selbst die Vernichtung der Universität oder mindestens eine so totale Umgestaltung der eben genannten Bildungsanstalten, daß deren alte Tabellen sich späteren Augen wie Überreste aus der Pfahlbautenzeit darstellen möchten. (BA 'Vorrede' 1)

Nietzsche's views are clear: either the Gymnasium and the university must be fundamentally reformed or they must be scrapped entirely. He prophesies that such institutions will eventually undergo necessary changes, but this process may still lie far in the future. However, the birth of new and/or reformed educational institutions will, Nietzsche writes, lead to a new, purified ("gereinigt[en]") form of education being widely implemented in schools and universities. This attitude demonstrates that Nietzsche was not opposed to educational institutions per se, but that he instead doubted whether the education they provided at that time was effective or useful. Until reforms take place,

Nietzsche will continue to question the education students receive in mainstream institutions.

Zarathustra does not echo this view verbatim, however he does develop a related model for a new type of active, experiential learning. By advocating for the individual to wander, Zarathustra promotes spontaneous engagement with the world and a diverse range of people. The figures in *Also sprach Zarathustra* do not sit in classrooms. Instead, mentorship and intellectual exchange typically occur unprompted in outdoor settings. For example, in book one of the text, Zarathustra speaks with a young man sitting by a tree. After the young man professes that he has struggled in his intellectual growth, Zarathustra galvanises him to maintain hope and to trust in his own abilities: "Reinigen muss sich noch der Befreite des Geistes. [...] Ja, ich kenne deine Gefahr. Aber bei meiner Liebe und Hoffnung beschwöre ich dich: wirft deine Liebe und Hoffnung nicht weg!" (ASZ I 'Vom Baum am Berge') Here, Zarathustra does not teach the young man in a formal or planned manner, and he instead provides him with advice that is specific to his problems. Zarathustra thus promotes a spontaneous form of education that is tailored to the individual at hand, rather than being determined by a formal curriculum. Chance meetings and conversations are presented as an effective means of learning, which ultimately aims to empower the individual on their journey to enlightenment. Zarathustra's young mentee is educated outside of the academy.

This model of learning through chance encounter in informal circumstances is replicated on a larger scale; Zarathustra's lessons are also given to larger groups at once. For instance, early in the first book of the text Zarathustra gives a speech on the Übermensch at a marketplace where people are waiting for a performance by a trapeze

artist.¹³⁴ Zarathustra wishes to teach those present about the *Übermensch*. After describing the *Übermensch*, however, the crowd laughs and dismisses Zarathustra:

Als Zarathustra so gesprochen hatte, schrie Einer aus dem Volke: „Wir hörten nun genug von dem Seiltänzer; nun lasst uns ihn auch sehen!“ Und alles Volk lachte über Zarathustra. Der Seiltänzer aber, welcher glaubte, dass das Wort ihm gälte, machte sich an sein Werk. (*ASZ I* ‘Zarathustra’s Vorrede’ 3)

In contrast to the example from ‘Vom Baum am Berge’, Zarathustra does not address an individual here. Instead, he seeks to provide public enlightenment on humanity’s future. Zarathustra is unsuccessful in this regard as he is mocked by the crowd, however he does succeed in influencing the trapeze artist, who acts upon Zarathustra’s speech. This result underscores Zarathustra’s (and Nietzsche’s) emphasis on the responsibility of the individual for their own enlightenment. Sages such as Zarathustra may provide large groups of people with information, but individuals must then use this information to better themselves. Moreover, this episode emphasises the role of spontaneous, unplanned speech in Zarathustra’s new enlightenment. Rather than being expected to learn in the classroom, his students are offered access to enlightenment in their everyday lives. Zarathustra’s new enlightenment therefore transforms the world into a seminar room, brings education into the open and, more importantly, turns enlightenment into an experience rather than a goal, as Josef Simon has also noted.¹³⁵

This last feature of Zarathustra’s new enlightenment is the most significant, and it is the very essence of Nietzsche’s and Zarathustra’s positions on enlightenment. Both

¹³⁴ The term *Übermensch* is often translated as ‘superman’ in English-language scholarship. However, I have chosen to use the German term here because, in my opinion, solutions such as ‘superman’ misrepresent the meaning of the German term. The German prefix ‘über-’ (over, above) denotes that the *Übermensch* has transcended the human being, and translations such as ‘superman’ do not account for this crucial distinction.

¹³⁵ Josef Simon, ‘Aufklärung im Denken Nietzsches’, in *Aufklärung und Gegenklärung in der europäischen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Jochen Schmidt (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989), pp. 459-474 (pp. 466 & 472).

Zarathustra and Nietzsche view enlightenment as a means of setting the individual free from the restraints of institutions and the dogmatic thought of others. Though Nietzsche often falls into the trap of dogmatism, particularly around his views on religion and Judeo-Christian morality, his primary concern is the empowerment of the individual to think and act freely. Those who act according to the whims of others have no place in his new enlightenment, and for him it is of the utmost importance to make these people aware of their intellectual reliance on others and to encourage them to think and behave independently. However, we must acknowledge that Nietzsche's basic understanding of the term 'enlightenment' departs, in many ways, from the model of enlightenment he inherited from representatives of the Enlightenment such as Kant. Nietzsche's new enlightenment dethrones reason from its supremacy in large parts of Enlightenment thought and instead accounts increasingly for what Nietzsche considers to be the non-rational basis of human nature. Humans are, in his view, animals. Reason must therefore be acquired and refined, and then settle for equal footing with the non-reason underpinning human behaviour, in Nietzsche's opinion.

The sceptical reader may criticise Nietzsche and Zarathustra for failing to define concretely what their newly enlightened culture may look like. In this light the end destination of the journey towards enlightenment is rendered obsolete, and it becomes the task of a culture to calculate where enlightenment should lead. However, in a sense this criticism speaks exactly to the central feature of Nietzsche's new enlightenment. Enlightenment is no longer an end, but it is now a means that should be enjoyed for its own sake. This lack of direction is the key to Nietzsche's new enlightenment. The reader must first voyage outside of their comfort zone, experience what the world has to offer, learn to think freely and independently, and finally work to create a new culture according

to this image. Yet, there is still a concrete conclusion to be taken from Nietzsche's redefinition of enlightenment. He ultimately embraces the paradoxes of enlightenment by arguing for a rebalancing of reason and non-reason rather than trying to move beyond this paradoxical model. Zarathustra's new enlightenment is therefore not intended to replace Nietzsche's antithetical model of enlightenment, but to supplement it with an example for the reader to follow. As we shall now see, this promotion of enlightenment's paradoxical nature represents a stark contrast to Adorno's attitude towards the paradoxes of enlightenment.

Chapter Three: Adorno's Enlightenment

As we have seen, Nietzsche did not nullify the Enlightenment's legacy. His interest in enlightenment also outlines a way of productively embracing the paradoxes of enlightenment by harnessing both reason and non-reason, and his interest in enlightenment forms part of his project to change culture more fundamentally. By empowering individuals to take charge of their own path through life, he hopes to effect lasting cultural change on a broad scale as changes in individual behaviour permeate into the fabric of society. Adorno too took a keen interest in questions of culture, however in his examination of enlightenment he does not neglect the more abstract philosophical insights typical of his thought. Adorno's views of enlightenment will not be misrepresented as mere philosophical speculation, but his sustained interest in theoretical insights will instead be acknowledged. This chapter will outline Adorno's paradoxical insights and bring them into dialogue with Nietzsche's views on enlightenment. It will be demonstrated that Adorno maintains a paradoxical image of enlightenment, albeit in a different way to Nietzsche. He also locates the solution for the paradoxes of enlightenment in the human mind exclusively rather than suggesting a cultural solution as Nietzsche does. Crucially, whereas Nietzsche reappropriates the paradoxes of enlightenment, Adorno seeks to circumnavigate them by outlining a way to depart from instrumental reason, a major flaw he identifies at the heart of enlightenment.

Adorno was influenced and fascinated by questions of enlightenment and Enlightenment from an early age. As a teenager, he was mentored in his reading of Immanuel Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781) by the now-renowned German film theorist and cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer (1889-1966). The two were brought

together by Rosie Stern, a friend of Adorno's parents,¹³⁶ and Adorno later remarked that he and Kracauer regularly met on Saturday afternoons to discuss Kant's influential Enlightenment text: "Über Jahre hindurch las er [Kracauer] mit mir, regelmäßig Samstag nachmittags, die Kritik der reinen Vernunft. Nicht im leisesten übertreibe ich, wenn ich sage, daß ich dieser Lektüre mehr verdanke als meinen akademischen Lehrern." (*Der wunderliche Realist: Über Siegfried Kracauer*, GS 11, p. 388) This relationship left a lasting impact on the young Adorno, who returned to the crossover points between film, sociology and music later in his career, and he shared several of these interests with Kracauer.¹³⁷ Moreover, Kracauer and Adorno's reading of Kant's text laid the foundation for Adorno's later sustained interest in its subject matter, and Adorno notes that Kracauer even helped him to unpick Kant's critique of reason: "Er [Kracauer] vergegenwärtigte mir die Vernunftkritik" (*Der wunderliche Realist: Über Siegfried Kracauer*, GS 11, p. 389). Even before beginning his formal studies in academic philosophy in Frankfurt in 1921 at the age of eighteen, Adorno had already been exposed to enlightenment and the Enlightenment.

Adorno's interest in these issues appeared to wane in the 1920s. Having written his doctoral thesis on the phenomenology of post-Enlightenment thinker Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), his attention turned to music in the mid-1920s as he moved to Vienna to study piano and composition.¹³⁸ He combined these musical endeavours with a significant output of musical and musicological writings, composing a vast number of concert

¹³⁶ See Theodor W. Adorno, *Der wunderliche Realist: Über Siegfried Kracauer*, in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften in 20 Bänden*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, Vol. 11, pp. 388-408 (p. 388).

¹³⁷ For an analysis that brings together Kracauer and Adorno (alongside Walter Benjamin) on film, see Miriam Bratu Hansen, *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno* (Berkeley, CA/London: University of California Press, 2012). For a broader overview of Kracauer's life and work, see Gertrud Koch, *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction*, translated by Jeremy Gaines (Princeton, NJ: University of Princeton Press, 2000).

¹³⁸ Brian O'Connor, *Adorno* (Abingdon, Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 3.

reviews, appraisals of individual musicians' works, and even his own pieces of music.¹³⁹ Adorno's interest in music and aesthetics developed at such pace that the observer would be forgiven for inferring that Adorno's interest in questions of enlightenment, and his engagement with representatives of the Enlightenment such as Kant, was a fleeting phase that had now been confined to the past. Despite his return to the territory of academic philosophy in the form of *Der Begriff des Unbewußten in der transzendentalen Seelenlehre* (1927), his first proposed Habilitationsschrift, the young Adorno seemed to have committed himself to a career centred around music. His early engagement with Kant was a formative one, but it was not his central priority in the 1920s. This is, however, not to say that Adorno later became uninterested in music and art more broadly, and our discussion will return to aesthetic issues in Chapters Four and Five.

Adorno's distance from issues of enlightenment was not permanent. He fled Germany in the early 1930s, first finding a new intellectual home at Merton College, Oxford. In February 1938 he travelled to the USA to join colleagues from the Institut für Sozialforschung,¹⁴⁰ such as Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) and Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979). This lengthy exile, which Thomas Wheatland has described as a "re-formative" event in the history of the so-called Frankfurt School,¹⁴¹ was a catalyst for changes in the thought of Adorno and several of his colleagues. One of these colleagues was Max Horkheimer, who fled to the USA via Switzerland in early 1934,¹⁴² four years before Adorno crossed the Atlantic. Almost certainly motivated in part by the rise of fascism in

¹³⁹ O'Connor, *Adorno*, p.3.

¹⁴⁰ Peter E. Gordon, 'Adorno: A Biographical Sketch', in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), pp. 3-20 (p. 7).

¹⁴¹ Thomas Wheatland, 'The Frankfurt School and the Experience of Exile', in *The Routledge Companion to the Frankfurt School*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer and Axel Honneth (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 193-205 (p. 193).

¹⁴² Rolf Wiggershaus, *Max Horkheimer: Unternehmer in Sachen 'Kritische Theorie'* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2013), p. 79.

Europe, Horkheimer, who had assumed the directorship of the Institut für Sozialforschung in 1930,¹⁴³ was particularly concerned with the topic of reason. In the late 1930s and the 1940s he published several essays on this issue, of which *Vernunft und Selbsterhaltung* (1942) deals with the topic of reason most directly, and his efforts culminated with the publication of the English-language text *Eclipse of Reason* in 1947. The conditions of exile thus coincided with a shift in Horkheimer's perspective, causing him to focus on what he viewed as the downfall of reason.

This new trajectory in Horkheimer's thought was mirrored in Adorno's, who first examined enlightenment and its paradoxes explicitly in the form of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947). Although Adorno co-authored this study with Horkheimer, the ideas in the text will below be examined as Adorno's. The purpose of doing so is not to erase Horkheimer's undoubtedly large influence on the text, especially as the critique of reason features heavily in his sole-authored works of the preceding years. Instead, this choice seeks to reflect the fact that Adorno invested significant time editing the manuscript of the *Philosophische Fragmente* (1944), an early version of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. As James Schmidt has noted, Adorno made important changes to the language in the manuscript, meaning that, in effect, the published version of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* was processed and approved by Adorno.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, Adorno had repeatedly remarked that he considered "all of his later major writings as excursions" to *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.¹⁴⁵ This comment frames *Dialektik der Aufklärung* as the starting point in a long line of works. Although the discussion below will not follow Adorno's statement

¹⁴³ Wiggershaus, *Max Horkheimer*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ James Schmidt, 'Mythology, and Enlightenment: Historical Notes on Horkheimer and Adorno's "Dialectic of Enlightenment"', *Social Research*, 65(4) (Winter 1998), 807-838 (p. 811).

¹⁴⁵ Gerhard Schweppenhäuser, *Theodor W. Adorno: An Introduction*, translated by James Rolleston (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 32.

verbatim – doing so would distract from the significance of his earlier works – it confirms that Adorno considered *Dialektik der Aufklärung* a fundament in his personal intellectual development.

Another such milestone was Adorno's sole-authored work *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben* (1951), which stems from the same exile circumstances as *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Although *Minima Moralia* makes many references to enlightenment and the Enlightenment, these incidences are brief and they are interspersed throughout the text due to its loose structure. Nonetheless, the dedication at the start of the work contains a useful comment regarding the nature of Adorno and Horkheimer's collaborative professional relationship. In this opening section of the text, Adorno provides context on the genesis of his works of the early exile period:

Den unmittelbaren Anlaß zur Niederschrift bot der fünfzigste Geburtstag Max Horkheimers am 14. Februar 1945. Die Ausführung fiel in eine Phase, in der wir, äußeren Umständen Rechnung tragend, die gemeinsame Arbeit unterbrechen mußten. Dank und Treue will das Buch bekunden, indem es die Unterbrechung nicht anerkennt. Es ist Zeugnis eines dialogue intérieur: kein Motiv findet sich darin, das nicht Horkheimer ebenso zugehörte wie dem, der die Zeit zur Formulierung fand. (MM, GS 4, p. 17)

Here Adorno acknowledges his intellectual debt to Horkheimer, and he also comments that his and Horkheimer's works form one continuous chain. More significantly, though, by referring to his and Horkheimer's works of this period as an interior dialogue, Adorno implies that there is little, if anything, that separates his works of the 1940s from Horkheimer's, including *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Including *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in an analysis of Adorno's single-authored works is therefore a justifiable decision. It is important not to take Adorno's comments at face value, but the close collaboration between the two authors, as well as their lasting friendship, suggests that there is a strong

element of truth in Adorno's claim. It is on these grounds that *Dialektik der Aufklärung* will be viewed in the context of Adorno's single-authored works below.

Before turning to Adorno's paradoxes of enlightenment, we must establish whether Adorno is interested in the process of enlightenment, the Age of Enlightenment, or both. One quotation from *Dialektik der Aufklärung* muddies these waters. In a nod to Max Weber (1864-1920), Adorno describes enlightenment as the demystification of the world: "Das Programm der Aufklärung war die Entzauberung der Welt." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 25) The genitive construction "der Aufklärung" could refer to enlightenment or the Enlightenment, and Adorno does not confirm which meaning he has in mind here. However, he soon mentions Francis Bacon (1561-1626), a pre-Enlightenment thinker. Bacon was described by Voltaire, whose account Adorno cites, as the father of experimental philosophy ("Vater der experimentellen Philosophie" (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 25)). Adorno's discussion of a pre-Enlightenment thinker implies that his main concern is enlightenment, rather than the Age of Enlightenment. Furthermore, the opening two words of this chapter from *Dialektik der Aufklärung* solidify the claim that Adorno here addresses enlightenment: "Seit je hat Aufklärung [...] das Ziel verfolgt, von den Menschen die Furcht zu nehmen und sie als Herren einzusetzen." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 25). The enlightenment of which Adorno writes is not limited to the epoch of the Enlightenment. Instead, it is one that has always ("seit je") played a part in human thought, mirroring Nietzsche's interest in the broader or timeless phenomenon of enlightenment.

Adorno nonetheless maintains an interest in the Age of Enlightenment. As noted above, his early engagement with Immanuel Kant was formative, and Adorno dedicates considerable time to Kant for the decades to follow, as evidenced by his 1959 study *Kants*

'*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*'. However, further examples from *Dialektik der Aufklärung* demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that his primary interest is enlightenment. For instance, in the opening chapter of the text Adorno discusses developments in knowledge and technology with reference to Bacon. Here, he includes inventions such as the printing press, cannons, and the compass in his discussion, all of which featured in the pre-Enlightenment world.¹⁴⁶ There are two possible explanations for Adorno's inclusion of these phenomena. The first possibility is that Adorno wishes to revise the borders of the Enlightenment to include the Early Modern world, as Nietzsche does by including Martin Luther in his Enlightenment. The second, more credible explanation is that Adorno investigates enlightenment as a historical phenomenon in human civilisation, without confining the text to the Age of Enlightenment. Given that Adorno also takes Homer's Odysseus as the central subject of an entire chapter of the text, as well as including other figures from Antiquity in his discussion,¹⁴⁷ it is clear that his primary interest is in enlightenment, rather than in the Enlightenment.

Dialektik der Aufklärung is still of significant interest to commentators. As a result of this breadth of interest, critical readings of the text provide many angles from which to view the work, though this popularity means that there is less room for consensus. It is worth briefly considering some of the different approaches to add context to the analysis that will follow below. Jeffrey Herf's 2012 analysis of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* places the work and its content in the context of the growth of the Nazi regime in Germany.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ For example, the author and printer Philip Luckombe (1730-1803) noted as early as 1771 that the first recorded printed book in Europe was produced on 14th August 1457. See Philip Luckombe, *The History and Art of Printing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 (first published 1771)), p. 4. Note that Luckombe's text is dated 1771, meaning that it was produced during the Age of Enlightenment, and published before Kant's *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784).

¹⁴⁷ For example, Aristotle, Plato and Xenophanes all feature in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.

¹⁴⁸ Jeffrey Herf, 'Dialectic of Enlightenment Reconsidered', *New German Critique*, 39(3 (117)) (Fall 2012), 81-90 (pp. 83-84).

Herf, a historian, thus traces a relationship between political events and Adorno's intellectual development, though he also notes that not all major historical and political events appear in the text; it does not speak of the Second World War at all, for example.¹⁴⁹ Appearing seven years after Herf's, John Grumley's respective reconsideration of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, on the other hand, focuses on the language of the text, referring to it as a "concept" in the work.¹⁵⁰ This insight draws our attention to how Adorno has in mind both the process of enlightenment and the very idea of enlightenment. It is helpful to distinguish between these two phenomena, and we will proceed below with the duality of enlightenment and the Enlightenment in mind.

Justin Evans' 2020 article is one of the most illuminating appraisals of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Evans highlights the paradoxical nature of the work,¹⁵¹ and he thus emphasises how enlightenment, in Adorno's view, is a source of progress and regression. Furthermore, he correctly shows how enlightenment's paradoxes manifest themselves in various areas of society in Adorno's works.¹⁵² Evans' assessment is significant because his appraisal of the text draws attention to the fundamental contradiction at its heart – and indeed at the heart of this study – that enlightenment, a concept for progress, undermines its own emancipatory cause. As a result, it becomes clear that *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in maintaining this paradox, does not find the remedy to what Adorno sees as enlightenment's inherent contradiction, and it instead means that the text serves as a diagnostic tool in Adorno's thought on enlightenment. The analysis below will use Evans' discussion to revise the way in which enlightenment is viewed in Adorno's works. Far

¹⁴⁹ Herf, 'Dialectic of Enlightenment Reconsidered', p. 87.

¹⁵⁰ John Grumley, 'The Dialectic of Enlightenment Reconsidered', *Critical Horizons*, 20(1) (2019), 71-87 (p. 74).

¹⁵¹ Justin Evans, 'The Dialectic of Enlightenment as Parody of Anti-Enlightenment Thought', *Constellations*, 27(3) (2020), 482-495 (p. 483).

¹⁵² Evans, 'The Dialectic of Enlightenment as Parody', pp. 485 & 488.

from being the final message of Adorno's enlightenment analysis, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* serves as the stage on which the flaws of enlightenment are identified, as well as the springboard for Adorno's work on how enlightenment could be saved from its self-imposed downfall. With this background in mind, we will start by discussing the foundations of Adorno's thought on enlightenment in the form of what he considers its dialectical, paradoxical form.

3.1 The Dialectic of Enlightenment

For Adorno, enlightenment is a dialectical paradox, in contrast to Nietzsche's antithetical understanding of enlightenment. In short, he believes that enlightenment, however effective it may be in emancipating individuals from the yoke of temporal or ecclesiastical authority, will inevitably undermine itself, as Adorno suggests in the opening chapter of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: "Nicht bloß die ideelle, sondern auch die praktische Tendenz zur Selbstvernichtung gehört der Rationalität seit Anfangs zu" (*DA*, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 22). This excerpt affirms Adorno's belief that self-destruction is inherent to enlightenment, and that enlightenment is thus simultaneously able to realise and undermine itself. For Adorno, this process has existed since the advent of thought, writing in *Negative Dialektik* (1966) that the dialectic of enlightenment summarises the history of thinking: "Die Geschichte des Denkens ist, soweit sie sich zurückverfolgen läßt, Dialektik der Aufklärung." (*ND*, GS 6, p. 124) This telling quotation encapsulates Adorno's dialectical attitude towards enlightenment, showing how Adorno historicises his theory, and it demonstrates how Adorno's view of enlightenment appears at first glance to be unchanged in 1966. For Adorno, the dialectic of enlightenment did not develop over time. He instead implies that it is inherent to rational thought by suggesting

that thought has forever been affected by enlightenment's dialectical tendencies, which leads him to present enlightenment's downfall as inevitable. This argument is supported by a claim found in the foreword of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, where Adorno writes that while enlightenment seals its own downfall without acknowledging its contradictory nature:

Wir hegen keinen Zweifel [...] daß die Freiheit in der Gesellschaft vom aufklärenden Denken unabtrennbar ist. Jedoch glauben wir, genauso deutlich erkannt zu haben, daß der Begriff eben dieses Denkens, nicht weniger als die konkreten historischen Formen, die Institutionen der Gesellschaft, in die es verflochten ist, schon den Keim zu jenem Rückschritt enthalten, der heute überall sich ereignet. Nimmt Aufklärung die Reflexion auf dieses rückläufige Moment nicht in sich auf, so besiegelt sie ihr eigenes Schicksal. (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), pp. 18-19)

This example is a strong introductory summary of Adorno's approach to enlightenment. He maintains that enlightenment is a force for good as it can set individuals free, yet at the same time it can lead to significant, disastrous regressions in human civilisation and culture. Adorno adds that enlightenment must acknowledge the contradiction at its core, otherwise it risks repeating again and again the mistakes that lead to its self-destruction. As a result we infer that, whilst Adorno does not consider enlightenment unattainable, nor does he view it as an irreversible process.

Adorno's efforts to substantiate what he sees as the dialectic of enlightenment are at their most sustained in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Adorno explores the dialectic of enlightenment from the outset of this work. It is evident as early as the foreword, where he refers to enlightenment's supposedly self-destructive tendencies: "Die rastlose Selbstzerstörung der Aufklärung zwingt das Denken dazu, sich auch die letzte Arglosigkeit gegenüber den Gewohnheiten und Richtungen des Zeitgeistes zu verbieten." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), pp. 16-17) Adorno here depicts enlightenment as a process that

destroys itself in a relentless, unstoppable manner, thus defeating its own emancipatory goal. This goal, Adorno writes later in the text, sought to remove fear, and to proclaim humans as the masters of their own destiny: “Seit je hat Aufklärung im umfassendsten Sinn fortschreitenden Denkens das Ziel verfolgt, von den Menschen die Furcht zu nehmen und sie als Herren einzusetzen.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 25). Echoing Nietzsche’s aim of providing each individual with the agency to shape their enlightenment, for Adorno this undertaking will, however, perpetually be disrupted by enlightenment’s inevitable tendency to undermine itself and thus become the thing it aimed to destroy.¹⁵³ The paradoxical flaws of enlightenment are inherent to enlightenment itself, rather than being a product of human failures.

In the examples above, reference has been made to the dialectic of enlightenment without examining the features that cause its paradoxical downfall, as Adorno perceives it. However, Adorno addresses this topic in several works, and he considers reason, central to both enlightenment and the Enlightenment, to be primarily responsible for enlightenment’s self-destruction. One reason for this, as Adorno wrote in an essay composed a decade after *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, is that reason must use reason to think about itself: “Solche Verteidigung gegen die ratio mußte mit rationalen Mitteln durchgeführt werden und war insofern, wie Hegel in der Phänomenologie aussprach, von Anbeginn hoffnungslos” (VO 2, GS 10.2, p. 609). Adorno here implies that reason is limited by its self-referential nature; even a critique of reason must be carried out using the same flawed tool that is being critiqued. Consequently, reason’s flaws are reproduced

¹⁵³ In an earlier, pre-publication version of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, the idea of enlightenment paradoxically causing its own downfall is made even more explicitly: “Was die rohen Advokaten der totalitären Ordnung in ihren Propagandareden heuchlerisch anpreisen und die versierten Anwälte der Opfer in ihren respektiven Sparten der Kulturindustrie naiv praktizieren: das Ende der Aufklärung durch eigene Mittel” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), pp. 17n).

indefinitely as the individual has no means of considering reason without using reason, and self-referential reason therefore cannot escape its own pitfalls. In addition, the above quotation is further evidence for the argument that Adorno was more interested in enlightenment than in the Enlightenment. Rather than referring to the Enlightenment, this passage refers to the process of enlightenment by its implicit reference to timelessness (“von Anbeginn”). The object of enquiry here is an intellectual phenomenon, not a historical epoch, in contrast to Nietzsche’s interest in both topics.

This interest in enlightenment’s inherent flaws is maintained in Adorno’s later works. For example, Adorno develops this line of thought in *Negative Dialektik*, writing in the first part of the text that irrationality is an object of reason’s self-criticism: “Aber Irrationalität bleibt dabei selbst wie er [der subjektive Begriff] Funktion der ratio und Gegenstand ihrer Selbstkritik.” (*ND*, GS 6, p. 92) Once more, Adorno here raises the issue of how reason remains its own frame of reference, reproducing reason’s flaws in perpetuity. He adds to this argument by stating that non-reason can also only be critiqued via rationality. The reader may infer here that Adorno is sceptical of reason’s ability to help the individual understand non-rational occurrences. On this basis, reason is too similar to rational phenomena yet too dissimilar from irrational phenomena to produce trustworthy understandings of them. Reason is thus not an effective tool in facilitating a journey towards enlightenment. In addition, Adorno’s vocabulary in this example is noteworthy. As in *Vernunft und Offenbarung*, in *Negative Dialektik* he denotes non-reason as irrationality (“Irrationalität”), at least in this instance. Adorno does not identify a difference between the two terms, meaning that he uses them interchangeably in his writings on this topic. The vocabulary of Adorno’s discussion is not a significant factor in our understanding of his views.

We have observed thus far that Adorno objects to what he sees as the conventional model of enlightenment because of its tendency to undermine, and falsely reinforce, itself. However, he was not just interested in the theoretical development of this dialectic. As he spent over a decade in exile, Adorno's insights into reason's self-destruction were no doubt informed by the rise of fascism in Europe, forming a contrast to Nietzsche's relative indifference towards politics. Indeed, references to the political effects of the dialectic of enlightenment can be found in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. This link between thought and politics can be found in the section 'Elemente des Antisemitismus', for instance: "Die Dialektik der Aufklärung schlägt objektiv in den Wahnsinn um. Dieser Wahnsinn ist zugleich einer der politischen Realität." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 235) This quotation highlights how, in Adorno's view, the dialectic of enlightenment has practical ramifications as it translates into a political and social reality. The mechanism Adorno identifies for this change is linked to his critique of industrial capitalism, which he believes destroys the concept ("Begriff") of the human as an independent user of reason: "Im Fortschritt der Industriegesellschaft [...], wird nun der Begriff zuschanden, durch den das Ganze sich rechtfertigte: der Mensch als Person, als Träger der Vernunft." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 235) Adorno's interest in enlightenment clearly extends beyond its history alone.

In *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Adorno explains the process by which industrial capitalism comes to ensnare the individual in the same way that reason does, in his opinion.¹⁵⁴ He writes that reason has become formalised, and that this formalisation is reflected in the means of production of industrial capitalism: "Die Formalisierung der

¹⁵⁴ Peter Uwe Hohendahl has implicitly written in support of this argument. Hohendahl notes that, for Adorno, "economic reality" is both rational and irrational, meaning that it thus embodies the dialectic of enlightenment. See Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *The Fleeting Promise of Art: Adorno's Aesthetic Theory Revisited* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 107.

Vernunft ist der intellektuelle Ausdruck der maschinellen Produktionsweise.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 127) This understanding of reason implies that it has become a means to an end, which is exploited for individual gain in the economic sphere. Significantly, this instrumental form of reason is, according to Adorno, embodied by the tools of industry that dominate the lives of individuals. The very fabric of society consequently starts to embody the form of reason that has dialectically come to subjugate individuals, and Adorno views the means of production as a manifestation of this intellectual development. He later implies that the sheer power of economic dominance cements its influence by eroding the individual’s ability to resist, writing that non-conformity leads to suffering: “Was nicht konformiert, wird mit einer ökonomischen Ohnmacht geschlagen.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 158) In light of these views, Adorno’s Marxian background is thus also reflected in his critique of enlightenment. Whilst he examines enlightenment independently of economics at times, in this case his critique returns to basic Marxian principles of economic analysis.

Adorno’s acknowledgement of the political ramifications of self-destructive enlightenment marks a point at which his approach diverges from Nietzsche’s. Nietzsche’s works make relatively few references to politics, except for his promotion of figures like Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), whom he admires more for his personal qualities rather than his political philosophy.¹⁵⁵ His works do not engage extensively with politics, let alone with the Enlightenment’s political consequences. Instead, his interest lies with the cultural effects of enlightenment. As was shown in Chapter Two, Nietzsche’s

¹⁵⁵ For analyses of Nietzsche’s attitude towards Napoleon, see Paul F. Glenn, ‘Nietzsche’s Napoleon: The Higher Man as Political Actor’, *The Review of Politics*, 63(1) (Winter 2001), 129-158; and Danilo Bilate, ‘Le cas Napoléon’, *Nietzsche-Studien*, 50(1) (2021), 121-140. For a longer study on Nietzsche and Napoleon, see Dom Dombowsky, *Nietzsche and Napoleon: The Dionysian Conspiracy* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014).

primary concern is the place of the individual in wider culture – and as a producer of culture – which is underscored by his promotion of Zarathustra’s self-reliance. Conversely, Adorno’s writings on enlightenment are often acutely aware of how enlightenment’s consequences manifest themselves in political life.¹⁵⁶ This awareness can almost certainly be explained by Adorno having witnessed the growth of fascism in Germany first-hand, which greatly shaped his life and academic work alike.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, as we will see in Chapter Four, Adorno’s image of self-destructive enlightenment in the cultural sphere seeks to demonstrate how the subjugation of others becomes a total, all-encompassing phenomenon that manifests itself in culture and politics. Nietzsche, however, criticises attempts to summarise anything in systematic, blanket terms. Ultimately, the contrast between Nietzsche’s general disinterest in politics and Adorno’s acute awareness of the relationship between his thought and political developments emphasises a fundamental difference between their respective philosophical approaches and goals.

Nietzsche’s and Adorno’s individual paradoxical models of reason are another source of difference. Nietzsche develops an antithetical image of reason, meaning that rational thought is supplemented by non-rational thought. Reason and non-reason work in constant opposition to one another, and Nietzsche sees non-rational thought as an

¹⁵⁶ A discussion of antisemitism features in Adorno’s analysis of the dialectic of enlightenment, and he views it as an extension of (paradoxically) enlightened political life. It will, however, not be a major part of this study for its lack of crossover with Nietzsche’s thought on enlightenment. For an overview of Adorno (and Horkheimer) on antisemitism, see Fabian Freyenhagen, ‘Adorno and Horkheimer on Anti-Semitism’, *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), pp. 103-122. For an account of Adorno and Horkheimer on antisemitism and enlightenment, see Peter Seymour, ‘Adorno and Horkheimer: Enlightenment and Antisemitism’, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 11(2) (Autumn 2000), 297-312.

¹⁵⁷ In his biography of Adorno, Lorenz Jäger details some of Adorno’s interactions with the early National Socialist regime, such as Adorno’s apartment being subjected to a police search in the summer of 1933. See Lorenz Jäger, *Adorno: A Political Biography*, translated by Stewart Spencer (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 78-79.

essential counterpart to rationality. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter Two, Nietzsche seeks to redefine reason so as to include phenomena that may appear to be non-rational, such as inner bodily drives and the body's biological needs. This redefinition of reason contrasts with Adorno's dialectical understanding of reason. Under this dialectical scheme, reason and non-reason are two sides of the same coin rather than opposing forces; one will always lead to the other. Whilst they may surface at different moments, and even work in opposition to one another as they do in Nietzsche's antithetical approach, they are part of the same dialectical structure. Consequently, Adorno's enlightenment casts doubt on the unlimited potential of progress. As non-reason is a necessary product of reason for Adorno, it is implied that progress is possible but short-lived because any positive developments will be cancelled out by the rise of irrationality. This view contrasts with Nietzsche's model of open-ended enlightenment as a journey without a specific goal. Nietzsche wants individuals to enjoy the search for enlightenment, and his enlightenment allows for continuous progress without regression.

Adorno's attitude towards progress becomes even more sceptical in light of his image of the human being. In his view, human behaviour is shaped by an innate drive towards self-preservation, and reason becomes a tool for this purpose. He describes this process in the second excursus of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: "Zugleich jedoch bildet Vernunft die Instanz des kalkulierenden Denkens, das die Welt für die Zwecke der Selbsterhaltung zurechtet" (*DA*, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 106). Adorno here posits that reason, far from being a means of emancipation, becomes a tool for the domination of others. Instead of liberating humans, it has paradoxically enslaved them by rendering civilisation a fight for survival. Adorno therefore suggests that reason is used in a cunning, calculating manner for the purpose of asserting one's dominance over the surrounding

world: “Was die Menschen von der Natur lernen wollen, ist, sie anzuwenden, um sie und die Menschen vollends zu beherrschen. [...] Rücksichtslos gegen sich selbst hat die Aufklärung noch den Rest ihres eigenen Selbstbewußtseins ausgebrannt.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 26) Because Adorno considers this quasi-survival instinct to be an integral, insurmountable part of the human psyche, we can infer that Adorno’s enlightenment does not work towards a teleological end state, where humanity has realised a permanent state of enlightenment. Rather, in Adorno’s view, the potential for outright enlightenment is limited by human nature.

This conception of human nature is indebted to Freudian psychoanalysis. Adorno’s (and his colleagues’) reception of Freud’s ideas is well documented,¹⁵⁸ and it is evident in his works. In *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, for instance, Adorno employs the concept of the super-ego (Über-Ich), and the ego (Ich) to explain how the psyche regulates inner drives to ensure that they remain within the territory of self-preservation: “In Auseinandersetzung mit dem Über-Ich, der gesellschaftlichen Kontrollinstanz im Individuum, hält das Ich die Triebe in den Grenzen der Selbsterhaltung.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 234) This description suggests that self-preservation is rooted in the individual psyche, and that it cannot be restricted due to its subconscious origins. Furthermore, Adorno’s understanding of the super-ego as the ‘societal supervisor in the individual’ (“gesellschaftliche[n] Kontrollinstanz im Individuum”) is also significant. This claim implies that truly independent thought and behaviour are not possible because

¹⁵⁸ For example, see Martin Jay, ‘The Integration of Psychoanalysis’, in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 86-112; Yvonne Sherratt, ‘Prelude II: Adorno’s Intellectual Tradition: Sigmund Freud’, in Yvonne Sherratt, *Adorno’s Positive Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 50-70; and Joel Whitebook, ‘Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory’, in *The Routledge Companion to the Frankfurt School*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer and Axel Honneth (New York/London: Routledge, 2019), pp. 32-47 (esp. pp. 33-35).

individuals cannot escape the influence of wider society, given that echoes of society are lodged in their psyche. He summarises this process as the ‘victory of society over nature’ later in the text: “Zivilisation ist der Sieg der Gesellschaft über Natur, der alles in bloße Natur verwandelt.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 216) On this basis, civilisation tames the animal in the human and causes the human psyche to restrict its instinctual behaviour in the name of civilisation and societal expectations, as Nietzsche also argues.

Adorno expands on this process in several of the fragments found at the end of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. One such fragment, ‘Interesse am Körper’, shines a light on Adorno’s view of how instincts are repressed in the name of civilisation. The first paragraph of this fragment is quoted in full below:

Unter der bekannten Geschichte Europas läuft eine unterirdische. Sie besteht im Schicksal der durch Zivilisation verdrängten und entstellten menschlichen Instinkte und Leidenschaften. Von der faschistischen Gegenwart aus, in der das Verborgene ans Licht tritt, erscheint auch die manifeste Geschichte in ihrem Zusammenhang mit jener Nachtseite, die in der offiziellen Legende der Nationalstaaten und nicht weniger in ihrer progressiven Kritik übergangen wird. (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 263)

It should first be acknowledged that Adorno considers fascism an exception to the rule of humans repressing their inner drives and desires for the sake of civilisation. He believes that fascism unleashes repressed drives on society, leading to collective, widespread irrationalism in daily life. This image of repression highlights how, for Adorno, repressed drives do not simply disappear. Instead, they remain retrievable in the human subconscious, festering below the surface of conscious thought and behaviour. This model of repression leads the reader to the second important claim to be made about that quotation, namely: that this fragment is further evidence of how the enlightenment of Adorno’s human being is restricted by the volatile state of their inner world. It is implied that the repression of natural irrational drives is not sufficient to create a rational,

enlightened society. Human beings cannot entirely rid themselves of their irrational impulses, and Adorno's anthropology produces a negative prognosis for rational enlightenment.

Not only does Adorno use the language of Freudian psychoanalysis to discuss inner drives and self-preservation, but at other points he also uses the language of the German Enlightenment to link enlightenment with self-preservation. He describes the system of enlightenment as one whose ultimate aim is self-preservation: "Das System, das der Aufklärung im Sinne liegt, ist die Gestalt der Erkenntnis [...]. Seine Prinzipien sind die der Selbsterhaltung. Unmündigkeit erweist sich als das Unvermögen, sich selbst zu erhalten." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 106) In this excerpt, Adorno employs the language of Immanuel Kant's *Was ist Aufklärung?* in the form of the term "unmündig", and this allusion grounds Adorno's statement in this specific strand of the German Enlightenment, with which Nietzsche frequently engages. In addition, Adorno's sentence structure and vocabulary here mirror those of the opening of Kant's essay, with the second sentence of *Was ist Aufklärung* reading as follows: "Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen."¹⁵⁹ Whether intentional or not, this link has the effect of parodying the emancipatory potential that Kant's essay sees in enlightenment. By substituting Kant's understanding of immaturity with his own (i.e. self-preservation), Adorno implicitly expresses his scepticism towards the ability of enlightenment, and by extension the Enlightenment, to lead individuals to an enlightened state.

Adorno links the need for self-preservation to industrial capitalism. More precisely, he identifies a relationship between self-preservation, and the division of labour

¹⁵⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*, pp. 33-42 (p. 35).

in society in the following quotation from *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: “Herrschaft verleiht dem gesellschaftlichen Ganzen, in welchem sie sich festsetzt, erhöhte Konsistenz und Kraft. Die Arbeitsteilung, zu der sich die Herrschaft gesellschaftlich entfaltet, dient dem beherrschten Ganzen zur Selbsterhaltung.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 44) Firstly, it is significant that Adorno here refers to the societal whole (“das gesellschaftliche Ganze“). Viewing workers – individual human beings – only as part of the societal whole eliminates these workers’ individuality, and their identities are thus reduced to an economic function. More significantly, though, Adorno describes here how the structures that govern labour in a society paradoxically come to dominate people’s lives whilst simultaneously providing them with a means of survival. This description mirrors Adorno’s understanding of enlightenment as a paradoxical, double-edged sword. He believes that instrumental rationality, a product of enlightenment that serves as a tool for self-centred dominance, has entered into industrial society’s dominant economic power structures, which then start to reproduce the dialectic of enlightenment. Whilst the development of industry resulted in technological progress, it has, under this scheme, trapped now anonymous individuals within its structures, highlighting what Adorno considered to be the all-encompassing nature of the dialectic of enlightenment.

Returning to Adorno’s often Freudian language, his terminology highlights another parallel with Nietzsche. Nietzsche referred to the driving force behind human nature as drives. Both his and Adorno’s understandings of the human being therefore represent a barrier to realising a permanent state of rational enlightenment. Humans’ impulsive behaviour means that, for both thinkers, rational thought and behaviour become fleeting moments rather than the norm. However, Adorno tempers this image by maintaining that the human being is different from the wider animal kingdom, writing in

a fragment published alongside *Dialektik der Aufklärung* that the idea of the human exists in opposition to the idea of the animal: “Die Idee des Menschen in der europäischen Geschichte drückt sich in der Unterscheidung vom Tier aus” (‘Mensch und Tier’, *DA*, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 277). This description implies that humans purposefully distance themselves from animals in order to live peacefully. Nietzsche shares this presumption but he does not promote it. In *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, he encourages humans to embrace their animalistic underpinnings by acting upon their inner drives, lamenting that humanity’s instinctual behaviour has been tamed by moralising: “Ich meine die krankhafte Verzärtlichung und Vermoralisierung, vermöge deren das Gethier ‚Mensch‘ sich schliesslich aller seiner Instinkte schämen lernt.” (*GM II 7*) The later Nietzsche places biological needs before the wellbeing of wider society, whereas Adorno considers the pursuit of these needs to contribute to enlightenment’s downfall.¹⁶⁰

In summary, then, Nietzsche’s and Adorno’s individual conceptions of the human being both render a permanent state of entirely rationalistic enlightenment impossible. Even though the individual may at times be able to think and act rationally, the irrational impulses of their body mean that any rational enlightenment will be hindered by the non-rational underpinnings of their existence. This shared view implicitly rejects any trajectory of perpetual progress, as well as rejecting the notion that enlightenment is an irreversible process. Instead, it suggests that regressions to irrationality are an inevitable fact of human civilisation, and as a result this model of the human being clearly contributes to Adorno’s paradoxical image of enlightenment. Any form of progress towards rationality for Nietzsche and Adorno is therefore not linear, and it will come at

¹⁶⁰ For a discussion of Adorno’s thought on the body, with a focus on *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, see Lisa Yun Lee, *Dialectics of the Body: Corporeality in the Philosophy of Theodor Adorno* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 13-40.

the cost of regressive episodes of irrationality. For both thinkers, the idea of a wholly rational enlightenment is thus little more than a myth. In Adorno's case this belief is literal; he considers enlightenment, as well as the idea that post-Enlightenment society can be entirely rational, to be a myth. As is the case in Nietzsche's works, myth is an integral feature of Adorno's thought on enlightenment, and our analysis will now turn to enlightenment and myth in Adorno's works.

3.2 Enlightenment and Myth

The idea of myth features prominently in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Nietzsche was also keenly interested in myth, and particularly in how myth can be used to bring about a rebirth of an invigorating aesthetic culture, an issue to which we will return below, as well as in Chapters Four and Five. In *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, which has been used above to lay out the fundamentals of Adorno's views on enlightenment, Adorno addresses what he views as the close relationship between enlightenment and myth, and this argument remains important in his thought in the years following the publication of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. It therefore cannot be dismissed as a philosophical phase that emerged from the developments that first forced Adorno to leave Germany in the 1930s, and later the horrors of genocide and global armed conflict in the 1940s. It is instead an integral part of Adorno's reflections on enlightenment, and it should be acknowledged that myth in Adorno's thought plays a different role to myth in Nietzsche's. As will now be shown, Adorno's interest in myth is linked closely with the implicit rejection of a linear path to a permanent state of enlightenment, and he analyses the timelessness of myth in an attempt to show how it is an ever-present feature of the past.

Given that myth may have several meanings, it is worth briefly considering previous commentators' approaches to myth in Adorno's thought. In his investigation into the origins of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, cited above, James Schmidt presents myth as the first step in a journey towards science, with philosophy acting as the bridge between the two.¹⁶¹ This assessment draws attention to the ancient nature of myth and we can infer that, in Schmidt's view, Adorno refers to literal myths, rather than using the term as an analogy. Furthermore, Schmidt's analysis implies that myth plays a role in the trajectory of progress in humanity in the sense that it represents a steppingstone in the story of progress. J.M. Bernstein, on the other hand, views myth differently, referring to it as an "acknowledgement of our epistemic dependence on the objects of cognition."¹⁶² This description depicts myth as something that takes away human agency in thought as it emphasises the extent to which human thought is contingent on its subjects; thought cannot exist in a vacuum, detached from the world. This approach emphasises the significance of the reception of myth in the present moment, rather than focusing on its ancient origins. Additionally, Bernstein's assessment focuses on the relationship between the irrational phenomenon of myth, as Adorno sees it, and the individual's apparent tendency to rationalise it.

As critical attitudes towards Adorno and myth vary, examples from Adorno's writings also need to be considered in order to explain how he frames it in his writings. One example from *Dialektik der Aufklärung* which supports James Schmidt's understanding of how Adorno refers to myth is as follows:

Der Furcht wähnt er [der Mensch] ledig zu sein, wenn es nichts Unbekanntes mehr gibt. Das bestimmt die Bahn der Entmythologisierung, der Aufklärung, die das

¹⁶¹ Schmidt, 'Mythology and Enlightenment', p. 826.

¹⁶² J.M. Bernstein, 'Negative Dialectic as Fate: Adorno and Hegel', in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Tom Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 19-50 (p. 26).

Lebendige mit dem Unlebendigen ineinssetzt wie der Mythos das Unlebendige mit dem Lebendigen. Aufklärung ist die radikal gewordene, mythische Angst. (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 38)

Here, Adorno equates enlightenment with demythologisation, and this equation frames enlightenment as the opposite of myth. If Adorno views myth as the opposite of enlightenment, then it can be inferred that myth represents a non-rational way of viewing the world and existence, in his eyes. Enlightenment, as represented by thinkers like Kant, sought at least in part to empower the individual to use and trust their own rational judgement, and thus to dismantle any irrational, mythical understandings they inherit. However, the reader infers that the undertaking to remove mythical understandings of the world from German culture was unsuccessful as Adorno still identifies mythical features and ways of thinking in twentieth-century society. With this context in mind, we will proceed below on the assumption that Adorno has irrational world views in mind when he writes of myth; it serves as a counter-current to the enlightenment (and elements of the Enlightenment) that he has inherited, as Owen Hulatt also notes.¹⁶³

That Adorno views enlightenment and myth as opposites is supported in the opening chapter of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, where he historicises enlightenment by pitting it against myth. He remarks that enlightenment sought to rid humanity of mythical understandings of the world: “Sie [Aufklärung] wollte die Mythen auflösen und Einbildung durch Wissen stürzen.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 25) Here, Adorno asserts that enlightenment and knowledge go hand-in-hand, implying that enlightenment is the ideal means for the emancipation of humanity as knowledge will pave the way for shared understandings of the world. In this light, it seems as if Adorno here attempts to downplay

¹⁶³ Owen Hulatt, ‘Reason, Mimesis, and Self-Preservation in Adorno’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 54(1) (January 2016), 135-151 (p. 142).

the relationship between enlightenment and myth, which J.M. Bernstein has viewed as antithetical.¹⁶⁴ Bernstein should be commended for underscoring how inseparable enlightenment and myth are for Adorno. However, the dialectical basis of Adorno's thought means that this relationship should be viewed as a dialectical one, i.e. one in which opposites eventually merge, rather than simply opposing each other as in an antithetical relationship. Indeed, Adorno states that enlightenment becomes entangled in myth: "Wie die Mythen schon Aufklärung vollziehen, so verstrickt Aufklärung mit jedem ihrer Schritte tiefer sich in Mythologie." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 34) In Adorno's eyes, enlightenment, seeking to dethrone myth, inevitably becomes its own worst enemy by becoming a form of myth itself.

However, Adorno writes soon afterwards that enlightenment does not negate itself blindly. He instead believes that enlightenment is aware of its inextricable relationship with myth, stating that enlightenment recognises itself in the latter: "An jedem geistigen Widerstand, den sie [Aufklärung] findet, vermehrt sich bloß ihre Stärke. Das rührt daher, daß Aufklärung auch in den Mythen noch sich selbst wiedererkennt. [...] Aufklärung ist totalitär." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 28) First, this quotation emphasises what Adorno views as the inevitability of rational enlightenment becoming irrational myth. By recognising itself in myth, enlightenment becomes aware that it is myth's dialectical opposite. Consequently, enlightenment, in a way that Adorno does not explain, becomes conscious of its own limits as a force for perpetual progress because it cannot dissociate itself from the irrationality of myth. Second, the final part of this quotation ("Aufklärung ist totalitär") is significant as the adjective "totalitär" implies that enlightenment is a

¹⁶⁴ J.M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 86.

powerful, all-encompassing force, and its political connotations also suggest that totalitarian regimes are a perverse extension of the Enlightenment. This characteristic works both for and against enlightenment's emancipatory mission. The totalitarian nature of enlightenment therefore both relentlessly furthers the cause of rationality, but also contributes massively to its own fall when it dialectically reverts to irrationality. This description therefore reinforces the paradoxical nature of Adorno's image of enlightenment.

Adorno maintains his views of enlightenment's descent into myth in his shorter works of the 1960s. One significant essay in this regard is *Fortschritt* (1962). Towards the end of the text, Adorno refers to one of the mechanisms whereby philosophy reverts to mythology: "Philosophie lebt in Symbiose mit der Wissenschaft; von ihr kann sie nicht sich lossagen ohne Dogmatismus, schließlich Rückfall in Mythologie." (*Fortschritt*, GS 10.2, p. 635) Adorno's choice of vocabulary here is significant. The first noun of note here is "Philosophie", which can be understood as referring to rational thought more broadly, stemming from ancient Greek thinkers like Aristotle and Plato, to whom Adorno refers over ten times in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* alone. In other words, philosophy here refers to a form or tradition of rational enlightenment long before the Age of Enlightenment. Additionally, Adorno notes that the only way for enlightenment to separate itself from pure knowledge ("Wissenschaft") is to revert to dogmatism. He believes that, by doing so, enlightenment in the twentieth century had become tied with abstract forms of knowledge, an issue to which we will return below. Additionally, this description of enlightenment also serves as another example of how Adorno considered enlightenment to be totalitarian; enlightenment must dogmatically assert itself as the sole

source of truth, thus totalising knowledge. In the process, hyper-rational enlightenment creates a myth: the myth that enlightenment has been achieved.

Adorno's argument that myth becomes an ever-present form of the past forms a significant part of his work on enlightenment because it again raises the question of enlightenment's trajectory. His assessment of myth's place in enlightenment suggests that progress is not linear and that it is matched with regression.¹⁶⁵ As such, enlightenment, as Adorno views it, is not a direct route to emancipation. Instead, he views it as a phenomenon with great emancipatory potential whose ability, however, is limited by its internal contradictions. The dialectical nature of enlightenment, according to Adorno, furthers and diminishes its cause. Similarly, the place of myth in Adorno's image of enlightenment shines a light on the question of temporality. As myth is ever-present it represents a kernel of the past suspended in the present, implying that human beings are unable to put the past behind them. History thus becomes insurmountable. This model blurs the line between modernity and antiquity, and it is implied that the split between past and present is not clear cut. In Adorno's view, then, enlightenment has not successfully broken from the past. Instead, it has maintained parts of history at its very core. The paradoxes of enlightenment therefore encompass not only the core contradiction Adorno identifies in enlightenment, but also the temporal development of enlightenment as it combines past, present, and future.

Adorno's views of myth in the context of enlightenment differ from Nietzsche's. As will be examined in Chapter Four, Nietzsche views myth as part of his irrational Dionysian scheme for art. From *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872) to his anti-Wagner

¹⁶⁵ Charles H. Clavey has correctly noted that "the progression from myth to enlightenment was neither unidirectional nor permanent." See Charles H. Clavey, 'Myth, Sacrifice, and the Critique of Capitalism in Dialectic of Enlightenment', *History of European Ideas*, 49(8) (2023), 1268-1285 (p. 1279).

polemics of the late 1880s, discussed in Chapter Five, Nietzsche promotes myth as a means of rejuvenating German culture. Furthermore, Nietzsche's interest in myth is rooted in discussions of culture and cultural rebirth, and it is not a noteworthy feature of his theoretical approach to enlightenment directly. He seeks to (re)enlighten culture through myth, rather than to (re)enlighten enlightenment. Moreover, myth, for Nietzsche, is an anti-rational phenomenon that is essential to a healthy cultural life. He uses myth to oppose what he sees as the dry nature of rationality, as is evidenced in his *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (1874), where he laments reason's supposed triumph over irrationality in culture: "Enthält jeder Erfolg in sich eine vernünftige Nothwendigkeit, ist jedes Ereigniss der Sieg des Logischen oder der „Idee“ — dann nur hurtig nieder auf die Kniee und nun die ganze Stufenleiter der „Erfolge“ abgeknieet! Was, es gäbe keine herrschenden Mythologien mehr?" (HL 8) Adorno, conversely, does not instrumentalise myth. Whereas Nietzsche weaponizes myth, Adorno remains a more detached observer of its effect on enlightenment. These contrasting approaches therefore represent an important difference between Nietzsche's and Adorno's attitudes towards myth and enlightenment.

Questions of myth, an ancient phenomenon that Adorno identifies as having survived into the present, shine a light on the temporality of Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective enlightenments. Indeed, their respective attitudes to myth highlight the different trajectories of their enlightenments, and another difference emerges when comparing the extent to which Nietzsche and Adorno believe in the circularity of time. Nietzsche's new enlightenment, as represented by Zarathustra, does not set an end goal for enlightenment. Instead, the individual is encouraged to wander towards an unspecified 'destination', finding meaning and joy in this journey with no specific goal. This model

presents enlightenment as a never-ending process. Though the concept of eternal recurrence, mentioned in a selection of Nietzsche's works from the 1880s, would appear to contradict the image of enlightenment without a destination, we can resolve this apparent tension by noting that Nietzsche does not consider it a literal truth. Eternal recurrence should instead be viewed as part of an attempt by Nietzsche to galvanise the reader to lead an invigorating, joy-filled life. The following miniature from the end of the fourth book of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882) is evidence of this endeavour:

D a s g r ö s s t e S c h w e r g e w i c h t . — Wie, wenn dir eines Tages oder Nachts, ein Dämon [...] dir sagte: „Dieses Leben, wie du es jetzt lebst und gelebt hast, wirst du noch einmal und noch unzählige Male leben müssen; und es wird nichts Neues daran sein, sondern jeder Schmerz und jede Lust und jeder Gedanke und Seufzer und alles unsäglich Kleine und Grosse deines Lebens muss dir wiederkommen, und Alles in der selben Reihe und Folge [...]. Die ewige Sanduhr des Daseins wird immer wieder umgedreht — und du mit ihr, Stäubchen vom Staube!“ — Würdest du dich nicht niederwerfen und mit den Zähnen knirschen und den Dämon verfluchen, der so redete? Oder hast du einmal einen ungeheuren Augenblick erlebt, wo du ihm antworten würdest: „du bist ein Gott und nie hörte ich Göttlicheres!“ Wenn jener Gedanke über dich Gewalt bekäme, er würde dich, wie du bist, verwandeln und vielleicht zermalmen; die Frage bei Allem und Jedem „willst du diess noch einmal und noch unzählige Male?“ würde als das grösste Schwergewicht auf deinem Handeln liegen! Oder wie müsstest du dir selber und dem Leben gut werden, um nach Nichts m e h r z u v e r l a n g e n , als nach dieser letzten ewigen Bestätigung und Besiegelung? (*FW* 341)

Nietzsche thus encourages the reader to live in such a way that they would be content if every second of their life were repeated ad infinitum. Many critics agree that he does not present this idea as a theory or prediction of time,¹⁶⁶ and that it should instead be

¹⁶⁶ For example, see Tracy B. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), p. 265; and Robert Wicks, 'Schopenhauer: Nietzsche's Antithesis and Source of Inspiration', in *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Tom Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 72-96 (p. 82).

understood as a bid to motivate individuals to pursue their own goals. To most observers, Nietzsche's enlightenment thus remains a non-linear, unpredictable journey.¹⁶⁷

Nietzsche's understanding of enlightenment as a journey without a defined destination contrasts with Adorno's linear understanding of enlightenment. Although Adorno does not go as far as developing a theory similar to Nietzsche's thought experiment of eternal recurrence, his dialectical model of enlightenment implicitly presents civilisation as a pendulum, swinging between progress and regression. This constant state of oscillation marks a significant difference to Nietzsche's image of the individual walking a unique path in the direction of enlightenment. Whereas Nietzsche's image of the enlightenment journey implies that individuals will never return to their starting point, Adorno's dialectical model suggests that regression not only coexists with progress, but also that it is inevitable. He affirms this argument in *Negative Dialektik*, writing that enlightenment cannot escape this dialectical process: "Aufklärung unterliegt wahrhaft der Dialektik: diese findet statt in ihrem eigenen Begriff. Ratio ist so wenig wie irgendeine andere Kategorie zu hypostasieren." (*ND*, GS 6, p. 312) As a result, Adorno's dialectical enlightenment means that attempts at enlightening will paradoxically confound the subjects it sought to empower. Adorno's enlightenment is therefore characterised by stasis. Periods of relative enlightenment are balanced out by phases of metaphorical darkness, meaning that individuals' rational powers are constrained by the limits of dialectics. For Adorno, the benefits of enlightenment are thus short-lived.

Adorno's essay *Fortschritt*, considered above, describes the process by which Adorno believes that forms of knowledge fall back into myth. In addition to this

¹⁶⁷ One exception is Paul S. Loeb, who argued in 2013 that eternal recurrence should be viewed as a literal, cosmological doctrine. See Paul S. Loeb, 'Eternal Recurrence', in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 645-671.

assessment, *Fortschritt* also contains an indication into how Adorno conceives of received knowledge, as he understood it. By stating that philosophy has a symbiotic relationship with knowledge, he implies that thinking is tied inextricably with (linguistic) categories of knowledge, given that this knowledge is expressed through language. Categories such as these are highly systematic and, as we will see, Adorno seeks to distance himself from categorical understandings of the world. Adorno was not a philosopher of language, but his writings demonstrate an interest in how language creates concepts into which ideas are merged to form knowledge. This idea is only strengthened by considering the following comment from *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in which Adorno identifies what he views as enlightenment's propensity for systems: "ihr Ideal [das Ideal der Aufklärung] ist das System, aus dem alles und jedes folgt" (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 29). In light of this quotation, we may infer that Adorno considers enlightenment to form a systematic nexus of knowledge. The process of establishing such systems formed a central pillar of Adorno's critique of enlightenment, and as such it will form the next step in this investigation.

3.3 Systematic Thinking

Stewart Martin has claimed that "Adorno's rejection of systematic philosophy should not be overstated".¹⁶⁸ However, of all aspects of enlightenment, Adorno examined systematic thought – the idea that thinking occurs within a system in which a change in one phenomenon necessarily triggers changes in others – in the most detail. This topic is central to his understanding of enlightenment, despite some variation in the terminology

¹⁶⁸ Stewart Martin, 'Adorno's Conception of the Form of Philosophy', *Diacritics*, 36(1) (Spring 2006), 48-63 (p. 49).

he uses to refer to mathematics and natural science. Indeed, he establishes this link in the first chapter of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: “Sie [Aufklärung] setzt Denken und Mathematik in eins. Dadurch wird diese gleichsam losgelassen, zur absoluten Instanz gemacht.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 47) Adorno suggests that enlightenment renders thinking and mathematics identical, transforming enlightenment into a calculation, and consequently an exploitable tool. Adorno reinforces this argument by claiming that the technical rationality of industry has become a form of dominance: “Technische Rationalität heute ist die Rationalität der Herrschaft selbst. Sie ist der Zwangscharakter der sich selbst entfremdeten Gesellschaft.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 145) Ultimately, turning thinking into a calculation limits the possibilities of thought, and thus the potential of enlightenment, in Adorno’s view. Such thought only functions if it fits into a formula, which restricts the breadth of thinking by forcing it to adhere to rigid rules. In this regard enlightenment becomes a function of a mathematical system, limiting the ability of thought to be free, innovative and independent.

Adorno returns to this idea repeatedly in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. One revealing instance is found soon after the example cited in the paragraph above, where Adorno describes in more detail the process whereby a mathematical form of thinking oversimplifies the non-systematic nuances of thought:

Der mathematische Formalismus aber, dessen Medium die Zahl, die abstrakteste Gestalt des Unmittelbaren ist, hält statt dessen den Gedanken bei der bloßen Unmittelbarkeit fest. Das Tatsächliche behält recht, die Erkenntnis beschränkt sich auf seine Wiederholung, der Gedanke macht sich zur bloßen Tautologie. (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 49)

In this example, Adorno draws the reader’s attention to what he views as the abstract nature of mathematical thinking. By creating abstract understandings of the world, thought aligns itself with, and tethers itself to, its immediate surroundings, Adorno writes.

Thought is consequently unable to develop ideas further because they are tied to the context in which they are generated, meaning that alternative insights cannot be produced. This indictment of enlightenment reinforces Adorno's image of enlightenment as analogous to a mathematical formula because abstraction can only produce knowledge based on the situation in which it is used, rather than generating novel insights into any situation. This is not to say that this kind of thought loses all potential for innovation – 'formulae', to use Adorno's metaphor, can still be combined in different ways to produce new insights into a particular phenomenon or situation – but even these insights are limited because these formulae have pre-determined outcomes. As a result, this type of enlightenment simply cannot lead humanity to an enlightened state. Different elements of the metaphorical formula of knowledge can be interchanged, but they will produce the similar, related results, and Adorno considers this tendency to be one of enlightenment's major flaws. Like Nietzsche, Adorno rejects the systematisation of knowledge. Adorno's argument in this regard is, however, more detailed than Nietzsche's, whose insights remain relatively undeveloped.

Adorno links this purported flaw to his notion of the paradoxical dialectic of enlightenment. Near the end of the first chapter of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, he writes that enlightenment creates the conditions for its own failure: "Mit der Preisgabe des Denkens, das in seiner verdinglichten Gestalt als Mathematik, Maschine, Organisation an den seiner vergessenden Menschen sich rächt, hat Aufklärung ihrer eigenen Verwirklichung entsagt." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 65) There are two items of note this quotation. The first, explored above, is that enlightenment is dialectical, and it therefore is both able to realise itself and to produce its own downfall. The second noteworthy feature of this excerpt is the Marxian language that Adorno employs. He uses

the term ‘reified’ (‘verdinglicht[en]’) to refer to mathematics. Adorno’s use of this vocabulary, associated with György Lukács’ *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein: Studien über marxistische Dialektik* (1923),¹⁶⁹ links his critique of enlightenment to a lineage of Marxian thought. Consequently, Adorno’s critique of enlightenment can be viewed as more than a detached philosophical insight. It instead represents, at least in places, an attempt by Adorno to demonstrate how his critique originates from a Marxian analysis of society, as well as of the relationship between economic and social relations.¹⁷⁰ Adorno, unlike Nietzsche, never strays far from elements of the Marxist tradition.

Adorno’s adherence to elements of this tradition in the context of his thought on enlightenment is also clear elsewhere. *Zu Subjekt und Objekt*, part of his unpublished *Dialektische Epilegomena*,¹⁷¹ contains a further example of Adorno linking enlightenment and economics. He writes the following of the relationship between the two: “Ist die maßgebende Struktur der Gesellschaft die Tauschform, so konstituiert deren Rationalität die Menschen; was sie für sich sind, was sie sich dünken, ist sekundär.” (*Zu*

¹⁶⁹ For an introduction to Lukács concept of reification, see Andrew Feenberg, ‘Lukács’s Theory of Reification: An Introduction’, in *Confronting Reification: Revitalizing Georg Lukács’s Thought in Late Capitalism*, ed. by Gregory R. Smulewicz-Zucker (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 13-24. For an examination of the relationships between Lukács and Adorno; Lukács and Adorno’s colleagues; and Lukács and subsequent thinkers from the so-called Frankfurt School, see Titus Stahl, ‘Lukács and the Frankfurt School’, in *The Routledge Companion to the Frankfurt School*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer and Axel Honneth (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 237-250. For a discussion of Adorno’s reception of Lukács, see Michael J. Thompson, ‘Adorno’s Reception of Weber and Lukács’, in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), pp. 221-236.

¹⁷⁰ Adorno’s intellectual debt to Marx has been well acknowledged for several decades. For example, see Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 46-47; Yvonne Sherratt, *Adorno’s Positive Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 35-44; and Simon Jarvis, ‘Adorno, Marx, Materialism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Tom Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 79-100 (esp. pp. 86-98).

¹⁷¹ *Dialektische Epilegomena* is directly linked to *Negative Dialektik*, and its contents were due to be delivered as part of a lecture course in Frankfurt in the summer semester of 1969. However, in April 1969 Adorno’s introductory lecture course on dialectics was disrupted by protests that led to tension between the *Institut für Sozialforschung* and the protestors. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, translated by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 126; and 352-353.

Subjekt und Objekt, 3, GS 10.2, p. 745) In this example Adorno links rationality with exchange form, which he views as the dominant economic form of a capitalist society. He states that this economic form determines how rationality functions because rational thought starts to reflect society's economic model. This argument demonstrates how, for Adorno, reason and rationality cannot always be separated from the society in which they are found. His comments on rationality in this example are therefore less a commentary on the intrinsic nature of rationality itself than they are an assessment of the forces that can shape rational thought. Moreover, this passage from *Zu Subjekt und Objekt* highlights the power rationality holds over human beings, in Adorno's view. By writing that this type of rationality determines human behaviour, he reinforces his view of rational thought as a powerful phenomenon that controls humans rather than empowering them.

Even when Adorno detaches his critique from social relations, he maintains his focus on enlightenment's systematic nature. In addition to portraying enlightenment as a mathematical system, he emphasises what he sees as enlightenment's tendency to establish harmonious systems. For instance, in chapter three of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* he writes that enlightenment turns thought into the producer of intellectual harmony: "Denken ist im Sinn der Aufklärung die Herstellung von einheitlicher, wissenschaftlicher Ordnung und die Ableitung von Tatsachenerkenntnis aus Prinzipien" (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 104). Here Adorno cements the relationship between order and 'enlightened' thought by suggesting that enlightenment artificially eradicates contradictions, creating a system in which thinking becomes an equation. The individual can add pieces of this system together to produce ideas, yet this narrow method limits the potential of free thought. Moreover, Adorno later argues in *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften* (1962) that society represents an array of contradictions: "Die Sache

widersteht der blanken systematischen Einheit verbundener Sätze. [...] Aber das Erkenntnisideal der einstimmigen, möglichst einfachen [...] Erklärung versagt, wo die Sache selbst: die Gesellschaft nicht einstimmig, nicht einfach ist” (*Logik*, GS 8, p. 548). This useful contextualisation shows that, for Adorno, the harmonious system of enlightenment is false; it eliminates ambiguity by blindly glossing over society’s contradictions. Adorno’s dialectical thinking progresses by recognising the contradictions between phenomena, and he therefore attacks ‘enlightened’ systems for their eradication of such tensions.

When discussing the systematic nature of enlightenment, Adorno’s focus occasionally shifts. As well as critiquing enlightenment more broadly, he also believes that reason is guilty of becoming systemised. He writes, for example, in *Negative Dialektik* that reason provided the French Enlightenment with a systematic impulse: “Der Französischen Aufklärung verleiht ihr oberster Grundbegriff, der der Vernunft, unterm formalen Aspekt etwas Systematisches” (*ND*, GS 6, p. 39). Adorno here expands his investigation into enlightenment by including reason in his analysis, rendering his discussion more precise by engaging with a strand of the Enlightenment in which Nietzsche was also interested. In this regard Adorno’s critiques of enlightenment and reason are one and the same because he considers them to have the same features and flaws. ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘reason’ are thus used interchangeably, at least in this example. Additionally, this excerpt is a rare instance of Adorno engaging with the Enlightenment rather than with enlightenment, in contrast with Nietzsche’s sustained analysis of both phenomena. Though Adorno’s discussion of the French Enlightenment is not the main object of his inquiry, it is noteworthy as it shows that Adorno does engage with the Enlightenment on occasion. Yet, as hinted at above, this critique of the

Enlightenment is interchangeable with his attack on the phenomenon of enlightenment because in each case Adorno's analysis leads to the same conclusion: that all forms of enlightenment have led to a distorting dependence on systematic thought.

Adorno's understanding, in *Negative Dialektik*, of reason as the creator of systems picks up on an argument from *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. He writes here that reason not only created systematic unity, but that this development was reason's main contribution to enlightenment: "Nichts wird von der Vernunft beigetragen als die Idee systematischer Einheit, die formalen Elemente festen, begrifflichen Zusammenhangs." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 105) This link between *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and *Negative Dialektik* demonstrates consistency in Adorno's thought on reason's supposed tendency to create systems, and it also cements a link to Nietzsche's thought as the latter also rejected intellectual systemisation. As this idea is present in Adorno's works published almost two decades apart, it can be regarded as a central feature of his critique of enlightenment. In addition, the quotation cited above emphasises the role of language in creating unified systems. Adorno writes that reason's (and enlightenment's) systematic unity is underpinned by language's ability to establish fixed conceptual boundaries. As a result, reason and enlightenment again limit the possibilities for free, novel thought because new ideas struggle to fit into the categories of knowledge established by reason. Adorno's critique of the role of linguistic concepts in enlightenment is therefore linked to his criticism that enlightenment resembles a mathematical system. In both cases, innovative thought is nullified because it has no place in previously established structures of knowledge.

The roots of this idea can be traced back to the early 1930s, a point at which Adorno was launching his own intellectual career. His 1931 essay *Die Aktualität der*

Philosophie contains traces of this concept, evidencing Andreas Hetzel's comment that elements of Adorno's later thought are already evident in his works of the 1930s.¹⁷² In the essay Adorno expresses scepticism towards philosophy's ability to produce reliable, all-encompassing understandings of the world: "Wer heute philosophische Arbeit als Beruf wählt, muß [...] auf die Illusion verzichten, mit der früher die philosophischen Entwürfe einsetzten: daß es möglich sei, in Kraft des Denkens die Totalität des Wirklichen zu ergreifen." (*Aktualität*, GS 1, p. 325) Here Adorno comments that philosophical works of the past have produced nothing but illusions by seeking to produce total understandings of the whole, with the whole likely referring to the combination of existence and social relations. He continues by criticising thought for pursuing this illusion. These comments demonstrate that Adorno holds a negative view of previous philosophical approaches to knowledge, and that he instead encourages the reader not to rely too heavily on philosophy to produce general understandings of the world. This critique once more casts doubt over philosophy's, and thus enlightenment's, ability to understand the world. Any insights philosophy can provide are consequently limited at best and misleading at worst.

This purported inability of thought to provide full understandings of the world, which mirrors Nietzsche's argument in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* that reason captures only a portion of existence, is framed through the lens of objectivity in *Negative Dialektik*. Here, Adorno writes that reason produces a tension between subjectivity and objectivity: "Vernunft ist [...] einerseits, unterschieden vom Denken, die reine Gestalt von Subjektivität; andererseits, Inbegriff von objektiver Gültigkeit, Urbild aller Objektivität."

¹⁷² Andreas Hetzel, 'Dialektik der Aufklärung', in *Adorno Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. by Richard Klein, Johann Kreuzer, and Stefan Müller-Doohm, 2nd edn (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 2019), pp. 411-418 (p. 411).

(*ND*, GS 6, p. 233) Adorno's argument suggests that reason strengthens the subjective perception of the individual, whom Adorno sought to rescue "from the wreckage of the bourgeois liberalism which had been its origin".¹⁷³ In other words, reason allows the individual to think freely and to trust their own intellectual capacity. On the other hand, he states that reason simultaneously lays a claim to universal, objective understandings of any phenomenon. This difference produces an unresolved tension between individual perception and collective thought. The emancipatory appeal of enlightenment stalls as the individual's views potentially contrast with wider public thought. Adorno thus charges reason with being unable to bridge the gap between both subjectivity and objectivity, and personal and collective enlightenment. This conflict represents another way in which, for Adorno, reason simultaneously empowers and disenfranchises the individuals it sought to liberate. Despite the different vocabulary used in this example, Adorno's paradoxical thought on this topic remains consistent.

Adorno's opposition to systematic thought creates a parallel to Nietzsche's thought, given Nietzsche's overt criticism of systemisation. Nietzsche criticises systematic thought and its proponents in, for example, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, as noted in Chapter Two, accusing those who favour systems of lacking integrity (*GD* 'Sprüche und Pfeile' 26).¹⁷⁴ Additionally, his entire philosophical project, if it can be summarised coarsely, focuses consistently on the needs of the individual, and their intellectual and cultural liberation from the influence of others. This emancipatory programme, as Nietzsche conceived of it, is represented well by Nietzsche's repeated references to the free-thinking individual and is best exemplified in the following excerpt from

¹⁷³ Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (Hassocks: The Harvester Press, 1977), p. 82.

¹⁷⁴ Nietzsche's works contain many disparaging references to intellectual systems and their proponents. For example, see *MR* 318; *JGB* 20; *GM* II 3; *GM* III 21; and *GM* III 23.

Morgenröthe: “Die Schlange, welche sich nicht häuten kann, geht zu Grunde. Ebenso die Geister, welche man verhindert, ihre Meinungen zu wechseln; sie hören auf, Geist zu sein.” (MR 573) Nietzsche here implies that individuals who think in a fixed, systematic manner are restricted by this rigid system, here represented by the inability to change one’s mind. For Nietzsche, systematic thought represents nothing more than an intellectual straitjacket that limits possibilities for thinking outside the box and pushing the limits of knowledge. Far from liberating individuals, these systems embody the paradoxical failure of enlightenment and highlight how, in Nietzsche’s view, enlightenment must be saved from itself. Adorno shares Nietzsche’s belief that enlightenment must be rescued, and we will now turn our focus to address this topic.

3.4 Rescuing enlightenment?

Adorno’s doubts regarding the unfulfilled emancipatory potential of enlightenment are clear and, like Nietzsche, he does not shy away from identifying its pitfalls. However, the dialectical nature of Adorno’s thought means that he must at times shed light on the advantages of enlightenment. Some of these instances have been highlighted above, with perhaps the most explicit promotion of enlightenment being found in the foreword to *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: “Wir hegen keinen Zweifel [...] daß die Freiheit in der Gesellschaft vom aufklärenden Denken unabtrennbar ist.” (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 18) This statement is evidence that Adorno was committed to enlightenment; despite its major flaws, he considers it necessary for a free society. Consequently, though the main concern of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* is to demonstrate how enlightenment’s emancipatory mission has been a paradoxical failure, the reader catches such occasional glimpses of hope for enlightenment in the text. These glimpses become even more significant in light

of Adorno and Horkheimer's plans to write a sequel to *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in which they would undertake to create a positive image of enlightenment.¹⁷⁵ This work never came to fruition and Adorno often lamented a lack of time and favourable conditions for his intellectual work,¹⁷⁶ but it would nonetheless be a mistake to conclude that Adorno saw no future place for enlightenment in thought.

It is possible to construct an image of Adorno's alternative enlightenment, which represents his attempt to overcome the paradoxes of enlightenment. Neither Adorno nor Horkheimer completed an optimistic sequel to *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, but glimpses of a different future for enlightenment emerge in *Negative Dialektik*. Adorno did not necessarily conceptualise *Negative Dialektik* as the answer to the ills of enlightenment he diagnoses in the 1940s, however the text frequently addresses the concerns present in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, such as the limits of systematic thought, which will be examined further below. We should not go as far as to view *Negative Dialektik* as a sequel to *Dialektik der Aufklärung* – the two texts differ significantly in terms of their structure, historical context, and aims – but they can certainly be viewed as forming part of a connected chain of writings. Reading *Negative Dialektik* with this continuity in mind will evidence how Adorno's concerns regarding enlightenment develop towards the end of his career, and how he also seeks to reconcile the pessimism of his exile period with his post-War return to academic and public life in Germany. Finally, this approach is supported further by Adorno's comment that the works he wrote after *Dialektik der Aufklärung* were

¹⁷⁵ Schmidt, 'Mythology and Enlightenment', p. 811.

¹⁷⁶ Adorno makes several references along these lines in his letters to Horkheimer from 1945 to 1949. See *Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Briefwechsel, 1927-1969, Band III: 1945-1949*, ed. by Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005). See especially letters 338 (pp. 54-58); 417 (pp. 186-187); and 465 (pp. 252-257).

a further development of its subject matter. To Adorno's own mind, *Negative Dialektik* expands upon *Dialektik der Aufklärung*.

On this basis, it will be shown that *Negative Dialektik* picks up in many ways where *Dialektik der Aufklärung* left off. Even though Adorno himself acknowledged the significant degree of continuity between the two texts, this approach is not widespread in critical literature. *Negative Dialektik* continues to interest critics, however it is read primarily as a stand-alone text, rather than in the wider context of Adorno's works. This trend has produced insightful readings of a work Brian O'Connor has described as "challenging yet unanswerable",¹⁷⁷ and the variety of critical literature on *Negative Dialektik* underscores how the text invites a wide range of approaches. Daniel Pucciarelli, for instance, has shown how Adorno focuses on the very idea of philosophy in *Negative Dialektik*,¹⁷⁸ as well as on the theory of concepts ("Begriffstheorie") more broadly,¹⁷⁹ creating an image of the text as an abstract, highly theoretical work. Max Pensky's 2020 examination of *Negative Dialektik*, conversely, emphasises what he identifies as Adorno's announcement of philosophy's "lateness" and the "missed appointment" for its realisation.¹⁸⁰ This approach mirrors Pucciarelli's because both Pensky and Pucciarelli zero in on the task of philosophy for Adorno. Recent critics have thus analysed *Negative Dialektik* in terms of how Adorno uses it as a way of exploring future means of undertaking philosophy, rather than dealing directly with enlightenment.

¹⁷⁷ Brian O'Connor, 'Negative Dialectics and Philosophical Truth', in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), pp. 519-530 (p. 519).

¹⁷⁸ Daniel Pucciarelli, *Qualitatives Subjekt: Versuch über Adorno* (Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz, 2019), pp. 34-39 (pp. 34-35).

¹⁷⁹ Pucciarelli, *Qualitatives Subjekt*, pp. 37-39.

¹⁸⁰ Max Pensky, 'Critique and Disappointment: *Negative Dialectics* as Late Philosophy', in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), pp. 503-518 (p. 505).

Brian O'Connor's assessment of *Negative Dialektik*'s enigmatic nature, cited above, rightly implies that there are new interpretations to be explored. Below, a new reading of the text will be offered by bringing it into dialogue with Adorno's concerns from *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and relating these concerns to his and Nietzsche's paradoxical enlightenments. This method will add to previous understandings of *Negative Dialektik*, and of Adorno's development of the ideas expressed in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* by highlighting how *Negative Dialektik* draws upon Adorno's concerns of the 1940s, despite questions of enlightenment being comparatively sparse in his works of the 1950s. Although enlightenment becomes a secondary area of focus for Adorno in the decade following the Second World War, his concerns from *Dialektik der Aufklärung* remained unresolved. What is more, *Negative Dialektik* does not typically feature in commentators' assessments of Adorno's attitude towards enlightenment. As a result our method will not only draw attention to the close relationship between the two texts, but it will also demonstrate that finding solutions to the paradoxical pitfalls of enlightenment remains as central a concern for Adorno in his later works as it is for him in the 1930s and 1940s. Though Peter E. Gordon has rightly warned against totalising interpretations of *Negative Dialektik*,¹⁸¹ it is not controversial to claim that issues of enlightenment form a central part of the text.

The issues of concepts and conceptual thought, two areas that are of greater interest to Adorno than to Nietzsche, are two of the most noteworthy thematic consistencies between the two texts. These topics are foregrounded in *Negative Dialektik*, and their significance is clear from the outset of the text. For instance, in the introduction to the work Adorno writes that philosophy's interest is in the non-conceptual:

¹⁸¹ Peter E. Gordon, *Adorno and Existence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 124.

“Philosophie hat, nach dem geschichtlichen Stande, ihr wahres Interesse dort, wo Hegel, einig mit der Tradition, sein Desinteressement bekundete: beim Begriffslosen” (*ND*, GS 6, pp. 19-20). As well as framing this element of the text as a departure from Hegel, this comment suggests that Adorno conceives of *Negative Dialektik* as promoting a new, non-paradoxical form of philosophy. His new philosophical method seeks to go beyond the empty concepts he criticises in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and thus to uncover new possibilities for understanding the world. Adorno’s commitment to re-evaluating the nature of thought implies that, despite what he views as the paradoxical tendency of enlightenment to descend into barbarism, he identifies a path for the redemption of rational thought. In order to forge this new path, thought must uncouple itself from strict, categorical intellectual systems. Adorno thus lays the foundations for his new form of thinking at the outset of the text.

Furthermore, he suggests soon afterwards that holding onto philosophical concepts is futile. He writes in the text’s introduction that all concepts become non-conceptual: “In Wahrheit gehen alle Begriffe, auch die philosophischen, auf Nichtbegriffliches, weil sie ihrerseits Momente der Realität sind” (*ND*, GS 6, p. 23). The second half of this quotation is notable as Adorno here argues that concepts are merely fleeting moments of reality. In his view, one of categorical thought’s shortcomings is that it is only able to summarise individual, subjective moments.¹⁸² This argument indicates that reality exists in an ever-changing state of flux for Adorno, and that fixed concepts do not adapt to the evolution of ideas. Concepts are left behind as reality changes. Adorno adds to this argument by writing that the nature of the world is itself non-conceptual:

¹⁸² Terrence Thomson, ‘Nonidentity, Materialism and Truth in Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*’, *Cosmos and History*, 31(1) (2017), 343-360 (p. 354).

“Daß der Begriff Begriff ist, auch wenn er von Seiendem handelt, ändert nichts daran, daß er in ein nichtbegriffliches Ganzes verflochten ist” (ND, GS 6, p. 24). On this basis it becomes clear that Adorno considers fixed concepts to be a distortion of reality because they distract us from the world’s non-conceptual foundations. In Adorno’s eyes, the world does not let itself be categorised in black and white terms, and any future, non-paradoxical enlightenment must avoid falling into this trap.

This argument calls into question the nature of knowledge and truth more broadly. If Adorno believes that the world cannot be categorised in overly simple terms, then any form of knowledge must therefore be a highly complex, nuanced construction. However, despite this acknowledgement of reality’s complicated nature, Adorno problematises the idea of thought by rejecting the notion, and plausibility, of objective truth:¹⁸³ “[...] während gegenwärtig jeder Schritt zur Kommunikation hin die Wahrheit ausverkauft und verfälscht. An dieser Paradoxie laboriert mittlerweile alles Sprachliche. Wahrheit ist objektiv und nicht plausibel.” (ND, GS 6, pp. 51-52) Here, Adorno rejects outright objectivity as a means of reaching enlightenment. By suggesting that objective truth is implausible, he places the emphasis for the production of knowledge on the subjective individual, recalling both Kant’s and Nietzsche’s respective appeals to the individual to think and act without being swayed by the will of others. The idea of truth is therefore rejected and instead Adorno implicitly promotes the coexistence of many truths. The redemption of enlightenment for Adorno therefore requires us to let go of the idea of truth that can be pinned to one immutable pillar. This critique recalls Adorno’s earlier criticisms of positivism and its purported attempts to create objective, systematic

¹⁸³ Ruth Groff correctly notes that, in *Negative Dialektik*, Adorno “is concerned that thought is inherently problematic.” She argues that Adorno wishes for the individual to acknowledge that critical thought ultimately does its objects an injustice. See *Subject and Object: Frankfurt School Writings on Epistemology, Ontology, and Method*, ed. by Ruth Groff (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 100.

understandings of the world, which demonstrates that Adorno's thought on this topic remains remarkably consistent between 1947 and 1966.

Later in *Negative Dialektik* Adorno expands on how to fill the void left by his rejection of objective truth. He argues in section one of the text that forms of knowledge are irrelevant when viewed on their own. Instead, they gain in meaning when viewed in relation to other phenomena: "Die Gesellschaft ist zu dem totalen Funktionszusammenhang geworden [...]; was ist, ist relativ auf Anderes, irrelevant an sich selbst." (ND, GS 6, p. 73) Adorno here suggests that no phenomenon can be viewed in isolation, and forms of knowledge must instead be considered against the background of their wider context. Individual phenomena are thus unimportant for Adorno, and he instead suggests that relevant knowledge can only be generated when considering how one phenomenon relates to others. This argument reinforces Adorno's view that humans must resist the temptation to create seemingly objective, over-arching truths because he here posits that every phenomenon is contingent on others for its meaning. This explanation may seem ironic given Adorno's rejection of systematic thought. His suggestion that knowledge of one phenomenon relies on an understanding of other phenomena assumes that ideas exist in a symbiotic system as one idea ultimately depends on others. Knowledge thus consists of a web of interchained ideas, in which one cannot be viewed separately from one another.

Adorno does not view this nexus of knowledge as a system because he emphasises the ever-changing nature of knowledge. The network of ideas he describes differs from the systems he critiques in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* as, in his own scheme, constant change allows ideas to evolve freely. Conversely, his critique of systems targets their fixed nature, which supposedly seeks to impose interpretations of the world on

individuals. The following quotation from *Negative Dialektik* underscores this difference: “Wo eine Kategorie [...] sich verändert, ändert sich die Konstellation aller und damit wiederum eine jegliche.” (ND, GS 6, p. 169) This excerpt demonstrates that, for Adorno, knowledge is an evolving structure of interlinked phenomena. He believes that a change to one phenomenon affects all others in the web of knowledge, which produce insights “when the connection of ‘moments’ begins to reveal what is otherwise hidden”, as Andrew Bowie summarises.¹⁸⁴ This understanding of knowledge has significant consequences for how we view Adorno’s attempt to rescue enlightenment. As knowledge exists in a constant state of change, we infer that Adorno’s enlightenment is a never-ending process with no end goal in sight. Intellectual advances become a perpetual undertaking, and this concept forms a parallel to Nietzsche’s understanding of enlightenment as a continuously evolving journey. Having established this link, along with the features of Adorno’s new enlightenment, his and Nietzsche’s attempts to rescue enlightenment can now be compared in more detail.

3.5 Enlightenment Journeys

The examination above has shown that Adorno’s view of the enlightenment he inherited from his philosophical predecessors is even more paradoxical than Nietzsche’s understanding of enlightenment as he received it. Whilst Adorno views the enlightenment he receives as a genuine means of emancipation, he also considers it and its main tool of reason to paradoxically lead to the dialectical downfall of rational order. This attitude is likely the reason behind a crucial difference between Adorno’s and Nietzsche’s respective understandings of the paradoxes of enlightenment. Whereas Nietzsche’s antithetical

¹⁸⁴ Andrew Bowie, *Adorno and the Ends of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p. 70.

model embraces the paradoxes of enlightenment and seeks to integrate them into his reformed enlightenment, Adorno reshapes enlightenment in order to avoid what he views as the dialectical pitfalls of these paradoxes. Nietzsche therefore makes space for non-reason in his new enlightenment, in contrast to Adorno, who wishes to avoid irrationality altogether. Despite these different conceptions of rational thought, there is an element of similarity between the images of how enlightenment can be saved in both Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective works. This chapter will close by bringing these images into dialogue with each other and discussing the ways in which Nietzsche's and Adorno's works converge, and diverge, with respect to their thought on the redemption of enlightenment.

The main similarity between Nietzsche's and Adorno's new enlightenments is that both thinkers present enlightenment as a never-ending process that has no set goal. Zarathustra, as Nietzsche's new model Aufklärer, promotes enlightenment as a metaphorical and a literal journey. By wandering the world and engaging with those he encounters, Zarathustra urges the individual to find joy on a perpetual voyage. Although Adorno does not use the image of the journey to convey this idea in his writings, the image that emerges from his discussion is similar to Nietzsche's model of a perpetual journey. For instance, by arguing that knowledge exists in constantly evolving networks, Adorno implies that there will not be a single point at which the individual can consider themselves to have reached a permanent state of enlightenment. We can therefore infer that Adorno's enlightenment is, like Nietzsche's, a journey without end. As constellations of knowledge evolve, Adorno implicitly tasks the individual with remaining abreast of these changes and adapting their understanding of the world accordingly. For both Nietzsche and Adorno, then, the answer to their predecessors' supposedly failed attempts at enlightenment is to find meaning in the process of seeking enlightenment. Nietzsche

promotes this principle more enthusiastically than Adorno, yet the latter nonetheless produces a similar model of undefined enlightenment to Nietzsche's.

However, the mode of expression of Adorno's attempt to redeem enlightenment is different from the way in which Nietzsche promotes his new enlightenment. In *Also sprach Zarathustra* Nietzsche seeks to redefine enlightenment via a quasi-literary text. As a result, enlightenment becomes entangled with art; enlightenment is unlocked via artistic expression, which creates an image of a vibrant, creative form of enlightenment. This promotion of enlightenment highlights how art and artistic expression remain central concerns for Nietzsche irrespective of the topic at hand. Furthermore, *Also sprach Zarathustra* pushes the reader to learn via the many parables present in the work. This method can almost certainly be viewed as an effort by Nietzsche to parody the Bible and to present Zarathustra as a Christ-life prophet. Adorno's enlightenment, as presented in *Negative Dialektik*, differs significantly as Adorno does not view enlightenment through an aesthetic lens in this instance. He affirms the distance between the text and aesthetics in its foreword: "Die *Negative Dialektik*, die von allen ästhetischen Themen sich fernhält" (*ND*, GS 6, p. 10). Adorno's attempt at rescuing enlightenment comes through the means of traditional academic philosophy, which suggests that the target audience of this enlightenment is not as broad as Nietzsche's. Nietzsche views culture as both the means and target of enlightenment, whereas Adorno considers the academy the main site for intellectual change.

Additionally, this difference in how Nietzsche and Adorno articulate their redefined enlightenments underscores the fact that Nietzsche's enlightenment has an emblem, whereas Adorno's does not. As a prophet of Nietzsche's new enlightenment, Zarathustra leads cultural change. We can infer that these cultural developments are slow

at first as Zarathustra requires time to reach a wide number of people. However, this collective form of enlightenment gradually gathers in pace as more and more people engage independently and productively with Zarathustra's key messages. This pattern creates an enlightenment that spreads via a ripple effect, with the wave gathering pace the further it moves from its starting point. Adorno, on the other hand, does not identify an enlightenment figurehead; he instead is more concerned with the intellectual mechanisms of enlightenment rather than how it can filter through wider society. Adorno's central concern is the intellectual processes by which self-defeating paradoxical enlightenment can be saved from itself, rather than how this enlightenment can permeate into a culture. This difference highlights another way in which Nietzsche's and Adorno's new enlightenments differ. Whereas Nietzsche focuses on how to spread word of his new enlightenment, Adorno concentrates more intensely on redeeming it. Nietzsche therefore has a long-term vision in mind for his new enlightenment, whereas Adorno's main concern lies with the immediate task of remodelling enlightenment to rescue it from its worst enemy: itself.

The final key difference between Nietzsche's and Adorno's alternative models of enlightenment is that Nietzsche's new enlightenment is primarily experiential, whereas Adorno's is not. Nietzsche has Zarathustra wander out into the wider world to seek enlightenment. He has no end goal, yet this lack of direction is precisely what Nietzsche encourages. The most important aspect of this model of enlightenment is the journey, rather than the destination. Additionally, as Zarathustra interacts with a wide range of people, Nietzsche's new enlightenment is portrayed as an individual undertaking that cannot function without engaging with others. Given that Adorno conveys his new model of enlightenment via traditional academic philosophy, the mind of the individual is the

most important aspect in Adorno's attempts to forge an alternative path for enlightenment. Whilst it is far from true to claim that Adorno is not concerned about the collective development of enlightenment – the Marxian basis of Adorno's thought means that wider society always remains part of the picture – he focuses primarily on how enlightenment manifests in the individual mind than he does on how interactions between individuals shape the path towards enlightenment. As was the case in the paragraph above, this difference ultimately emphasises the difference in scale between Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective new enlightenments. Nietzsche has wider culture in mind, Adorno the individual mind.

In summary, Nietzsche and Adorno are similarly sceptical towards enlightenment. Both thinkers acknowledge the benefits of the enlightenment models they inherit, however they are equally keen to diagnose enlightenment's paradoxical flaws. These similarities are remarkable, given the different circumstances from which Nietzsche's and Adorno's critiques emerge. The views of the former were motivated by what he viewed as cultural decline, and the need to rejuvenate a German culture that he considered fundamentally ill. Conversely, the latter's critique of enlightenment was almost certainly shaped by his intellectual surroundings, and his experiences of fascism. However, Nietzsche's and Adorno's basic paradoxical understandings of enlightenment differ. Whereas Nietzsche holds an antithetical image of enlightenment, Adorno both respects and deplors the results of his dialectical conception. Chapters Two and Three of this study have thus shown that both thinkers maintain paradoxical theoretical images of enlightenment. Our discussion so far has focused on theoretical approaches to enlightenment in an intellectual sense, yet neither thinker wishes for their respective models of enlightenment to be viewed as stand-alone intellectual models. As hinted at

throughout Chapters Two and Three, Nietzsche and Adorno tie their interest in enlightenment to cultural questions, which frequently relate to art and aesthetics. Given that both thinkers are known as cultural critics, and each wrote extensively on art, an examination of aesthetics and enlightenment is the next natural step for our investigation.

Chapter Four: Aesthetics and Enlightenment

We have seen that Nietzsche and Adorno hold ambivalent attitudes towards enlightenment as a transhistorical process and the Enlightenment as an epoch. Both thinkers critique the intellectual models they inherited, yet they also plot a new path for a brighter future of enlightenment. Nietzsche does so primarily by means of Zarathustra, who represents Nietzsche's new form of enlightenment. Zarathustra is self-reliant, patient, and does not search for enlightenment in places such as schools or universities, where Nietzsche believes it cannot be found. Instead, Zarathustra engages with those he encounters every day in order to continually progress towards a new state of enlightenment, even if Nietzsche's new model of enlightenment portrays this process as one that can never be completed. In this respect, Nietzsche's enlightenment is a journey without a defined end. The trajectory of Adorno's dialectical understanding of enlightenment, on the other hand, presents a pessimistic image of temporary progress that inevitably descends into the barbarism whence it came. To Adorno, enlightenment is as much a process that enslaves human beings as it is one that liberates them from arbitrary structures of power and authority. His solution to enlightenment's flaws is to advocate departing from self-serving instrumental reason, as well as to argue that truth and knowledge perpetually shift. Far from being a stable sanctuary, enlightenment is perpetual work in progress for both thinkers.

Another similarity we have identified between Nietzsche's and Adorno's approaches to enlightenment is that both thinkers tie their critiques to the wider cultures in which they are found. For instance, Nietzsche's appraisal of enlightenment (and the Enlightenment) is closely linked to his understanding of Francophone Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau and Voltaire, as well as what he identifies as their relationship

to the cultural and intellectual shifts of the French Revolution. Similarly, as explored in Chapter Three, Adorno's understanding of enlightenment cannot be separated from his critique of the monopoly capitalism he experienced first-hand whilst exiled in the United States, which he considered to represent the flaws of dry, detached reason. It is thus clear that, for both Nietzsche and Adorno, questions of enlightenment cannot be separated from their cultural origins. Whether linked to intellectual phenomena such as the Francophone Enlightenment or cultural institutions like Hollywood, Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective approaches to enlightenment maintain their ties to culture in the broadest sense. The most significant cultural interest that Nietzsche and Adorno have in common, though, is art. For both thinkers, artistic production opens new avenues for cultural and intellectual change, as well as for insights on the role of art in culture. It will therefore be the task of this chapter to compare each thinker's aesthetic thought with reference to its relationship to the paradoxes of enlightenment.

This chapter will use Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872) and Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie* (posthumous, 1970) as its main sources for this comparison. This choice of texts may at first glance seem to restrict discussion of both thinkers' aesthetic thought, given that *Die Geburt der Tragödie* was Nietzsche's first published work and that *Ästhetische Theorie* was published posthumously and in an unfinished state. However, this choice of texts has significant advantages. Firstly, both works can be considered representative of Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective aesthetic thought. Although *Die Geburt der Tragödie* was Nietzsche's first published text, the central tenets of Nietzsche's thinking about art and aesthetics, to be explored below, remain similar. This assertion does not imply that his aesthetic thought did not change at all, yet it maintains that Nietzsche did not depart significantly from the foundations he established

in 1872. In Adorno's case, his *Ästhetische Theorie* was drafted over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, meaning that the text is far from an isolated product in the context of his wider thought. Furthermore, *Ästhetische Theorie* covers extensive ground and pulls together many strands of Adorno's aesthetic thought in one text. Far from omitting detail, then, this focused choice of texts will ensure that the most crucial aspects of Nietzsche's and Adorno's aesthetic thought can be compared with reference to enlightenment.

This approach will build upon existing scholarship on Nietzsche's and Adorno's individual aesthetic thought, as well as on the relatively limited comparative assessments of their aesthetics. Existing comparative assessments of Nietzsche's and Adorno's aesthetic thought are typically not full-length studies, which means that space for analysis and discussion are limited. However, one exception to this claim is Axel Pichler's assessment of how Adorno uses Nietzsche, amongst other sources, in *Ästhetische Theorie*. As well as providing useful contextual information on the history of the text, such as that Adorno had planned to carry out further work on the text before his death in 1969,¹⁸⁵ Pichler's discussion draws out elements of Nietzsche's influence in the text. Additionally, Pichler details core features of the arguments found in *Ästhetische Theorie*, such as the relationship between art and truth (to be explored below). Though not a full-length study, Pichler's examination covers considerable ground, and it serves as a strong introduction to Nietzsche's place in *Ästhetische Theorie*. However, though Pichler uses one section of *Ästhetische Theorie* as a springboard for his discussion, his focus is otherwise not on comparative close reading. We will therefore build upon Pichler's work by widening the

¹⁸⁵ Axel Pichler, '»Eine antimetaphysische aber artistische Philosophie«: Adornos Inanspruchnahme Nietzsches und anderer Quellen in einer Einfügung zur *Ästhetischen Theorie*', in *Text/Kritik: Nietzsche und Adorno*, ed. by Martin Endres, Axel Pichler, and Claus Zittel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 231-272 (p. 235).

scope of the investigation. The discussion to follow below will supplement Pichler's approach by considering the text as a whole, with a comparative focus in mind.

The reader is, however, largely left to compare critics' conclusions on Nietzsche and Adorno as individual thinkers in order to create an image of the scholarly consensus surrounding the two thinkers. Unsurprisingly, there is a wealth of scholarship on Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, meaning that we have a range of approaches at our disposal. Some, such as Paul Raimond Daniels, shine a light on the genealogical approach of Nietzsche's text. Though he does not do so explicitly, Daniels implicitly highlights Nietzsche's genealogical method through his discussion of how Nietzsche's portrayal of Socratism in the text represents a "counter-history of Athens".¹⁸⁶ This approach to the text underscores the extent to which Nietzsche seeks to create a historic basis for his argument. By drawing the reader's attention to this method, Daniels shows how Nietzsche's text positions itself as a case study. As well as showing that Nietzsche's genealogical method is not limited to his later works – texts such as *Zur Genealogie der Moral* take this approach most clearly – this method identifies historicising qualities in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, and it ultimately shows how the foundation of the text is Nietzsche's appreciation for ancient Greek society. In order to change the present, Nietzsche reaches into the past.

In the introduction to their wide-ranging commentary on *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Douglas Burnham and Martin Jesinghausen highlight different elements of the text to Daniels. Whereas Daniels focuses on the text's core messages, Burnham and

¹⁸⁶ Paul Raimond Daniels, 'The Birth of Tragedy: Transfiguration Through Art', in *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Tom Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 147-172 (p. 164).

Jesinghausen emphasise Nietzsche's methods and style.¹⁸⁷ In particular, Burnham and Jesinghausen underscore how the text invites the reader's participation because of its experimental, "hybrid" nature, as well as the way in which the text represents a "dialogue" with the reader.¹⁸⁸ This analysis places emphasis on the style and form of the text, suggesting that the way in which the text delivers its core messages is as significant as the messages themselves. This argument gains in strength and significance when considering *Die Geburt der Tragödie* alongside Nietzsche's wider corpus of works. The structure, style, and form of his writings can vary significantly from text to text, with works such as *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* making widespread use of the aphoristic form, whereas *Also sprach Zarathustra* mimics many stylistic features of the novel. This variety means that the reader's attention is drawn to the way in which Nietzsche's works convey their philosophical messages. This interpretation of Burnham and Jesinghausen's work does not downplay the other elements of their analysis but aims instead to emphasise what can be viewed as their most valuable contribution to discussion of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

Critical approaches to Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie* often diverge from those taken in scholarship on *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. One reason for this difference is that the structure and style of *Ästhetische Theorie* are, whilst important, not major factors in how we read Adorno's text. Adorno's text was unfinished and the most important feature of its form to acknowledge is that it was, by Adorno's admission, a fragmentary work. The editors of the now standard critical edition sought to remain true to Adorno's

¹⁸⁷ Douglas Burnham and Martin Jesinghausen, *Nietzsche's 'The Birth of Tragedy': A Reader's Guide* (London/New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 10.

¹⁸⁸ Burnham and Jesinghausen, *Nietzsche's 'The Birth of Tragedy'*, pp. 10-11.

preliminary manuscript and the work we read exists as permanent “work in progress”.¹⁸⁹ Wider scholarship on *Ästhetische Theorie* typically analyses the theoretical content of Adorno’s text because the work is abstract in nature, whereas *Die Geburt der Tragödie* tends to ground itself in case studies such as ancient Greek art. One recent example of how critics have approached the theory behind *Ästhetische Theorie* is Eva Geulen’s exploration of the concept of form.¹⁹⁰ The strength of Geulen’s article is that she not only directs us to wider scholarly interest in the topic, but she also undertakes a detailed analysis of form in *Ästhetische Theorie*, discussing how Adorno distinguishes between the form of the artwork, and other types of form.¹⁹¹ Geulen thus draws out nuances in one concept found at the text’s core, emphasising how in scholarship on *Ästhetische Theorie* the text’s content invariably trumps its style.

This brief exposition of varying approaches to scholarship on Nietzsche, Adorno and aesthetics has shown that there is no consensus on how to approach the two thinkers comparatively, even though there are undoubtedly trends in critics’ assessments of the two thinkers as individuals. We have seen that style is important in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, as it is in Nietzsche’s works on the whole, however below we will proceed with a primarily conceptual comparative analysis of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Ästhetische Theorie*. This choice will allow us to treat each text on the same terms. The primary concern of this analysis will therefore be to compare what Nietzsche and Adorno say, rather than how they say it, while acknowledging that they carry out their respective philosophical investigations in different ways. In spite of these differences in method and

¹⁸⁹ Rolf Tiedemann, ‘Editorisches Nachwort’, in Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften in 20 Bänden*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, Vol. 7, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), pp. 535-544 (p. 537).

¹⁹⁰ Eva Geulen, “‘The Primacy of the Object’: Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* and the Return of Form”, *New German Critique*, 48(2) (August 2021), 5-21 (pp. 5-16).

¹⁹¹ Geulen, “‘The Primacy of the Object’”, p. 16.

style, it is possible to identify several commonalities between the ideas and the areas of focus of Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective aesthetic thought, and these similarities will guide the discussion below. Perhaps the most fundamental question that both thinkers address relates to the nature of art and its function in human society. This issue is essential to address because it lays the foundations for any discussion of aesthetics and enlightenment. As such, it will form the next step in our investigation.

4.1 The Nature and Function of Art

Central to Nietzsche's discussion in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* is an assessment of art's place in culture. Rather than viewing it as a neutral, passive undertaking, he sees participation in art as essential to life. Art and aesthetic experience are crucial components in Nietzsche's image of a healthy culture, to add to Andrew Huddleston's list of factors centred on the individual.¹⁹² Probing this significance further will allow us to appreciate how Nietzsche sees human experience and art as analogous. Before proceeding with this analysis, though, it is important first to summarise the main arguments of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* so that the text's fundamental premise is clear. At the beginning of the text, Nietzsche outlines what he perceives as the antithesis of the 'Apollonian' and the 'Dionysian'. In essence, these two terms refer to artistic drives that Nietzsche locates at the heart of pre-Socratic Greek culture, which is the culture that Nietzsche uses as his case study in the text. Nietzsche's description of the Apollonian and the Dionysian in the text's opening sentence implies that each phenomenon has sub-conscious origins, meaning that they are both produced before the individual can understand them as

¹⁹² For example, Huddleston lists "Will to Power" and "Resilience" as two such factors. Andrew Huddleston, 'Nietzsche on the Health of the Soul', *Inquiry*, 60(1-2) (2017), 135-164 (pp. 140 & 146).

mediated, rational thoughts. He adds that these drives predominantly struggle against each other, and that they are only occasionally reconciled:

Wir werden viel für die ästhetische Wissenschaft gewonnen haben, wenn wir nicht nur zur logischen Einsicht, sondern zur unmittelbaren Sicherheit der Anschauung gekommen sind, dass die Fortentwicklung der Kunst an die Duplicität des Apollinischen und des Dionysischen gebunden ist: in ähnlicher Weise, wie die Generation von der Zweiheit der Geschlechter, bei fortwährendem Kampfe und nur periodisch eintretender Versöhnung, abhängt. [...] beide so verschiedene Triebe gehen neben einander her, zumeist im offenen Zwiespalt mit einander und sich gegenseitig zu immer neuen kräftigeren Geburten reizend (GT 1).

The antithesis of the Apollonian and the Dionysian therefore represents a perpetual struggle between opposites that swings between extremes,¹⁹³ coming to a temporary moment of harmony only under certain conditions. This moment is crucial for Nietzsche as the pairing of the beauty-oriented drive of the Apollonian and the chaotic, subjective impulse of the Dionysian enables the production of what he views as the pinnacle of art: the pre-Socratic Greek tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles.¹⁹⁴ Nietzsche believes that the Greeks needed tragedy as he considered them extreme pessimists who used tragedy as a means of ‘justifying life’ in the face of the horrors of existence (“Entsetzlichkeiten des Daseins” (GT 3)).¹⁹⁵ Indeed, Nietzsche writes that life’s sorrows can only be justified aesthetically: “Denn nur als aesthetisches Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig gerechtfertigt” (GT 5). For Nietzsche, then, pre-Socratic tragedy, of which he believed Wagner’s music-dramas were to some extent a reincarnation, is the art

¹⁹³ Rose Pfeffer, *Nietzsche: Disciple of Dionysus* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1972), p. 205.

¹⁹⁴ Whereas Nietzsche refers to the Apollonian as a drive towards beauty (“Schönheitstrieb”) in GT 3, he emphasises the chaotic nature of Dionysian artforms (like dance) in GT 1.

¹⁹⁵ It is noteworthy that the full title of the 1886 edition of the text is *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Oder: Griechenthum und Pessimismus*, departing from the 1872 title of *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*.

form best suited to not only rendering existence bearable, but also making it worth celebrating and affirming.

It is worth dwelling on this argument for two reasons. Firstly it highlights how, for Nietzsche, art can rescue a culture from decline. Irrespective of how pessimistic a person or culture may be, he firmly believes that art and aesthetic experience offer solutions to humans' cultural and existential woes. These cultural and existential issues are symbolised by the Nietzsche's reimagining of Socrates in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Here (GT 11-15), Nietzsche equates Socrates with a dry, hyper-rational way of viewing the world. He extends this critique to the sphere by rejecting what he terms aesthetic Socratism, which he identifies as an anti-Dionysian method of producing art.¹⁹⁶ An overly rational approach to art prevents the production of authentic tragedy and other great forms of art as, in Nietzsche's view, it acts against, or shuts out, Dionysian impulses,¹⁹⁷ and thus limits what he views as the necessary the remit of non-reason. Nietzsche provides his most concise critique of so-called aesthetic Socratism in section 12 of the text:

Wenn an diesem [dem neuen Kunstschaffen] die ältere Tragödie zu Grunde ging, so ist also der aesthetische Sokratismus das mörderische Princip: insofern aber der Kampf gegen das Dionysische der älteren Kunst gerichtet war, erkennen wir in Sokrates den Gegner des Dionysus (GT 12).

Nietzsche believes that (aesthetic) Socratism and cultural decline go hand-in-hand. Socrates, the demonised anti-Dionysus, is accused of promoting reason over instinct, thus downplaying the significance of the paradoxes of enlightenment and setting in motion a chain of cultural decline that has continued into the nineteenth century.¹⁹⁸ The sceptical

¹⁹⁶ In GT 12 Nietzsche refers to his image of aesthetic Socratism as a 'murderous principle' ("mörderische[s] Princip").

¹⁹⁷ Matthew Rampley, *Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 112.

¹⁹⁸ Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, 'Décadence artistique et décadence physiologique: Les dernières critiques de Nietzsche contre Richard Wagner', *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, 188(3) (July-September 1998), 275-92 (p. 283).

reader questions, with good reason, whether Nietzsche's claim that one man should be considered responsible for centuries of cultural decline can be taken at face value. However, as has been suggested, 'Socrates' is a metonym for hyper-rational tendencies in modern culture.¹⁹⁹ The attack on 'Socrates' is therefore a vehicle for Nietzsche's attack on modern German culture's tendency to favour rational order over impassioned artistic chaos, glossing over or ignoring the painful, irrational basis of existence in the process.

Nietzsche develops his attack on hyper-rational Socratism over the course of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, further highlighting the links between his aesthetic writing and his thought on enlightenment. Nietzsche later argues that Socrates replaced Apollo in the antithetical model of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, and that this change directly contributed to the downfall of Greek tragedy:

Auch Euripides war in gewissem Sinne nur Maske: die Gottheit, die aus ihm redete, war nicht Dionysus, auch nicht Apollo, sondern ein ganz neugeborner Dämon, genannt S o k r a t e s . Dies ist der neue Gegensatz: das Dionysische und das Sokratische, und das Kunstwerk der griechischen Tragödie ging an ihm zu Grunde.
(GT 12)

Rather than replicating the role of the Apollonian in artistic production, and thus mirroring the paradoxes of enlightenment by complementing the Dionysian, Nietzsche believes that the Socratic became a rationalistic counterweight to Dionysian intoxication. Although Nietzsche denotes the Socratic a godhead ("Gottheit"), implying a level of respect for the Socratic, referring to Socrates as a demon shows without doubt that he views Socratic rationality negatively. This opposition of the two phenomena highlights how Nietzsche maintains an antithetical model of reason and non-reason in aesthetic thought, as he does in his writing on enlightenment and the Enlightenment, creating a

¹⁹⁹ Daniel Came, 'The Aesthetic Justification of Existence', in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Keith Ansell Pearson (Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 41-57 (pp. 45-46).

direct opposition between the unconscious irrationality of the Dionysian and the conscious rationality of the Socratic. He does not go so far as to promote an entirely non-rational life, yet Nietzsche undeniably encourages humans to embrace invigorating aesthetic irrationality, such as when he describes the vitalising human reaction to the Dionysian dithyramb, in the form of music and dance:

Jetzt soll sich das Wesen der Natur symbolisch ausdrücken; eine neue Welt der Symbole ist nöthig, einmal die ganze leibliche Symbolik, nicht nur die Symbolik des Mundes, des Gesichts, des Wortes, sondern die volle, alle Glieder rhythmisch bewegende Tanzgebärde. Sodann wachsen die anderen symbolischen Kräfte, die der Musik, in Rhythmik, Dynamik und Harmonie, plötzlich ungestüm. (*GT 2*)

The terminology Nietzsche uses to describe the Apollonian and the Dionysian occasionally changes in this text, however the basic ideas behind this varying vocabulary remain unchanged. For instance, in the text's first section, Nietzsche refers to the artistic worlds of intoxication and dream to describe the Dionysian and the Apollonian respectively: "Um uns jene beiden Triebe näher zu bringen, denken wir sie uns zunächst als die getrennten Kunstwelten des T r a u m e s und des R a u s c h e s" (*GT 1*). Once again, Nietzsche refers to the Apollonian and the Dionysian as drives, which implies that humans feel a natural impulse to create art, forming a parallel to Adorno's understanding of the drives underlying human behaviour. The reader consequently infers that the need for aesthetic experience is embedded in the human psyche, which affirms art's central place in Nietzsche's understanding of life.²⁰⁰ Nietzsche makes this argument explicitly later in the text, writing that humans experience joy in the Apollonian: "[...] dass unser innerstes Wesen, der gemeinsame Untergrund von uns allen, mit tiefer Lust und freudiger

²⁰⁰ Critics such as Annamaria Lossi have noted Nietzsche's emphasis on how art is an integral part of life. See Annamaria Lossi, 'A Promise of Happiness? Nietzsche on Beauty', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 51(1) (2022), 179-194 (p. 182).

Nothwendigkeit den Traum an sich erfährt” (*GT 1*). By creating a link between art and the core of the human psyche, Nietzsche implies that art is an integral part of life and its affirmation.²⁰¹ Rather than being something to be enjoyed, aesthetic experience is instead a common component to all people that survives by virtue of its place at the core of the human being.

By addressing the irrationality he identifies in human beings – rather than in enlightenment itself, as Adorno does – Nietzsche depicts art as a collective undertaking and experience. However, this approach does not mean that Nietzsche is not concerned with the individual reception of art. For example, he provides the following description of how the individual experiences Dionysian intoxication: “Singend und tanzend äussert sich der Mensch als Mitglied einer höheren Gemeinsamkeit: er hat das Gehen und das Sprechen verlernt und ist auf dem Wege, tanzend in die Lüfte emporzufliegen” (*GT 1*). This excerpt shows how Nietzsche encourages individuals to embrace Dionysian chaos by temporarily ignoring the calm, rational functions of speaking and walking. He instead pushes people towards embracing invigorating forms of expression like dance, as embodied by the image of the individual flying into the air, and simultaneously argues that such expressions allegedly flourished in earlier, ‘healthier’ cultures. It is telling that Nietzsche places significant responsibility for engaging with art with the individual, even if they are part of an anonymous mass, because Nietzsche here attempts to strike a balance between driving collective cultural change and empowering individuals to embrace irrational aesthetic experience. Nietzsche thus wishes to empower both the individual and the culture in which they live.

²⁰¹ Bernard Reginster, ‘Art and Affirmation’, in *Nietzsche on Art and Life*, ed. by Daniel Came (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 14-38 (pp. 14-15).

The culmination of Nietzsche's promotion of individual empowerment in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* is found in section twenty of the text. Here, Nietzsche uses rich imagery to depict the downfall of what he terms the 'Socratic person', an extension of the image of Socrates explored earlier in this chapter: "Ja, meine Freunde, glaubt mit mir an das dionysische Leben [...]. Die Zeit des sokratischen Menschen ist vorüber: kränzt euch mit Epheu, [...] und wundert euch nicht, wenn Tiger und Panther sich schmeichelnd zu euren Knien niederlegen. Jetzt wagt es nur, tragische Menschen zu sein" (GT 20). This rallying cry for humanity to embrace Dionysian chaos, alongside Apollonian order, and thus to be tragic people ("tragische Menschen"), represents one of Nietzsche's clearest attempts to redress what he views as the imbalance between rational and irrational forms of art. Additionally, as mentioned above, the imagery used in this excerpt adds to its power. Nietzsche's description draws a parallel between the tragic person, and by extension Dionysian art and big cats. He uses tigers and panthers as metaphors for perfectly formed, innately powerful Dionysian energy. Additionally, this link reinforces the relationship between art and nature that Nietzsche identifies in the form of the human need for intense aesthetic experience – a drive inherent to human beings²⁰² – and his use of imagery cements one of his central aesthetic arguments.

In short, Nietzsche believes that Dionysian art is part of a fixed, common element of the human psyche. He writes that members of ancient Greek society were able to temporarily flee from the pains of everyday life by embracing Dionysian intoxication. The most significant point to note in the context of this study is that Nietzsche's model of the Apollonian and the Dionysian resembles his antithetical, paradoxical model of

²⁰² Carsten Bäuerl, *Zwischen Rausch und Kritik 1: Auf den Spuren von Nietzsche, Bataille, Adorno und Benjamin*, 2nd edn (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2019), p. 17.

enlightenment. According to both schemes opposing forces, whether in the form of the Apollonian and Dionysian, or reason and non-reason, compete against one another. At points one reigns over the other, meaning that reason and non-reason find themselves in a constant struggle for supremacy. Furthermore, Nietzsche's antithetical models of enlightenment, and aesthetics both represent attempts to redress what Nietzsche views as an imbalance of reason and non-reason. His critique of so-called Socratism, in combination with his promotion of the Dionysian, show how Nietzsche is concerned that rational thought and behaviour have caused artistic and cultural decline. Similarly, his acceptance of non-rational bodily drives in texts such as *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and *Zur Genealogie der Moral* demonstrates how he seeks to limit the reach of reason by eliminating the repression of what he considers instincts. Nietzsche's use of an antithetical models of reason and non-reason is, on this basis, consistent across his paradoxical thought on enlightenment, and his aesthetic thought.

However, there is one important difference between Nietzsche's general attitude to enlightenment – his active, experiential enlightenment – and his approach to enlightenment via aesthetic experience. The image of Nietzsche's new enlightenment that emerges from his depiction of Zarathustra suggests that the journey to enlightenment never ends. It instead places value on the journey towards enlightenment, emphasising the process of enlightenment rather than its outcome. Neither Nietzsche nor Zarathustra prescribes what an enlightened person should think, and the responsibility for forging a path towards enlightenment lies with individuals on a personal level. However, Nietzsche does not reproduce this model in his discussion of aesthetic enlightenment. By claiming that the significance of art for humanity is fixed, in addition to describing how the common individual drives of the Apollonian and the Dionysian should be harnessed, he

prescribes a way for people to (re)discover the artistic drives that allow them to experience a balance between Dionysian intoxication and Apollonian rationality. This process (re)enlightens people about the nature of aesthetic experience, which speaks to an unshifting element at the core of the human being, and we can therefore distinguish between Nietzsche's new, experiential enlightenment and his more passive aesthetic enlightenment. The former encourages people to wander freely, but the latter prescribes a repeating, short-term path that furthers humanity's understanding of itself and its existential need for art.

Adorno's approach to aesthetics and enlightenment is extremely consistent; in both areas of thought he maintains the same dialectical approach across his whole career. For example, he states that art is an embodiment of the same dialectic of enlightenment as he believes rational thought to be: "Kunst ist Rationalität, welche diese kritisiert, ohne ihr sich zu entziehen; kein Vorrationales oder Irrationales [...]. Rationalistische und irrationalistische Kunsttheorie versagen daher gleichermaßen." (AT, GS 7, p. 87) Adorno claims that art is a form of rationality that, paradoxically, rationally critiques itself without dissociating itself from rationality. By extension, art therefore contributes to its own downfall by both highlighting its own flaws and using a flawed tool (reason) to self-reflexively undermine itself. The excerpt provided above is not an isolated example in *Ästhetische Theorie*, and we encounter this critique throughout the text.²⁰³ The example provided earlier in this paragraph, though, accentuates another important aspect of Adorno's arguments: that art and philosophy are intertwined. By mirroring the dialectical processes of enlightenment, art for Adorno is intrinsically linked to philosophical

²⁰³ To provide just one further example that demonstrates the dialectical relationship between reason and non-reason in *Ästhetische Theorie*, Adorno links reason with what he views as its ultimate goal, non-rationality: "Denn der Zweck aller Rationalität, des Inbegriffs der naturbeherrschenden Mittel, wäre, was wiederum nicht Mittel ist, ein Nichtrationales also" (AT, GS 7, p. 86).

thought,²⁰⁴ and it can therefore be viewed as a means of philosophical and societal discovery. Art thus has an aesthetic and an intellectual function for Adorno, whereas for Nietzsche it serves as a means of living a vitalising, invigorating life.

Adorno soon expands upon the ways in which the artwork represents an intellectual engagement. He implies that an interpretation of a work of art, as well as its meaning, can change from one moment to the next: “Kunstwerke synthetisieren unvereinbare, unidentische, aneinander reibende Momente; sie wahrhaft suchen die Identität des Identischen und des Nichtidentischen prozessual, weil noch ihre Einheit Moment ist, und nicht ihre Zauberformel fürs Ganze.” (AT, GS 7, p. 263) This quotation highlights two crucial elements of Adorno’s approach to art in *Ästhetische Theorie*. Firstly, as addressed at the start of this paragraph, it underscores Adorno’s understanding of the fluidity of art as the artwork thus demands constant reinterpretation. The meaning of an artwork shifts rapidly. Secondly, it shows that, in Adorno’s view, the work of art is characterised by constant tensions rather than being a fully unified phenomenon. He stresses how moments of unity do not evolve beyond fleeting moments at which the unity of the artwork must be grasped before it evolves further. Whereas according to Nietzsche’s understanding of Attic tragedy the artwork creates sustained, albeit not permanent, moments of unity amongst the spectators,²⁰⁵ Adorno’s conception of the

²⁰⁴ Peter Uwe Hohendahl has acknowledged the link between Adorno’s theoretical approach, and his thought on social and aesthetic developments. See Peter Uwe Hohendahl, ‘Aesthetic Theory as Social Theory’, in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), pp. 413-426 (p. 425). Earlier in the same volume as Hohendahl’s essay, Andrew Huddleston makes a similar argument, underscoring the relationship between art and its surrounding social world in Adorno’s thought. See Andrew Huddleston, ‘Adorno’s Aesthetic Model of Social Critique’, in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), pp. 237-250 (p. 240).

²⁰⁵ In *GT 7* Nietzsche states that tragedy, via the Dionysian, created a sense of unity amongst its spectators that led back to the heart of nature: “In gleicher Weise, glaube ich, fühlte sich der griechische Culturmensch im Angesicht des Satyrchors aufgehoben: und dies ist die nächste Wirkung der dionysischen Tragödie, dass der Staat und die Gesellschaft, überhaupt die Klüfte zwischen Mensch und Mensch einem übermächtigen Einheitsgeföhle weichen, welches an das Herz der Natur zurückführt.”

artwork creates only fleeting moments of unity. Additionally, Adorno's thoughts on aesthetic unity consider the integrity of the work of art, whereas Nietzsche's focus on the unified reception of the artwork.

For Adorno, then, meaning in art is dependent on individual moments of tension for the individual spectator or recipient. His appraisal of what he views as the ever-changing meaning of art means that it is not possible to make absolute claims about the meaning of an artwork; truth in art thus becomes a fleeting moment that must be grasped. This relationship between art and knowledge is a topic to which Adorno devotes significant space in *Ästhetische Theorie* and analysing it at this stage will also help to shed light on how Adorno's aesthetic thought relates to his paradoxical view of enlightenment, which maintains that enlightenment dialectically undermines itself. There are clear parallels between his aesthetic critique and his understanding of enlightenment, as is demonstrated by the following quotation: "Das Nichtseiende in den Kunstwerken ist eine Konstellation von Seiendem." (AT, GS 7, p. 204) As was the case in the previous chapter of this study, Adorno's model of knowledge in art relies on constellations of ideas. Rather than a single piece of art having meaning in its own right, its meaning is an "enigma" that is contingent on the wider web of knowledge in which it is located.²⁰⁶ The consistency of Adorno's approach, whether to art or enlightenment, shows that Adorno's method of analysing art is built upon the same foundations as his paradoxical image of enlightenment.

Returning to Adorno's examination of the relationship between time and truth in art, though, will allow us to appreciate further the extent to which Adorno considers art's

²⁰⁶ Lorraine Markotic, 'Enigma, Semblance, and Natural Beauty', *Symplokē*, 20(1-2) (2012), 293-307 (p. 305).

truth content to be linked to individual moments. In the first section of *Ästhetische Theorie* he writes that the conditions in which a work of art finds itself affect its relationship with the fleeting moments of truth that are revealed when the conditions for accessing it, rooted in constellations of knowledge, are realised:

Was einmal in einem Kunstwerk wahr gewesen ist und durch den Gang der Geschichte dementiert ward, vermag erst dann sich wieder zu öffnen, wenn die Bedingungen verändert sind, um derentwillen jene Wahrheit kassiert werden mußte; so tief sind ästhetisch Wahrheitsgehalt und Geschichte ineinander. (AT, GS 7, p. 67)

Adorno here suggests that the meaning of art is not only contingent on the conditions in which it is located, but also on the extent to which those moments of truth are accessible. Consequently, for Adorno it is plausible that the truth of a work may remain hidden indefinitely, or at least until conditions allow the truth to surface. We should, however, note that Adorno here has in mind a specific kind of aesthetic truth, which is different from empirical truth. Both here and elsewhere he references truth content (“Wahrheitsgehalt”) rather than truth per se. This truth content refers to autonomous art’s ability to separate itself from the warped logic of what he views as hyper-rational capitalist domination,²⁰⁷ allowing it to challenge the insights produced by instrumental reason. The truth content of art therefore lies in its ability to produce a “different, non-instrumental logic”.²⁰⁸ This approach to art and truth content demonstrates once more the level of consistency in Adorno’s intellectual approach. In both his criticism on enlightenment and questions of aesthetics, he rejects instrumental reason because he considers its insights to be false. By departing from instrumental reason in every arena, Adorno argues, we can produce more faithful insights into any phenomenon.

²⁰⁷ Christian Fuchs, *Critical Theory of Communication: New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet* (London: University of Westminster Press, 2016), p. 86.

²⁰⁸ Fuchs, *Critical Theory of Communication* (2016), p. 86.

Art clearly does not have an existential meaning for Adorno in the way it does for Nietzsche. This difference in approach can be considered the principal explanation for Nietzsche's argument that art has an intrinsic purpose for humans, creating a route to a separate aesthetic enlightenment, whereas for Adorno it challenges warped, 'enlightened' capitalist logic. However, Adorno's approach does not discount the possibility that art can be used to fulfil specific functions, and his views on how the individual encounters art in everyday life illuminate this idea: "Musik kann, im Caféhaus gespielt oder, wie vielfach in Amerika, durch telefonische Anlage für die Gäste von Restaurants übertragen, zu einem gänzlich Anderen werden [...]. Sie erwartet die Unaufmerksamkeit der Hörer, um ihre Funktion zu erfüllen" (AT, GS 7, p. 375) In this example Adorno argues that music is used as background noise in everyday situations. Whether in a café or a restaurant, he believes that the listener passively engages with art so that it fulfils its role of filling in silence. Rather than being a special occasion to be engaged with intensely, aesthetic experience becomes an almost unnoticeable feature in the background of everyday life whose meaning shifts depending on the situation at hand. Nietzsche privileges aesthetic experience over everything else in order to invigorate and maximise existence, whereas for Adorno it may become an indiscernible feature of everyday life.

Adorno's example of how music is used as a background feature in everyday life hints at one of his primary concerns, both in terms of his aesthetic thought and his wider intellectual projects: the influence of industry and capitalism on art and aesthetic experience. In the context of the café or the restaurant, music is being used as a background feature to business rather than as an aesthetic experience in and of itself, which shines a light on Adorno's scepticism towards art's position in capitalist societies. This element of Adorno's argument forms another key difference between his and

Nietzsche's approaches to aesthetic questions as Nietzsche took little or no interest in social or economic questions. Crucially, Adorno also links (artistic) industry, and capitalism to the paradoxes of enlightenment, which means that they will be essential parts of our examination of how his understanding of aesthetics relates to his understanding of enlightenment. Given the extent to which Nietzsche's and Adorno's aesthetic theories diverge from one another in this regard, we will now examine this issue in more detail.

4.2 Art and (Industrial) Production

One of the most prominent features of Adorno's aesthetic thought is his examination of the relationship between monopoly capitalism and works of art. While at this stage the focus of discussion on Adorno and aesthetics will remain on *Ästhetische Theorie*, we must provide a summary of one of Adorno's main ideas, upon which much of the material from *Ästhetische Theorie* discussed below will build: the concept of the culture industry. This task is of particular importance given Adorno's attempts over the course of three decades to build a holistic intellectual project that connects several aspects of thought and society. The culture industry, explored in detail in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, and the essay *Résumé über Kulturindustrie* (1963), is the concept that art becomes increasingly standardised as a result of industrial capitalism's purported stranglehold over society. The following quotation illustrates this fundament well: "Kultur heute schlägt alles mit Ähnlichkeit. Film, Radio, Magazine machen ein System aus. Jede Sparte ist einstimmig in sich und alle zusammen." (DA, GS 5 (Horkheimer), p. 144) Adorno hypothesises that aesthetic products, such as film and radio (amongst others), have become standardised because they now form a single, uniform system. Rather than allowing for artistic innovation,

Adorno believes that ‘enlightened’ popular culture produces near-identical artworks, irrespective of the artistic type or genre at hand.

Later in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* Adorno addresses the mechanism whereby the culture industry comes to dominate society. This process is significant as he considers how reason, integral to the Enlightenment, subjugates others, rather than acting as a force for the liberation of all: “Die Trickfilme waren einmal Exponenten der Phantasie gegen den Rationalismus. [...] Heute bestätigen sie bloß noch den Sieg der technologischen Vernunft über die Wahrheit.” (DA, GS 6 (Horkheimer), p. 163) The type of art discussed in this example – cartoons – is not significant. Instead, the most crucial component of this quotation is Adorno’s argument that (technological) reason has conquered truth. As a result reason is presented as a means for the falsification of the world. Rather than enlightening society by leading it towards truth, reason (re)mystifies the world by allowing falsehoods to spread, dialectically contributing to its own downfall in the process. It is also noteworthy that Adorno, echoing Hegel and Max Weber (1864-1920),²⁰⁹ blames ‘technological reason’ specifically for this shortcoming, rather than reason per se. By blaming a specific form of reason Adorno implies that the culture industry is not an inevitable consequence of all rational thought. His pessimism towards the culture industry cannot therefore be viewed as an outright rejection of rationality. Rather, Adorno’s negative attitude towards the culture industry represents a rejection of a specific manifestation of reason.

Before developing this overview of Adorno’s concept of the culture industry, we should consider a comment Adorno makes in *Résumé über Kulturindustrie*. Here he

²⁰⁹ Dana Villa, ‘Weber and the Frankfurt School’, in *The Routledge Companion to the Frankfurt School*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer and Axel Honneth (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 266-281 (p. 268).

warns the reader against understanding the term ‘industry’ literally: “Der Ausdruck Industrie ist nicht wörtlich zu nehmen. Er bezieht sich auf die Standardisierung der Sache selbst [...] und auf die Rationalisierung der Verbreitungstechniken” (*Résumé über Kulturindustrie*, GS 10.1, p. 339). Once more, Adorno’s view that the culture industry homogenises art is clear. However, his comment that the reader should not read the term industry literally is more significant. He wishes to use the term synonymously with the standardisation of art, but the reader should question this claim. The American film industry, for instance, which Adorno frequently critiqued, attracted weekly audiences of 80 million people at the end of the Second World War.²¹⁰ Additionally, in 1948 the US Supreme Court “ruled that the majors had an illegal monopoly over the industry”,²¹¹ underscoring the industrial structures and scale behind 1940s American cinema. Furthermore, as Adorno’s thought has a Marxian basis, it would be strange for him to brush industry aside given his intense engagement with capitalism. Consequently, amidst no clear scholarly consensus,²¹² the term industry will be understood literally below.²¹³ This approach will allow us to link the economic basis of Adorno’s thought with his aesthetic theory more overtly, creating a more holistic view of his analysis.

Adorno affirms his theory that the culture industry standardises art later in *Résumé über Kulturindustrie*. Here he writes that room for artistic innovation under the influence

²¹⁰ Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 2nd edn (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), p. 124.

²¹¹ Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, p. 155.

²¹² Juliane Rebentisch and Felix Trautmann accept Adorno’s claim on his use of the term ‘industry’. See Juliane Rebentisch and Felix Trautmann, ‘The Idea of the Culture Industry’, in *The Routledge Companion to the Frankfurt School*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer and Axel Honneth (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 19-31 (p. 26). However, most critics take either a neutral, or no clear stance on Adorno’s use of the term. Instead, analyses of the culture industry typically focus on the concepts behind Adorno’s theory, such as commodification. For example, see Deborah Cook, *The Culture Industry Revisited: Theodor W. Adorno on Mass Culture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), and especially pp. 107-113.

²¹³ Sven Kramer offers support for this interpretation, albeit implicitly, by noting that such artworks are commodities produced and distributed via industrial methods. See Sven Kramer, ‘Im Exil’, in *Adorno Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. by Richard Klein, Johann Kreuzer, and Stefan Müller-Doohm, 2nd edn (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 2019), pp. 12-18 (p. 13).

of the culture industry is not only reduced, it is eliminated completely: “Die Autonomie der Kunstwerke, die freilich kaum je ganz rein herrschte [...] wird von der Kulturindustrie tendenziell beseitigt” (*Résumé über Kulturindustrie*, GS 10.1, p. 338). Although Adorno starts pessimistically by stating that art has never been truly autonomous, implying that the so-called culture industry is not the only phenomenon to have stifled artistic innovation, this excerpt expresses his view that the originality of art suffers once the culture industry has established itself as a dominant force. Both this example and the quotation from *Dialektik der Aufklärung* provided in the paragraph above show that Adorno’s views on the core aspects of his culture industry thesis do not shift over time. He suggests that art must develop independently of powerful economic forces so that it may continually produce new insights, rather than repeating those that have gone before it and reproducing the flaws of ‘enlightened’ reason. In this sense Adorno argues for a democratisation of art by freeing it from the hands of industrial capitalism, thus returning it to members of wider society, mirroring to some extent Nietzsche’s wish for artists and spectators alike to collectively embrace the Dionysian.

However, under the control of the culture industry, Adorno believes that art ceases to be art. Instead, artistic products become standardised consumer commodities, as he states in *Résumé über Kulturindustrie*: “In allen ihren Sparten werden Produkte mehr oder minder planvoll hergestellt, die auf den Konsum durch Massen zugeschnitten sind und in weitem Maß diesen Konsum von sich aus bestimmen” (*Résumé über Kulturindustrie*, GS 10.1, p. 337). This quotation provides an insight into the dialectical steps that Adorno identifies behind the processes of continual production and consumption. Whilst on the one hand he suggests that the production of artistic products is determined by patterns of consumption in a society, he also implies that these patterns of consumption come to be

determined by production. The relationship between these two phenomena is so entrenched in what Adorno views as a system of industrial capitalism, so enlightened that it has paradoxically become irrational thanks to his dialectical approach, and it is extremely difficult to disrupt them once established. Indeed, he believes that the power of these processes, coupled with that of the culture industry more broadly, becomes an unparalleled force that shapes how every single aspect of a life is viewed: “Die ganze Welt wird durch das Filter der Kulturindustrie geleitet.” (DA, GS 6 (Horkheimer), p. 150) In Adorno’s eyes, the culture industry is a powerful yet pernicious force.

As well as devoting significant space in *Ästhetische Theorie* to the theory behind the nature of art in and of itself, Adorno uses the text to develop his thoughts on the relationship between industrial production and aesthetic experience. He, unlike Nietzsche, is interested in the conditions of artistic production and how the artwork is affected by art’s industrialisation. This thematic affinity is evident throughout *Ästhetische Theorie*, where Adorno argues that the conditions and means of artistic production are the basis for its relationship to wider society:

Die Objektivation der Kunst [...] ist ihrerseits gesellschaftlich als Produkt der Arbeitsteilung. Darum ist das Verhältnis der Kunst zur Gesellschaft nicht vorwiegend in der Sphäre der Rezeption aufzusuchen. Es ist dieser vorgängig: in der Produktion. Das Interesse an der gesellschaftlichen Dechiffrierung der Kunst muß dieser sich zukehren (AT, GS 7, p. 338).

This quotation suggests that the production process of an artwork forms the foundation upon which it can then be interpreted. On this basis, if the process of production were to change, so would the way in which the consumer of the artwork approaches interpretation. For Adorno, then, the production process of an artwork determines its reception. Furthermore, Adorno frames this idea in such a way that the Marxian roots of his thought are clear. By focusing on the production process he implies that the economic base of

society determines, or at least influences, every other area of society and culture.²¹⁴ In addition, by highlighting aspects such as the division of labour in his discussion, Adorno roots his analysis in an intellectual tradition that does not stem solely from Marx,²¹⁵ but to whom it owes a great deal. In Adorno's eyes it is not possible to separate industrially produced art from the context of this production.

Adorno develops this argument by underscoring the links between industrial production and the content of art. He writes that industrial production creates models that artworks replicate: "Kaum etwas dürfte in den Kunstwerken getan oder erzeugt werden, was nicht sein wie immer latentes Vorbild in gewerkschaftlicher Produktion hätte." (AT, GS 7, p. 351) This excerpt shows that Adorno, unlike Nietzsche, considers industrial production as the determiner of the basis of our interpretation of art and the content that we interpret. Artworks become trapped in the moulds of industrial production, and industry thus endlessly produces similar or identical works of art. This lack of creative freedom for both the production and reception of art has significant consequences because it limits the potential to produce original works of art. Artistic creativity is severely restricted by the straitjacket of industrial production, which remains under the influence of the paradoxes of enlightenment as it is determined by self-undermining instrumental

²¹⁴ The significance of the base-superstructure model concept has been subject to intense debate. Dileep Edara, for instance, has sought to reposition the significance of the base and superstructure in Marxism. See Dileep Edara, *Biography of a Blunder: Base and Superstructure in Marx and Later* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), especially pp. 1-27. Edara cites S.H. Rigby, who goes so far as to say that the superstructure is but a metaphor, and that it does not actually exist. See S.H. Rigby, *Marxism and History: A Critical Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 178.

²¹⁵ For instance, in the Historical Dictionary of Switzerland (*Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*), Marian Stepczynski and Béatrice Veyrassat note that the concept of the distribution of labour emerged in the late 18th century, before Marx's birth in 1818. See Marian Stepczynski and Béatrice Veyrassat, 'Arbeitsteilung', translated by Alfred Zangger, *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, <<https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/026219/2006-01-23/>> [accessed 19th April 2024]. In the context of Germany before Marx, Friedrich Schiller refers to the concept of the distribution of work in the sixth letter of his *Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1794/1795). See Friedrich Schiller, *Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* in Wolfgang Düsing, *Friedrich Schiller, Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen: Text, Materialien, Kommentar* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1981), pp. 9-110 (pp. 23-24).

reason. Artworks thus start to mimic their predecessors, rendering it difficult for artists to produce new, innovative art. We can infer that, for Adorno, the solution to this issue is to free art by separating it from the conditions of industrial production. However, until this step is made art continually serves the interests of “those who, in Marxian terms, own the means of production”,²¹⁶ as Jennifer Rich has summarised.

The most significant aspect of Adorno’s critique here is his focus on the relationship between economic power and art. The Marxian roots of much of Adorno’s thought dictate that the economic base of a society can influence its every sphere, and the idea that popular culture starts to prescribe ways of life for the individual is a significant feature of his critique: “An diesem Aspekt von Moderne hat so wenig sich geändert wie an der Tatsache von Industrialisierung als maßgebend für den Lebensprozeß der Menschen; das verleiht dem ästhetischen Begriff von Moderne einstweilen seine wunderliche Invarianz.” (AT, GS 7, p. 57) This quotation demonstrates the links that Adorno identifies between industry and aesthetics. In Adorno’s opinion, the industrial production of art becomes so powerful and wide-ranging that it scripts processes of human life, including leisure time.²¹⁷ Human behaviour consequently follows the narrow model produced by the paradoxically enlightened culture industry, which prescribes ways of living that reinforce its own power. This framework suggests that a change in mass-produced art will be mirrored by a change in behaviour in wider society, which casts doubt upon individuals’ abilities to act rationally and of their own accord in the face of economic domination. Using Adorno’s own words, mass-produced art becomes a

²¹⁶ Jennifer Rich, *Adorno: A Critical Guide* (Penrith: Humanities E-Books, 2015), p. 16.

²¹⁷ Eli B. Lichtenstein, ‘Adorno, Marx, and Abstract Domination’, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 49(8) (2023), 998-1023 (p. 1015).

“reproduction of one’s own life under the monopoly of mass culture” (“Reproduktion des eigenen Lebens unterm Monopol der Massenkultur” (MM 13, GS 4, p. 35)).

The reproduction of life at the hands of the culture industry is a concept that features at the heart of Adorno’s theory. A particularly intense focus on this issue is found in chapter four of *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, ‘Kulturindustrie: Aufklärung als Massenbetrug’. In this chapter Adorno expands upon the extent to which the culture industry comes to dominate a society. He writes that it not only standardises life and art, but that its main function is as a means of social control:

Dafür sieht jeder sich von früh an in einem System von Kirchen, Klubs, Berufsvereinen und sonstigen Beziehungen eingeschlossen, die das empfindsamste Instrument sozialer Kontrolle darstellen. Wer sich nicht ruinieren will, muß dafür sorgen, daß er, nach der Skala dieses Apparats gewogen, nicht zu leicht befunden wird. Sonst kommt er im Leben zurück und muß schließlich zu Grunde gehen. Daß in jeder Laufbahn [...] fachliche Kenntnisse mit vorschriftsmäßiger Gesinnung in der Regel verbunden sind, läßt leicht die Täuschung aufkommen, die fachlichen Kenntnisse täten es allein. In Wahrheit gehört es zur irrationalen Planmäßigkeit dieser Gesellschaft, daß sie nur das Leben ihrer Getreuen einigermaßen reproduziert. (DA, GS 6 (Horkheimer), p. 176)

This excerpt summarises well the main means by which the culture industry establishes social control, in Adorno’s view. First, the culture industry’s influence permeates into the institutions of civil society, such as churches and professional associations. As a result, the culture industry provides many different moulds for individuals to follow, depending on their economic and social role. Instead of prescribing one fixed way of life for all to follow, the culture industry separates individuals into certain groups. This critique reminds the reader of Nietzsche’s rejection of institutions for their purported standardisation of thought, and their opposition to new, innovative thought.²¹⁸ Second,

²¹⁸ As discussed in Chapter Two, *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* is the text in which Nietzsche develops and expresses this critique most clearly.

this quotation emphasises the role of reason in this process. Adorno states that this way of organising society is assisted by ‘enlightened’ instrumental reason, which has become co-opted as a self-serving tool for social dominance. Instrumental reason thus helps the powerful to place individuals into neatly organised systems, which maintain the interests of those with the power to do so. This framework means that most people are not truly free to think or behave as they please, meaning that the culture industry is a system of both social and aesthetic standardisation at the intersection of these two areas of cultural life.

Adorno affirms his opposition to what he views as the culture industry’s standardisation of life throughout *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, and he expands upon the image of the culture industry as a phenomenon that alters human thought and behaviour. However, he does not indicate whether the culture industry constantly reshapes the image of its ideal human thought and behaviour, or whether it creates the same individual in perpetuity. The following quotation exemplifies this ambiguity: “Unweigerlich reproduziert jede einzelne Manifestation der Kulturindustrie die Menschen als das, wozu die ganze sie gemacht hat.” (DA, GS 6 (Horkheimer), p. 152) Adorno here argues that the culture industry continually reproduces a specific type of person, but the extent to which the culture industry, and consequently its ideal individual, will change over time remains unexplored. Nonetheless, this example from *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, and the quotations from *Minima Moralia* and *Ästhetische Theorie* provided in the previous paragraph show that Adorno’s concept of the culture industry’s standardisation of humanity does not shift over time. Rather than representing unique character types, individuals under the yoke of the so-called culture industry are nothing but an illusion, as Adorno later adds: “In der Kulturindustrie ist das Individuum illusionär nicht bloß wegen der Standardisierung ihrer

Produktionsweise. Es wird nur so weit geduldet, wie seine rückhaltlose Identität mit dem Allgemeinen außer Frage steht.” (DA, GS 6 (Horkheimer), p. 181)

The notion of individuality forms an illuminating point of comparison between Nietzsche and Adorno. For Adorno, industrial art strips individuals of agency by prescribing behaviour for them to follow, in contrast to Kant’s Enlightenment appeal for intellectual autonomy. Art becomes entangled with ‘enlightened’ industrial power, meaning that the paradoxes of enlightenment trap individuals in certain patterns of life. Ultimately this process diminishes the power and significance of the individual in a society that is determined by the ‘enlightened’ power of industry. Though Nietzsche does not focus on the role of industry in art, he does downplay the role of the individual in aesthetic experience in his antithetical model of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. For instance, in the fifth section of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* he writes that individuals are relieved of their individual will: “Insofern aber das Subjekt Künstler ist, ist es bereits von seinem individuellen Willen erlöst und gleichsam Medium geworden, durch das hindurch das eine wahrhaft seiende Subjekt seine Erlösung im Scheine feiert” (GT 5). Here the individual serves as a medium for artistic production, which in turn leads to the aesthetic enlightenment of the individual. Instead of exercising free will to produce or experience art, individuals are conduits for the primal impulses of the Apollonian and the Dionysian.

Not only does the individual become a conduit for the production of art in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, but they also function as the site of artistic production. Nietzsche creates this link in the first section of the text: “Der Mensch ist nicht mehr Künstler, er ist Kunstwerk geworden: die Kunstgewalt der ganzen Natur, zur höchsten Wonnebefriedigung des Ur-Einen, offenbart sich hier unter den Schauern des Rausches” (GT 1). Far from remaining a self-determining being with a clear personal identity, here

the individual becomes the anonymous site of the artwork. This anonymisation of individuals is underscored later in the text, where Nietzsche refers to what he views as the destruction of the individual (“Vernichtung des Individuums” (*GT* 16)). The importance of individuals in Nietzsche’s aesthetic scheme is therefore limited to those who are energised by the Dionysian, only to be subsumed by it later. The individual features passively in Adorno’s appraisal of the culture industry, but for different reasons. Whereas Nietzsche’s individual is subject to the will of artistic and psychological drives, for Adorno individuals are subjugated by paradoxically enlightened economic forces. In both cases, however, the limits of rationality become clear. Nietzsche’s antithetical model of the Apollonian and the Dionysian describes how non-rational drives are pivotal to art and aesthetic experience, and Adorno’s dialectical model portrays the process of how enlightenment undermines itself and becomes irrational.

However, significant differences emerge between the two thinkers’ approaches. Firstly, Adorno maintains a consistent focus on the production process of art, claiming that production is significant in art’s societal reception.²¹⁹ He argues that industrial production standardises artworks, meaning that the production and reception of art become homogenized processes. On this basis the industrial production of art, along with individuals’ consequent tendency to reproduce life as it appears in artworks, lacks the necessary independence to evolve and produce new insights into existence. Furthermore, this mode of production modifies aesthetic experience in the sense that it starts to resemble daily life, and vice-versa. Art is therefore no longer a distinct aesthetic experience under this scheme, but is instead a model that reflects a monotonous, unchanging image of daily life. Nietzsche, conversely, is not significantly interested in

²¹⁹ See *AT*, *GS* 7, p. 338 (discussed above).

the dynamics or conditions of modern artistic production. Whilst in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* he does analyse art within its wider societal framework (i.e. in light of what he views as the ancient Greeks' pessimistic culture),²²⁰ he does not view art or aesthetic experience through the lens of mass production. The extent to which art was produced on a mass scale was admittedly much smaller in Nietzsche's time than in Adorno's, but Nietzsche was nonetheless not concerned with the questions of industry, economics and ideology that preoccupied Adorno.

There is, however, one notable exception to this assessment of the differences between Nietzsche's and Adorno's approaches. Towards the end of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Nietzsche makes a passing comment on the influence that specific individuals and institutions have on different areas of society: "Während der Kritiker in Theater und Konzert, der Journalist in der Schule, die Presse in der Gesellschaft zur Herrschaft gekommen war, entartete die Kunst zu einem Unterhaltungsobjekt der niedrigsten Art" (*GT* 22). As well as drawing the reader's attention to his dismay towards critics, journalists, and the press, Nietzsche here passes telling judgement on what he considers to be the decline of specific types of art, and he implies here that mass art is a lesser form of art. Based on the arguments Nietzsche makes earlier in the text, as they have been examined above, the reader can piece together the reasons behind Nietzsche's claim. By becoming an object of entertainment, art loses its invigorating existential function. Rather than enlivening and rejuvenating culture, this type of art is consumed casually, and Nietzsche views this type of art as less valuable. This scepticism towards art as a mere object of entertainment mirrors Adorno's rejection of the products of the so-called culture

²²⁰ See, for example, Nietzsche's argument in *GT* 3 that the ancient Greeks grasped the horrors of existence, and that this pessimism was central to ancient Greek culture.

industry for their false, ideological nature, and it therefore highlights another commonality between their aesthetic thought.

Although Nietzsche and Adorno approach most issues from different angles, this similarity shows that being a Marxist, or having Marxian elements of thought, is not a prerequisite to analysing the effects of mass production and consumption of art. In this respect Nietzsche and Adorno come to a strikingly similar conclusion in spite of their different premises on most topics, and we should question how this similarity came about given that this excerpt is a rare example of Nietzsche and Adorno coming to seemingly identical conclusions via different means. There are two possible answers to this question. The first possibility is that both thinkers believe that the standardisation of art restricts creative artistic output, as evidenced by Adorno's views of the culture industry, which in turn stifles the extent to which art, and our understanding of it, can evolve. This latter point is particularly important for Adorno's view of continually shifting constellations of knowledge, and consequently this limited creativity also represents a barrier to knowledge's continual evolution. For Nietzsche, this lack of creativity constricts both artistic genius and the individual. More specifically, the genius individual is pivotal in Nietzsche's model of how these individuals – often artists and thinkers – lead wider cultural change.²²¹ This similarity between Nietzsche and Adorno may therefore stem from their shared concern for the freedom of artistic output.

A second possible answer to the question of how Nietzsche and Adorno arrive at the same conclusion relates to the two thinkers' respective attitudes towards institutions.

²²¹ Brian Leiter is one critic who has analysed Nietzsche's great individuals. See Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 92-93. Andrew Huddleston has tempered Leiter's assessment by aligning the great individual more closely with their wider culture. See Andrew Huddleston, *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 60-76.

Nietzsche is consistently sceptical towards institutions and their apparent tendency to restrict their members by imposing levelling thoughts and ideas upon them. He opposes the institutionalisation of knowledge, which he sees as stifling truly free, innovative thought and behaviour. We need only think of Zarathustra's independent search for enlightenment to see how Nietzsche encourages individuals to steer clear of educational institutions and instead to trust themselves, their own intuition, and their interactions with others outside the limitations of institutional settings.²²² Adorno, though, opposes institutionalisation in a slightly different way to Nietzsche in this context. He rejects what he sees as the power held by financially, and thus culturally and socially, dominant institutions. The central example of such an institution in Adorno's thought is the Hollywood film industry, and Adorno's personal interactions with Hollywood and those associated with it are widely understood to have shaped his views of such institutions.²²³ On this basis, Adorno's opposition to such institutions is linked to his Marxian background, but not exclusively so: it is also connected to his critique of paradoxical enlightenment, which he believes creates the conditions in which industrial capitalism can flourish, and thus come to dominate culture and artistic products.

Adorno is perhaps best known for his criticisms of popular culture. From his opposition towards Hollywood, to his rejection of jazz music in essays such as *Zeitlose*

²²² To highlight one further example, Nietzsche expounds his critique of grammar schools (*Gymnasien*) in the second lecture of *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* (1872).

²²³ Thomas Wheatland, for example, notes that Adorno and Max Horkheimer had access to "insider knowledge about the workings of the Hollywood studio system". See Thomas Wheatland, 'Critical Theory: The Los Angeles Years', in *The Berlin Journal of Critical Theory*, 1(2) (December 2017), 5-20 (p. 15); More recently, Fred Rush has argued that Hollywood could not be avoided, despite the restrictions on movement to which Adorno and others were subject in California at the time. See Fred Rush, 'The Culture Industry', in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), pp. 87-102 (p. 92); and David Jenemann has discussed how Adorno and Horkheimer even sought to utilise their connections to Hollywood to produce an experimental film for the purposes of their social research. See David Jenemann, "'Nothing is True Except the Exaggerations": The Legacy of *The Authoritarian Personality*', in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), pp. 273-286 (p. 277).

Mode. Zum Jazz (1953/1955), his criticism often focuses on the emerging media and genres of his day. This claim does not maintain that Adorno was not interested in the art and media of the past. His essay on the Baroque music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), to name one example, is proof that he did not limit himself to his contemporary environment,²²⁴ but much of Adorno's aesthetic thought refers to artistic media from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Adorno was therefore clearly interested in art's emerging technologies. However, the timeless technology of literature features prominently in Adorno's collected works. His *Noten zur Literatur* alone contains over fifty essays on literature and literary topics. Nietzsche, conversely, although interested in literature and its production, did not engage with literature as extensively. Nonetheless, the relationship between Nietzsche's works and literature,²²⁵ and writers' reception of Nietzsche's thought and ideas, has generated significant scholarly interest.²²⁶ There is, however, a scarcity of comparative research on Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective approaches to literature. As such, the last section of the chapter will use literature as a bridge between Nietzsche and Adorno in the context of their paradoxical views of enlightenment.

²²⁴ See Theodor W. Adorno, *Bach gegen seine Liebhaber verteidigt*, in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* in 20 Bänden, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann, Vol. 10.1, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), pp. 138-151.

²²⁵ Many critics' assessments of the relationship between Nietzsche's works, and literary style typically focus on individual works by Nietzsche. For example, see James Lehrberger, 'Artistry and Genealogy: The Literary Structure of *On the Genealogy of Morality's* First Treatise', *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 53(2) (Autumn 2022), 111-136. For an examination of *Also sprach Zarathustra* and poetry, Felix Christen, 'Dichten an der Stelle des Denkens. Bemerkungen zur Genese des Gesangs im dritten Teil von Nietzsches *Zarathustra*', *Nietzsche-Studien* 47(1) (2018), 49-69.

²²⁶ For a recent volume that addresses Nietzsche's reception of literature, as well as literature's reception of Nietzsche, see *Nietzsches Literaturen*, ed. by Ralph Häfner, Sebastian Kaufmann, and Andreas Urs Sommer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019). For a wide-ranging discussion of Nietzsche's cultural reception and impact in the late nineteenth and the majority of the twentieth century in literature and beyond, see Steven E. Aschenheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1992).

4.3 Adorno, Kafka, and the Culture Industry

Though not a writer of literary fiction, Adorno took a clear interest in literature as a cultural product. Much of his work on literature consists of analyses of specific authors and their works. Writers such as Marcel Proust (1871-1922), and Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) are two of the most prominent subjects of Adorno's literary excursions. In addition to his interest in specific texts and artists, Adorno's corpus of works on literature demonstrates that he was aware of the literary canon of his time. For instance, his essay *Standort des Erzählers im zeitgenössischen Roman* (1954) exhibits an understanding of basic narratology, and his *Zum Klassizismus von Goethes Iphigenie* (1967) indicates that he was familiar with periods of the literary canon. Furthermore, these two texts show that Adorno was drawn to different forms of literature, rather than pursuing a specific interest in prose fiction, for instance. However, given that the main aim of the current chapter's discussion of Adorno has been to link his aesthetic thought to his paradoxical understanding of enlightenment, it will be necessary to limit our discussion of Adorno and literature to works that mirror this interest, rather than producing a broad overview of Adorno's thought on literary issues.

It should be clarified that, although Adorno produced no literary fiction himself, there are traces of literary methods and techniques in some of his works.²²⁷ The structure, form, style, and methods of texts such as *Minima Moralia*, for instance, mirror closely

²²⁷ Of Adorno's works, the one that has received the most attention for its literary qualities is *Minima Moralia*. Tyrus Miller has likened its style to that of literary modernists and avant-garde writers; Gerhard Richter's assessment of the text draws attention to its "narrating poetic voice"; and Andreas Huyssen has described *Minima Moralia* as a fragmented literary text that challenges the form of the traditional philosophical treatise. See Tyrus Miller, *Modernism and the Frankfurt School* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2014), p. 80, Cambridge Core; Gerhard Richter, 'Aesthetic Theory and Nonpropositional Truth Content in Adorno', in *Language Without Soil: Adorno and Late Philosophical Modernity*, ed. by Gerhard Richter (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), pp. 131-46 (p. 138); and Andreas Huyssen, *Miniature Metropolis: Literature in an Age of Photography and Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 288 and 294.

those of canonical Modernist texts and films of the 1920s and 1930s, such as their use of montage.²²⁸ These similarities are no coincidence given Adorno's particularly strong interest in Modernist art of all kinds. However, the literary, aphoristic style of *Minima Moralia* is more the exception than the rule amongst his works, and for the most part his writing adheres to the style of the traditional philosophical essay of his predecessors. The work that represents the best link between Adorno's approach to enlightenment and literature is *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* (1953); this essay engages with the core pitfalls of enlightenment Adorno identifies, as discussed above and in Chapter Three. *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* was composed in stages during the 1930s and 1940s, which means that it represents the culmination of a long train of thought on the topic. Kafka was very much a part of Adorno's intellectual surroundings, and several of Adorno's colleagues and acquaintances engaged with Kafka's writings.²²⁹ As we shall see below, *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* offers excellent opportunities to connect different components of Adorno's wider thought, and the essay's value lies in its ability to combine these different elements.

The significance of Adorno's essay on Kafka has not been lost on commentators. For example, Stanley Corngold has drawn attention to the significance of established capitalist structures in *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka*. Corngold writes that, for Adorno, the

²²⁸ These arguments form parts of my Master's dissertation. See Imran Hashmi, 'Modes of Philosophy: A Comparative Textual Analysis of *Eclipse of Reason* and *Minima Moralia*' (unpublished master's dissertation, University of St Andrews, 2020).

²²⁹ For example, Walter Benjamin wrote several essays on Kafka in the 1920s and 1930s, and his exile in the early 1930s was a productive time for his engagement with Kafka. For an overview on this period interest, see Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life* (Cambridge, MA/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), esp. pp. 442-446. Their contemporary Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) also engaged with Kafka, and his writing. For a recent reading of Arendt and Kafka, see Lyndsey Stonebridge, *Placeless People: Writing, Rights, and Refugees* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 29-45.

world of Kafka's works represents a "cryptogram of a decaying capitalist social order".²³⁰ This appraisal highlights the explicit links Adorno draws between capitalism and Kafka's writings, and Corngold highlights how we must read Adorno's essay with capitalism in mind as a primary focus. Corngold's description, however, does not go far enough in summarising Adorno's rejection of capitalism: rather than decaying, Adorno believes that capitalism has already decayed at the hands of instrumental reason. Nonetheless, Corngold's assessment of *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* provides a strong basis for further analysis of Adorno's essay. We will draw upon his observation that capitalism is one of, if not the, main focal points of the essay, and this claim will be developed further to bring *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* into dialogue with Adorno's theory of the culture industry and its links with paradoxical enlightenment. Adorno considers the culture industry inseparable from popular culture and capitalism, and in his view the culture industry is the driving force behind capitalism's dominance of culture, and thus the "capitalist social order"²³¹ that Corngold describes. *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* is much more closely linked to Adorno's work on the culture industry than has been acknowledged.

Roger Foster's assessment of *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* draws upon Corngold's. However, as well as discussing Corngold, Foster provides several potent observations on *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka*. One of his most significant is how Adorno's essay promotes a "principle of literalness".²³² This description highlights how Adorno approaches Kafka. Although he acknowledges the allegories in Kafka's works, Adorno considers Kafka to produce literal (re)presentations of the world. Foster's assessment will inform our

²³⁰ Stanley Corngold, 'Adorno's "Notes on Kafka": A Critical Reconstruction', *Monatshefte*, 94(1) (Spring 2002), 24-42 (p. 27).

²³¹ Corngold, 'Adorno's "Notes on Kafka"', p. 27.

²³² Roger Foster, 'Adorno on Kafka: Interpreting the Grimace on the Face of Truth', *New German Critique*, 40(1) (Winter 2013), 175-198 (p. 186).

approach below as we analyse how Adorno relates Kafka's fictional narratives, which reproduce the structures of capitalism as per Corngold's argument, relate to the world around them, which Adorno believes to be shaped by monopoly capitalism. Foster's analysis legitimises this approach. In addition, Foster makes a passing reference to enlightenment when he refers to K., the protagonist of Kafka's *Das Schloss*, published posthumously in 1926, as an "enlightened outsider" to the village community in which he finds himself.²³³ Although it is not Foster's intention to interpret Kafka's novel with enlightenment in mind, his description demonstrates at least an implicit awareness of questions of enlightenment, which gain in significance in light of the seemingly enigmatic absurdity of some of Kafka's works. Foster's innocuous passing reference to enlightenment will therefore be taken up and expanded to show that enlightenment is at the heart of Adorno's thought on Kafka. Aesthetics and enlightenment are intertwined in *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka*.

In many ways, *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* upholds much, if not all, of Adorno's (aesthetic) thought, as explored above. Our discussion of Adorno's essay, which is fragmentary but far from "aphoristic",²³⁴ as has been claimed, will begin by examining examples that highlight the consistencies in Adorno's approach to aesthetics. Doing so will show that Adorno's aesthetic thought forms a holistic system, despite his opposition to systematic thought. For example, in *Ästhetische Theorie* Adorno argues that the meaning of an artwork unfolds over time, which suggests that the rationalised act of interpretation continues in perpetuity, as well as presenting artistic meaning as inherently unstable. He replicates this argument in the second section of *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka*:

²³³ Foster, 'Adorno on Kafka', pp. 191-192.

²³⁴ Martin Ryle and Kate Soper, 'Adorno's Critical Presence: Cultural Theory and Literary Value', in *Adorno and Literature*, ed. by David Cunningham and Nigel Mapp (London/New York: Continuum, 2006), pp. 26-39 (p. 26).

“Kafkas Gebilde hüteten sich vor dem mörderischen Künstlertum, die Philosophie, die der Autor ins Gebilde pumpt, sei dessen metaphysischer Gehalt. Wäre sie es, das Werk wäre totgeboren: es erschöpfte sich in dem, was es sagt, und entfaltetete sich nicht in der Zeit.” (AK 2, GS 10.1, p. 257) Adorno states that Kafka’s works are not simply a reproduction of the philosophy that Kafka injected into it; if it were, he argues, then its meaning would not evolve over time. Adorno’s belief in this principle therefore does not differ essentially between his theoretical aesthetic work and his examination of Kafka as a practical example. He upholds Kafka’s writing as an example of a wider aesthetic principle.

This principle is not the only one that Adorno upholds in *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka*. Though it is not a feature of his aesthetics in *Ästhetische Theorie*, in works such as *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and *Negative Dialektik* Adorno rejects systematic models of thought for what he views as their oversimplification of nuance. This attitude is also present in his essay on Kafka. Here, he argues that systems dismiss anything that does not resemble pre-established norms: “Systeme des Gedankens und der Politik wollen nichts, was ihnen nicht gleicht. Je mehr sie sich jedoch verstärken, je mehr sie was ist gleichnamig machen, desto mehr unterdrücken sie es zugleich” (AK 5, GS 10.1, p. 268). As well as re-emphasising Adorno’s rejection of intellectual systems, this excerpt also underscores his opposition to similarly organised political systems. Adorno’s argument here contains traces of his theory of the culture industry, according to which artistic products become increasingly similar until culture is swamped with near-identical artworks. More significantly, by resembling the critique of the culture industry, *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* echoes Adorno’s critique of paradoxical enlightenment as self-serving instrumental reason helps to establish the so-called culture industry. This

economic and cultural phenomenon enslaves people rather than liberating them from dogma and control, and the culture industry represents a closed intellectual system that rejects anything that departs from the norm. Adorno's essay thus upholds his critique of 'enlightened' reason.

Similarly, the image of the human being that emerges from Adorno's essay resembles his earlier depiction of humans as beings whose behaviour is determined at least in part by inner drives. As discussed above, this drive-centred image of humanity questions the extent to which a rational enlightenment is possible, a scepticism he shares with Nietzsche. Adorno considers drives to be crucial in how Kafka's characters interact with one another: "Der ebenfalls für die Sphäre des Tabus zuständige, von Freud zitierte Ausdruck *délire de toucher* trifft genau den sexuellen Zauber, der bei Kafka Menschen, zumal niedrige mit höheren zusammentreibt." (AK 3, GS 10.1, p. 261) By referring to the significant role that desire plays in human behaviour, as well as using the vocabulary of drives in the form of the verb "zusammentreiben", Adorno presents these characters as subject to the same impulses as human beings are more broadly. This parallel between the image of humans in the diegetic world of the text and the non-diegetic world is significant. Adorno thus approaches Kafka's texts as microcosms of the world he identifies around both himself and Kafka because they reproduce humans' drive-based behaviour. Instead of falsifying the world in the style of the culture industry, Adorno suggests that Kafka depicted humans as they truly are.

Adorno expands upon this depiction of Kafka later in *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka*, where he further cements the links between what he identifies as the relationship between Kafka's writing and enlightenment. He compares Kafka with the French writer Marquis de Sade (1740-1814), who is also of significant interest to Adorno in *Dialektik der*

Aufklärung, which shows that Adorno likely had questions of enlightenment actively in mind when composing his essay on Kafka. One commentator has criticised Adorno's linking of Kafka with issues of enlightenment, denoting this pairing as a co-opting of Kafka for "his [Adorno's] own tendentious purposes".²³⁵ Although this verdict would find Adorno guilty of applying the same instrumental logic to Kafka's works that he laments elsewhere, Adorno explains that, in his view, both Sade's and Kafka's works portray reason at work and that they thus belong to a tradition of enlightenment:

In Sade aber und in Kafka ist Vernunft am Werk [...]. Beide gehören, auf verschiedenen Stufen, der Aufklärung an. Bei Kafka ist ihr Entzauberungsschlag das »So ist es«. Er berichtet, wie es eigentlich zugeht, doch ohne Illusion übers Subjekt, das im äußersten Bewußtsein seiner selbst – seiner Nichtigkeit – sich auf den Schrotthaufen wirft, nicht anders als die Tötenmaschine mit dem ihr Überantworteten verfährt. (AK 8, GS 10.1, p. 280)

We should first note that Adorno's reference to enlightenment here is ambiguous; he could have in mind enlightenment or the Enlightenment. Though not the main thrust of Adorno's argument, it is important to consider how this distinction affects our interpretation of his claim. If this reference is understood as referring to the Enlightenment, then Adorno links Sade's and Kafka's works to a specific branch of thought and art that can be gathered under the umbrella term of the Enlightenment. Viewing this excerpt in this way would require the reader to interpret Sade and Kafka against the backdrop of the Enlightenment, and specifically against the literary and cultural movements that come under this heading. However, if we assume that in this example Adorno is referring to enlightenment, we can conclude that he positions Sade and Kafka as the descendants of enlightenment, stemming from the ancient Greeks, and

²³⁵ Maeve Cooke, 'Truth in Narrative Fiction: Kafka, Adorno and Beyond', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 40(7) (2014), 629-643 (pp. 631-632).

specifically Homer, as Adorno notes in *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. This interpretation separates Sade and Kafka from a specific epoch and portrays the phenomena in their texts as timeless, universal features of humanity. Given that Adorno otherwise does not dispute or disrupt the temporal borders of the Enlightenment, in contrast to Nietzsche's attempts to include figures such as Martin Luther, Petrarca and Erasmus in his understanding of the Enlightenment, we can assume that Adorno has enlightenment mind and not the Enlightenment.²³⁶

Having established the basis of this reference to enlightenment, we can now return to the significance of Adorno's explicit linking of Kafka to enlightenment. As explored above, Adorno praises Kafka for his cool, sober depiction of the world as it is. He expands on this praise by stating that Kafka demystifies the world of the text for the reader, which serves as a source of enlightenment because he thus creates his unfiltered image of the world. Once again, this method works in direct opposition to the methods that Adorno identifies in the workings of the so-called culture industry. Whereas the culture industry produces near-identical artworks that prescribe a distorted view of culture and human life, Kafka's writing lays bare the realities of life without the need for falsification in Adorno's opinion. Kafka's works are consequently free from the false consciousness that Adorno identifies as emerging from the consumption of industrially produced art, whose sole goal is the domination of the cultural and social sphere. Produced outside the culture industry's influence, Kafka's literary works therefore represent a site of implicit resistance against the works of the culture industry, as well as against the 'enlightened' instrumental reason

²³⁶ Daglind E. Sonolet's linking of Adorno's discussion of Kafka with the purported self-mythologisation of rationality supports this conclusion, given that Sonolet refers to an unspecified "historical moment" at which this process takes place. See Daglind E. Sonolet, 'Literature and Modernity: Günther Anders, Hannah Arendt, and Theodor W. Adorno – Interpreters of Kafka', in *Bordieu in Question: New Directions in French Sociology of Art*, ed. by Jeffrey A. Halley and Daglind E. Sonolet (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2017), pp. 426-441 (p. 431).

that afforded it such power. Instead of conforming to market norms and needs, Kafka's works present an alternative image of modernity that seeks to overcome the paradoxes of enlightenment.

Adorno creates a more specific image of how Kafka's writings resist the paradoxes of enlightenment in section eight of *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka*. Here, Adorno addresses the fragmentary nature of Kafka's novels. In addition, he discusses what he terms the 'dialectic of Expressionism', and he states that this dialectic leads Kafka to distance himself from established literary genres:

Das Fragmentarische der drei großen Romane, die übrigens kaum mehr vom Begriff des Romans gedeckt werden, wird bedingt von ihrer inneren Form. [...] Die Dialektik des Expressionismus resultiert bei Kafka in der Angleichung an Abenteuererzählungen aus aufgereihten Episoden. Er hat solche Romane geliebt. Durch die Übernahme ihrer Technik sagt er zugleich der etablierten literarischen Kultur ab. (AK 8, GS 10.1, p. 279)

Adorno thus views Kafka's works, and more specifically his novels, as texts that were influenced by a mixture of literary genres. As such, they are not easy to categorise, in Adorno's view. He writes that the novels can hardly be viewed as novels and that they draw upon the episodic structure and form of adventure novels, meaning that they find themselves in between established literary categories. Adorno portrays Kafka's novels as artworks that occupy this artistic no-man's land and operate independently from the culture industry as they position and define themselves away from the influence of market forces. These novels therefore resist the trends of both popular culture and the expectations of art produced under the culture industry. Instead, they work against these established patterns, and thus come close to representing the autonomous, truly enlightened form of art that Adorno promotes elsewhere.

These arguments provide an opportunity to bring Adorno's essay on Kafka into dialogue with Nietzsche's aesthetic theory as presented in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. The discussion of *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* above has shown that Adorno praises Kafka for demystifying the world. Adorno does not go as far as claiming that art should precisely reproduce the world, but in *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* he lauds Kafka for not producing a falsified or prettified image of life in the way that the products of the so-called culture industry do. Adorno therefore considers Kafka's demystification of the world to be a positive result. Nietzsche, conversely, holds the opposite view of demystification. He argues in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* that the ancient Greeks used to draw a veil over the harsh realities of life, and he thus associates demystification with surrendering to everyday life's struggles (or accepting the banality of everyday life). For Nietzsche, so-called aesthetic Socratism represents the process of demystification. He equates aesthetic Socratism – shorthand for what Nietzsche views as a more rational approach to art – with the marginalising of the Dionysian, and he considers this development dangerous for (Germany's) cultural health. In Nietzsche's view, one of art's central purposes is to (re)mystify the world. We will return to this concept in Chapter Five when we examine Nietzsche's weaponization of myth for the purpose of cultural rejuvenation.

Another similarity between Nietzsche's aesthetics and Adorno's in *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* is the place of the individual. Adorno's essay adds to the arguments of *Ästhetische Theorie* by highlighting Adorno's perception of the individual in Kafka's works, which comes close to the image of individuality found in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. For instance, in *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka*, Adorno writes that Kafka's works destroy the individual: "Das hermetische Prinzip hat unter anderem die Funktion einer Schutzmaßnahme [...]. Das heißt aber: die eigene Kollektivierung. Das Werk, das

die Individuation zerrüttet, will um keinen Preis nachgeahmt werden: darum wohl ordnete es an, es zu vernichten.” (AK 4, GS 10.1, p. 265) A parallel to Nietzsche emerges here as he prioritises the subsuming of the individual into the tragic chorus, reducing the role of individuality. Nietzsche’s theory does not destroy individuality but suspends its significance. Adorno goes further than Nietzsche in his appraisal of Kafka, stating that individuals are destroyed so that the artwork cannot be imitated. Adorno’s argument presents Kafka’s texts as artworks that resist mass production and imitation, and as a result a nuanced difference between Nietzsche’s and Adorno’s downplaying of individuals surfaces. Whereas Adorno suggests that individuals are destroyed so that the artwork may resist industrial forces, Nietzsche promotes the destruction of the individual in the production process of tragic art. For both thinkers, though, the downfall of individuals relates to their respective aesthetic ideals.

Returning to Adorno’s notion of individuality, the clearest links between *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka* and the ‘enlightened’ culture industry are found in the sections of the text where Adorno makes explicit reference to capitalism. For instance, in the sixth section of the text he identifies a parallel between the structures of capitalism and the characters in Kafka’s novels. More specifically, he highlights how the characters’ identities reflect the capitalist tendencies that surround them:

Wie im Zeitalter des defekten Kapitalismus wird die Last der Schuld von der Produktionssphäre abgewälzt auf Agenten der Zirkulation oder solche, die Dienste besorgen, auf Reisende, Bankangestellte, Kellner. [...] Die ökonomischen Tendenzen, deren Relikte sie darstellen, schon ehe sie sich durchgesetzt haben, waren Kafka keineswegs so fremd, wie die hermetische Verfahrensweise vermuten läßt. (AK 6, GS 10.1, p. 272)

Adorno suggests here that Kafka’s characters become representatives of their economic function. Rather than being unique individuals who shape their own identities, they are

identified through, and with, their relationship to the sphere of capitalist production, which maintains its supremacy through the use of instrumental reason. These characters fit the moulds that this dominant economic system has created for them in a similar way to how the culture industry prescribes and reproduces ways of life, as Adorno argues elsewhere. This relationship between capitalism and characters of Kafka's novels that Adorno identifies is significant for two reasons. Firstly, as noted above, it solidifies the similarities between Adorno's attitude towards Kafka and his theory of the culture industry, which Adorno views as embodying the paradoxes of enlightenment as self-serving instrumental reason is pivotal to its survival. Secondly, it reinforces the idea addressed above that Adorno considers Kafka's works to be microcosms of the world Kafka inhabited. The structures and forces of capitalism that surrounded Kafka find their way, in Adorno's view, into the diegetic world of his novels, meaning that the texts paradoxically reproduce, and make visible, the capitalist structures they counter as works of art in the non-diegetic world.

We have seen that Adorno was keenly interested in literature. His fascination with Kafka's works is particularly noteworthy for the parallels that emerge between his theory of the culture industry, which emerges from enlightenment's self-imposed paradoxical downfall, and his analysis of Kafka's writings. This coherence and consistency demonstrate that, far from being an abstract theory, Adorno views his understanding of the culture industry as a verifiable phenomenon that could be identified in works of art, and even in those, such as Kafka's, that resisted the forces of the culture industry. Despite having produced his own artworks in the form of musical compositions, Adorno stopped short of producing works of literary fiction. The same cannot be said of Nietzsche, however. We noted in Chapter Two that Nietzsche produces a quasi-philosophical

fictional narrative in the form of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the text that best represents his new, experiential journey towards enlightenment, and he also composed a significant number of poems over the course of his life. In other words, whereas we can view Adorno strictly as a literary critic and theorist, Nietzsche can be viewed as a practitioner of literature. This major difference will form the final step in this chapter's analysis.

4.4 Nietzsche as Poet-Philosopher

Łukasz Marek Pięś, among others, has correctly observed that categorising Nietzsche's thought is a challenging task.²³⁷ Whilst Nietzsche is perhaps best known as a cultural critic in its broadest sense, treating him purely as such risks distracting from pivotal elements of his writings. Nietzsche's works exist in several forms, ranging from the several hundred aphorisms in texts like *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches* and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* to the more essayistic style of the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* and *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. It is therefore important to avoid over-categorising Nietzsche's writings, especially as many of his works straddle the boundaries between structures and forms. This claim gains traction when we consider Nietzsche as a practitioner of literature. The examination of *Also sprach Zarathustra* in Chapter Two alluded to this approach, and it will be expanded upon below through an examination of Nietzsche's poetry. Our discussion will analyse poetry from several of Nietzsche's works to first show how these poems, in combination with *Also sprach Zarathustra*, represent an attempt to aestheticize philosophy. Rather than producing literary works for art's sake, Nietzsche sought to transform philosophy into another form of art.²³⁸ Additionally, this

²³⁷ Łukasz Marek Pięś, 'Friedrich Nietzsche: Dichter oder Denker?', *Folia Germanica*, 8 (2012), 35-49 (pp. 38-41), <<http://hdl.handle.net/11089/9365>> [accessed 19th April 2024].

²³⁸ Paul Bishop and R.H. Stephenson have previously drawn attention to the relationship between *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and Weimar Classicism, demonstrating that there is also

argument will highlight how many of Nietzsche's poems contain traces of his attempt to pave a new path for enlightenment in *Also sprach Zarathustra*. The poems are just as concerned with enlightenment as they are with the aestheticization of philosophy.

Nietzsche's poetry is not a major topic of scholarly investigation, and few commentators have discussed Nietzsche's poems as stand-alone works. One major exception to this claim is Philip Grundlehner, whose monograph on Nietzsche's poetry serves as a rare attempt to shine a light on the poems as a significant sub-genre of Nietzsche's written output,²³⁹ rather than as supplementary components of his thought. Grundlehner's study provides a comprehensive overview of Nietzsche's poetic development, from his schoolboy years to the late 1880s, encompassing some of the final works Nietzsche composed in his lifetime. The strength of Grundlehner's monograph is its successful contextualisation of Nietzsche's poetry with reference to both his personal and philosophical development, which means that the reader gains a stronger, more detailed appreciation of the place of poetry in Nietzsche's life and works. However, the central criticism that can be levelled at Grundlehner's analysis is that his discussion at times sacrifices depth of textual analysis in order to provide such a broad overview of Nietzsche's poetry and its place in his thought. Consequently the argument often skips over key elements of poetic analysis, such as metre, with the result that the composition of the poems is not explored in as much detail as it could be. Grundlehner's otherwise excellent investigation will be supported further below by including important elements of poetic analysis in our discussion.

critical awareness of some of the literary texts that informed Nietzsche's own literary production. See Paul Bishop and R.H. Stephenson, *Friedrich Nietzsche and Weimar Classicism* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004).

²³⁹ Philip Grundlehner, *The Poetry of Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Despite a relative lack of full-length studies of Nietzsche's poetry in recent years – Grundlehner's monograph was published in 1986 – Nietzsche's poetry is nonetheless periodically discussed. One compelling assessment of Nietzsche and poetry is Christina Knast's discussion of Nietzsche's re-founding ("Neubegründung") of philosophy in poetry. Maintaining a focus on Nietzsche's Dionysos-Dithyramben (1888), Knast argues that Nietzsche's engagement with truth leads to an attempt to re-found philosophy and that Dionysos-Dithyramben should be read as the realisation of Nietzsche's new understanding of philosophy.²⁴⁰ Here Knast emphasises how Nietzsche's poetry should be viewed as an integral part of his philosophy as he wishes to transform philosophy into poetry, rather than viewing poetry as a separate entity. Knast's argument can be strengthened by demonstrating that Nietzsche started his project of transforming philosophy into poetry long before the publication of Dionysos-Dithyramben, highlighting how the poems of 1888 are the culmination of this process. In addition, we will advance insights into Nietzsche's poetry by underscoring the functional aspects of the poems, such as rhythm and metre, to show that Nietzsche's poems are carefully crafted aesthetic works with a philosophical and critical intent. Focussing on poems from across the 1880s,²⁴¹ we will conclude that, especially with *Also sprach Zarathustra* in mind, Nietzsche's poems are evidence of how he deliberately blurs the line between philosophy and literature whilst seeking to repurpose enlightenment for the future.

²⁴⁰ Christina Knast, "Nur Narr! Nur Dichter!" Nietzsches Versuch einer Neubegründung der Philosophie in der Dichtung', in *Nietzsche als Dichter: Lyrik – Poetologie – Rezeption*, ed. by Katharina Grätz and Sebastian Kaufmann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 377-400 (p. 378).

²⁴¹ Nietzsche did, however, produce poems long before the 1880s. Additionally, Nietzsche also draws parallels between philosophy and poetry in works prior to this decade. See Michael Robertson, 'Nietzsche's Poet-Philosopher': Towards a Poetics of Response-ability, Possibility, and the Future', *Mosaic*, 45(1) (2012), 187-202 (pp. 190-192).

Some of Nietzsche's poems contain explicit philosophical critiques, which highlights how Nietzsche's poetry mirrors his central philosophical concerns. One such example is the poem 'Prinz Vogelfrei', which was first published in the collection *Idyllen aus Messina* (1882). Though this poem was later published in the addendum to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* 'Lieder des Prinzen Vogelfrei', in the context of *Idyllen aus Messina* it is framed as one of many poems in a literary collection. This framing itself suggests that literary writing has a philosophical function for Nietzsche, and this philosophical function becomes clear when considering the critique of reason evident in 'Prinz Vogelfrei':

Vernunft? – Das ist ein böses Geschäft:
Vernunft und Zunge stolpern viel!
Das Fliegen gab mir neue Kräfte
und lehrt' mich schönere Geschäfte,
Gesang und Scherz und Liederspiel.

(‘Prinz Vogelfrei’, *IM*)

Here, reason is presented as an arduous tool that causes the lyric subject to stumble, which implies that it cannot be relied upon solely as a tool for enlightenment. Instead, the stumbling of reason is contrasted with the image of invigorating flight, which is also linked to the Dionysian artform of song. Nietzsche therefore uses this poem in part as a means of furthering the aesthetic insights of texts such as *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. He philosophises through poetry, which represents an attempt to create an aestheticized philosophical method. Adorno, conversely, discusses aesthetic products without seeking to mirror their form.

However, if Nietzsche's poems are to be viewed as art, the poetic qualities of the text are just as important as its philosophical content. Some critics, such as Mike

Rottmann, have acknowledged scepticism towards this method. Rottmann writes that it is not self-evident that Nietzsche's poems should be subjected to a literary analysis,²⁴² and that the burden of justifying this method lies on the commentator who wishes not to treat the poem as a philosophical text. Rottmann's claim rests upon the assumption that there is a binary split between literature and philosophy; he suggests that the critic must find a way to bridge the gap between the two genres. This concern can be waived if we view Nietzsche's poetry as neither poetry nor philosophy. Instead his poems can, and should, be viewed as an attempt to create a new, aestheticized hybrid genre of 'literary philosophy' that does not fit perfectly into either camp. This claim must be tempered by acknowledging that Nietzsche's primary means of writing was not poetry, and neither was it the more novelistic style of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Nonetheless, both his poems and *Also sprach Zarathustra* are significant enough contributions to his corpus of works that they should be considered serious experiments to reshape the structure, style and form of philosophical writing.

With this approach in mind, analysing the rhythm and metre of the quotation from 'Prinz Vogelfrei' provided above, for instance, will demonstrate how the text's critique of reason and its promotion of Dionysian artforms are supported by its poetic form. The first item of note in this extract is the dash found in the first line. This dash causes a short pause after the opening iamb of "Vernunft", which interrupts the flow of the text and draws the reader's attention to reason, the object of critique here. Later in this line, the

²⁴² Mike Rottmann, "'Das Unglück holt den Flüchtigen ein – und sei's'": Nietzsche inszenierte Melancholie als poetische Begründung des zukünftigen Philosophen. Mit zwei Exkursen zum Problem der Interpretation Nietzschescher Gedichte', in *Nietzsche als Dichter: Lyrik – Poetologie – Rezeption*, ed. by Katharina Grätz and Sebastian Kaufmann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 207-245 (p. 208).

lyric subject – whose voice cannot be assumed to be Nietzsche’s in his poetry²⁴³ – omits the adjective ending from “bö’s” in order to maintain the iambic metre, which highlights how the grammar of the text is manipulated to enhance its aesthetic qualities. The strophe cited above continues in iambic metre until the fourth line: “Und lehrt’ mich schönere Geschäfte”. The dactyl of “schönere”, and the amphibrach of “Geschäfte” interrupt the flow of the iambic verse, drawing the reader’s attention to the more pleasant undertakings that the lyric subject describes and emphasising them in the process. Nietzsche therefore manipulates the rhythm and metre of ‘Prinz Vogelfrei’ in order to guide the reader’s focus towards the poem’s most significant messages. ‘Prinz Vogelfrei’ represents one example of Nietzsche’s combining of art and philosophy.

‘Prinz Vogelfrei’ is not the only poem to contain a critique of reason, and thus an implicit promotion of the Dionysian in the rebalancing of the paradoxes of enlightenment. In ‘Im Süden’, found in the aforementioned ‘Lieder des Prinzen Vogelfrei’ in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, the lyric subject rejects reason using vocabulary similar to that seen in ‘Prinz Vogelfrei’:

Vernunft! Verdriessliches Geschäfte!
 Das bring uns allzubald an’s Ziel!
 Im Fliegen lernt’, ich, was mich äffte –
 schon fühl ich Muth und Blut und Säfte
 Zu neuem Leben, neuem Spiel...

(‘Im Süden’, *FW*, Lieder)

On one level this rejection of reason is straightforward because it is stated in explicit terms, with the two exclamation marks underscoring the emphatic nature of this statement. On another level, the nuanced manipulation of metre of the opening line once

²⁴³ Milan Wenner, “Nach neuen Meeren”: Nietzsches Abenteuerlyrik vor dem Hintergrund der *Fröhlichen Wissenschaft*, in *Nietzsche als Dichter: Lyrik – Poetologie – Rezeption*, ed. by Katharina Grätz and Sebastian Kaufmann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 121-152 (p. 122).

more plays a role in rejecting reason. The second, third and fourth lines of this strophe contain an iambic metre, however the adjective “verdrüssliches” in its first line consists of an iamb and a dibrach. This departure from the strophe’s previously iambic metre emphasises the rejection of reason and shows how metre is manipulated in Nietzsche’s poetry to highlight, and further aestheticize, elements of the text. The form of Nietzsche’s poetry is therefore integral to the philosophical content it wishes to convey. As was the case of the literary style of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, poems such as ‘Im Süden’ can be viewed as an attempt to expand the traditional boundaries and means of philosophy, as Nietzsche views them.

‘Im Süden’ reflects Nietzsche’s interest in questions of enlightenment in several ways. As well as containing a critique of reason, the poem also invokes a key image of Nietzsche’s attempts to redefine enlightenment, as explored in Chapter Two in relation to *Also sprach Zarathustra*: the concept of enlightenment as a journey. In the strophe of ‘Im Süden’ prior to the one cited in the paragraph above, the lyric subject speaks of travelling – specifically flying – south:

Ich hiess den Wind mich aufwärts heben,
Ich lernte mit den Vögeln schweben, –
Nach Süden flog ich über’s Meer.

(‘Im Süden’, *FW*, Lieder)

The lyric subject’s flight is different from Zarathustra’s never-ending journey towards enlightenment in the sense that the lyric subject travels in a specific direction. Nonetheless, ‘Im Süden’ maintains the image of a permanent journey towards enlightenment, as depicted in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, by not travelling to a named place; there is no end destination, and the emphasis in this case is still on the journey more

broadly. Furthermore, as the lyric subject commands the wind to carry them, the agency for the journey remains with the lyric subject as an individual, as does the responsibility for beginning one's journey towards enlightenment in Nietzsche's wider thought. 'Im Süden', then, when read with *Also sprach Zarathustra* in mind, widens the scope of Nietzsche's redefinition of enlightenment by producing similar messages through different literary forms.

Nietzsche composed numerous other poems that, when read looking ahead to *Also sprach Zarathustra*, can be viewed as making a notable contribution to his attempts to redefine enlightenment. For example, the short poem 'Der Wanderer', found in the opening section of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, anticipates elements of the redefinition of enlightenment to follow in *Also sprach Zarathustra* by using the images of the wanderer and the path. In 'Der Wanderer', the lyric subject encourages the wanderer to leave the well-trodden path:

Kein Pfad mehr! [...]“
So wolltest du's! Vom Pfade wick dein Wille!
Nun, Wanderer, gilt's! Nun blicke kalt und klar!
Verloren bist du, glaubst du – an Gefahr.
(‘Der Wanderer’, *FW*, Vorspiel 27)

By encouraging the wanderer to leave the comfort of the path, the lyric subject argues for the individual's ability to determine their own journey. The image of leaving the path serves as a metaphor for continuing independently through life, as is later reflected by Zarathustra's lone journeys of discovery. Leaving the path is presented as all the more important by the fact that the individual's will wished to do so, which portrays independent wandering as a wish rather than an arduous task. 'Der Wanderer', a poem that

contains traces of Romantic imagery (unlike Nietzsche's early poetry),²⁴⁴ mirrors Nietzsche's depiction of his new enlightenment as a journey with no defined end destination. The individual must walk blindly into the unknown, a concept, and an approach to philosophy that Nietzsche does not share with Adorno.

Later in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* Nietzsche goes beyond merely anticipating the messages of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. For example, in 'Mit dem Fusse schreiben' he equates walking with the act of writing:

Ich schreib nicht mit der Hand allein:
Der Fuss will stets mit Schreiber sein.
Fest, frei und tapfer läuft er mir
Bald durch das Feld, bald durchs Papier.
(‘Mit dem Fusse schreiben’, *FW*, Vorspiel 52)

By stating that the foot is a co-author, the lyric subject suggests that wandering produces written insights, meaning that life metaphorically writes philosophy. This comparison embodies Nietzsche's promotion of experiential philosophy, which he believes produces more valuable insights than predominantly discursive philosophical methods. Consequently, the wanderer assumes the role of the artist-philosopher, to whom we will return in the form of Richard Wagner in the next chapter of this study. For the artist-philosopher of 'Mit dem Fusse schreiben', mobility is a philosophical method: walking is 'writing'. Additionally, the form of the poem underpins its content. For instance, the enjambment from the third line into the fourth causes the reader to move quickly between the lines, rather than being interrupted by punctuation. This rapid movement between lines replicates the image of running freely and bravely that is found in lines three and

²⁴⁴ See Steven D. Martinson *Nietzsche's Early Writings and the Birth of Tragedy* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2022), p. 43.

four, demonstrating how Nietzsche's poems are not only means of generating philosophical insights, but are also carefully constructed aesthetic objects.

The best example of a poem that furthers Nietzsche's redefinition of enlightenment is 'Der Einsame'. At the start of the poem, the lyric subject notes that they like neither following nor leading:

Verhasst ist mir das Folgen und das Führen.
Gehorchen? Nein! Und aber nein – Regieren!
Wer sich nicht schrecklich ist, macht Niemand Schrecken:
Und nur wer Schrecken macht, kann Andre führen.
Verhasst ist mir's schon, selber mich zu führen!
Ich liebe es, gleich Wald- und Meeresthieren,
 Mich für ein gutes Weilchen zu verlieren,
 In holder Irrniss grüblerisch zu hocken,
 Von ferne her mich endlich heimzulocken,
 Mich selber zu mir selber — zu verführen.

('Der Einsame', *FW*, Vorspiel 33)

As is clear from the poem's title, the lyric subject is a solitary figure, who neither follows the crowd nor dictates its path. This retreat from groups demonstrates Nietzsche's commitment to independence, both in terms of the lyric subject's self-reliance and the ability of individuals more generally not to be dependent on others. As is the case in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, each individual must take responsibility for their own enlightenment journey. Second, the lyric subject speaks of the joys of being lost in lines six and seven. The lyric subject embraces being lost, which prioritises the experience of the journey over its destination. Additionally, the lyric subject likens this experience to that of wild animals, which parallels Nietzsche's appeal to humans to embrace their non-rational inner drives, and to consider themselves part of the wider animal kingdom. 'Der Einsame' therefore shows that Nietzsche was prepared to experiment with literary forms in order to develop his philosophy.

While Adorno typically relies on more traditional, discursive philosophical forms, Nietzsche often takes a more experimental approach that erases the boundary between art and philosophy. Nietzsche's aesthetic and cultural criticism thus leads him to seek new ways of articulating philosophy. The means upon which he settles, as discussed above, is an aestheticized form of philosophy. This hybrid form of artistic thought offers Nietzsche a new way of articulating the artistic ideals that he believes can change (certain) individuals for the better. However, Nietzsche does not consider himself the first to have articulated such a visionary, life-affirming form of philosophy that has the potential to transform existence: he identified the composer Richard Wagner as a cultural leader. Given that Adorno too took a significant interest in Wagner's works, in terms both of their musical attributes and their relationship to the paradoxes of enlightenment, we will turn to the composer in the final chapter of this study.

Chapter Five: Paradoxes in Practice: Richard Wagner as a Case Study

Our discussion of Nietzsche and Adorno thus far has brought them into dialogue with one another via the close reading of, and comparisons between, selected texts with shared concerns. From discussion of what both Nietzsche and Adorno view as the paradoxical nature of rational thought to their assessments of the place of reason in art and aesthetic experience, we have seen how Nietzsche's and Adorno's interests cover significant theoretical ground. However, this emphasis on the theoretical models behind the two thinkers' thought has not detracted from their attempts to view the paradoxes of enlightenment in a practical sense. Nietzsche's attempts to aestheticize philosophy and Adorno's assessment of Kafka's literary fiction serve as examples of how they are concerned with the cultural manifestations of their thought. This combining of text types and focal points has proved fruitful, and the key similarities and differences between the two thinkers' approaches to the Enlightenment and wider issues of enlightenment have become clear. Yet what has been lacking from this investigation so far is a common case study through which to compare the two thinkers. This chapter will identify this case study and assess its place in the Nietzsche-Adorno relationship in the context of their respective approaches to enlightenment.

The most significant cultural figure that Nietzsche and Adorno have in common is the composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883). Wagner, like Nietzsche and Adorno, was deeply familiar with German cultural history. He sought to locate himself within this tradition, with some of his operatic output drawing upon Germanic myths such as the

Nibelungenlied,²⁴⁵ and medieval romances like Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*.²⁴⁶ As will be addressed below, Nietzsche's interest in Wagner stems from more than this attempt to reanimate the myths of the past, but Wagner's place in this cultural lineage almost certainly drew both Nietzsche and Adorno to him. Both thinkers dedicate several studies to the composer. Although their respective approaches to music differ significantly. Adorno at times takes a highly musicological approach, whereas Nietzsche's angle can be viewed more as emphasising the socio-cultural role that music can play. Wagner is a fruitful bridge between the two thinkers. This chapter will examine how elements of Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective understandings of how the paradoxes of enlightenment converge and depart from one another in their writings on Wagner, his music, and what they view as his cultural legacy. The case of Wagner will once again tell a mixed story of Nietzsche's and Adorno's attitudes to enlightenment, and this case study will show how each thinker maintains a paradoxical understanding of enlightenment in their reflections on the composer.

This chapter's contribution to scholarly debates will be twofold. First, it will further critical understanding of the intellectual relationship between Adorno and Nietzsche. Wagner is one of the most significant subjects of analysis that both thinkers have in common. As such, this comparative discussion of Nietzsche and Adorno will allow us to bridge the gap between the two thinkers from an angle that has hitherto remained relatively unexplored and the analysis below will therefore chart in detail

²⁴⁵ The original manuscript of the Middle High German text does not survive today. However, scholars are aware of three varying manuscripts from the early thirteenth century that are assumed to be several decades younger than the original manuscript. For an overview of these three manuscripts, as well as a general introduction to the text, see Hermann Reichert, *Das Nibelungenlied: Text und Einführung*, 2nd edn (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 3-42.

²⁴⁶ *Parzival* can also be dated to the early 13th century, with Wolfram's text drawing upon an unfinished French source from the later 12th century. See Marion E. Gibbs and Sidney M. Johnson, 'Parzival', in Marion E. Gibbs and Sidney M. Johnson, *Medieval German Literature: A Companion* (New York/London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 180-191 (p. 180).

another aspect of the Nietzsche-Adorno relationship. This angle will approach Nietzsche, Adorno and Wagner in the context of Nietzsche's and Adorno's understandings of the paradoxes of enlightenment. As a result, this chapter's second significant contribution to scholarly understanding will be to show how Nietzsche's and Adorno's analyses of Wagner relate to their understanding of the paradoxical nature of enlightenment; commentators have not yet produced a sustained comparative analysis of how Nietzsche's and Adorno's thought on the composer relates to their significant interest in questions of enlightenment. The discussion below will therefore address this gap in critical understanding. It will be shown that the paradoxes of enlightenment are as integral to Adorno's understanding of Wagner as they are to other areas of his thought. Nietzsche's analysis of Wagner, however, departs somewhat from the antithetical paradox of enlightenment he establishes in other works.

5.1 Nietzsche and Wagner

Wagner played a central role in Nietzsche's intellectual development. The two men were close friends for at least eight years (1868-1876), and Nietzsche was welcomed as a guest by Richard and his partner Cosima at their house in Tribschen, Switzerland, over twenty times between 1869 and 1872.²⁴⁷ The relationship between Nietzsche and Wagner was therefore more than an intellectual or artistic one. It had a highly personal component, which is important to consider when approaching Nietzsche's assessment of Wagner in his written works. Additionally, the fact that Nietzsche stayed with the Wagners so frequently is evidence that he had a strong relationship with the Wagner family rather

²⁴⁷ Robert C. Holub, 'Complexity and Ambivalence in Nietzsche's Relationship with Wagner', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 47(1) (2018), 422-41 (p. 426).

than with Richard alone. Although this chapter will analyse the relationship between Nietzsche and the composer, it is worth bearing in mind that Nietzsche lived and wrote in the orbit of Richard and Cosima for several years. This amicable constellation, with a particular emphasis on the intellectual and personal partnership that developed between Nietzsche and Richard, has long fascinated critics, with one commentator describing the Nietzsche-Wagner relationship as a “mystical tie”.²⁴⁸ Such assessments run the risk of mythologising the all-too human relationship between the two men, but they equally underscore the considerable extent to which Nietzsche and Wagner were both personally and intellectually aligned in this phase of their friendship.²⁴⁹

The significance of the Nietzsche-Wagner relationship for the development of Nietzsche’s thought cannot be underestimated. From the moment Nietzsche sent his first letter to Wagner on 22nd May 1869, Wagner assumed the role of intellectual mentor to the young philologist as the two men shared several concerns. The clearest link between the two men was music. By the start of their correspondence Wagner, over thirty years Nietzsche’s senior and the same age as Nietzsche’s father, had established his prominent place in Germany’s musical landscape thanks to his large output of operas and essays.²⁵⁰ Nietzsche himself became interested in music at an early age, and Adorno would later mirror this early musical disposition. Nietzsche carried this interest over into his adult life and by his mid-twenties he had developed a talent for piano improvisation.²⁵¹ Wagner

²⁴⁸ Francis Neilson, ‘The Nietzsche-Wagner Rift’, *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 12(2) (January 1953), 211-17 (p. 213).

²⁴⁹ For an overview of their friendship and how it is reflected in Nietzsche’s works, see Dieter Borchmeyer, ‘Critique as Passion and Polemic: Nietzsche and Wagner’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. by Thomas S. Grey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 192-202.

²⁵⁰ For an introductory summary of these works within the context of Wagner’s life, see Mark Berry and Nicholas Vazsonyi, ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner’s ‘Der Ring des Nibelungen’*, ed. by Mark Berry and Nicholas Vazsonyi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 1-56.

²⁵¹ Aaron Ridley, ‘Nietzsche and Music’, in *Nietzsche on Art and Life*, ed. by Daniel Came (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 220-35 (p. 221).

initially guided these musical (and intellectual) curiosities via their lengthy exchange of letters, which are invaluable sources for tracing the development of their friendship and shared ideas. When they met in person the two men continued their discussions whilst hiking up Mount Pilatus during Nietzsche's stays with the Wagners.²⁵² Music was thus one of the foundations underpinning their entire friendship. Given Nietzsche's focus on music in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and beyond, this element of their relationship does not come as a surprise.

The other foundation of their friendship was a shared interest in the thought of the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). This commonality is established early in the Nietzsche-Wagner correspondence, when Nietzsche describes Schopenhauer as Wagner's spiritual brother ("Geistesbruder") in an April 1869 letter to the composer (Briefe, 1869, 4). Nietzsche agreed with Schopenhauer's central premise that music is able to depict metaphysical truths by allowing unmediated access to the Will.²⁵³ Schopenhauer uses the term 'Will' to refer to a non-rational, unconscious, aimless striving of devoid knowledge, outside of space or time, that forms the inner essence of everything. Schopenhauer thus states that the force behind life is blind and irrational and, though he does not deny that reason can be extremely powerful, he believes that reason's powers are dwarfed by the non-rational foundation of existence. Nietzsche later launched (often ad hominem) attacks on Schopenhauer, for reasons such as Schopenhauer's apparently contradictory status as both a pessimist and a flautist (*JGB* 186), yet Nietzsche never rejected Schopenhauer's diagnosis of the Will or his emphasis on the metaphysical importance of music. Wagner was similarly attracted to these elements of Schopenhauer's

²⁵² Sue Prideaux, *I Am Dynamite: A Life of Friedrich Nietzsche* (London: Faber & Faber, 2018), p. 69.

²⁵³ Mark Berry, 'Nietzsche and Wagner', in *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Tom Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 97-120 (pp. 102-3).

thought, and parts of Wagner's musical corpus have been viewed as embodiments of Schopenhauer's philosophy of music and the Will.²⁵⁴ Schopenhauer's thought thus acts as the philosophical glue in Nietzsche's and Wagner's music-based relationship.

The harmonious relationship between Nietzsche and Wagner did not last, and Nietzsche 'split' from Wagner in the mid-1870s. This date is deliberately vague as the timeline of the Nietzsche-Wagner rift is disputed, and critics disagree on precisely when Nietzsche cut ties with his mentor. For some commentators, the split can be traced through Nietzsche's published works alone. For example, Aaron Ridley argues that Nietzsche broke with Wagner after 1876,²⁵⁵ the year in which Nietzsche's essay *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* was published, a text which displays enthusiasm for Wagner and his music. Robert C. Holub implicitly supports this view, noting that Nietzsche's works from the late 1880s are particularly significant as Nietzsche did not publicly acknowledge his disputes with Wagner until 1887, despite having expressed reservations privately up to a decade earlier.²⁵⁶ However, Martine Prange argues that Nietzsche was only a "true" Wagnerian from November 1868 to February 1870,²⁵⁷ which suggests that *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872) is the only work in which Nietzsche looks favourably upon the composer. Prange should be recognised for her acknowledgement of the nuances in Nietzsche's approach to Wagner,²⁵⁸ but her argument implies incorrectly that *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* is less supportive of Wagner than *Geburt der Tragödie*. Nietzsche's admiration of Wagner clearly remains stable, or even grows, between 1872 and 1876, and

²⁵⁴ See Berry, 'Nietzsche and Wagner', p. 103.

²⁵⁵ See Ridley, 'Nietzsche and Music', p. 222.

²⁵⁶ See Holub, 'Complexity and Ambivalence in Nietzsche's Relationship with Wagner', p. 433.

²⁵⁷ See Martine Prange, *Nietzsche, Wagner, Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), p. 22.

²⁵⁸ Prange has also analysed Nietzsche's reception of Wagner in the 1860s, i.e. before Nietzsche had published a single work. See Martine Prange, 'Was Nietzsche ever a true Wagnerian? Nietzsche's late turn to and early doubt about Richard Wagner', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 40(1) (2011), 43-71.

Prange's argument misrepresents Nietzsche's overwhelmingly positive attitude towards Wagner in the early to mid-1870s.

Three key points emerge from these critics' assessments. Firstly, we note that it is difficult, if not impossible, to date precisely Nietzsche's turn away from his mentor. This difficulty is not a problem here, though, as our task is to examine the nature of Nietzsche's intellectual relationship with Wagner, rather than its precise chronology. Secondly, the opinions Nietzsche expresses in private do not necessarily correspond precisely to his published opinions of the same time. The positive views towards Wagner expressed in the published works of the mid-1870s, for example, are not necessarily reflected in the letters and notebooks of the same period of time. This disparity between Nietzsche's published and private writings highlights the importance of reading them side by side, rather than maintaining a primary focus on the published works. Treating the published and unpublished works as equals will enable us to examine the conflicts and ambiguities between Nietzsche's public and private views of Wagner. Thirdly, this disparity emphasises how the private correspondence is not just a documentation of Nietzsche's life; the letters are sources that fill many of the gaps left by Nietzsche's publications. Below, we will further critical insights into Nietzsche by affording the private letters equal status to the published works. This approach seeks to rebalance the significance of the unpublished works in discussions of Nietzsche and Wagner.

This discussion will begin by examining Nietzsche's intellectual interest in, and use of, Wagner from 1869 to 1889. This examination will demonstrate that, during the phases when Nietzsche is more positive towards Wagner's works, Nietzsche uses Wagner as a weapon in his campaign to bring about a rebirth of German culture. At the centre of this desire is the wish to see German myth reborn. This ambition, which stems from a

critique of what Nietzsche considers to be overreaching rationalism in art and life, is first sketched in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872), and we will return to this issue below. Nietzsche later uses *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876) to expand upon this desire and several of the other aesthetic arguments he makes in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Soon afterwards, though, Nietzsche's position inverts, and he becomes sceptical of Wagner's art and its ability to breathe new life into German culture. Nietzsche now criticises Wagner's music for failing to fulfil its potential to deliver a new cultural dawn, and he rejects Wagner's art for having come to represent everything that he considered culturally misguided in the newly unified Germany of the 1870s and 1880s. Nietzsche's high hopes for a Wagnerian cultural rebirth, in the style of the ancient Greeks, had been misplaced.

5.2 Wagner as 'Anti-Socrates'

Of Nietzsche's published works, the two that engage with Wagner and his music in the most positive manner are *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and the fourth *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtung, Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. Published in 1872 and 1876 respectively, these texts bookend the three earlier *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (1873-74). We can read *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* alongside each other. The main justification for doing so is that both works engage with the same core topics, such as the place of reason in art – an interest Nietzsche shares with Adorno – and the role of music in rejuvenating modern culture. The close relationship between these two works can be proven concretely by considering comments Nietzsche makes in a draft letter to Wilhelm Engelmann in April 1871: "Die eigentliche Aufgabe ist aber dann [...] Richard Wagner in seinem Verhältniß zu der griech. Tragödie zu beleuchten." (*Briefe*, 1871, 133). The links between the two texts are proved by the fact that *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*

picks up on the key topics that Nietzsche alludes to in his letter.²⁵⁹ The two works therefore emerge from the same intellectual currents. This does not mean that the two texts wish to prove the same points, and the latter should at most be considered an evolution of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Without over-simplifying Nietzsche's intellectual development, though, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* is certainly a critical sibling of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

It is worth quickly revisiting the main arguments of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, as explored in Chapter Four, so that the concepts *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* draws upon are clear. *Die Geburt der Tragödie* establishes Nietzsche's basic antithesis of the chaotic, irrational Dionysian and the cool, detached Apollonian. These two artistic drives compete with one another for supremacy, leading to a paradoxical balance between the two forces in the form of pre-Socratic tragedy. Crucially, they compete to help humans to deal with the horrors of existence ("Entsetzlichkeiten des Daseins") that Nietzsche describes in section three of the text, and pre-Socratic tragedy thus gave the ancient Greeks a way of celebrating and affirming life, in Nietzsche's view. However, Nietzsche then argues that pre-Socratic tragedy was later opposed by what he terms 'aesthetic Socratism'. He holds Socrates, or what he represents, responsible for the decline of great tragedy, writing in section twelve of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* that Socrates' purportedly hyper-rational approach to art was a murderous principle ("mörderisches Prinzip") that triggered a long process of cultural decline, which extended into Germany in the nineteenth century. For Nietzsche, this shift represents an unhealthy reconfiguration of reason and non-reason in art, and he ultimately wishes to restore this balance by resurrecting chaotic Dionysian

²⁵⁹ For example, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* addresses the position and role of the spectator in sections 4, 8 and 9; it discusses the origins, role, and aims of tragedy in section 4 and 7; and the concept of the individual in artistic production and experience is examined in sections 5 and 9. *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* shares these concerns with *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, as discussed in Chapter 4.

experience in order to rebalance the paradoxical antithesis of the Apollonian and the Dionysian.

The attack on rationalistic Socratism retains a central position in Nietzsche's thought following the publication of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.²⁶⁰ Although Socrates is not named in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche here develops his attack on so-called Socratic art, portraying Wagner and his music as the antipode to modern rationalism, and as a means of overcoming it. Starting with the composer, Nietzsche writes that Wagner's success stemmed from his looking inwards for artistic inspiration: "Was aber Wagner an jenem Tage innerlich schaute — wie er wurde, was er ist, was er sein wird — das können wir, seine Nächsten, bis zu einem Grade nachschauen: und erst von diesem Wagnerischen Blick aus werden wir seine grosse That selber verstehen können" (*WB* 1). Looking inwards ("innerlich schaute") can be understood as referring to Wagner's use of, or at least his being inspired by, his emotions in the composition process. This process privileges the inner life of the artist, i.e. their feelings, emotions, and (artistic) impulses, over a reliance on reason in creating great art. For Nietzsche, Wagner's looking inwards was a significant factor in his success as a composer. This description of Wagner echoes the anti-rationalistic description of pre-Socratic Greek tragedy first developed in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, and it represents Nietzsche's desire to reconstruct the paradoxes of enlightenment by addressing the imbalance he perceives between reason and non-reason.

²⁶⁰ Christoph Cox, 'Nietzsche, Dionysus, and the Ontology of Music', in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. by Keith Ansell Pearson (Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 495-514 (p. 498).

This opposition is made clearer in the second section of Nietzsche's essay. Having argued that Wagner looked to his inner nature for artistic inspiration in section one of the essay, Nietzsche then describes this inner nature:

Seine Natur erscheint in furchtbarer Weise vereinfacht, in zwei Triebe oder Sphären auseinander gerissen. Zu unterst wühlt ein heftiger Wille in jäher Strömung, der gleichsam auf allen Wegen, Höhlen und Schluchten an's Licht will [...]. Nur eine ganz reine und freie Kraft konnte diesem Willen einen Weg in's Gute und Hülfreiche weisen (WB 2).

This description of Nietzsche's perception of the two competing elements of Wagner's character forms a clear parallel with the duality of the Apollonian ("Licht") and the Dionysian ("Wille") developed in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. As discussed above, in the text of 1872 these two forces are described as artistic drives which originate in the unconscious of the individual,²⁶¹ and are thus not governed by reason. This model is replicated in the description of Wagner in the second section of *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. Although he does not use the terms Apollonian or Dionysian to describe the opposing drives within Wagner, Nietzsche still retains the model of competing artistic forces within the individual, as opposed to the dialectical approach that Adorno consistently takes. Consequently, the Wagner of *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* is portrayed as an artist who practises his art by harnessing unconscious artistic drives rather than through the conscious use of reason. He assumes role of Nietzsche's anti-Socratic hero, and furthers Nietzsche's cause of redressing what he views as the imbalance between reason and non-reason in art and wider culture.

Later in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche's focus shifts from the inner state of the artist to the role of the consumer of art, echoing points he makes in *Die Geburt der*

²⁶¹ "[...] bis wir jene Doppelheit selbst als Ursprung und Wesen der griechischen Tragödie wiederfanden, als den Ausdruck zweier in einander gewobenen Kunsttriebe, des Apollonischen und des Dionysischen" (GT 12).

Tragödie. The main points that emerge from this argument of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* are that the spectator must be receptive to great works of art; that the spectator must surrender elements of their individuality; and that the spectator must rebalance non-reason and reason when interacting with art.²⁶² This last point is particularly significant in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. In section seven, Nietzsche describes how great art suspends reason: “Er [der Zuschauer] steht mit einem Male vor einer Macht, welche den Widerstand der Vernunft aufhebt, ja alles Andere, in dem man bis dahin lebte, unvernünftig und unbegreiflich erscheinen lässt” (WB 7). The cultural products of great artists like Wagner resist the temptation to interpret artistic experience through the lens of reason, allowing spectators to instead experience true Dionysian intoxication. This pattern works against what Adorno sees as the rationalised process of interpreting art, as he discusses in *Ästhetische Theorie*. For Nietzsche, though, Wagner is an anti-Socratic artist whose art evokes a non-rational reaction in its audience, promoting the (re)birth of a culture that emphasises the irrational element of the paradoxes of enlightenment.

This rebalancing of intoxication over reason is linked to the rebirth of myth, which is central to Nietzsche’s aesthetic theories of the 1870s. The wish to see myth reborn is the culmination of the argument of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, where Nietzsche considers it a “healthy” cultural component:²⁶³ “Ohne Mythos aber geht jede Cultur ihrer gesunden schöpferischen Naturkraft verlustig: erst ein mit Mythen umstellter Horizont schliesst eine ganze Kulturbewegung zur Einheit ab.” (GT 23) More importantly, he links myth and music, suggesting that both are an expression of a people’s aptitude for the Dionysian: “Musik und tragischer Mythos sind in gleicher Weise Ausdruck der dionysischen

²⁶² For an extensive commentary on these points, see M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 87-106.

²⁶³ Roger Scruton, ‘Nietzsche on Wagner’, in *Nietzsche on Art and Life*, ed. by Daniel Came (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 236-51 (p. 238).

Befähigung eines Volkes” (*GT* 25). By defining myth as an expression of Dionysian potential, Nietzsche suggests that myth is a non-rational phenomenon, and his promotion of myth in art therefore seeks to restore non-rationality to the centre of aesthetic experience. Furthermore, his promotion of Dionysian myth only reinforces his paradoxical understanding of enlightenment. Rather than allowing reason to dominate art, Nietzsche writes in support of the non-rational Dionysian in order to draw aesthetics away from the rationalistic principles Socrates allegedly supported. He does not eliminate rationalism from his aesthetic model entirely as the cool Apollonian still plays a significant role, but his promotion of non-rational myth reinforces the antithetical tension between reason and non-reason by countering the rationalistic role of the Apollonian, of which ‘Socratism’ is an extreme form.

The coupling of music and myth in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, a pairing which will also prove significant for Adorno, is taken up by Nietzsche in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. He elaborates on the music-myth relationship towards the end of the essay, with his most intense engagement with the topic coming in section eight. Here Nietzsche writes that myth and music function as two sides of the same coin as they offer the composer’s soul respite from the pains of being: “In diesen beiden Elementen badet und heilt er [Wagner] seine Seele, ihrer bedarf er am brünstigsten: — von da aus darf er zurückschliessen, wie verwandt seine Noth mit der des Volkes sei” (*WB* 8). It is worth noting that Nietzsche presents music and myth not simply as worthy elements of a noble culture. By using the verb ‘bedürfen’ to describe Wagner’s dependence on them, he portrays music and myth as essential ingredients for a life-affirming existence. In spite of his praise of Wagner’s character earlier in the essay, Nietzsche reduces the gap between the composer and his audiences because even the genius Wagner must be tamed by music

and myth. This approach reinforces Nietzsche's view of music and myth as universal, non-rational human requirements.

Though Wagner is thus just as dependent on the healing powers of music and myth as any other human being, Nietzsche equally describes him as a genius who is able to identify how music and myth should be used in wider culture. Consider the following extract from *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*:

Hier hörte der Künstler [Wagner] deutlich den Befehl, der an ihn allein ergieng — [...] die Musik zu entzaubern, zum Reden zu bringen: er fühlte seine Kraft zum Drama mit einem Male entfesselt, seine Herrschaft über ein noch unentdecktes Mittelreich zwischen Mythos und Musik begründet. (WB 8)

Here, Nietzsche depicts Wagner as a lone genius, an idea that Adorno does not replicate as it almost certainly stems from Nietzsche's personal admiration for Wagner. Nietzsche considers Wagner the only artist who recognises the need to reshape music and myth in order to remould the modern world. Nietzsche's view of Wagner's artistic prowess is cemented further by the description of how Wagner has uncovered a previously unknown middle ground between music and myth. More importantly, this promotion of Wagner's abilities reinforces Nietzsche's view of the rejuvenating powers of music and myth as Wagner is regarded as a medium for the birth of a "new myth".²⁶⁴

As Nietzsche considers both music and myth to be Dionysian, non-rational phenomena, the promotion of Wagner and his role in the rebirth of myth forms part of Nietzsche's wider critique of modernity's hyper-rational habits, and thus his attempt to reinforce the paradoxes of enlightenment. Only by rebalancing humans' tendency to rely on the rational as a means of understanding the world does Nietzsche see a path towards cultural regeneration, and Nietzsche here believes that (Wagner's) art is the primary

²⁶⁴ Andrew Huddleston, *Nietzsche on the Decadence and Flourishing of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 1.

means of implementing this change. Nietzsche's approach here, and specifically his focus on the role of great individuals in processes of cultural change, differs from Adorno's. Although issues of individuality are present in Adorno's thought as he is concerned with questions of subjectivity and objectivity, Adorno does not routinely hold up specific individuals as models of cultural change. Instead, he believes that change can be enacted on a structural level, such as by altering the economic foundations of a society. Adorno's examination of the power and reach of the culture industry, as discussed in Chapter Four, speaks to this view of societal and cultural change as he focuses on the culture industry's purported ability to underpin all kinds of social and cultural developments. Nietzsche, however, maintains more of a focus on the role and place of individuals, which is more typical of his wider philosophical method.

Distancing ourselves from Wagner temporarily, Nietzsche does not reproduce his paradoxical image of enlightenment in his works on Wagner in the level of detail that we see elsewhere. In places he redresses what he views as the imbalance between reason and non-reason in art, seeking to recentre non-reason in aesthetic experience. He also implicitly maintains his antithetical model of the Dionysian and the Apollonian in his works on Wagner, but his focus is on limiting the remit of reason (the Apollonian) in art, which has all but disappeared in name by this point in Nietzsche's aesthetic discourse. Consequently, the Apollonian becomes a background feature of Nietzsche's antithetical image of enlightenment in his works on Wagner. This is not to say that Nietzsche abandons his promotion of his antithetical approach in focusing on the non-rational, but he primarily uses *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* to promote the place of non-rationality in art. As a result, one preliminary conclusion to be drawn from this discussion of Nietzsche's works on Wagner is that Nietzsche's attitude to the

paradoxes of enlightenment in art is different to his understanding of them as part of humans' abstract intellectual powers. This insight will become even clearer as our analysis develops below, and Nietzsche's discussion of language in Wagner's music is one topic that will draw out this insight further.

5.3 The Critique of Language

Up until this point, the examination of Nietzsche's use of Wagner has demonstrated a close relationship between the arguments of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872) and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876). The ties between the two works are so close that one commentator has even suggested that *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* has "nothing of substance" to add to the earlier work.²⁶⁵ The two works do indeed have much in common, and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* often builds upon the concerns present in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. However, it would be a mistake to claim that the former has nothing to add to the latter. Although it is not simply a footnote to *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* does, in fact, expand upon its arguments by developing a critique of language. As well as continuing Nietzsche's early attempts to redress the balance of reason and non-reason in culture and society more in favour of the latter, an undertaking he began in reaction to the apparent rise of aesthetic Socratism, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* expands Nietzsche's critique of language. Nietzsche once more uses Wagner as the antipodal element in this critique, and he represents the shift towards non-reason that Nietzsche believes German culture needs. Wagner therefore remains a tool through which Nietzsche attacks both the culture of his day, and an excessively rational form of life.

²⁶⁵ Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 55.

Nietzsche develops the critique of language – a central issue in Adorno’s works on Wagner – in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. He writes that language has fallen ill, and that this illness burdens humanity: “Überall ist hier die Sprache erkrankt, und auf der ganzen menschlichen Entwicklung lastet der Druck dieser ungeheuerlichen Krankheit.” (WB 5) Read literally, this quotation suggests that language restricts human progress as it is an illness that affects humanity physically. This interpretation is supported by Nietzsche’s attempts to recentre the body and its needs in later texts like *Also sprach Zarathustra*. However, a metaphorical reading of this quotation is more fitting as Nietzsche does not routinely describe culture as a living thing. This reading is underpinned by the context of this critique. Nietzsche’s interest in language in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* forms part of an aesthetic critique that aims to effect cultural change, which suggests that Nietzsche does not have physiology in mind here. Nietzsche questions the extent to which language can produce a truthful image of the world,²⁶⁶ and thus whether it can reliably lead humans towards enlightenment. Nietzsche’s argument forms a parallel to Adorno’s criticism of categorical thinking, although each thinker’s critique stems from different circumstances. Whereas Nietzsche looks to limit rationality’s role in art and aesthetic experience, Adorno wishes to dissuade his reader from relying on simplified, misleading intellectual systems to comprehend the world.

Nietzsche proposes a solution to what he views as language’s shortcomings in the form of music, and he considers music to be much more than a mere artform. Critics have previously assessed the relationship between music and knowledge in Nietzsche’s thought. George H. Leiner, for example, writes that Nietzsche views music as an “element

²⁶⁶ Nietzsche addresses the issues of language’s ability to both accurately represent the world, and its potential to mislead humans throughout his writing career. For example, see *WL 1*; *MAM I*, 11; and *JGB* 192.

of life that Nietzsche took to be essential to the task of philosophy”.²⁶⁷ Leiner shows that music is central to Nietzsche’s wider philosophy and subtly underscores the existential function that art can play in it. However, Leiner’s assessment can be taken a step further with reference to Nietzsche’s attempt to aestheticize philosophy, as discussed in Chapter Four. We noted there that Nietzsche equates art and philosophy by aestheticizing his philosophical messages in the form of poetry, and it was established that *Also sprach Zarathustra* loosely parallels the *Bildungsroman* of the nineteenth century. Building upon this analysis, it becomes clear that music, as a form of art, is more than central to philosophy for Nietzsche: it is philosophy. Music is a means of understanding and experiencing the world, as well as a tool that leads to cultural rejuvenation through its cathartic, liberating, and invigorating effect on the listener.

Nietzsche once again uses Wagner as a case study to develop and illustrate this insight. In section eight of *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche depicts Wagner’s compositions as a form of philosophy: “Er [Wagner] wollte nur noch Eins: sich mit sich verständigen, über das Wesen der Welt in Vorgängen denken, in Tönen philosophieren” (WB 8). Wagner’s form of philosophy creates meaning through sound, rather than through the rationalised, mediated means of language alone.²⁶⁸ Philosophy therefore becomes an invigorating, Dionysian form of art and, crucially, an experience that is integral to life, as is the case in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Wagner assumes the role of the archetypal musician-philosopher who comments on the world via a non-rational form of art.

²⁶⁷ George H. Leiner, ‘To Overcome One’s Self: Nietzsche, Bizet and Wagner’, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 9/10 (Spring/Autumn 1995), 132-47 (p. 132).

²⁶⁸ Reason is not the only factor that drives linguistic communication between people. However, Kirk Ludwig successfully argues that a major degree of rationality is required for thought, and thus for language. Adopting this understanding of language allows us to view Nietzsche’s critique of language as a critique of language’s rational foundations. See Kirk Ludwig, ‘Rationality, Language, and the Principle of Charity’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Rationality*, ed. by Alfred R. Mele and Piers Rawling (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 343-362 (pp. 343-355).

Nietzsche does not entirely abandon his antithetical model of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, and nor does he reject language outright.²⁶⁹ However, in aesthetic experience he seeks to limit the role of what he considers to be the overly rational use of language, and Wagner contributes to Nietzsche's mission to aestheticize philosophy and enlightenment by tipping the balance towards the non-rational. This observation underpins the argument made earlier in this chapter that, in his works on Wagner, Nietzsche focuses more heavily on the non-rational element of his paradoxes of enlightenment than on its rational counterpart as the rational is already (too) present.

Nietzsche pursues the argument that Wagner's music represents a new, aestheticized form of philosophy later in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. He again states that Wagner's preferred way of thinking is through the mode of music: "Das Dichterische in Wagner zeigt sich darin, dass er in sichtbaren und fühlbaren Vorgängen, nicht in Begriffen denkt, das heisst, dass er mythisch denkt" (WB 9). This description of Wagner's composition method reaffirms the central role Nietzsche assigns to myth in rejuvenating modern culture. Additionally, he suggests that the senses play a large role in Wagner's musico-philosophical understanding of the world, highlighting the significance of the body in the process, a topic that is also significant for Adorno. Nietzsche once more presents the inner world of the individual as a privileged means of generating philosophical insights into being and the world, which is a rejection of philosophising using rational thought and logic. Nietzsche's argument here recalls his

²⁶⁹ For a discussion of the relationship between instinct and language in Nietzsche's wider thought, see Claudia Crawford, *The Beginnings of Nietzsche's Theory of Language* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1988), especially pp. 41-50. Other critics, such as Patrick Wotling and João Constâncio, have discussed this topic with reference to specific texts. See Patrick Wotling, 'What Language Do Drives Speak?', in *Nietzsche on Instinct and Language*, ed. by João Constâncio and Maria João Mayer Branco (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 63-79; and João Constâncio, 'Instinct and Language in Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*', in *Nietzsche on Instinct and Language*, pp. 80-116.

debt to Schopenhauer's privileging of music above all other forms of art, and Schopenhauer's belief in music's ability to depict metaphysical truths. Consequently, Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Wagner's music also represents an implicit promotion of Schopenhauer's emphasis on the metaphysical importance of music and its ability to represent the Will. At this stage, in 1876, despite a slight cooling of his affection for both the composer and the philosopher, Nietzsche still sees himself, Wagner, and Schopenhauer as a formidable cultural trio.

As a form of philosophy, music in Nietzsche's eyes encourages humans to embrace the chaotic, Dionysian side of being in order to restore a healthy balance between reason and non-reason. Wagner's brand of musical philosophy is characterised as an invigorating philosophy that reprioritises non-reason in art and wider culture by affording more space to non-rational phenomena and experiences. Nietzsche hopes to appropriate Wagner's music as a means of promoting his own belief that life should be lived in an autonomous yet self-disciplined manner that will enable individuals to live life to the full. Nietzsche does not develop this later outlook, with its heavy focus on the individual, in detail until the 1880s, however his enthusiasm for Wagner in the early to mid-1870s contains the seeds for the idea that life-affirmation should be at the centre of everything humans do. Nietzsche presents this life-affirming outlook in different ways in several of his works, describing it as 'saying yes' to life in *Also sprach Zarathustra* (see ASZ, 'Von den drei Verwandlungen'), and referring to it as a 'love of fate' in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: "Amor fati: das sei von nun an meine Liebe!" (FW 276). According to Nietzsche humans should accept their fate, reshaping it according to their own wishes, and they should then embrace both the higher pleasures and the pain that this life brings.

Nietzsche's promotion of Wagner's invigorating music undoubtedly anticipates this development in his thought.

To summarise this section, Nietzsche uses *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* to attack nineteenth-century German culture. By downplaying the importance of language in artistic production, he redresses the cultural (im)balance between reason and non-reason. Nietzsche does not reproduce an obviously paradoxical image of enlightenment in his promotion of Wagner as he focuses more on critiquing reason in art. Additionally, Nietzsche seeks to transform the meaning of philosophy, praising Wagner's works for their ability to interpret the world through sound rather than language. This attempt to convert philosophy into a Dionysian artform, mirroring his endeavour to aestheticize philosophy through poetry as discussed in Chapter Four, also foreshadows Nietzsche's later campaign to have individuals embrace an invigorating way of life. Nietzsche's use of Wagner and his works in the early to mid-1870s is therefore the foundation of a wider attempt to alter humans' understanding of their lives. These latter two conclusions are this chapter's most significant contribution to scholarship thus far as they show how Nietzsche uses Wagner to further his campaign to transform the meaning of philosophy. This aim is intrinsically linked to Nietzsche's attempt to redress culture's balance of reason and non-reason, and thus to address the antithetical balance between reason and non-reason. Nietzsche engages with Wagner productively, but we will now see that his admiration for the composer would not last.

5.4 Breaking from Wagner

In the late 1870s and early 1880s, Nietzsche's attitude towards Wagner changes. Having spent considerable time in Wagner's company, and having published works in which he

praises the composer, Nietzsche comes to reject Wagner and his music. Nietzsche dramatized this twist in their friendship, portraying, in a dramatic invention, the crossing in the post of his *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* and the score of Wagner's opera Parsifal (first performed in 1882) as a crossing of swords: "Klang es nicht, als ob sich Degen kreuzten?... Jedenfalls empfanden wir es beide so: denn wir schwiegen beide" (*EH* 'MA' 5). This shift in attitude is marked most unambiguously in two polemics published in the late 1880s: the essay *Der Fall Wagner* (1888) and *Nietzsche contra Wagner* (1889).²⁷⁰ The latter is a text comprised of reworked anti-Wagner passages from Nietzsche's previous works, which highlights how Nietzsche's rejection of Wagner was a gradual process, rather than a sudden break.²⁷¹ Turning away from Wagner, a man who mentored Nietzsche academically and personally for a number of years, would suggest that Nietzsche's aesthetic thought had undergone significant change, but Nietzsche's writings tell a different story. Nietzsche's image of enlightenment, as expressed in his works on Wagner, will ultimately remain unaffected.

Nietzsche's aesthetic thinking in the published texts of 1888 and 1889, along with comments from private letters, show that the fundamental ideals behind his thought on Wagner undergo little change between 1872 and 1889. Take, for instance, the following comment from a letter Nietzsche wrote to Franz Overbeck in October 1886: "Ich glaube, sie [die Anhänger Wagners] wissen, daß ich heute noch so gut als ehemals an das Ideal glaube, an welches Wagner glaubte" (*Briefe*, 1886, 769). Nietzsche suggests here that his musical opinions have not changed. He alludes to an unnamed ideal, meaning that it is

²⁷⁰ Robert C. Holub (cited above) correctly notes that tensions between Nietzsche and Wagner remained largely private until the late 1880s (p. 433).

²⁷¹ For a list of the sections from Nietzsche's works that constitute *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, see Andreas Urs Sommer, 'Nietzsche contra Wagner. Aktenstücke eines Psychologen', in *Kommentar zu Nietzsches Der Antichrist, Ecce Homo, Dionysos-Dithyramben, Nietzsche contra Wagner*, ed. by Andreas Urs Sommer (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 701-790 (pp. 704-705).

difficult to pinpoint exactly what Nietzsche is referring to, but he likely has in mind the principles he previously admired in Wagner's music. However, in the late 1880s Nietzsche believes that Wagner has abandoned the artistic and cultural principles that made him a great composer. Nietzsche, in a parallel to Adorno, also addresses the relationship between economics and art, and states that Wagner has given himself over to theatres whose goal is to make money: "Man macht heute nur Geld mit kranker Musik; unsre grossen Theater leben von Wagner" (WA 5) In Nietzsche's view, Wagner has turned his back on the artistic ideals they shared. Wagner is consequently no longer a suitable representative of these cultural ideals or of the aestheticized enlightenment Nietzsche promotes.

This impression is reinforced in Nietzsche's later published works. In *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, he portrays Wagner and Schopenhauer as his antipodes: "Sie [Wagner und Schopenhauer] verneinen das Leben, sie verleumden es, damit sind sie meine Antipoden" (NW 'Wir Antipoden'). Nietzsche thus creates an opposition between himself – a thinker with the potential to transform culture – and Schopenhauer and Wagner, and Nietzsche believes that Wagner turned his back on loving life, betraying him in his quest to induce cultural change. This opposition does not amount to a change in Nietzsche's aesthetic thought, though. Instead, he simply no longer considers Wagner or Schopenhauer great cultural transformers. Describing them as deniers of life recalls the values of 'saying yes' to life and 'loving fate', as Nietzsche describes in *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. Nietzsche depicts himself as having remained true to these principles, and he rejects Wagner and Schopenhauer for their tendency to deny life. However, Nietzsche's image of Wagner changes. He once promoted Wagner as the genius to bring about a new era of culture. However, in 1886 he

warns the reader of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, in a new introduction to the text, that the first of his works to praise Wagner was immature and uninformed: “Ich heisse es [das Buch] schlecht geschrieben, schwerfällig, peinlich, bilderwüthig und bilderwirrig, gefühlsam” (GTVS 3). The Nietzsche of 1886 distances himself from his earlier promotion of Wagner.

Nietzsche’s rejection of Wagner has several facets. In *Der Fall Wagner* Nietzsche analyses the composer, his works, and his impact on wider culture,²⁷² accusing Wagner of creating a cultural movement that promotes an inauthentic, overly rational approach to art and life: “Die Bewegung, die Wagner schuf, greift selbst in das Gebiet der Erkenntnis über” (WA 11). Nietzsche here rejects Wagner’s cultural movement for what he views as its over-reliance on rationality. “Erkenntnis” refers to the rational process of cognition and understanding, whereby individuals interpret phenomena like music via rational thought. For Nietzsche, this process produces a superficial understanding of the world that is rooted in the overly rational processing of language. Consequently, Nietzsche believes that Wagner produces and promotes a rational interpretation of music. This rational approach to music contradicts what Nietzsche had mistakenly believed was the composer’s previous promotion of music’s chaotic, Dionysian nature, and this rejection of Wagner can be considered an attack on what Nietzsche perceives to be the “rhetorical nature of music”.²⁷³ Additionally, Nietzsche’s claim demonstrates that his critique of Wagner does not reproduce Nietzsche’s paradoxical image of enlightenment, just as his promotion of Wagner does not. Nietzsche once praised Wagner for being the antipode to

²⁷² Katherine Fry, ‘Nietzsche, *Tristan and Isolde*, and the Analysis of Wagnerian Rhythm’, *The Opera Quarterly*, 29(3-4) (summer-autumn 2013), 253-76 (p. 271).

²⁷³ Fry, ‘Nietzsche’ p. 271.

hyper-rational Socratism, yet now he lambasts the composer for promoting what he had previously appeared to reject.

Wagner thus becomes Nietzsche's new Socrates. He now represents a dry, rational approach to life that suffocates artistic potential, which forms a parallel with Adorno's critique of the culture industry. This shift in Wagner's approach to art – or in Nietzsche's perception of it – has starved culture of the invigoration it requires for the rebirth of myth, in Nietzsche's view. Culture is thus still far from being rejuvenated, and Nietzsche's views of Wagner tell a story of cultural decline. Nietzsche expands this narrative by linking Wagner to Christianity, one of Nietzsche's principal targets. After proclaiming the death of God in 1882 (*FW* 108, 125), Nietzsche's attacks on Christianity intensified towards the end of the decade. Texts such as *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887), and *Der Antichrist* (1888/1895) represent attempts to dismantle Christianity and the foundations of its moral system. However, the foundations for the critique of Wagner's apparent adherence to flawed Christian ideals were laid much earlier. In a January 1878 letter to Reinhart von Seydlitz, Nietzsche attacks the score of Wagner's *Parsifal* for being too reflective of the modern day and, crucially, too Christian: "Mehr Liszt, als Wagner, Geist der Gegenreformation [...] Alles zu christlich zeitlich beschränkt" (*Briefe*, 1878, 678). This letter highlights Nietzsche's view that *Parsifal* does not expand the boundaries of musical possibilities as it maintains the cultural status quo, and genuflects to Christianity.

Later in *Der Fall Wagner*, Nietzsche links Wagner's purported pro-reason turn with Christianity: "Wagner vertritt damit den christlichen Begriff „du sollst und musst glauben“. Es ist ein Verbrechen am Höchsten, am Heiligsten, wissenschaftlich zu sein..." (*WA* 3). This excerpt highlights Nietzsche's view that understanding the world through

knowledge (“wissenschaftlich”) is inadequate. Additionally, Nietzsche accuses Wagner of limiting himself by adhering to Christianity. Nietzsche considers Christianity incompatible with great art as it restricts individual genius, and in Nietzsche’s view, Wagner’s music should therefore no longer be considered great as it embodies Christian values. This argument recalls the third section of *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, which develops Nietzsche’s critique of ascetic ideals. An examination of ascetic ideals is beyond the scope of this study,²⁷⁴ but they can be summarised using Nietzsche’s words as “wanting nothingness, rather than not wanting” (“eher [...] das Nichts wollen, als nicht wollen” (*GM* III 2)), and they thus lead to the “self-suppression” life’s energising passions for fear of excess individual pleasure.²⁷⁵ Wagner’s music has, for Nietzsche, followed this path, and it can consequently no longer provide the revitalising energy needed for cultural rebirth. Nonetheless, Nietzsche still finds a use for Wagner in his thought, as we shall now see.

5.5 Overcoming Wagner

Nietzsche clearly turns away from his former mentor after his earlier glowing assessments of Wagner’s music. Nietzsche’s enthusiasm for cultural renewal, as is evident in his works of the 1870s, is undimmed, but it has since taken a different direction: he no longer believes that Wagner’s music will usher in a new era of culture. Having focused primarily on the rebirth of culture in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche’s emphasis shifts to the rebirth of the individual in the 1880s, as exemplified by the self-reliant Zarathustra. Yet Nietzsche’s acceptance that Wagner’s music has failed

²⁷⁴ For a detailed commentary on ascetic ideals in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, see Lawrence J. Hatab, *Nietzsche’s ‘On the Genealogy of Morality’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 113-171.

²⁷⁵ Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche’s Genealogy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007), p. 166.

to live up to its potential is not a full rejection of the composer. Even if he no longer supports Wagner's musical projects, Nietzsche recognises that he and culture at large can benefit from exposure to Wagner's music. Despite its flaws, it can still play a role in shaping the future of culture, albeit in a way that neither Nietzsche nor Wagner envisaged in the early 1870s. Nietzsche does not consider Wagner a force for good, yet his music provides an invaluable stimulus for cultural rejuvenation, and this attitude towards Wagner can even be considered dialectical. Wagner is now a necessary evil, which refutes critical assessments of the Nietzsche-Wagner relationship as a shift from love to hate, such as Holub's and Ridley's binary understandings (examined above).

Nietzsche forges his later, paradoxical image of Wagner through analogies of illness.²⁷⁶ As was the case with Nietzsche's criticism of Wagner's alleged Christian tendencies, this image surfaces in Nietzsche's private correspondences long before it emerges in the published works. For example, Nietzsche writes to Mathilde Maier in July 1878 that Wagner's art was one of the two phenomena that made him ill:

Jene metaphysische Vernebelung alles Wahren und Einfachen, der Kampf mit der Vernunft gegen die Vernunft [...] — dazu eine ganz entsprechende Barockkunst der Überspannung und der verherrlichten Maßlosigkeit — ich meine die Kunst Wagner's — dies Beides war es, was mich endlich krank und kränker machte und mich fast meinem guten Temperamente und meiner Begabung entfremdet hätte (*Briefe*, 1878, 734).

Wagner, his music, and the Wagnerian cultural movement Nietzsche disparagingly refers to as “Wagnerei” in the foreword to *Der Fall Wagner* are thus treated as diseases. In the

²⁷⁶ Nietzsche's own struggles with illness have long been an object of discussion. Even in recent years – over a century after his death – critics have retrospectively diagnosed Nietzsche with various conditions. This study will not engage in such speculation. However, should the reader wish to gain an overview of these discussions, Thomas Klopstock's 2013 article summarises several assessments. See Thomas Klopstock, 'Friedrich Nietzsche und seine Krankheiten: kein ausreichender Anhalt für MELAS', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 42(1) (2013), 293-297. For a discussion of how Nietzsche's comments on health relate to his 1886 prefaces to *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, see Melanie Shepard, “Let us return to Herr Nietzsche”: On Health and Revaluation', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 50(1) (Spring 2019), 125-148.

letter to Maier, Nietzsche describes how the Wagnerian illness has only affected him individually. However, as Nietzsche often alludes to Wagner's significant cultural influence in the published works, we infer that Wagner, in Nietzsche's view, also 'infects' wider culture. If the individual and the culture are ill and in decline, they are unable to grow and evolve in a life-enhancing manner. What is more, the life of the individual and the culture at hand may be at risk of succumbing to this illness, meaning that Wagner and his music are implicitly treated as an existential threat to both individual and cultural wellbeing. For Nietzsche, Wagner now stands for cultural decline.

Nietzsche does not consider this threat to culture entirely negative. In spite of the risk the Wagnerian illness poses, Nietzsche believes that responses to it can promote growth in the individual, which then permeate into wider culture. He describes this process in *Der Fall Wagner*: "Die Krankheit selbst kann ein Stimulans des Lebens sein: nur muss man gesund genug für dies Stimulans sein! Wagner vermehrt die Schöpfung" (WA 5). By describing how the Wagnerian illness stimulates growth, Nietzsche implicitly shifts the focus of his vision for cultural rejuvenation. Rather than proclaiming this change to be imminent, as he did when praising Wagner's music in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* for its ability to induce the rebirth of Germanic myth, Nietzsche here creates a long-term vision for change. He implies that Germany's 'immunity' to Wagner will develop over time. A culture must, Nietzsche suggests, suffer through difficult periods of the infection, overcome it, and then use the strength gained to rejuvenate the individual and the culture to which they belong. Much like the journey towards enlightenment Nietzsche depicts elsewhere, the cure to the Wagnerian cultural illness is a long-term undertaking that leads to an undefined destination. Although Nietzsche only takes this dialectical approach when attacking Wagner ad hominem, this method nonetheless represents a departure from his

antithetical philosophical method and provides a parallel to Adorno's dialectical approach.

Nietzsche describes the process of infection and recovery as a necessary evil, reaffirming the paradoxical, dialectical nature of his dismissal of Wagner the man. In *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, he states that humanity has no other option but to burden itself in order to become healthy again: "Und wollen wir hinterdrein zur Gesundheit zurück, so bleibt uns keine Wahl: wir müssen uns schwerer belasten, als wir je vorher belastet waren..." (NW 2). Nietzsche believes that society is already infected with this ailment. The solution, he suggests, is to gather the strength needed to survive as there is no medicine to ease the symptoms of this cultural illness. This description forms a parallel to Nietzsche's portrayal of his own overcoming of Wagner. He writes in *Ecce Homo* (1888) that he paradoxically owes his own strength to the composer as Wagner forced Nietzsche to become stronger: "Und so wie ich bin, stark genug, um mir auch das Fragwürdigste und Gefährlichste noch zum Vortheil zu wenden und damit stärker zu werden, nenne ich Wagner den grossen Wohlthäter meines Lebens" (EH 'Klug' 6). Nietzsche thus suggests that humans should accept suffering as it unlocks the higher potential of the individual and the culture of which they are part. For Nietzsche, Wagner paradoxically holds cultural development back in the first instance, and later pushes it to grow beyond its previous limits.

Nietzsche's analogies of health emphasise the place of the body, a pressing concern in his wider thought. In Chapter Two of this study, we saw how Nietzsche redresses the antithetical balance of reason and non-reason. He elevates the significance of the body and its needs through his discussion of drives, as well as by referring to the body as a physical manifestation of reason in *Also sprach Zarathustra*: "Der Leib ist eine

grosse Vernunft, eine Vielheit mit Einem Sinne” (ASZ I ‘Von den Verächtern des Leibes’). Although Nietzsche does not refer to culture as a body, he frames cultural issues in physiological terms by using the language of illness to diagnose cultural ailments. This choice of language demonstrates that the body remains a concern of Nietzsche’s, creating a link between his writings on Wagner, and his campaign to present the human being as a member of the wider animal kingdom. Adorno’s thought – specifically his emphasis on the role of drives in human behaviour – acknowledges the place of the body in culture and society, but Adorno does not elevate the status of the body as Nietzsche does. Furthermore, the role of the body does not feature as prominently in Adorno’s works on Wagner as it does in other areas of his thought.

We have seen that Nietzsche’s relationship with Wagner rose and fell. However, Nietzsche’s personal investment in this relationship did not have a significant effect on his outlook on the relationship between art and enlightenment. Even though his admiration for Wagner turned into a strong dislike, Nietzsche does not depart from the pro-Dionysian aesthetic principles he promotes in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. This consistency demonstrates that both Nietzsche’s pro-Wagner and his anti-Wagner works dedicate themselves to the same rebalancing of reason and non-reason in art, aesthetic experience, and culture that works such as *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* and *Also sprach Zarathustra* explore. Crucially, Nietzsche’s attitude towards Wagner maintains his antithetical approach to enlightenment, and he uses these texts to redress what he perceives as the imbalance between reason and non-reason. He does so by prioritising the chaotic Dionysian in order to combat the supposedly mendacious tendencies of ‘aesthetic Socratism’. Nietzsche believes that this tendency has tipped the balance of reason and non-reason in art and culture excessively in favour of

cool, rational order, and he therefore promotes the intoxication of the Dionysian in order to restore parity between reason and non-reason. With this discussion in mind, we will now shift our focus to Adorno's analysis of Wagner, his works, and how they relate to enlightenment.

5.6 Adorno and Wagner

Adorno's relationship to Wagner differs greatly from the one between Nietzsche and the composer. Adorno's life did not overlap with Wagner's. Wagner died in 1883 – two decades before Adorno was born – meaning that they never met, and that they lived through different historical and cultural circumstances. Though obvious, this observation is significant as it meant that Adorno engaged with Wagner from a position of greater distance than Nietzsche, and Adorno's judgement of the composer was clearly not clouded by personal affect to the same extent that Nietzsche's was. In addition, Wagner represents a figure from the past for Adorno, whereas he was Nietzsche's contemporary. This difference perhaps explains the urgency behind Nietzsche's attempts to present Wagner as the cultural messiah of the here and now, yet Wagner did not carry this significance for Adorno. Consequently, Adorno approached Wagner with a different set of expectations of the composer and his music. Whereas Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner caused him to view the composer initially through rose-tinted glasses and later with hostility, Adorno's views on Wagner were instead more grounded in Wagner's musical and written works and less in his personality.²⁷⁷ The second half of this chapter

²⁷⁷ Adrian Daub, "'An All-Too-Secret Wagner'": Ernst Bloch the Wagnerian', *The Opera Quarterly*, 30(2-3) (Spring-Summer 2014), 188-204 (p. 202).

will investigate Wagner in the context of Adorno's paradoxical understanding of enlightenment.

Adorno took a strong interest in Wagner. The composer is mentioned as early as 1926, when Adorno turned 23, in Adorno's reviews of opera performances in Frankfurt. Similarly, several paragraphs in his musical aphorisms (1927-1937) are dedicated to Wagner, and to Adorno's understanding of the composer's relationship to Hegel (*Maph* 19, GS 18, p. 23). Adorno thus became interested in Wagner, his music and its performance early in his intellectual development. Adorno's first essay dedicated exclusively to Wagner, *Notiz über Wagner*, appeared in 1933. Adorno later wrote several texts about Wagner, of which the most famous is his monograph *Versuch über Wagner* (1952). This work represents Adorno's most sustained engagement with the composer, and it will therefore be the main subject of our analysis. *Versuch über Wagner* emerged from a drafting process in the late 1930s,²⁷⁸ with three chapters being published in 1939 as *Fragmente über Wagner* in the Institute for Social Research's journal (*VW*, GS 13, p. 9). Work on the text was likely interrupted by Adorno's increasing involvement in other research projects as he settled in the USA,²⁷⁹ but he remained abreast of perception of Wagner in the decade following the publication of *Versuch über Wagner*. He reviewed books on the composer and his cultural surroundings,²⁸⁰ wrote supplementary content on Wagner for concert booklets; and spoke at events attended by committed Wagnerians,²⁸¹ a group that Nietzsche had treated with profound suspicion.

²⁷⁸ For a detailed timeline of these works in the context of Adorno's written corpus, see Nikolaus Bacht, 'Music and Time in Theodor W. Adorno' (unpublished doctoral thesis, King's College London, 2002), pp. 190-242.

²⁷⁹ Stuart Jeffries describes Adorno's discomfort and distrust of the empirical projects in which he became involved in the early phases of his US exile. See Stuart Jeffries, *Grand Hotel Abyss: The Lives of the Frankfurt School* (London/New York: Verso, 2016), p. 204.

²⁸⁰ For example, Adorno reviewed three of the four volumes of Ernest Newman's biography of Wagner (1933-1947).

²⁸¹ See Bacht, 'Music and Time in Theodor W. Adorno', pp. 209, 216, and 238.

Despite being less personally invested in Wagner than Nietzsche, Adorno's views of the composer were not entirely neutral as Adorno often viewed him through a political lens. In Detlev Claussen's view, for instance, this approach resulted in the first version of Adorno's *Versuch über Wagner* resembling a "manifesto of a rationalist critique of fascism".²⁸² By emphasising the text's political background, Claussen highlights the politically charged exile context in which the work was written. Equally, Claussen's claim must be tempered by acknowledging that it would be reductive to consider the text purely as a critique of fascism, given that Adorno's interest in Wagner also encompasses elements of musicology and staging, too. Nonetheless, Claussen's observation of reason's central role in the text highlights how Adorno's engagement with the paradoxes of enlightenment, and how they relate to art, is as prominent in his writings on Wagner as it is in texts such as *Ästhetische Theorie*. Mark Berry's assessment of how Adorno views Wagner as a "case of 'enlightenment'" supports this sentiment.²⁸³ Berry correctly links Adorno's views on Wagner with his interest in enlightenment and focusing on reason in Adorno's works on Wagner simultaneously underscores how, for Adorno, questions of enlightenment are omnipresent. Claussen's and Berry's appraisals will be developed further below by showing how Adorno's understanding of the paradoxes of enlightenment intertwines with his aesthetic thought, and his understanding of wider cultural issues.

It is worth noting that Claussen's and Berry's approaches to Adorno's thought on Wagner are not the only angle critics have taken. Max Paddison, for instance, examines the relationship between Adorno's thought on Wagner, and the intersection of economic

²⁸² Detlev Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*, translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 234.

²⁸³ Mark Berry, 'Adorno's Essay on Wagner: Rescuing an Inverted Panegyric', *The Opera Quarterly*, 30(2-3) (Spring-Summer 2014), 205-227 (p. 206).

power and culture.²⁸⁴ By linking Wagner to Adorno's theory of the culture industry, Paddison draws together different strands of Adorno's thought. This method highlights the holistic nature of both Adorno's engagement with the paradoxes of enlightenment, and his attitude towards the so-called culture industry: Adorno believes that the culture industry establishes its dominance over society by employing instrumental reason, which stems from a drive for self-preservation, and many elements of Adorno's thought thus combine to form his theory. However, we will not reproduce Paddison's focus on the relationship between Wagner and Adorno's interest in economics. Paddison's approach is illuminating, but it does not lend itself to a comparative approach with Nietzsche because Nietzsche took little or no interest in economic questions. It will therefore be necessary to select areas of Nietzsche's and Adorno's discussions of Wagner that allow for a more direct comparison of the two thinkers, and the analysis below will further understanding of the most productive topics through which to approach the Nietzsche-Adorno relationship. Given the scarcity of comparative scholarship on Nietzsche and Adorno on Wagner, this discussion will deepen understanding of the intellectual relationship between Adorno and Nietzsche.

Adorno's engagement with Wagner and enlightenment is underpinned by his interest in Wagner as a cultural figure. This interest is significant as it highlights parallels with Nietzsche's views on Wagner. For instance, Bernd Kulawik has argued that Adorno's critique of elements of Wagner's musical works uses Nietzsche's texts as models, and that Adorno completes elements of Nietzsche's critiques.²⁸⁵ Adorno's works

²⁸⁴ Max Paddison, 'Authenticity and Failure in Adorno's Aesthetics of Music', in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Tom Huhn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 198-221 (pp. 211-212).

²⁸⁵ Bernd Kulawik, 'Wagnerkritik als Kulturkritik der Moderne bei Nietzsche und Adorno', *Nietzscherforschung*, 5/6 (December 1998), 305-317 (p. 308).

on Wagner were certainly influenced by Nietzsche as Adorno cites Nietzsche at several points. However, the suggestion that Adorno modelled his own writing on Nietzsche's would be an over-reading of the relationship between the two thinkers. Adorno's works on Wagner follow different structures to Nietzsche's; they are, for example, not couched in Nietzsche's polemical style. In addition, whilst Adorno consciously and openly draws upon Nietzsche's works on Wagner,²⁸⁶ we must distinguish between Adorno's reception of the early Nietzsche's works on the composer (i.e. *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*), and his reception of the late texts (*Der Fall Wagner* and *Nietzsche contra Wagner*). Nietzsche focus in his works on Wagner changes over time, and Adorno's thought on Wagner aligns more closely with the ideas Nietzsche develops in the 1870s, and there is greater distance between Adorno and the Nietzsche of the late 1880s in this regard. It will consequently be necessary to consider whether Adorno's works on the composer mirror, or diverge from, Nietzsche's only at specific points in the latter's career.

Adorno's dialectical conception of enlightenment, as explored in detail in Chapter Three, is one key source of differences between Nietzsche's and Adorno's thought on the composer. Adorno's dialectical approach leads to a more ambiguous image of Wagner and his music than is the case in Nietzsche's works. This difference is supported by Adorno use of Wagner, which is less instrumental than Nietzsche's. Wagner was, for the early Nietzsche, a figure to be exploited in his campaign to change German culture fundamentally, whereas for Adorno the composer serves as a case study in a more academic, and less ideological, sense. Adorno's exploration of Wagner nonetheless addresses similar issues to Nietzsche's. Of these topics, the most significant is the role of

²⁸⁶ Albrecht Riethmüller, 'Adorno Musicus', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 47(1) (1990), 1-26 (p. 22).

myth in modern culture, which Adorno once again views dialectically. In addition to myth, Adorno also touches upon the role of language in the production and reception of Wagner's musical works, and this issue reveals another source of difference between Nietzsche's and Adorno's thought. Adorno's views do not mirror Nietzsche's outright rejection of language in music. Adorno's dialectical approach is once more a key factor behind differences between the two thinkers.

5.7 Wagner, Adorno, and (Non-)Reason

As established earlier in this chapter, Nietzsche replicates his typical philosophical method of pitting opposites against one another in order to critique enlightenment in his works on Wagner. This approach creates an antithetical image that seeks to reduce the significance of reason in art, and instead endorses an approach that is not governed by reason alone. Nietzsche maintains a similar approach to issues of enlightenment throughout his writing career by means of his antithetical conception of enlightenment, which seeks to redress what is in his view the incorrect or authentic balance of reason and non-reason. In this respect, Nietzsche's approach to both enlightenment, and art (in the context of his thought on Wagner) is consistent. Adorno's dialectical approach to enlightenment, however, differs from Nietzsche's antithetical philosophy of opposites, and we would therefore expect Adorno's works on Wagner to depart from Nietzsche's thought on the composer. Any attempt to reconcile Nietzsche's polarising approach and Adorno's dialectical method may seem unproductive on this basis, given the different, though not entirely divergent, bases of their approaches. However, this conclusion assumes perfect consistency in Adorno's approach. In spite of his dialectical conception

of enlightenment, Adorno on occasion echoes Nietzsche's method in his writings on Wagner, albeit in an inconsistent and undeveloped way.

Given that these instances are the exception rather than the rule, it is worth exploring them for the parallels to Nietzsche's thought that emerge. For example, in *Versuch über Wagner* Adorno describes what he views as the failure of rationality in Wagner's music: "Die Rationalität der Technik, der Wagner im Material der Musik am nächsten kam, ist überall sonst gescheitert. Zu einem verständlichen, von falscher Identität gereinigten Gesamtkunstwerk gehörte ein planendes Kollektiv von Spezialisten" (VW, GS 13, p. 106). This comment is not a direct critique of Wagner but is instead a criticism of methods of rationalised music-making. Such a critique is not unusual for Adorno as his critique of the culture industry ultimately rests on a more fundamental critique of instrumental reason. However, the fact that Adorno here does not present this rejection of rationalised music-making in a dialectical framework is unusual. Rather than portraying reason as a paradoxical double-edged sword, as would be his usual dialectical conclusion, here he criticises the rational means of music-making he identifies in Wagner's opera. This criticism of the composer recalls Nietzsche's attempt to redress the balance of reason and non-reason in art in favour of the latter in an attempt to rejuvenate German culture, and suggests that Adorno does, whether intentionally or not, occasionally depart from his typically dialectical method.

This exception to Adorno's rule of dialectical thinking is replicated in the following decade. In *Wagner und Bayreuth* (1966), Adorno provides the reader with another implicit critique of reason: "Vor allem krankt die Dichtung daran, daß ihr abgeht, was ich [...] geschichtsphilosophischen Instinkt nennen möchte" (*WuB*, GS 18, p. 204). As well as containing a parallel to Nietzsche's language of illness ("krankt"), this

quotation draws the reader's attention to the role of instinct in the production of the Wagnerian music drama. Adorno's description implies that the composer must be naturally gifted with this instinct, and thus that it cannot simply be learnt, and the genius composer is consequently presented as having a natural sense for music and its production. This assumption mirrors the attitude towards Wagner that Nietzsche holds in his early works on the composer. When presenting Wagner as the 'anti-Socrates' in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, for instance, Nietzsche suggests that Wagner draws upon a natural gift for composition that bypasses the use of reason, which contrasts with Socrates' supposed attempts to downplay instinct in the production of Greek tragedy or to banish it from the stage altogether. Adorno does praise Wagner as a genius here, but his description of Wagner as an instinctual artist resembles a more subtle version of the early Nietzsche's thought.

Although Adorno's writings occasionally produce a similar critique of rationality in art to Nietzsche's, these incidences are neither consistent nor sustained. Adorno otherwise maintains his usual dialectical understanding of enlightenment consistently, hinting at the paradoxes of enlightenment rather than a one-way critique. His dialectical method is most evident in his *Versuch über Wagner*. Here, Adorno writes that the production of art reveals this dialectic: "Zum ersten Male wird bei Wagner die Ungleichzeitigkeit der Entwicklung ästhetischer Medien, ja die Irrationalität selber in einem rational geplanten, ob auch vorerst bloß ästhetischen Zusammenhang eingesetzt" (VW, GS 13, p. 94). Here, Adorno indicates that non-reason ("Irrationalität") must be adapted into a rational framework in the production of art.²⁸⁷ The artist must therefore

²⁸⁷ Morton Schoolman similarly suggests that, for Adorno, reason forms an early image of the artwork, and this image is later supplemented by a "noncognitive" function, i.e. a non-rational function. See Morton Schoolman, 'The Next Enlightenment: Aesthetic Reason in Modern Art and Mass Culture', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 9(1) (2005), 43-67 (p. 47).

balance reason and non-reason, and ultimately produces a work of art that is neither exclusively rational nor exclusively non-rational. Additionally, this quotation suggests that the division of reason and non-reason in art depends on the stage at which the artwork is approached. Adorno indicates that the artwork is rational in its planning stages as the artist consciously creates a structure and form for the work. However, the content of the artwork is irrational, and the work as a whole thus embodies Adorno's paradoxical dialectic of enlightenment. Like Nietzsche, Adorno identifies a conflict between reason and non-reason at the core of artistic production and experience.

Adorno's dialectical appraisal of enlightenment is seen elsewhere in *Versuch über Wagner*. Having already identified a break between the rational planning of art's form and its irrational content, Adorno soon expands upon this statement: "Die magische Wirkung [der musikalischen Arbeitsteilung Wagners] ist untrennbar von eben dem rationalen Produktionsprozeß, den sie bannend von sich fernhält." (VW, GS 13, p. 105) This description of Wagner's method of composition reinforces the idea that the dialectic of enlightenment is produced by the artwork employing reason and non-reason at different stages of its existence. Whereas the artist plans the artwork rationally, the audience receives and interacts with it non-rationally. More precisely, Adorno uses the term "magisch" to describe the reception of Wagner's music amongst its audience. This description implies that Wagner's music is received as a critique of reality,²⁸⁸ or at least as a distraction from shared social reality. As a result, Adorno implies that it is not possible to label a work of art wholly rational or irrational. The critic must instead view the artwork as a paradoxical balancing act that combines reason and non-reason.

²⁸⁸ Richard Leppert, 'Adorno and Opera', in *A Companion to Adorno*, ed. by Peter E. Gordon (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), pp. 443-456 (p. 451).

Nietzsche's antithetical model of enlightenment, which he often departs from in his works on Wagner, is not dissimilar, given that he attempts to rebalance reason and non-reason. In their works on Wagner both thinkers address the ways in which reason and non-reason interact with, and against, one another.

Adorno applies his dialectical approach in *Versuch über Wagner* to more than issues of enlightenment, though. In the third chapter, Adorno writes that the leitmotif in Wagner's music becomes its own enemy: "Während das Leitmotiv gerade der metaphysischen Absicht der Musikdrama dienen soll, wird es [...] zu deren eigenem Feind" (VW, GS 13, p. 43). Firstly, this quotation demonstrates that Adorno maintains his dialectical approach to Wagner's music even when examining it through a musicological lens. Secondly, this quotation creates an implicit link between *Versuch über Wagner* and Schopenhauer's emphasis on the metaphysical importance of music. Adorno here draws the reader's attention to the metaphysical intention ("Absicht") of music, which Schopenhauer considers to be a means of coping with the horrors of existence. Although Adorno does not cite Schopenhauer here, this link is supported by the numerous references he makes to Schopenhauer throughout the text.²⁸⁹ It is thus clear that Adorno's work on Wagner is rooted in texts that belong to the German-language canon as of the time of writing. However, Adorno's engagement with Schopenhauer is limited. The quotation above may parallel Schopenhauerian thought, but it does not develop this insight further, and Schopenhauer's emphasis on music's existential role is therefore a minor aspect of *Versuch über Wagner*, rather than being an integral part of the text as it is for Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie*.

²⁸⁹ For example see VW, GS 13, pp. 95; 117; 124; and 135.

Returning to Adorno's paradoxical view of enlightenment, he maintains his dialectical approach to reason when writing about Wagner in the 1960s. Towards the end of *Wagner und Bayreuth*, Adorno posits that Wagner's music has developed a sense of independence, and that the process of listening to this music must learn to give itself over to interpretation: "Bei Wagner hat sich die Musik buchstäblich freigeschwommen. Die Wahrnehmung dessen wäre nicht zu bekämpfen, sondern das Hören müßte lernen, ihr sich zu überlassen, ohne sich selber dabei zu verlieren" (*WuB*, GS 18, p. 222). This quotation highlights Adorno's view that the correct way to approach Wagner's music is to balance rational and non-rational means of listening and interpretation. On the one hand, the listener should not fight their unmediated experience of Wagner's music (here referred to as "das Hören"). However, on the other hand, the listener should simultaneously be able to maintain the rational process of perception and interpretation of music. This dialectical balancing act therefore favours neither reason nor non-reason, and it seeks to synthesise the two as part of a dialectical process. Despite the temporal distance between Adorno's first work on Wagner and his last, he consistently applies the same dialectical approach in these texts as he does in his inquiries on the nature of reason.

On this basis, it is clear that Adorno's dialectical approach is just as significant for his works on Wagner as it is in his thought more broadly. Some minor exceptions aside, which are by no means sustained enough to be counted as significant departures from his usual philosophical approach, he does not depart from the dialectical method that is present in all areas of his thought. The dialectical approach, which maintains that all phenomena have the ability to become their opposite, stands in contrast to the antithetical, approach that Nietzsche takes to both Wagner and questions of enlightenment more broadly. Nietzsche's approach emphasises more clearly the constant struggles

between reason and non-reason, and how they come to exist in a state of harmonious tension. He replicates this model of enlightenment in his aesthetic thought in the form of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, demonstrating that Nietzsche's method is consistent across different areas of his thought. Adorno's approach, on the other hand, depicts the relationship between the two phenomena as a fluid relationship of transitions. Given how fundamental dialectics are to Adorno's approach to Wagner, though, it is worth dwelling on the topic for the further insights it can unlock on how Adorno engages with Wagner and his music.

5.8 Dialectics, Myth, Magic

We have established that Adorno's paradoxical dialectic of enlightenment is a prominent component of his writings on Wagner, and it has also been shown that the dialectical approach he takes in his works on Wagner mirrors that he takes towards enlightenment, in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and elsewhere. In addition to his interest in dialectical enlightenment, Adorno undertakes an extensive close analysis of the role of myth in Wagner's operatic compositions. Much like Nietzsche, Adorno's interest in Wagner and myth emerged early in his writing career. One of the earliest examples of Adorno bringing together the composer and myth can be found in a review of a performance of Wagner's Parsifal, which was performed in Frankfurt at Easter in 1926. When writing of Amfortas' apparent attempt to resemble the figure of the redeemer, Adorno describes the effects of this development as mythological: "Dies alles ist sehr mythologisch und sonderbar, und unerfindlich bleibt jedenfalls, warum stets noch die Zuschauer ehrfürchtig schweigen" (*FrOK*, GS 19, 74). Though Adorno does not use this review to explore the relationship between Wagner's opera and myth further, questions on the topic clearly started to occupy

Adorno's thoughts several years before the publication of his first essay dedicated solely to Wagner.

This coupling of Wagner's music with myth is supplemented by its relationship to magic. As was the case with myth, this interest emerges early in Adorno's writing career, though it is not fully established in his thought until after the Frankfurt opera reviews of the 1920s. It is first mentioned in detail in *Notiz über Wagner* (1933), where Adorno describes how Wagner was able to deceive the audience of his musical works with magic: "Wagner aber [...] konnte sein Publikum allein mit dem Zauber überlisten, eben weil seine Musik mit Einsamkeit, Geheimnis und selbst Schein die gesellschaftliche Struktur real bezeugte" (*NüW*, GS 18, p. 206). Here, Adorno links social structure and the audience's experience of being deceived by magic when listening to Wagner's music.²⁹⁰ Magic evades the listener's capacity for reason, and it is thus received and experienced by the audience's non-rational side. By writing that Wagner's music contains secret ("Geheimnis"), he also implies that the audience is unable to fully, rationally comprehend Wagner's music because it contains elements that the spectator cannot understand, which highlights how rational understanding of Wagner's music is limited. Adorno later solidifies the relationship between Wagner's music and the non-rational, and he writes that Wagner's music stems from the non-rational unconscious: "Die Erhellung der Welt aufsteigen zu lassen aus den Schächten ihrer unbewußten Tiefe [...] dahin zielt Wagners Musik" (*NüW*, GS 18, p. 209).

Adorno's paradoxical view of enlightenment remains consistent in his works on Wagner, as does his view of myth. He considers myth an inevitable product of

²⁹⁰ Adorno's attentiveness towards social structure reveals the Marxist, or at least Marxian, undercurrent to his thought. However, it is important to bear in mind that Adorno was critical of significant swathes of Marx's writings. For instance, Adorno challenges Marx's conception of the dialectic. See Aidin Keikhaee, 'Adorno, Marx, Dialectic', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 46(7) (2020), 829-857.

enlightenment, and vice-versa. Myth embodies the dialectic of enlightenment – meaning that the very idea of enlightenment becomes a myth²⁹¹ – and this view is present in Adorno’s works on Wagner. In an appraisal of *Versuch über Wagner*, which reads as a more confident, less troubled piece of self-reflection than Nietzsche’s *Versuch einer Selbstkritik*, Adorno states that myth leads to regression: “Auf der einen Seite verfolgt bei ihm [Wagners Werk] die mythische Intention bewußte Aufklärung der individuellen Psychologie [...]. Auf der andern [sic] Seite dienen die Mythen selber der Regression aufs Uralte und vergeblich Unabänderliche.” (*Résumés*, GS 13, p. 502) Adorno’s use of the noun “Aufklärung” in this example is significant, and it shows how questions of enlightenment are central components of his thought on Wagner. Additionally, Adorno states that Wagner’s use of myth, a part of the rational planning of the artwork discussed above, regresses to a primitive, pre-rational state of being in the audience’s reception of the music. Myth thus simultaneously enlightens and confounds. Commentators have long made this link with reference to *Versuch über Wagner*,²⁹² and Adorno’s comment demonstrates that this element of his thought is also present in the drafts of the late 1930s.

This line of thought is also present earlier in the 1930s. In *Notiz über Wagner*, Adorno states that Wagner’s myth is a modern phenomenon: “Ihm [Wagner] kommt aller mythische Gehalt zu, der echt ist [...]; das Echtheitszeichen der Wagnerschen Mythen ist allemal ihre Moderne, kraft welcher er, Höllenfürst des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, gebietet über das, was war von jeher.” (*NüW*, GS 18, p. 207) This description reinforces our understanding of Adorno’s argument that myth in Wagner’s works is timeless, and

²⁹¹ David Roberts, ‘Art and Myth: Adorno and Heidegger’, *Thesis Eleven*, 58(1) (1999), 19-34 (p. 21).

²⁹² See Andreas Huyssen, ‘Adorno in Reverse: From Hollywood to Richard Wagner’, *New German Critique*, 29 (Spring-Summer 1983), 8-38 (p. 30); Max Paddison, *Adorno’s Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 243; Karin Bauer, ‘Adorno’s Wagner: History and the Potential of the Artwork’, *Cultural Critique*, 60 (Spring 2005), 68-91 (p. 87); and Miller, *Modernism and the Frankfurt School* (2014), p. 92.

that modernity contains primitive traits that regress to pre-rational thought and behaviour. Adorno portrays Wagner as deliberately maintaining the regressive tendency in his music, as suggested by Adorno's use of the verb "gebieten" to describe Wagner's strong level of control over his music. In addition, Adorno presents Wagner's myth as a source of truth by denoting it real ("echt"). This adjective indicates that the truth content of music, for Adorno, is not a phenomenon that the listener can generate rationally for themselves. Instead, truth in Wagner's music drama resembles a truth that is generated independently from rational thought. Reason is needed to interpret Wagner's myth as truth, but in Adorno's eyes Wagnerian myth itself embodies non-rational, and pre-rational, traits and behaviours that survive into the modern day. Whereas the survival of myth in the present is deliberate and ideological for Nietzsche, it is coincidental for Adorno.

The regression of Wagner's music to primitive forms of being, as perceived by Adorno, is also expressed in the 1952 edition of *Versuch über Wagner*. In chapter eight, which primarily investigates myth in Wagner's works, Adorno cites at length Arnold Schoenberg's appraisal of how Wagner's music creates, and then resolves, a sense of imbalance via different musical tones. Adorno then supplements Schoenberg's views, writing that the restoration of balance causes a regression to a primal form of being: "In der Herstellung der »Balance« geht der Saldo des Schicksals auf; alles Geschehene wird widerrufen, und die ästhetische Rechtsordnung ist die Restitution des Urzustandes." (VW, GS 13, p. 113) Here, Adorno emphasises, through a musicological lens, the timelessness of Wagner's music. This perceived timelessness is referred to at several points in the text. For example, Adorno refers to it as the eternality ("Ewigkeit") of Wagner's music in chapter two (VW, GS 13, p. 37), demonstrating that Adorno at times uses different vocabulary to refer to the same phenomenon. More importantly, though, Adorno stresses

that Wagner's music seeks to establish rational order. This rational order is then countered by the regression to a non-rational primal state, which ultimately represents what Adorno considers to be the "realm of unalterable sense" behind music, as Gyorgy Markus accurately notes.²⁹³ For Adorno, Wagner's music thus contains elements of unalterable human truths.

Adorno's view of the regression caused by Wagner's music reflects his attitude towards wider questions of progress and modernity. Like Nietzsche, he believes that modernity is full of primal traits. However, whereas Nietzsche believes that these instincts have been artificially suppressed in the name of civilisation, Adorno believes these traits are part of modernity, thus blurring the line between antiquity and modernity, and between progress and regression. Adorno's view of the omnipresence of primal traits in the present day is reflected in *Versuch über Wagner*. When writing about Wagner's regression to myth, Adorno states that Wagner's music suspends primal traits in time:

Durch die Regression auf die Mythen ruft sich in Wagner die bürgerliche Gesellschaft selber beim Namen: alle neuen Ereignisse im musikalischen Fortgang messen den vorgehenden sich an, und indem sie diese tilgen, wird stets auch das Neue getilgt. Der Ursprung ist erreicht mit der Liquidation des Ganzen. Das erwachende Bewußtsein von den anarchischen Zügen der späten bürgerlichen Gesellschaft dechiffriert die Totalität als vorweltliche Anarchie. Sie wird vom Bürger Wagner noch verdammt, vom Musiker schon gewünscht (VW, GS 13, pp. 113-14).

Adorno here creates a paradoxical dialectic of progress and regression, both in musical and societal terms, which differs from Nietzsche's narrative of supposed cultural decline since the downfall of Attic tragedy. Musically, Adorno describes how new musical developments compete against ("sich messen") their predecessors. This process of musical creation is simultaneously a process of destruction as the new must constantly

²⁹³ Gyorgy Markus, 'Adorno's Wagner', *Thesis Eleven*, 56 (February 1999), 25-55 (p. 36).

give way to the old, which then gives way to the new as part of a constant dialectical process. Yet, Adorno later suggests in *Wagners Aktualität* (1963) that the competition between different elements of Wagner's music is futile because its end result has already been decided: "Die Erzählungen bedeuten, daß, was geschieht, in Wahrheit berichtet wird: als Vorentschiedenes bereits gewesen sei." (WAK, GS 16, p. 559). Though Wagner's music exists in an evolving state of conflict, it can lead to only one, pre-determined result, and this process is replicated in societal terms. For Adorno, late bourgeois society uncovers the prehistoric anarchy that lies dormant in the heart of modernity. The audience of Wagner's opera learns of this process via rational means as the individual becomes conscious of this phenomenon, which once again embodies Adorno's dialectic of enlightenment as reason uncovers unreason, which will uncover reason in due course. These accounts of Wagner's music show that, in Adorno's view, Wagner's music undermines itself. By simultaneously constructing and deconstructing itself, its own downfall is found at its very core.²⁹⁴

The timelessness of Wagnerian myth features persistently in Adorno's writings on Wagner. In *Wagners Aktualität*, which was both held as a talk and published in a concert booklet, he describes Wagnerian myth as a permanent catastrophe: "Der Mythos ist die Katastrophe in Permanenz. Was ihn abschafft, vollstreckt ihn, und der Tod, das Ende der schlechten Unendlichkeit, ist zugleich die absolute Regression" (WAK, GS 16, p. 561). Though Adorno here maintains the link between myth and regression, he develops it further by here characterising regression as the end of myth. Adorno's dialectical approach means that this end of myth is not permanent, though. Instead,

²⁹⁴ Peter E. Gordon summarises this paradox: "For Adorno, then, Wagner's artwork [...] bears *within itself* an implicit indictment of its own ideology." See Peter E. Gordon, 'Wounded Modernism: Adorno on Wagner', *New German Critique*, 43(3) (2016), 155-173 (p. 171).

regression will itself lead to the rebirth of myth out of its own irrationality. This description represents a similarity to Nietzsche as both thinkers address the rebirth of myth, albeit for very different reasons. Whereas Nietzsche promotes myth's rebirth as part of his campaign to rejuvenate culture, in Adorno's case it serves as further evidence that he carried forward his dialectical approach to Wagner and myth into the later stages of his career. Adorno's writings on Wagner may not yet have reached the stage of the fully developed negative dialectic of *Negative Dialektik* (1966), however Adorno's conventional dialectical method is still as clearly defined in the early 1960s as it was during his and Horkheimer's engagement with reason in the late 1930s and throughout the 1940s.

Adorno's approach to myth in his writings on Wagner differs from Nietzsche's. Nietzsche actively aims to (re)introduce elements of myth into German culture to bring about a new dawn for culture. He wishes to use myth to rescue culture from so-called aesthetic Socratism and its purported promotion of excessive rationality, thus reversing the process of cultural decline that he identifies in nineteenth-century Germany. Adorno, conversely, believes that myth is present throughout all ages due to its position in a dialectic of antiquity and modernity. Rather than representing a force for good, as it does for Nietzsche, for Adorno myth "bears out the schema of the dialectic of enlightenment",²⁹⁵ emphasising how the old begets the new, and the new paradoxically begets the old. In Adorno's view, myth thus reminds people in all epochs that they are not as modern – or enlightened – as they might believe, and it highlights how linear progress is not inevitable. This understanding of myth in Wagner's music dramas is not the only one that emerges from Adorno's assessment of the composer, though, as he also

²⁹⁵ Alex Thomson, *Adorno: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London/New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 145.

addresses a topic that caught Nietzsche's interest: language. Given that Nietzsche and Adorno both engage with this subject in their thought on Wagner, we will now shine a light on how language relates to myth in Adorno's assessment of the composer and his works.

5.9 Language and Myth

Adorno's views of the timelessness of myth, the consequent modern nature of antiquity and the antique nature of modernity are expressed through his dialectical conception of myth in Wagner's works. This aspect of Adorno's thought is the one he develops the most out of all of his views on the composer. Indeed, he advances it through his analysis of language, a feature linked to Wagner's opera that Nietzsche's and Adorno's works have in common. However, the two thinkers approach the issue in fundamentally different ways. Whereas Nietzsche's critique of language in his works on Wagner represents his antithetical approach to the critique of reason, Adorno's views on language in the composer's works can be linked to his views on regression, and the presence of primitive features in modernity. In addition, an analysis of the place of language in Adorno's works on Wagner can also be linked to his scepticism towards systematic, categorical thinking that he develops in works such as *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, *Negative Dialektik*, and several others (discussed in Chapter Four), which serves as a rejection of instrumental reason's linguistic categories. Furthermore, the rejection of categorical thought resists what Adorno considers enlightenment's tendency to create over-simplified understandings of any phenomenon. As will be discussed below, Adorno's interpretation of language in Wagner maintains this scepticism towards instrumental reason's categorisation of the world.

In Adorno's works on Wagner, the critique of language is again reflected most extensively in *Versuch über Wagner*. He states that Wagner's composition regresses to a pre-linguistic form of being: "Sein [Wagners] Komponieren fällt zurück auf ein Vorsprachliches, ohne doch dabei des Sprachähnlichen ganz sich entäußern zu können" (VW, GS 13, p. 32). It here becomes clear that Adorno considers the linguistic and the pre-linguistic, and by extension the linguistic and the non-linguistic, inseparable. The phenomena are dialectically related to one another as the non-linguistic cannot fully separate itself from the linguistic, and the two find themselves in a paradoxical stalemate. This relationship embodies Adorno's dialectical paradoxes of enlightenment because the linguistic represents a rational means of processing experiences, and the pre-linguistic and the non-linguistic represent non-rationalised, unmediated experience of the internal drives that partially dictate human behaviour in Adorno's view.²⁹⁶ Consequently, the reader infers that, for Adorno, society and culture's pre-history is maintained and embodied in language in Wagner's works. This conclusion is supported elsewhere in *Versuch über Wagner*, where Adorno later states that Wagner's music shares features of the pre-historic world ("Vorwelt") by simply telling of it: "Mit der romantischen Tradition teilt Wagners Musik ein episches Moment: sie neigt sich der Vorwelt, indem sie von dieser berichtet." (VW, GS 13, p. 57) Primal features are embodied in the language of Wagner's works, Adorno suggests.

Adorno later provides the reader with further insight into the pre-linguistic phenomenon he envisages. In the chapter on sound, he pairs nature and the pre-linguistic: "Wagner hat es freilich mit der berühmten Definition der Musik als Kunst des Übergangs

²⁹⁶ This argument is underpinned by Fabian Freyenhagen's claim that, for Adorno (and Horkheimer), language is inseparable from the "human life form". See Fabian Freyenhagen, 'The Linguistic Turn in the Early Frankfurt School: Horkheimer and Adorno', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 61(1) (January 2023), 127-148 (p. 141).

selbst befördert, und die Tendenz zur allegorischen Rückkehr ins unartikulierte Naturmaterial gibt ihm in letzter Instanz recht” (VW, GS 13, p. 63). Adorno here portrays the pre-linguistic, which is frequently expressed as drives in Nietzsche’s thought, as natural material (“Naturmaterial”). This description contextualises Adorno’s reference to the pre-linguistic because it indicates that the pre-linguistic phenomenon Adorno conceives of is not an artificial invention. This appraisal supports the interpretation of the pre-linguistic as a non-rational phenomenon that works against instrumental reason’s tendency to sort the world into artificial categories. The pre-linguistic has yet to be subjected to the rationalisation that transforms it into language with rational form and meaning, and it consequently represents the non-rational element of the dialectic of enlightenment. Furthermore, Adorno’s use of the noun “Rückkehr” to describe the movement of Wagner’s music emphasises the role of regression in his compositions as Adorno indicates that the composer’s music will return to a specific state, just as the societal whole “has failed to progress” under paradoxical enlightenment.²⁹⁷ By regressing, Wagner’s modern music cements its inextricable relationship with the past and embodies one side of Adorno’s dialectic of enlightenment.

The dialectic of enlightenment is linked in more explicit terms to the role of language in music later in *Versuch über Wagner*. In its third chapter, Adorno elaborates on the role of what he considers to be music’s similarity to language: “Die Sprachähnlichkeit der Musik, der so viel von ihrem metaphysischen Anspruch verdankt, schlägt um in ein Mittel musikalischer Aufklärung” (VW, GS 13, p. 47). This quotation highlights another link between Adorno’s views of Wagner, and Schopenhauer’s

²⁹⁷ Buğra Yasin, ‘Utopia as “Genuine Progress”: Adorno and the Historicity of Utopia’, *Thesis Eleven*, 144(1) (February 2018), 13-29, <<https://journals-sagepub-com.bham-ezproxy.idm.oclc.org/doi/epub/10.1177/0725513618756091>>.

emphasis on the metaphysical importance of music for coping with existence, which Schopenhauer considers empty and full of suffering. In writing that music has a metaphysical claim (“metaphysischer Anspruch”) Adorno adopts a similar stance to Schopenhauer, and thus to the Nietzsche of 1872, with regards to the metaphysical role of music, though Adorno does not assign music an essential existential role like Schopenhauer does. More importantly, Adorno here presents language in Wagner’s music as a direct cause of enlightenment, and this linking of the two phenomena embodies the paradoxical dialectic of enlightenment once more. Whereas music was previously a source of non-rational understanding, it is here portrayed as a phenomenon that leads to rational understanding. When viewed against the backdrop of *Versuch über Wagner* as a whole, music functions as both the key to rationalisation and as enlightenment’s very antithesis as a source of myth and magic.

Returning to Adorno’s dialectical approach to language, a comparison of his approach to Nietzsche’s views in the texts on Wagner reinforces a key difference between the two thinkers’ views on language in Wagner’s opera. In *Versuch über Wagner*, Adorno does not fully reject language and its role in Wagner’s musical works. Instead, he sees it as a necessary part of Wagner’s operatic compositions: “Musik sagt noch einmal, was die Worte ohnehin sagen, und je mehr sie sich in den Vordergrund spielt, um so überflüssiger ist sie, gemessen an dem Sinn, den sie ausdrücken soll” (VW, GS 13, p. 98). This quotation highlights once more how, for Adorno, the importance of language waxes and wanes due to what he considers to be its dialectical nature. Language will therefore have a central role in rationally defining meaning at certain points in Wagner’s works, yet at others it will fade into the background and thus lose significance in the generation of meaning amongst the audience as a non-rational means temporarily takes the upper hand. When

discussing Wagner, Adorno paints a starker image of enlightenment's self-undermining tendencies than Nietzsche does. This difference between the two thinkers is one of several, and our discussion of Nietzsche and Adorno has covered significant ground. It is therefore now worth summarising the similarities and differences between them.

5.10 Nietzsche contra Adorno

Whilst there are similarities between elements of Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective works on Wagner, which will be addressed below, there are also important differences. Most notably, Nietzsche and Adorno have fundamentally different conceptions of paradoxical enlightenment. Nietzsche's antithetical model locates reason and non-reason in a constant balancing act, whereas Adorno's dialectical approach indicates that thought and behaviour oscillates between reason and non-reason like a pendulum, and these differing views are reflected in their respective works on Wagner. Both thinkers are aware of the paradoxes of enlightenment, but Adorno's dialectical view cannot be reconciled with Nietzsche's antithetical approach to reason for its different approach to how reason and non-reason relate to each another. Nonetheless, both thinkers are consistent in their approaches, and this consistency is especially noteworthy in the case of Nietzsche, whose critique of enlightenment remains unchanged despite his change of heart on Wagner the man. Whether writing in favour of Wagner or against him, Nietzsche remains alert to, and critical of, issues of enlightenment in Wagner's music. As Adorno did not know the composer personally, we can be confident that Nietzsche's and Adorno's different relationships with the composer are the source of much of the stylistic and rhetorical gulf between the two thinkers. Nietzsche's attacks on Wagner are more personal than Adorno's more balanced, though not entirely neutral criticisms of the composer.

Additionally, despite covering several similar topics in their writings on Wagner, Nietzsche and Adorno often come to different conclusions on these shared interests. One example of such a topic is the use of language in Wagner's works. The two thinkers have fundamentally different views, and areas of focus, with regards to language. Nietzsche's critique of language represents a polarised critique of reason, both in the 1870s and in the late 1880s. The only difference between these two stages in Nietzsche's career is that in *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* he praises Wagner for not employing rationalised language in his works; whereas in his late works, *Der Fall Wagner* and *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, he criticises the composer for supposedly having performed a *volte face* and composing via the rationalised means of mediated language. Adorno, conversely, takes a different approach to language in Wagner's musical works, at times viewing language as a rationalised component of the Wagnerian music drama. However, in contrast to Nietzsche, Adorno does not dismiss language, and he instead believes that it embodies the dialectic of enlightenment. Consequently, language sometimes has a rational function in Wagner's music, however at other points it represents non-reason as it retains non-rational primal features of humanity, in Adorno's view. For Adorno, language embodies a tension between past and present, and between reason and non-reason.

Adorno's approach to language in his works on Wagner marks a significant difference to his attitude to language and its role in thought more broadly. As explored in Chapter Four, Adorno is sceptical of the ability of language, in a society dominated by instrumental reason and its manifestation in monopoly capitalism, to reflect the complex nuance of the world. In works such as *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and *Negative Dialektik*, he argues that instrumental reason leads to humans relying on misleading categories of thought. Adorno rejects this undertaking because, in his opinion, this intellectual method

over-simplifies the world by creating rigid intellectual systems that do not account for nuance. Categorising the world in this way ultimately allows for corrupted instrumental reason, and thus the forces of the free market, to tighten their stranglehold on what Adorno views as an increasingly technocratic, administered society. In his writings on Wagner, conversely, Adorno does not reproduce this argument. Instead, he focuses on the relationship between language, reason, and non-reason. This different focus in the works on Wagner is not entirely different to his previous focus on language and categorical, systematic thought because issues of rationality underpin Adorno's discussion of both issues. Nonetheless, his emphasis clearly shifts from intellectual systems in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and *Negative Dialektik* to language's place in several different dialectics in his works on Wagner.

The most significant topic that Nietzsche and Adorno have in common in their works on Wagner, though, is myth. Nietzsche weaponizes myth in the texts of the 1870s that promote the Wagnerian music drama (*Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*). In these two works, Nietzsche portrays myth as the solution to what Nietzsche considers to be the overly rational nature of culture in the Germany of the time. Myth thus comes to represent the antithesis to an excess of reason and its perceived cultural impact. This promotion of myth ultimately has a twofold purpose in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*: firstly, Nietzsche seeks to promote the operatic works of his close friend and mentor; secondly, and more importantly, he wishes to trigger a cultural change that will restore the balance between non-reason and reason. Adorno's interest in Wagner's use of myth differs significantly from Nietzsche's. In Adorno's view, myth is inextricably linked to the dialectic of enlightenment: enlightenment embodies myth, and myth embodies enlightenment. This dialectical

relationship between enlightenment and myth draws the reader's attention to what Adorno portrays as myth's tendency towards regression. Myth is as modern as it is ancient and, much like Adorno's views on language in Wagner's works, it becomes suspended in time as a feature of the past, the present, and the future.

Despite the differences between Nietzsche's and Adorno's thought on Wagner, there are parallels between the two thinkers. Adorno's works on Wagner come closest to the Nietzsche of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* as the elements of Adorno's writings on Wagner that pertain to aesthetic theories can be linked to some of the core arguments of Nietzsche's work of 1872. For example, Adorno's description of Wagner's music as an illusionary critique of reality, found in *Versuch über Wagner* and explored above, resembles the early Nietzsche's aesthetic theory. Adorno's discussion of the illusionary qualities of the Wagnerian music drama recalls Nietzsche's discussion of the ancient Greeks' use of tragedy as a temporary escape from the pains of reality. Although Nietzsche develops this theory to justify his quest to create a society centred around a restoration of non-rational aesthetic experience – in contrast to Adorno's more academic, though still somewhat ideological examination of Wagner as a case study of modernity – both thinkers nevertheless emphasise the metaphysical significance of musical experience. However, it should equally be noted that the metaphysical experience of music is a far more pressing issue for Nietzsche than it is for Adorno. Whereas for Adorno it is a side effect of music, it is an existential issue of the utmost importance in Nietzsche's view. For Nietzsche, music is metaphysical medicine for an unwell culture.

However, the most significant insight to emerge from this discussion is the different extent to which Nietzsche and Adorno maintain their respective fundamental approaches to enlightenment in their discussions of Wagner, and thus reproduce their

paradoxical images of enlightenment. Adorno maintains his dialectical method with great consistency. Even though there are isolated examples in his examination of Wagner where he seemingly departs from his dialectical approach, Adorno otherwise maintains his dialectical understanding of all phenomena in Wagner's music, including questions of enlightenment, and his paradoxes of enlightenment therefore remain unaltered in his works on Wagner. Nietzsche, however, often modifies his antithetical view of enlightenment in his writings on Wagner, which affects the extent to which his understanding of the paradoxes of enlightenment is evident in his works on the composer. In both his pro-Wagner and his anti-Wagner works, Nietzsche's early promotion, and later rejection of Wagner focuses heavily on promoting the Dionysian principle of chaotic intoxication at the expense of cool Apollonian order. In praising Wagner for philosophising through sound rather than through the rational form of mediated language, for instance, Nietzsche promotes a non-rational approach to art without balancing it with its rational counterpart, and this trend continues through Nietzsche's rejection of Wagner. Nietzsche does not necessarily reject his antithetical understanding of the paradoxes of enlightenment, but neither does he reproduce it.

The significance of Nietzsche's discrepancy in his approach to the paradoxes of enlightenment need not be over-stated, though. His writings on Wagner aside, there are few noteworthy instances of him departing from his antithetical understanding of reason, and his writings on Wagner are consequently the exception rather than the rule. Without reducing his writings on Wagner to affect alone, Nietzsche's shifting personal relationship with Wagner clearly determined his approach to the composer in his written works. The unique nature of Nietzsche's engagement with Wagner and his legacy becomes clear when we compare it to how Nietzsche discusses other prominent figures,

such as Voltaire. Although Nietzsche expresses scepticism towards Voltaire as a representative of what he views as an overly rational enlightenment, he nonetheless admires Voltaire for his independent, free-spirited thought. Nietzsche thus takes a balanced approach to this key Enlightenment figure. He does not afford Wagner this same courtesy when breaking from Wagner, though, and he rejects the composer in emphatic terms. Even when discussing Wagner as an illness in his later appraisals of the composer, he treats Wagner as a necessary evil for the recovery of culture, rather than as a figure whose artistic output is to be welcomed. Nietzsche's inconsistency regarding the paradoxes of enlightenment in his works on Wagner can therefore be explained by his troublesome relationship with Wagner.

The discussion in this chapter has shown that Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective thought on Wagner, despite being based on significantly different intellectual and personal foundations, contains many parallels. Both thinkers examine the place of language; they both share an awareness of what they view as the limits of reason; and they each identify a clear role for myth in Wagner's musical output. However, we have seen that the reasons and motivations behind Nietzsche's and Adorno's assessments of Wagner, his music, and his cultural legacy are significantly different. The two thinkers' critiques stem from different intellectual positions and priorities, even though they address the same topics in many places, and similar issues in others. As the conclusion of this study will now argue, the relationship between Nietzsche's and Adorno's assessments of Wagner is representative of the broader relationship between the two thinkers.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis has shown that, whatever the topic at hand, both Nietzsche and Adorno maintain a paradoxical view of enlightenment. Nietzsche's antithetical enlightenment presents reason and non-reason as two forces locked in a perpetual conflict with one another. This conflict is productive, and reason and non-reason complement one another; Nietzsche therefore affords both phenomena space in his revised model of enlightenment. However, in many of his works he prioritises non-reason because he believes that nineteenth-century European culture has neglected it and thereby created an overly rational culture. Far from being an irrationalist, Nietzsche advocates a rebalancing of reason and non-reason in order to reanimate an invigorating cultural life. Adorno, on the other hand, develops a dialectical understanding of enlightenment. In his opinion, reason begets non-reason and vice-versa, meaning that reason and non-reason are two sides of the same coin. He believes that modern culture has become enveloped in this dialectical trap thanks to instrumental reason's stranglehold over the human being, which leads to one person asserting their dominance over the other for the purposes of self-preservation. This drive replicates itself on a mass scale, and the dialectic of enlightenment replicates itself in all areas of society. However, he, like Nietzsche, does not believe that all is lost. Before discussing this conclusion further, we will revisit each chapter's arguments in more detail.

6.1 Summary of Arguments

Chapter Two of this study examined Nietzsche's relationship to enlightenment. It was shown that Nietzsche shows a strong interest in the Enlightenment as a historical period, in addition to his engagement with enlightenment more broadly. His primary interest in

the Enlightenment, expressed for the most part during his so-called ‘middle period’ (1876-1882), is the Francophone Enlightenment, and Rousseau and Voltaire are the two thinkers at the centre of Nietzsche’s interest. However, Nietzsche has a different view of each of these Enlightenment figures. Nietzsche criticises Rousseau for preparing the ground for the French Revolution, and he accuses the Genevan thinker and his moral system of promoting falsehood and mediocrity. On the other hand Nietzsche admires Voltaire for his intellectual independence and free-spirited thought, two values of significance for both the Enlightenment and Nietzsche. Far from being the irrationalist that Georg Lukács and Jürgen Habermas, among others, consider him to be, Nietzsche counters Rousseau’s arguments through reason, and his promotion of Voltaire is similarly contained within the framework of rational discussion. Nonetheless, not all of Nietzsche’s engagement with the Enlightenment was rational. For example, his prejudice against nineteenth-century Germany led him to claim in the late 1870s and the 1880s that Germans were not ready for the Enlightenment. His rational approach to the Francophone Enlightenment is undermined by his less reasoned argument regarding Germany and Germans.

Chapter Two also highlighted how Nietzsche’s antithetical model of reason – as summarised below – mirrors this paradoxical image of the Enlightenment. Nietzsche frames reason as a cause of self-deception in texts such as *Menschliches*, *Allzumenschliches*, which underscores his scepticism regarding the extent to which reason can create an accurate understanding of the world. As a result, Nietzsche sets out to expand our understanding of reason to include inner drives that seek to fulfil subconscious bodily needs. He departs from the more conventional understanding of reason as rational thought alone, and he aims to realign reason’s relationship to biology.

As well as considering bodily drives natural, Nietzsche also includes the senses in his redefinition of reason. By redefining reason in this way, Nietzsche subsumes both rational thought and subconscious bodily drives, which are not the product of rational thought, into his understanding of reason. Rational thought and bodily impulses must therefore work with, and against, one another to form equilibrium over the course of time. This combination is the basis of Nietzsche's antithetical understanding of reason, and it shines a light on the key paradox at the heart of his approach to enlightenment: for Nietzsche, reason is the sum of both rational thought and the unmediated needs of the body.

Further ambivalence in Nietzsche's attitude emerged in our discussion of Nietzsche's approach to the Enlightenment in Chapter Two. Although he both supports and dismisses representatives of the Enlightenment, his attitude towards the Enlightenment becomes more positive in the context of his rejection of Christianity. Nietzsche is well known for his polemical campaign against Christianity and what he considers to be its moral code, and he takes a pro-Enlightenment turn in order to criticise Christianity. For instance, Nietzsche states that people of faith oppose the Enlightenment, and that they thus represent a barrier to intellectual and cultural progress. He suggests that religion and the Enlightenment are mutually exclusive. He strengthens this attack by arguing that the Enlightenment shattered religious dogma, which implies that Nietzsche favours the Enlightenment for its purported anti-religious impulse. It would seem, then, that Nietzsche shifts his position on the Enlightenment in order to attack Christianity, which he views as the greater of the two evils. However, ambiguity emerges even here. In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche states that some pious people hate reason, and that these people are to be lauded for this scepticism towards the Enlightenment's key tool. Nietzsche's attitude towards the Enlightenment consequently shifts depending on

the context in which it is found. He favours the Enlightenment when using it to reject Christianity, but he becomes anti-Enlightenment when weaponizing religion to criticise reason.

Chapter Two ended with an examination of how Nietzsche uses Zarathustra, the protagonist of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, as a model for a new enlightenment. This text is significant because the structure and form of *Also sprach Zarathustra* do not mirror Nietzsche's typically aphoristic way of writing. Instead, the text is a novelistic work which presents Nietzsche's new enlightenment in an aestheticized form. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, three features of Nietzsche's new enlightenment become clear. Firstly, emphasis is placed on (intellectual) independence; Zarathustra relies on himself for his own enlightenment. Much like Nietzsche's Voltaire, Zarathustra is a free-spirited thinker who guides his own intellectual progress. Secondly, *Also sprach Zarathustra* affords the body and the instincts a greater role in the enlightenment of the individual, underlining Nietzsche's attempt to include biological needs in the redefinition of enlightenment. Finally, Nietzsche's new enlightenment favours experiential learning over an institutional education. The individual is consequently free to learn and develop in line with their own needs and tastes. However, Nietzsche's new enlightenment is a process without an end or telos. The individual, represented by Zarathustra, journeys in perpetuity towards an individual state of enlightenment that will never fully be achieved. However, this lack of end goal is the critical thrust of Nietzsche's new enlightenment: individuals should enjoy the process of enlightenment for its own sake rather than for where it takes them.

Chapter Three examined Adorno's thought on enlightenment. The first conclusion of note from this chapter is that Adorno maintains a dialectical image of enlightenment throughout his whole writing career, which differs from Nietzsche's antithetical

understanding of enlightenment. Adorno's dialectical conception of enlightenment means that reason, despite being, on his own admission, a tool for liberation, causes its own downfall by descending into unreason. Reason and unreason are therefore inseparable in Adorno's dialectical scheme. More specifically Adorno opposes instrumental reason – a form of reason that is exploited for personal gain rather than for public good – for what he considers to be its self-serving nature as it departs from the Enlightenment belief in reason as a tool for common progress. However, he does not blame reason alone for this flaw. Instead, like Nietzsche he identifies powerful drives at the heart of the human being, and these drives play a significant role in human behaviour. Adorno believes that a drive for self-preservation leads human beings to selfishly deploy instrumental reason for their own gain. Adorno therefore believes that instrumental reason cannot lead humans to a state of enlightenment. Instrumental reason, in combination with drives towards self-preservation, leaves humans oscillating between reason and unreason. This dialectical trap is Adorno's central paradox of enlightenment.

Chapter Three also demonstrated that Adorno extends his critique of instrumental reason by arguing that this type of reason turns thinking into a quasi-mathematical formula. In *Dialektik der Aufklärung* he explicitly states that reason equates thinking with mathematics, and he therefore suggests that thought has become a calculation under the yoke of instrumental reason. This form of thinking is restricted as it can only function as part of a wider 'formula', rather than being valid and valuable in its own right. Individuals are free to combine different elements of thought into different formulae, but they are unable to innovate beyond the scope of these pre-defined equations of thought. Viewing thinking in this way limits the reach and freedom of thought and, once again, enlightenment as a tool for (intellectual) liberation has undermined itself, exemplifying

Adorno's main paradox of enlightenment. Adorno extends this critique by linking instrumental reason's restrictive nature to his critique of intellectual systems, an approach he shares with Nietzsche. However, Adorno's critique of systematic thought is more developed than Nietzsche's as Adorno goes into more detail on this topic than his predecessor. He argues that systematic thought creates over-simplified understandings of the world that discard nuance, which means that enlightenment confounds individuals further rather than providing them with more accurate understandings of the world and their lives.

Adorno links truth to his critique of systematic thought. He believes that systematic thought over-simplifies any phenomenon, and that it therefore cannot produce an authentic image of the world. The solution he offers to rigid intellectual systems is to view knowledge as existing in constellations. These constellations depict all forms of knowledge as contingent on one another. As a result, if one piece of knowledge changes or develops, the shape of the whole constellation shifts with it, thereby reshaping the relationship between different areas of knowledge. This process means that knowledge is, for Adorno, continually evolving, and so too is truth. Rather than being an immutable pillar, truth for Adorno is always in progress; what is true at one moment is not necessarily true later because the constellation of knowledge has shifted. Although Nietzsche does not develop a model of shifting knowledge, Adorno's constellations form a parallel with Nietzsche because these constellations suggest that enlightenment is an ever-evolving process. For Adorno there is no fixed point at which enlightenment has been permanently reached because the constellations of knowledge will continue to shift. He does not place value on the journey to enlightenment as Nietzsche does, but his understanding of

evolving knowledge depicts enlightenment as a similarly open-ended journey. The arc of Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective enlightenment journeys is thus similar.

Another similarity between Nietzsche and Adorno that emerged in Chapter Three is the extent to which they rely upon individuals to enlighten themselves, rather than describing enlightenment as a collective endeavour. This reliance on the individual is clearer in Nietzsche's case than it is in Adorno's. Holding Zarathustra up as an example, Nietzsche encourages individuals to navigate the world independently. He does not argue that anybody should retreat entirely from culture and society, but he undeniably encourages self-reliance and, where necessary, solitude. Nietzsche's promotion of independence runs throughout his works, from his description of Zarathustra's self-driven enlightenment to his admiration for Voltaire's free-spirited thought. Adorno approaches the issue of individuality in enlightenment differently, but his thought leads to a similar model of self-reliance. When describing how reason is used, he identifies a tension between the individual and collective use of reason. He views reason as a tool to empower the subjective perception of the individual, and yet simultaneously as a means of supporting supra-individual, collective objectivity. Adorno clarifies his position in *Negative Dialektik* by stating that over-arching truth is simply not plausible, and this attitude to truth suggests that he too locates the agency for enlightenment in the individual as he considers collective, objective enlightenment impossible. His emphasis may be less strident than Nietzsche's, but both thinkers ultimately view reason as a tool for individuals to enlighten themselves.

Chapter Four addressed aesthetics and enlightenment. The first noteworthy point was that both Nietzsche and Adorno maintain their respective models of enlightenment in their discussions of art. Nietzsche creates an antithesis in the form of the Apollonian

and the Dionysian, the two artistic drives that he identifies as the wellsprings of artistic creativity. Adorno, conversely, maintains his dialectical model when discussing art. This dialectical approach suggests that all artistic phenomena become their opposite, and elements of Adorno's dialectic of enlightenment are thus carried over into the aesthetic sphere in Adorno's thought. The nature of Nietzsche's model of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, though, reveals a difference between Nietzsche's and Adorno's approaches to aesthetics and enlightenment. Nietzsche refers to these two forces as drives, which suggests that art is intrinsic to the human psyche. He reinforces this argument by stating that art has an existential function as truly great art temporarily hides the pains of existence. On this basis great art is not a product of enlightenment or cultural progress, in Nietzsche's view. Instead, it is an existential necessity. Art has no such function for Adorno, though. He perceives art as something that emerges from culture rather than from the inner world of the human being and, as a result, it is subject to the same cultural demands as any other phenomenon in society.

The cultural demands placed on art form a major part of Adorno's views on art's relationship to enlightenment, and he focuses on the production process of art under the influence of the so-called culture industry. In Adorno's view the culture industry embodies the dialectical downfall of enlightenment from a liberating force to one that entraps and enslaves people. He argues that instrumental reason, combined with inner drives towards self-preservation, leads individuals to subjugate others for their own survival, and this process repeats itself on a mass scale in the form of the culture industry. Although he argues against interpreting the term industry literally in *Résumé über Kulturindustrie*, capitalist production plays a major role in Adorno's approach to the topic as many of the demands placed on art stem from its mode of production. Stemming from

enlightenment's self-inflicted downfall, Adorno believes that the industrial production of art standardises artistic products and aesthetic experience by reproducing ideological images of the world that the culture industry has shaped to maintain its own hegemony over culture and society. For Adorno, this process demonstrates how the dialectic of enlightenment determines the course of art in a society dominated by industrial capitalism. Although Nietzsche focuses on the production process of art in the sense that he examines its genesis, he shows little or no interest in the relationship between industry, art and the technology behind its production.

In Chapter Four, the individual formed a fruitful point of comparison between Nietzsche and Adorno. In Nietzsche's model of artistic production the individual's unique character diminishes in significance, even though individuals are crucial to artistic production. He argues in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* that individuals are key conduit for the Apollonian and the Dionysian, and they must embrace these drives to contribute to artistic production. Nietzsche also suggests that individuality must be suspended in the production of great art; the individual is subsumed by the Dionysian as the individual is united with their fellow spectators. During the aesthetic experience the individual therefore ceases to be an autonomous, self-determining being, and this process represents a temporary departure from Nietzsche's promotion of individual independence. Adorno too believes that the individual is restricted, but he believes the culture industry is to blame for this loss of agency. He writes that the culture industry produces standardised characters and that these characters become moulds for the consumers of its art to follow, meaning that people come to reflect personalities crafted by capitalist industrial ideology. Furthermore, he adds that these prefabricated characters restrict individuals' abilities to live independently. Alternative ways of thinking, behaving, and living are eradicated

under the yoke of the culture industry, and the culture industry therefore contradicts the key Enlightenment principle of independence in thought, word and deed.

Literature bridged the gap between Nietzsche's and Adorno's approaches to aesthetics in Chapter Four, whilst also emphasising notable differences between them. In his *Aufzeichnungen zu Kafka*, Adorno remains on the territory of literary criticism. He maintains his more conventional academic style to analyse Kafka's works, focusing on the latter's three novels, and he demonstrates how Kafka's works contain traces of the paradoxes of enlightenment. Adorno believes that Kafka's novels reproduce elements of culture and society, determined, as they are, by the forces of the culture industry, and that Kafka therefore does not falsify the world. Kafka's novels thus represent a rare form of resistance against the so-called culture industry, and Adorno makes this argument through his usual medium of philosophical prose. However, whereas Adorno is a critic of literature, Nietzsche is a practitioner. Alongside *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche seeks to produce a new, highly aestheticized mode of philosophy in the form of a range of poems written throughout his career. These poems address several of the same concerns as Nietzsche's non-poetic texts, and they therefore contribute to Nietzsche's attempt to rebalance reason and non-reason in art and wider culture. In addition, the poems' formal qualities, such as metre, underpin the texts' philosophical messages, which underscores the significant extent to which Nietzsche took seriously this attempt to aestheticize philosophy. For Nietzsche, philosophy is an artform.

Chapter Five was a case study of how Nietzsche's and Adorno's paradoxes of enlightenment are maintained in their thought on Richard Wagner, a composer of interest to both thinkers. For the Nietzsche of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and, to some extent, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, Wagner represents a new kind of cultural messiah. The

Nietzsche of *Die Geburt der Tragödie* believes that art and culture have been in decline for millennia, and he pins the blame on 'aesthetic Socratism'. Aesthetic Socratism is accused of having introduced rationality into the sphere of art, thus tipping the balance of reason and non-reason in favour of reason. In the 1870s Nietzsche presents Wagner as the antipode to aesthetic Socratism, depicting him as an anti-Socrates whose music has the power to rejuvenate culture. The early Nietzsche believes that Wagner harnesses the non-rational inner world of the human being and reintroduces myth into art in an attempt to save German culture from further decline. Additionally, he believes that Wagner's music embodies a critique of rationally processed, mediated language in art, which serves as a further counter to the rationalism that Nietzsche believes has permeated modern culture. In *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, Wagner thus represents a new form of hope for the future of German culture.

Nietzsche's promotion of Wagner is significant in the context of his thought on enlightenment. Nietzsche maintains a generally consistent antithetical image of enlightenment, meaning that reason and non-reason work with and against one another in a relationship of chaotic harmony. However, in his works on Wagner he does not reproduce this antithesis as explicitly as he does elsewhere. Instead, in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* he focuses on recentring non-reason in art. Nietzsche does not denounce the orderly Apollonian in art, but neither does he develop it beyond *Die Geburt der Tragödie*. Nietzsche's support for Wagner is instead based on a criticism of rational phenomena like mediated language, and a promotion of non-rational features such as the emotional world of the human being. Nietzsche's support for Wagner in the early to mid-1870s consequently departs from his standard approach to enlightenment as his balanced paradoxical approach gives way to redressing an imbalance

between reason and non-reason. Wagner is Nietzsche's ideal artist in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, and these texts downplay the rational side of Nietzsche's antithetical approach. Although Nietzsche's personal relationship with Wagner, which was amicable at this time, is undoubtedly a factor in his positive attitude towards the composer, his favourable attitude towards Wagner nonetheless still supports his cultural-philosophical agenda of the 1870s: the rebirth of myth in German culture.

However, Nietzsche's friendship with Wagner broke down. Nietzsche's published works indicate that the friendship between the two men declined beyond repair, and this progression paints a picture of a radical split with the composer and his art. However, private correspondence between Nietzsche and several acquaintances and friends shows that his turn away from Wagner was more of a gradual process and, even though he publicly denounces Wagner, he privately admits that he still upholds the same aesthetic principles that he shared with Wagner in the days of their friendship. The principles Nietzsche promotes in his denunciation of the composer remain constant, and he instead believes that Wagner has abandoned their previously shared hopes for cultural change. Nietzsche still promotes the rebirth of myth in German culture, as well as the critique of rational phenomena in art and aesthetic experience in order to redress what Nietzsche views as the imbalance between reason and non-reason in modern culture. However, Nietzsche does not emphasise his antithetical image of enlightenment in his works on Wagner to the same extent that he does elsewhere. This method does not mean that he ignores the paradoxes of enlightenment in these works, but his writings on Wagner become the site of his most intense rebalancing of reason and non-reason in culture.

Adorno's approach to Wagner is dialectical, mirroring the dialectical method that he employs in other areas of his thought. The most significant dialectic for Adorno is the

dialectic of enlightenment, and he writes that Wagner's music contains this fundamental dialectic at its core. Reason and non-reason therefore merge into one another in Wagner's art, in Adorno's view, meaning that Wagner's music contains the source of both progress and regression. Adorno's approach to Wagner and his music therefore reproduces the paradoxes of enlightenment that he identifies at the heart of other cultural and societal phenomena. He also describes further dialectics that he believes are located at the heart of Wagner's music, such as the dialectic of modernity and antiquity, and this dialectic is linked to the dialectic of enlightenment in the sense that each dialectic blurs the line between progress and regression. The place and role of myth in Wagner's music is linked to this dialectic, and a key difference between Adorno's and Nietzsche's respective approaches to Wagner emerges here. Whereas Adorno underscores how myth is, in his view, a central feature of Wagner's music which is tied to a dialectical process, Nietzsche weaponizes it in an attempt to use it to rejuvenate culture. Adorno's engagement with myth in Wagner's music is therefore less driven by ideological goals than Nietzsche's.

This difference notwithstanding, it is clear that Adorno's and Nietzsche's examinations of Wagner address similar issues. For instance, both conduct a critique of language in the composer's works, albeit from a different perspective and with fundamental differences. Adorno's critique focuses on the dialectic of the linguistic and the non-linguistic, which he once more links to the ever-present dialectic of enlightenment. In this scheme, the linguistic stands for the rational element of the dialectic as it refers to the mediated process of interpreting language. The non-linguistic, on the other hand, denotes the pre-rational or sub-rational processing of the internal drives that Adorno considers to be at the heart of human behaviour. This seemingly contradictory image of the linguistic and the non-linguistic forms another paradox in Adorno's

approach to both Wagner and to questions of enlightenment, which in turn further underscores the consistency of Adorno's dialectical approach across topics. Paradoxes define this approach, and they are maintained in Adorno's thought on Wagner. Both thinkers, then, are broadly consistent in maintaining their respective paradoxical understandings of enlightenment in their thought on Wagner. Having now summarised the arguments of each chapter, we can turn to the key findings, and potential avenues for future research, that can be taken from this study.

6.2 Key Findings and Further Research

We can now turn to the key conclusions to be taken from this study. The first, and most significant, of these conclusions is that both thinkers reject a form of enlightenment that can be termed 'hyper-enlightenment'. Hyper-enlightenment denotes an extremely rational form of enlightenment that ultimately undermines itself: in seeking to enlighten and liberate, it instead confounds and enslaves. Nietzsche and Adorno both welcome enlightenment's emancipatory thrust, and they promote reason for its ability to help individuals become intellectually and spiritually free. This support for intellectual independence is particularly strong in Nietzsche's case, given that the liberation of the individual remains his primary concern throughout his whole writing career, yet Adorno also embraces reason as a means of self-emancipation. However, both thinkers believe that reason has become too dominant. For Nietzsche reason's influence on the human being, culture, and society has surpassed that of non-reason. This development has produced a dry, overly rational world that restricts the human being's full, autonomous growth. For Adorno reason has become so powerful that it has become a tool for the

control of others. It allows individuals to subjugate others for personal gain and, in Nietzsche's and Adorno's eyes, enlightenment is no longer a story of inevitable liberation.

In rejecting hyper-enlightenment both thinkers seek to redefine enlightenment, and their different approaches to this redefinition stand out. Nietzsche's redefinition of enlightenment is twofold. Its first prong is the empowerment of the individual to think and act as a free-spirited person, as embodied by Zarathustra, and its second prong is Nietzsche's direct engagement with reason. He seeks to redress what he views as the imbalance between reason and non-reason and Nietzsche encourages the reader to use more non-reason and less reason in order to strike a healthier balance between them. Although he is not a thoroughgoing irrationalist, Nietzsche does lean in favour of non-reason in his rebalancing of enlightenment. Adorno, on the other hand, does not encourage the use of non-reason. His dialectical understanding of enlightenment is an important factor in this decision as this understanding maintains that reason will inevitably become non-reason. However, the most significant influence behind this choice is his rejection of self-serving instrumental reason. Adorno instead argues for a more neutral form of reason that cannot be exploited for personal gain rather than the instrumental reason that has allowed groups to establish mechanisms of control such as the culture industry. Consequently, whereas Nietzsche promotes non-reason as the answer to hyper-enlightenment, Adorno promotes a non-instrumental kind of reason to liberate humans from the pitfalls and paradoxes of enlightenment.

Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective models of enlightenment are linked to their efforts to rebalance and redefine enlightenment and, as has been extensively examined in this study, their models of enlightenment are fundamentally different. Nietzsche's antithetical model presents reason and non-reason as complementary phenomena that

work to form a balance in the form of a permanent productive tension. According to Adorno's dialectical model, which he maintains consistently, reason and non-reason are simultaneously opposites and the same. The difference between Nietzsche's antithesis and Adorno's dialectic is that, for Adorno, these opposites do not work against one another. Instead, one eventually becomes the other in a cyclical pattern, meaning that periods of enlightenment swing into unenlightened barbarism, and vice-versa, like a pendulum that swings from pole to pole. This difference is the source of another key conclusion: Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective models of enlightenment reject a teleology of constant, linear progress. Adorno's dialectical model swings back and forth between opposing phenomena, meaning that questions of progress become trapped within this dialectical paradox. Nietzsche's antithetical understanding of enlightenment means that progress and regression occur simultaneously as rational and non-rational phenomena compete against each other constantly, meaning that neither is truly able to overpower the other over the course of time.

Of the two thinkers, Nietzsche comes closest to presenting a linear path towards enlightenment. By encouraging individuals to follow Zarathustra's example of wandering from interaction to interaction, Nietzsche suggests that a change of location and scenery forms part of the search for enlightenment. Additionally, his poetry often portrays individuals embarking on great journeys, and his new enlightenment is therefore centred on the mobility – literal or figurative – of the individual. Nietzsche does not say where this journey should end, but the undefined terminus of his enlightenment encourages individuals to undertake a unique journey. For Nietzsche, enlightenment is an open-ended experiential practice. Adorno's redefinition of enlightenment, conversely, is not a practice, and he instead focuses on the intellectual processes that can potentially save

enlightenment from dialectical downfall. By arguing against rigid intellectual systems, which rely on falsely simplified linguistic categories, Adorno wishes to induce change in the mind of the individual. He promotes a new way of thinking that is more open to the shifting nature of knowledge, as well as the extent to which ideas and concepts exist in relation to others. As a result, the mind of the individual is the site of Adorno's new enlightenment, which means that the process of enlightenment does not leave its starting point. The trajectory of Adorno's enlightenment is therefore less clear than Nietzsche's, but Adorno nonetheless clearly stipulates where enlightenment should take place.

Nietzsche's and Adorno's understandings of art and aesthetics have also formed integral parts of this study. Art for both thinkers is a symptom of the paradoxes of enlightenment, which means that it contains features of their respective understandings of enlightenment. For example, Nietzsche's model of the Apollonian and the Dionysian forms a mirror image of his antithetical view of reason and non-reason, and his attempt to lend more weight to the Dionysian corresponds to his wish to imbue non-reason with more significance. In addition, Nietzsche's critique of 'Socratism' is identical to his critique of what he views as overly powerful rational thought in wider society. Adorno similarly reproduces his dialectical image of enlightenment in his theoretical analysis of aesthetics. He believes that art is subject to several dialectics, including the dialectic of enlightenment. Additionally, he argues that the dialectic of enlightenment is present in mass-produced art as it has been produced under the influence of the culture industry, which standardises artistic products. Art and aesthetics are therefore integral elements of an analysis of Nietzsche, Adorno and the paradoxes of enlightenment, and this relationship between questions of enlightenment and aesthetic issues shows that questions of enlightenment are cultural issues for both thinkers. Even though Adorno locates his

new, abstract enlightenment in the mind of the individual, he engages with its cultural manifestations just as intensely as Nietzsche does.

These cultural manifestations highlight a key difference between Nietzsche's and Adorno's approaches to art against the backdrop of enlightenment. In Nietzsche's view, art has a fixed purpose. He treats art and aesthetic experience as existential questions, and he believes that art is a means towards leading a more invigorating life and thus injecting culture with much-needed vitality. Art therefore has an existential role to play, in Nietzsche's view. This understanding of truth in art departs from his image of enlightenment as a never-ending journey of meaning-making, instead portraying a shorter-term, more passive form of aesthetic enlightenment that enlightens the individual about their inner need for Dionysian aesthetic experience. Adorno's understanding of art's meaning, on the other hand, reflects his views on the wider issue of truth, which he believes is generated by constantly evolving networks of knowledge. In this regard, Adorno's assessment of art and its meaning mirrors his view of truth and knowledge, and there is therefore no gulf between his understanding of how enlightenment produces truth, and how truth is (re-)produced in the form of the artwork. Art produces truth in the same way as enlightenment does in Adorno's thought, rendering aesthetic experience and enlightenment two sides of the same coin.

Nietzsche's aesthetic enlightenment also differs from his other thought on the process of enlightenment, as represented by Zarathustra, with regards to the place of the individual. Whereas *Also sprach Zarathustra* and various poems from Nietzsche's corpus encourage the individual to forge their own journey towards enlightenment, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* places specific demands on the individual. The individual is subsumed into the Dionysian along with the collective of spectators, and individuals therefore become

subject to the power of the Dionysian during the aesthetic experience. However, Adorno's thought on aesthetics and enlightenment seeks to have the opposite effect on the individual. He states that individuals are restricted by the power of the culture industry, given the culture industry's ability to prescribe ways of life for members of a culture to follow. This prescription of life limits individuals and their subjectivity, and thus their sense of individual agency. Adorno believes that empowering the individual, in a way that reflects the Enlightenment's appeal to people to think and act independently of dogma, can counter the power of the culture industry. As a result, Adorno's aesthetic enlightenment upholds a key Enlightenment principle: the free mind of the individual. Despite his dialectical model of enlightenment, which states that reason and non-reason are intrinsically linked, Adorno maintains a focus on this fundamental Enlightenment principle.

This study's final conclusion speaks to a more fundamental difference between the two thinkers. Nietzsche frequently wishes to reshape philosophy into art. For instance, *Also sprach Zarathustra* uses novelistic techniques to create characters, and to narrate a plot within a narrative world. Furthermore, Nietzsche's poetry embodies philosophical insights, such as his critique of the over-reliance on reason, in an aestheticized form, seeking to merge art and philosophy into one. Nietzsche's texts thus present themselves as living examples of the journey towards enlightenment that he promotes. They are not constrained by genre, and they forge their own uplifting future. Adorno too identifies parallels between art and philosophy, but he does not aim to transform philosophy into art. The structure and form of his writings typically adhere to formal philosophical conventions, and he does not vary his mode of writing as much as Nietzsche. Adorno does occasionally write in different forms, with a prime example being his *Minima*

Moralia, but he generally does not conduct trans-genre experiments in his discussion of enlightenment. Nietzsche's writings on enlightenment often seek to embody the change they wish to realise, but Adorno's do not reproduce this method. Nietzsche and Adorno have different modes of paving the path to enlightenment. This insight is one of this investigation's main contributions to scholarship.

This study of the paradoxes of enlightenment has highlighted several promising avenues for future research that lie outside the necessarily limited scope of this thesis. The most significant topic for further development is the extent to which other nineteenth and twentieth-century (German) thinkers replicate the paradoxes of enlightenment. Given that neither the periodisation nor the geographical location of the Enlightenment is concretely fixed, it would not be necessary to limit discussion to the period between the late seventeenth century and the early nineteenth century, and nor should the geographical range of such an investigation be limited to Germany. We have seen that Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective understandings of the paradoxes of enlightenment differ in their fundamental approach – Nietzsche's is antithetical, and Adorno's is dialectical –, which in turn emphasises that there is no single approach to paradoxical thinking. If it is found that other thinkers do indeed draw attention to the paradoxes of enlightenment, it would be apt to ask whether their approaches reflect those taken by Nietzsche and Adorno. However, if Nietzsche and Adorno were found to be outliers in their appraisals of enlightenment as paradoxical, then it would be just as important to ask why their thought departs from that of other thinkers. Further research into this topic could therefore uncover whether Nietzsche and Adorno are part of a lineage of thought on the paradoxes of enlightenment, or whether their paradoxes of enlightenment are the first of their kind.

An analysis of how other thinkers employ paradoxical thought would provide valuable insights into the intellectual networks in which we locate Nietzsche and Adorno, both as individuals and as a pair. Identifying any further use of paradoxical thought, whether in relation to questions of enlightenment or not, would enable us to detail how Nietzsche's and Adorno's uses of the paradoxes of enlightenment relates to other thinkers' use of paradoxes. Mapping out any networks of paradoxes would provide a better overview of how ideas flowed and developed along intellectual networks and currents, and it may thus be possible to add to our understanding of German intellectual history from the 1870s to today. Furthermore, this undertaking may help to identify new links between specific intellectual movements. For example, the origins of Adorno's dialectical paradox of enlightenment can be traced back primarily to Hegel's dialectical method. Although Adorno did not reproduce Hegel's dialectic verbatim, the links between Hegel, Adorno and other dialecticians are clear. Nietzsche's antithetical paradox, on the other hand, is not as easy to locate within any major philosophical tradition. Nonetheless, neither this unclarity nor his anti-Hegelian background stopped him from producing a paradoxical understanding of enlightenment. Paradoxical thought is therefore not the exclusive preserve of Hegelians and dialecticians. Placing Nietzsche's and Adorno's respective paradoxes in broader currents of intellectual history may affirm, disturb, or reshape links hitherto established between thinkers and intellectual movements.

A more fundamental question to ask would be whether the paradoxes of enlightenment, and/or paradoxical thought more broadly, are part of the wider cultures in which Nietzsche and Adorno lived and worked. An issue such as this once again invites a transnational approach due to the cross-cultural reach of the Enlightenment, as well as

the fact that Nietzsche and Adorno both travelled during their writing careers, albeit to different extents and for different reasons. Viewing the question of paradoxes in wider culture therefore requires an approach that takes heed of the various cultures with which both thinkers had contact. The answer to the issue of whether any paradoxes and paradoxical thought formed part of wider culture in the spheres of literature, visual art, and social norms and practices, would be revealing. If paradoxes were prominent parts of the cultures in which Nietzsche and Adorno lived, then this commonality may suggest that Nietzsche's and Adorno's paradoxical approaches to enlightenment are, to a certain extent, products of their times. However, if it were found that the paradoxical imagination was otherwise not culturally widespread, then we may ask how and why Nietzsche and Adorno take such paradoxical approaches to enlightenment, especially if it were to transpire that their paradoxical appraisals are the exception in (German) intellectual history, rather than the rule.

The Enlightenment, along with the process of enlightenment, sought to liberate human beings from subjugation, dogma and blind obedience. This study has shown that Nietzsche and Adorno promote this empowerment of individuals to think and live independently, and that they thus support the emancipatory animus of the Enlightenment and enlightenment. However, both thinkers equally view enlightenment as a paradoxical, double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is able to liberate individuals from the arbitrary hierarchies that humans have imposed upon themselves, yet both Nietzsche and Adorno identify ways in which enlightenment undermines itself. What started as a movement to liberate individuals ultimately enslaved them, argues Adorno; and, in Nietzsche's view, created a dull, desiccated, overly rational world that suppresses the vigour and vitality of life. Both thinkers also believe that there are limits to the power of rational thought:

neither Nietzsche nor Adorno upholds reason, the main weapon in the arsenal of the Enlightenment, as the sole remedy to enlightenment's downfall. This attitude suggests that neither thinker sees a positive future for enlightenment in light of its previous iterations, yet Nietzsche and Adorno both take it as their task to address, and disentangle, the paradoxes of enlightenment. Despite their scepticism towards the models of enlightenment they inherited, they believe that enlightenment can still be rescued from itself. The paradoxes of enlightenment may be intricate and convoluted, but neither Nietzsche nor Adorno gives up hope for a new kind of enlightened future.

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