

Habermas' Critique of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

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ABSTRACT

In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argue that the Enlightenment is fated to always return to the state of myth which it claims to have escaped from. They attempt to show how the instrumental reason which is present within the Enlightenment has come to dominate over all other forms of reason which leads to the closing off of the possibility that the Enlightenment is able to fulfil its promise of freedom, truth and equality for humankind. However, Jürgen Habermas, a philosopher which shares the same tradition of Critical Theory as Adorno and Horkheimer, counters this claim by undermining the intellectual process which the authors of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* used to reach their conclusions. Habermas argues that by utilising a totalising critique of reason in their argument, Adorno and Horkheimer undermine the very rational grounds which their argument is based on and become guilty of a performative contradiction. Habermas attributes this fault in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to the fact that Adorno and Horkheimer followed Friedrich Nietzsche's criticism of reason too closely and eventually overextended it into an aporia. This dissertation will trace Habermas' critique of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by exploring his main arguments.

Key Terms: Enlightenment; modernity; myth; instrumental reason; performative contradiction; *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

HABERMAS' CRITIQUE OF THE *DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT*

1. INTRODUCTION

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment – Philosophical Fragments*, written in the turbulent times of the early 1940's¹, not only plays a crucial role in the history of Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School, but also in the very history of Western Philosophy. The work has been described as a classic text, since it continues to remain relevant and productive, and also as a “quintessential distillation” of the new direction which Critical Theory moved into at the time (Alway, 1995: 9, 31). Also, the major themes of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* have not lost any of their topicality over the last six decades, since humanity continues to be concerned with interpreting and evaluating the role of modernity and the Enlightenment, especially the effects which technological rationalisation have on the living conditions of humankind (Honneth, 2007: 49).

The primary themes developed in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* are still relevant to analysing contemporary society since they provide an insight into the role of power, domination and humankind's relationship with nature. Further, the promise which the Enlightenment and modernity held for those in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was all but lost in the wake of two devastating world wars in the first half of the twentieth century necessitating a thorough reconceptualisation of the Enlightenment which the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* represents. This work from Adorno and Horkheimer has been chosen in particular for this task since it has had a major influence on the great thinkers of the late twentieth century in terms of criticising the Enlightenment and scrutinising the role which reason plays in society. Moreover, in order to evaluate the continued relevance of modernity and the Enlightenment, it is

¹ The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was written between 1941 and 1944; was published in Amsterdam in 1947; and then reissued in Germany in 1969 after it had become an underground classic (Alway, 1995: 32).

important to not only study the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* closely, but also to study the main criticisms of its major themes.

In the work, Adorno and Horkheimer's pessimistic reading of history follows on from, amongst others, the work of György Lukács who affirmed the proletariat's revolutionary role but denied its capacity and agency to fulfil it. Through the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* "the debilitation of the proletariat was rendered complete and the issue of revolutionary agency made moot" since, in the work, Adorno and Horkheimer totally dismantled "the vision of history as the road to redemption" and in turn did not provide any indication of how to escape from this tragic fate (Alway: 1995: 31).

According to Axel Honneth (2007: 49-50), the current director of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt am Main, the history of the reception and criticism of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can be seen as following three broad periods: critics in the first period attempted to employ a model of "historical distancing" by arguing that the work's "historical-philosophical perspective was bound up with [its] epoch" and is irrelevant in other times; the second period saw critics attempting to "show the inadequacy of its social-scientific modes of explanation" as compared to the standards of corresponding specialised disciplines; and lastly, critics in the third, and current period, began to question whether "one can conduct a consistent critique of society while simultaneously doubting one's own discursive means". It is in this third period in which Jürgen Habermas' criticism of the *Dialect of Enlightenment* is situated.

Habermas, who shared many of the ideas of the early Frankfurt School, especially in the beginning of his philosophical career, distances himself from the sceptical stance taken by Adorno and Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* concerning the Enlightenment and modernity. Habermas (1982:18) takes issue with the "global pessimism" of the inherently self-destructive Enlightenment portrayed by Adorno and Horkheimer and criticises its treatment in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* because, according to him, the work attempts to argue that "it is no longer possible to place hope in the liberating force of enlightenment" (Habermas, 1985: 106). He further criticises Adorno and Horkheimer's "conceptuali[sation of] the self-destructive

process of Enlightenment” and claims that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was “their blackest, most nihilistic book” (Habermas, 1982: 13). According to Hohendahl (1985:4), Habermas’ argument against the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* revolves around the idea that “in no uncertain terms... something went wrong in the evolution of Critical Theory during the 1940s... [and]... this harsh verdict [Habermas] directed at Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s work from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* .”

This criticism emanating from Habermas is not only directed against the main theses of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* but also against an attitude prevalent during the second half of the 20th Century which he sees as comparable to “a Nietzsche restored by some post-structuralist writers such as Derrida and...Foucault” which is a “spitting image of those of Horkheimer and Adorno in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*” (Habermas, 1982: 13). Therefore, the overwhelming scepticism of the Enlightenment contained in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, together with the attack on modernity and enlightenment thinking launched by Friedrich Nietzsche and the poststructuralists, is what Habermas seeks to forestall in his “The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment” (1982) as well in his *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984). Habermas argues that if the reader of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* does not guard him/herself against its rhetoric, the following may be inferred from the text, in Habermas’ (1982:16-17) words:

..., that the thesis which is being developed here is no less risky than Nietzsche's diagnosis of nihilism which is formulated in a similar manner; - that the authors are aware of this risk and, contrary to a first impression, are making a serious attempt to substantiate their cultural critique; - but that in doing so, they put up with generalizations and simplifications which ultimately threaten the plausibility of their project.

Therefore, what we find are two divergent views as to whether the Enlightenment and modernity are in fact positive forces on the history of humankind, or whether these forces will eventually guide humankind towards its inevitable cataclysmic demise. This paper will explore how this debate unfolds by presenting Adorno and Horkheimer’s arguments in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* on the one side, and Habermas’ criticism of their arguments on the other.

1.1 Methodology

Apart from the academic aim of demonstrating an advanced knowledge of Habermas' criticism of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the main objective of this dissertation is to ascertain whether Habermas' criticism is able to effectively counter, or to cast in doubt, the main theses contained within Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

The paper begins with an analysis of the concepts of Enlightenment, modernity and myth in order to explore the different ways in which these are employed in the works of Adorno and Horkheimer, and of Habermas. Then, before launching into Habermas' critique, a presentation on the central tenets of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* will be undertaken in order to discuss Adorno and Horkheimer's ideas on their own merit. This section will explore the following main themes of the work: myth as enlightenment and enlightenment as myth; the dominant role of instrumental reason; the eventual destruction of the Enlightenment and the inevitable decline of humanity; and finally, contrary to what may be deduced from the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, this section will conclude with a discussion on the possibility that Adorno and Horkheimer may have harboured, at the very least, an ambivalent attitude towards the positive and constructive potentials of the Enlightenment and modernity but chose to hide this attitude for rhetorical effect.

With these aspects covered, the dissertation will move on to analysing Habermas' criticism of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the following three main sections. Firstly, Habermas' exploration, in his "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", of Adorno and Horkheimer's use of the Greek tragedy of Odysseus, and how it relates to their understanding and approach to the Enlightenment, will be examined. Secondly Habermas' critique of the treatment of instrumental reason in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* will be explored. It is at this point where we explore how Habermas takes up issue with Adorno and Horkheimer's attempt to explain how instrumental reason has come to dominate over the other forms of reason. Simultaneously, at this point, the dissertation will show how Habermas begins to build his argument that Adorno and Horkheimer develop a totalised critique in their understanding of the dominant role of instrumental reason in the Enlightenment.

And thirdly, in the final section of the dissertation, it is shown how Habermas extends the argument of a totalised critique occurring in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by claiming that Adorno and Horkheimer follow Nietzsche's approach to totalising critique too closely and end up with a performative contradiction which they are not able to escape from. In other words, it will be shown how Habermas attempts to create the grounds for his final and most pointed criticism of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by claiming that the performative contradiction emanating from the work is the result of Adorno and Horkheimer's overextension of Nietzsche's attack on reason and modernity which in fact ends up becoming unsustainable. In the conclusion, an assessment on whether the dissertation's research objectives were met or not will be made together with a discussion on what is at stake in terms of the debate which is opened between these authors.

1.2 Literature Review

The dissertation will focus on the following primary sources: Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Habermas' "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment" as well as relevant sections of his *The Theory of Communicative Action*. To further explicate the theses in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and Habermas' criticism of it, a number of secondary literature sources will be consulted.

To support of Habermas' criticism of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Martin Jay's *The Dialectical Imagination* (1976), and "The Debate over Performative Contradiction" (1992) will be used together with R.J. Bernstein's *The New Constellation* (1991) and *Habermas and Modernity* (1985). These two authors also join Habermas in criticising firstly, the wide-spread pessimism of the Enlightenment and modernity which they see the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* championing; and secondly, the inevitability of the Enlightenment's self-destruction.

A general critique of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which more specifically delineates the role of reason in the Enlightenment, is Hohendahl's "The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited: Habermas' Critique of the Frankfurt School" (1985). Jay and Bernstein will be used to delve deeper into the issues opened up by Habermas'

exploration of the main ideas in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, whereas Hohendahl's work will be used to bolster Habermas' findings and critique of Adorno and Horkheimer work.

In support of Adorno and Horkheimer, Morton Schoolman's (2005) "Avoiding 'Embarrassment': Aesthetic Reason and Aporetic Critique in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*" will be used show how Adorno and Horkheimer in fact managed to differentiate an aesthetic form of reason. Schoolman's attempt to show how Adorno and Horkheimer consider how the rational content of modernity can be recovered through aesthetic reason, will be explored, and by thinking of the Enlightenment in this way, Habermas' theme of modernity as an unfinished project can be preserved.

Finally, James Schmidt's work in studying the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and the numerous letters written by Adorno and Horkheimer around that time, will be used to explore how the authors considered the work to be incomplete, and in fact intended to write a sequel explaining the positive aspects which they actually believed to be present in the Enlightenment.

2. CLARIFICATION OF THE CONCEPTS OF MYTH, ENLIGHTENMENT AND MODERNITY

In order to ensure conceptual clarity at the very onset of the paper, the way in which the terms or concepts of myth, Enlightenment and modernity are understood and used by both Adorno and Horkheimer, and by Habermas, will be clarified. It will be argued that, even though these authors believe that the Enlightenment and modernity have their origins at different times in human history, these two concepts are however still compatible, and are used somewhat synonymously.

In his study of the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, James Schmidt (1998: 23) found that Adorno and Horkheimer attempted to ground their understanding of the Enlightenment on a "historico-philosophical theory of the individual" and that they attempted to provide an understanding of "the process of enlightenment as it was marked out in the first thought a human being conceived." According to Schmidt (1998: 24), the distinction between myth and Enlightenment in the *Dialectic of*

Enlightenment was clarified by adding a third term to the discussion, namely magic. Humankind, in the work, is described as existing in the mode of magic before the advent of mythology. Schmidt (1998: 25) sees Adorno and Horkheimer drawing on the work of Marcel Mauss by arguing that whilst humankind was in the stages of magic, it “presupposed neither a unity of nature nor a unity of the subject.” However, as humankind moved away from magic and into myth, there was an attempt both “to report, to name, to say the origin” and to “present, preserve, and explain” (Schmidt: 1998: 25).

In this way, Schmidt (1998: 26) sees the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as arguing that, when contrasted with humankind’s magical relationship with nature in its earlier stages, mythology can be seen as already on the path towards Enlightenment. In other words, he states that the “origins of individuality or the human subject, in short, lie on this side of the line between magic and mythology” and not between myth and the Enlightenment in the general sense (Schmidt, 1998: 26). Schmidt (1998: 26) quotes Horkheimer from his *Dawn and Decline* as stating that

We are always mindful of the fact that as contrasted with the spiritual God, mythology is a false religion. But as we face the totally dark world [magic], the threatening and the insipid one of the primitive, it [mythology] yet contains something positive, something that confers meaning, the beginning of relativization, negation.

Therefore, humankind’s progress from magic to myth is seen by Adorno and Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as the beginning of Enlightenment. Thus, in their view, since the concept of Enlightenment stretches back to the beginning of recorded history, Adorno and Horkheimer “can find no form of thinking that is not already inclined towards enlightenment” (Schmidt, 1998: 23).

On the other side, Habermas understands modernity to be very similar to the general understanding of what the Enlightenment is, namely:

the period in the history of western thought and culture, stretching roughly from the mid-decades of the seventeenth century through the eighteenth

century, characterized by dramatic revolutions in science, philosophy, society and politics: these revolutions swept away the medieval world-view and ushered in our modern western world. (Bristow, 2011: 1)

The Enlightenment, in this general sense, describes how the ideals of freedom, equality and truth, championed by a rising bourgeois class, eventually led to the French Revolution in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Its focus on the principals of human reason led to revolutionary changes throughout the Western world. Emanating mostly from the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the Enlightenment, described in this way, undermined the dominant presuppositions of the time which constrained philosophical inquiry and challenged the modes of thought traditionally under the power and influence of a theological understanding of the world (Bristow, 2011: 1). The success of science in explaining the natural world through reason and mathematics reinforced the revolutionary changes in thinking in all spheres of thought. With this general definition of the Enlightenment, it was easy for most of its proponents to conclude that the progressive changes brought on through its influence on humankind was positive and would guide it to a better and more fulfilling life for all.

Habermas' (1982: 14) view of modernity closely resembles this general understanding of Enlightenment. He describes modernity as traditionally being understood as both a contrast to myth as well as a force which can oppose the powerful influence that myth has on humankind. Habermas (1982: 19) adds that modernity, which he compares with Enlightenment here, was able to break the spell that myth had on humankind which led to the confusion between nature and culture, and states that:

The process of Enlightenment leads to the desociali[s]ation of nature and to the denaturalization of the human world; Piaget describes this as the decentering of the world view.

Like Immanuel Kant, Habermas believes that even though modernity is a change in belief attitude it is not necessarily a change in the already-established body of beliefs. Similarly, Habermas subscribes to Kant's idea that humankind is not living in

an enlightened age, but in the age of Enlightenment. The difference here is instructive and the idea was taken further by Habermas who argues that modernity and the Enlightenment remains an unfinished project (Barradori, 2003: 18). Habermas argues that, in addition to providing a non-coercive means of countering the authority of tradition with the power of rational argumentation, modernity also opposed myth's hold on the collective by allowing the rational insights gained by individuals to grow in strength in societal discourse (Habermas, 1982: 14).

In his description of modernity, and in his understanding of Enlightenment, Habermas does not provide any indication that he sees humankind's escape from myth beginning any time before the broad political and social changes in Europe roughly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Adorno and Horkheimer do. However, irrespective of their different ideas regarding the genesis of these processes (Enlightenment and modernity), Habermas' understanding of modernity is not fundamentally different to that of Adorno and Horkheimer's idea of Enlightenment. This is because both parties describe the initial effect which these processes have had on humankind in a similar way: both represent a breaking with myth (or in Adorno and Horkheimer's case, magic and myth) which allowed humankind to unlock certain of its inherent emancipatory potentials.

These similarities, however, begin to diverge when we start to examine how the two parties understand how these processes firstly unfold over time, and secondly how they understand the end states of these processes to look like. For instance, with regard to the end states, whereas Adorno and Horkheimer (1992: 3) believe that a "fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant", Habermas (1981: 3) believes that the positive impact which modernity has on humankind continues to unfold and that it remains as yet an "unfinished project".

However, for the purposes of the rest of this paper, we can consider the two parties as generally speaking of the same thing when they utilise the concepts of modernity and the Enlightenment in their respective works. Both parties agree that the Enlightenment and modernity were processes that broke the spell which myth (or magic) had on the mind of humankind. Hence, their differing beliefs as to when the

escape from myth occurred does not fundamentally alter the similar ways in which they use their respective concepts of Enlightenment and modernity.

Therefore, we shall see how the debate between Adorno and Horkheimer, and Habermas, actually plays out firstly, in the different emphasis which both parties place on the negative role which instrumental reason has on humankind; and secondly, in the different quality of the possible end states of these processes. The rest of this paper will now explore the debate within these terms.

3. THE CENTRAL ARGUMENTS OF THE *DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT*

Before we are able to deal with Habermas' critique of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the arguments made by Adorno and Horkheimer in the work will be presented on their own merit. By way of introduction, in describing Adorno and Horkheimer's understanding of the Enlightenment, Jay (1976: 258) writes that the notion of the Enlightenment in the Frankfurt School changed in the 1940's, largely because of the impact of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, to not being merely ascribed to the bourgeoisie and their ideals, but to be understood as to include the entire spectrum and history of Western thought, including the ancient world, as described above.

Moreover, contained within Adorno and Horkheimer's understanding of the Enlightenment was a new view within the thought of the Frankfurt School concerning humankind's relationship with nature: both external and internal nature. Early in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer begin by exploring Sir Francis Bacon's understanding of humankind's relationship with knowledge and nature. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the "concordance between the mind of man and the nature of things that he [Bacon] had in mind is patriarchal: the human mind which overcomes superstition, is to hold sway over a disenchanted nature" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 4; Alford, 1985:129). In other words, by overcoming nature humankind begins to ever increasingly see him/herself as the master of nature within a relationship of domination.

Understood this way, according to Jay (1976: 260), Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the Enlightenment becomes a "program of domination", and that at the root of

the Enlightenment lays a secularised version of the religious belief that God controlled the world. Therefore, the idea that humankind sees itself as the master of nature is key to understanding how Adorno and Horkheimer view the Enlightenment since much, if not all, of the arguments they develop in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is based on this fundamental understanding.

Adorno and Horkheimer divide the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* into the following sections: an essay entitled “The Concept of Enlightenment”; two excursions named “Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment” and “Juliette of Enlightenment and Morality” respectively; an appendix entitled “The Cultural Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”; and finally another appendix entitled “Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment”. When working through the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* one would immediately agree with Habermas (1982: 13-14) when he states that “[t]he composition of the book is...unusual” and that “[t]he rather obscure manner of presentation makes it difficult at first glance to recogni[s]e the underlying structure of the train of thought”. Be that as it may, the work manages to achieve the objectives it sets out to achieve, irrespective of the unconventional style or form of its exposition.

In order to work through the central arguments in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, this section of the paper will explore the following themes forwarded by Adorno and Horkheimer in the work: myth is already Enlightenment, and Enlightenment reverts to mythology; instrumental reason’s domination over nature and all other form of reason; and the self-destruction of the Enlightenment and the inevitable demise of humanity. This section will conclude with a brief exploration of the possibility that Adorno and Horkheimer held a more optimistic belief in the Enlightenment than would at first appear in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and that they may have made a conscious decision not to explore it but rather to ultimately employ a rhetorical strategy which focuses almost exclusively on the negative aspects of the role of reason in the Enlightenment and modernity.

3.1 Myth as Enlightenment and Enlightenment as Myth

The crux of Adorno and Horkheimer’s argument in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is that “myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology” (1992:

XVI). Their argument focusses on humankind's relationship with nature, reason and labour which eventually and unavoidably results in alienation and domination. The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* argues that as humankind moves away from myth by separating the animate from the inanimate, "the first line of the separation of subject and object" becomes apparent (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 15). Through this process, humankind tries to free itself from the fear it felt under myth by creating a situation where there is "no longer anything unknown" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 16). However, instead of freeing itself, humankind carries the fear which emanated from myth with it into the Enlightenment which leads Adorno and Horkheimer (1992: 16) to argue that the "Enlightenment is [actually] mythic fear turned radical".

The entanglement, or conflation, of myth, domination and labour is explored and elaborated upon in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* through the use of the Homeric narrative, the *Odyssey*, which is central to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The story of Odysseus, as interpreted in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, provides a literary illustration of how humankind tried to transcend the primitive unity of inner and outer nature. The way in which Odysseus overcomes danger with the use of cunning in order to escape servitude and death is used allegorically as an example of how humankind was able to create a form of subjectivity which is more autonomous and independent.

During his journeys, Odysseus contends against powers that threaten to destroy his burgeoning individuality that he has only recently wrested away from nature. Odysseus is confronted by numerous challenges such as the Lotus-eaters' temptation of a life without labour; the event where Circe reduces his men to a state of animality; and the Sirens' promise to suspend time itself. Odysseus manages to free himself from the control over nature "only because he practices a self-renunciation that amounts to a sacrifice of the self" (Schmidt, 1998: 28). Odysseus escapes the hold of the powers by learning how to give in to them only up to a point, and by managing "to find loopholes that allows him to escape [their] law while fulfilling it" (Schmidt, 1998: 28-29).

Adorno and Horkheimer explore and play upon the idea of escape and return depicted in the story of Odysseus, for instance, even though Odysseus was able to

escape, he was lured to return by the song of the Sirens which made him remember past joys with a sense of nostalgia (Jay, 1976: 264). Adorno and Horkheimer use this to show how humankind's relationship with his/her own inner nature, and external nature, fluctuates between the drive to escape and the nostalgic longing for return (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 32-34). Adorno and Horkheimer (2002: 43) argue that "Odysseus yields to the temptations [in the songs of the Sirens] as one who knows himself to be already in chains" and states that:

Man's domination over himself, which grounds his selfhood, is almost always the destruction of the subject in whose service it is undertaken; for the substance which is dominated, suppressed and dissolved by virtue of self-preservation is none other than that very life as functions of which the achievements of self-preservation find their sole definition and determination: it is, in fact, what is to be preserved.

Habermas (1982: 16) agrees with Adorno and Horkheimer's description of the Janus-faced quality of the operation of reason since it shows that even though humankind enjoys some success at being able to control external nature it comes with the price of also having to repress his internal nature. The result of this is a self-imposed seclusion and the creation of an ego that is not connected to its own inner nature any longer. Whereas sacrifices to the Gods (myth) were once made externally, the result of humankind's quest to develop its own identity means that it would now have to repress its own inner nature which is seen in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as becoming the new sacrifice which it has to make. The result of this analysis is that even though modern humankind believes that it has transcended the practice of sacrificing something external to escape from a fate it believed myth had in store for it, humankind is shown once again to be sacrificing something, and this time it is its own inner nature. (Habermas, 1982: 16)

Central to Adorno and Horkheimer's thesis is that this specific understanding of the primordial history of subjectivity shows that a crucial stage of Enlightenment was already present at the very beginning of subjectivity, as already discussed. According to Adorno and Horkheimer (1992: 43) the *Odyssey* "as a whole bears

witness to the dialectic of enlightenment” and Odysseus “himself... [is] a prototype of the bourgeois individual.” It is here where we can once again see how Adorno and Horkheimer believe that the Enlightenment began way before the modern idea that it began in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The story of Odysseus in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* attempts to show that when humankind gains some mastery over the power which myth has over it, it inevitably once again returns to myth. Ironically, it is through humankind’s fear of the revenge of the mythic powers that these same powers continuously impede humankind’s emancipation. In other words, the effects of domination on humankind leads to the inevitable reversion back to myth which neutralises the very Enlightenment humankind sought to manifest in the world and society. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 9; Habermas, 1982: 15)

Schmidt (1998: 29) summarises the use of the *Odyssey* in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as follows:

The intertwining of myth and enlightenment could now be seen both on the level of the culture at large and on the level of the formation of the bourgeois subject itself. The story of Odysseus traces, on the level of the individual, the same trajectory that Horkheimer and Adorno found in western civilization itself: the attempt to break free from mythology falls back into mythology. (Schmidt, 1998: 28-29)

But how would humankind be able to return to a state of myth after having already experienced the effects of the Enlightenment? Adorno and Horkheimer argue that humankind would have to conflate aspects which were differentiated during the stages of Enlightenment with one another once again, albeit in a much different way. They argue that this may occur in the following manner: instead of regressing to a kind of “magical” thinking once again, humankind can enter into a state similar to that seen in the countries which adopted totalitarian ideals in the first half of the 20th Century as well as in the ways in which they justified the subsequent atrocities they committed.

Totalitarianism, with its extreme use of instrumental rationality, is considered by Adorno and Horkheimer to be a mythic state, as compared to the Enlightenment, because, among other things, it treats men/women as mere means which can be dominated to reach certain ends. According to Jay (1976: 265), Adorno and Horkheimer argue that “[c]arried to its logical extreme, calculating, instrumental, formal rationality led to the horrors of twentieth-century barbarism”. Therefore, the processes, social organisations, values and ideals of a society which immerses itself too deeply within the powers of instrumental reason, is thought to be caught once again in a web of myth. Let us now examine Adorno and Horkheimer’s treatment of instrumental reason as it manifests in the Enlightenment.

3.2 The Dominant Role of Instrumental Reason and the Destructive Capacity of the Enlightenment

Adorno and Horkheimer (1992: 4) argue that since the human mind was able to overcome superstition, it is able to control what in effect became a disenchanted nature. Following from Francis Bacon, Adorno and Horkheimer (1992: 4) state that “[k]nowledge, which is power, knows no obstacles” and “[w]hat men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it...” This argument does not end with only nature being dominated, but the domination of nature serves only to allow for the domination of humans over other humans. Adorno and Horkheimer (1992: 9) state that as “[m]yth turns into enlightenment”, humankind begins to objectify nature and the “Enlightenment behaves towards things as a dictator towards men” which results in humankind paying “for the increase of their power with alienation from that over which they exercise their power”. In other words, an object, or humankind’s potentiality is manipulated to fulfil the ends chosen by those who dominate over that object or human, with those who dominate becoming increasingly alienated from that which they dominate over.

In this way, as argued above, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* develops the argument that the domination of an objectified external nature and a repressed inner nature is a key feature of the Enlightenment (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 3; Alway, 1995: 33). Adorno and Horkheimer argue in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that humankind’s domination of nature is a central theme with technology (the application

of scientific knowledge for practical purposes) becoming “the essence of this knowledge” through the processes of the Enlightenment (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 4). The Enlightenment is shown to be at the service of instrumental reason which, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, has eventually come to structure and dominate all practices of social life. They argue that science, morality and art have succumbed to the purposive rationality of instrumental reason. Through the dominating role of instrumental reason, the Enlightenment, which was supposed to have escaped from the forces of myth, is shown to revert back to myth, and in doing so becomes secretly complicit with the actions of power. (Adorno & Horkheimer: 1992: XVI; Habermas, 1982: 107,111; Bernstein, 2001: 76)

Further, the potentialities of the dominated are manipulated to fulfil the desires of the dominator. From here, Adorno and Horkheimer progress to include labour as an important aspect of their argument by stating that “[n]ature must no longer be influenced by approximation, but mastered by labour” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 19). The resulting domination leads to the “division of labour... [which] serves the dominated whole for the end of self-preservation... [since d]omination lends increased consistency and force to the social whole in which it establishes itself” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 21-22). This process of domination and self-preservation further alienates individuals within bourgeois society in that they must “model their body and soul according to the technical apparatus” used within the processes which are manifested by the bourgeois division of labour (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 29-30). Reason’s increasingly instrumental role is explained by Adorno and Horkheimer (1992: 30) as such:

The technical process, into which the subject has objectified itself after being removed from the consciousness, is free of the ambiguity of mythic thought as of all meaning altogether, because reason itself has become the mere instrument of the all-inclusive economic apparatus. It serves as a general tool, firmly directed towards its end.... At last... [reason’s] old ambition, to be a pure organ of ends, has been reali[s]ed.

Instrumental reason, and its domination over all other forms of reason, is hereby identified by Adorno and Horkheimer to be the driving force of all human activity, and in so doing, this force eventually steers and leads the entire Enlightenment project away from its emancipatory potential towards a world where power and domination is an all-encompassing reality for all.

Therefore, the Enlightenment's return to myth and the subsequent domination of instrumental reason leads Adorno and Horkheimer (2002: xiv, xvi) to argue that "humanity, instead of entering into a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism" through the "self-destruction of enlightenment". For Adorno and Horkheimer, the resulting domination, continuously reinforced by reason in its instrumental form, is so complete that they are willing to argue that the "[E]nlightenment is as totalitarian as any system" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 24). Also, because they state that enlightenment thinking contains within itself "the germ of the regression which is taking place everywhere" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: xvi), the domination and repression that results from this situation leads to the Enlightenment turning against itself in such a way as for Adorno and Horkheimer to state that a "fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 3).

Therefore, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is able to convincingly develop an argument which states that "myth, domination, and labour" become entangled, and that "[u]nder the pressure of domination, human labour... [leads] away from myth – but under domination always returns to the jurisdiction of myth" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 32). They deepen this argument by stating further that the "enslavement to nature [myth] of people today cannot be separated from social progress" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: xvii). It would seem that for Adorno and Horkheimer, the fate of the world is sealed in that they do not deny that there is movement in the world, but that this movement is not one of progress, but one of regression which is driven through the very processes which humankind believes it can harness for emancipatory purposes.

3.3 Adorno and Horkheimer's Ambivalent Attitude Towards the Enlightenment

As already argued, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* argues persuasively throughout the text that the Enlightenment, if fully realised, would lead to the destruction of humanity. However, in the original 1944 Preface (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: xiv-xix) of the work, the authors allude to certain constructive or positive forces at play in enlightenment thinking which could contribute to humanity's emancipation. Adorno and Horkheimer (2002: xvi), contrary to what has been argued above, state categorically that: "We have no doubt – and herein lies our *petitio principii* – that freedom in society is inseparable from enlightenment thinking". Further, the authors interestingly add that the "increase in economic productivity... creates the conditions for a more just world"; that society is "provided for by the [social] apparatus... better than ever before"; and that there has been a "materially considerable... rise in the standard of living of the lower classes" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 2002: xvii).

Even though Adorno and Horkheimer spend the rest of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* demonstrating how the Enlightenment is fundamentally flawed, these passages allude to the possibility that they actually believe that there are some positive aspects inherent in enlightenment thinking and modernity which could assist in the emancipation of humankind. However, in the work, they continue to argue the counter-position so pervasively, and in such a one-sided fashion, that the reader easily forgets that the writers may see a positive or constructive role to reason and the Enlightenment beyond merely its instrumental manifestation. In fact, the one-sided nature of Adorno and Horkheimer's treatment of reason, the Enlightenment and modernity in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can possibly be interpreted as a surreptitious attempt to utilise rhetorical means to drive their arguments home. In this way, they in effect make the one-sided point – Enlightenment's self-destructive nature – so forcefully, that the reader is led to believe that this is the only reality and outcome for the Enlightenment.

Therefore, this section of the paper will explore how firstly, the incompleteness of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; secondly, the fact that its intended sequel was never written; and lastly, the presence of rhetorical devices in the work, results in a

misleading situation which makes it seem as though Adorno and Horkheimer do not see any positive aspects in the Enlightenment. This situation in turn reinforces the distorted idea that they may have exclusively harboured an intensely dark and pessimistic view of a future.

3.3.1 The Incompleteness of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Its Unwritten Sequel

The question of Adorno and Horkheimer's seeming ambivalence towards the Enlightenment is taken up by James Schmidt (1998) who argues that this ambivalence is rooted in the fact that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is not only an incomplete work, but the sequel to the work, which would have explored Adorno and Horkheimer's positive ideas concerning the Enlightenment, was never written. According to Schmidt's study of the various drafts of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as well as the numerous letters written by Adorno and Horkheimer to each other and their peers around that time, Schmidt found that the authors never considered the debate opened up by the work to be complete until they had written their intended sequel which would describe their "positive theory of dialectics" explaining how the "rescue of the enlightenment" might be accomplished (Schmidt, 1998: 5-7). However, as the focus of the authors shifted to other activities, Adorno was forced to hastily ready the work for publication which largely meant "dropping references to the incompleteness of the work... and toning down its Marxian language" (Schmidt, 1998: 5-6). Therefore, Schmidt (1998: 6) found that:

What we know as the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was thus the product of a heroic job of copy editing on Adorno's part which transformed a manuscript that openly proclaimed its incompleteness into something resembling a normal book.

Even though no material has as yet been found concerning the intended sequel to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Schmidt's study does provide some insight into the problems the authors were confronted with in attempting to show how the Enlightenment can be positively guided out of the bleak situation they described in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Schmidt, 1998: 16). For instance, since Adorno and

Horkheimer believe that myth is already enlightenment, Schmidt (1998: 23) explains that “[w]here other critics of the Enlightenment respond to its alleged failings by seeking to reactivate modes of thinking that had not been corrupted by enlightenment rationality, this path is not available to Horkheimer and Adorno.” This in turn had a direct impact on the options which were open to Adorno and Horkheimer when attempting to formulate possible ways out of the predicament which they described the Enlightenment to be in in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Further, in trying to find a way to articulate a “positive theory of dialectics”, Horkheimer asked Adorno: “Hegel had absolute reason[‘s] fulfilment as his guide. What do we have as a guide?” (Schmidt, 1998: 5, 18). According to Schmidt (1998: 18), “[f]or Horkheimer, at least, work on the proposed sequel to *Dialectic of Enlightenment* seemed to be leading into a dead end.” Therefore, Schmidt (1998: 32) concludes that “[a]ny reading of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that is unaware of the incompleteness of its argument runs the risk of misunderstanding the intentions of its authors” who would seem to be much more sympathetic to the Enlightenment than what can be gathered from their bleak view of it in the work.

3.3.2 The Use of Rhetoric in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

To further explore the possibility that Adorno and Horkheimer may have had a more sympathetic view of the Enlightenment, we will now examine whether the presence of rhetoric in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* may add to a distorted view of their actual beliefs. Honneth (2007: 59) identifies the role and use of rhetoric in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and argues that rather than utilising the social-theoretical perspective in their critique of society, Adorno and Horkheimer use the technique of historical-philosophical construction specifically for rhetorical purposes. He argues that they do this in order to “evoke a new way of seeing the social world... so that we might become attentive to [the] pathological character” of certain parts of our life-world (Honneth, 2007: 59). Honneth identifies three rhetorical devices used in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* namely: narrative metaphor; chiasmus; and exaggeration.

Firstly, the narrative metaphor of the Odysseus myth leads us to identify with the tragic hero and thereby experience familiar events as strange and “become aware of

the excessive demands they place” on us (Honneth, 2007: 59). The aim of the Odysseus rhetorical device is to ensure that the historically developed naturalness of our self-imposed discipline should be disclosed when we are allegorically connected to, for instance, Odysseus’ effort to bind himself to the mast to protect himself against the deadly seduction of the Sirens. In this way, Honneth (2007: 59) adds that “[t]he comparison with social practices as we know them from the culture of capitalism should lead us to understand for the first time the full extent of the elementary raw violence that lies at the basis of these practices”.

The second rhetorical device has a similar function to the first. Chiasmus, or the joining of two phrases of words with apparently contradictory meanings, collapses the familiar and discloses a new way seeing something. According to Honneth (2007: 59-60), Adorno and Horkheimer’s terms of ‘culture industry’ and ‘natural history’ allows for the “process of human history [to] suddenly gain [a] new meaning” since its “raw natural elements” become visible. The chiasmus of ‘culture industry’ attempts to show rhetorically that cultural and industrial production are linked; and the chiasmus of nature and history, which appear to be opposite from a historical-philosophical perspective, are joined in a single term to form a new meaning. Therefore, in the rhetorical act of combining these terms “the conventional context of meaning is lost in a single stroke” (Honneth, 2007: 60).

Honneth (2007: 60) describes the third rhetorical device, exaggeration, as the “attempt through which a certain characteristic is presented in a grotesque or shrill way” in order to expose hidden meanings. Honneth mentions *Dialectic of Enlightenment’s* description of human social behaviour as being like animals, and the identification of the clinical experiments of the Marquis de Sade with bourgeois moral understanding, as examples of exaggeration for rhetorical purposes.

Even though the one-sided treatment of the Enlightenment, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, successfully elucidates the concealed inclination of instrumental reason towards domination, the rhetorical use of what can be described as sustained hyperbole (or exaggeration) throughout the entire work creates an idea in the mind of the reader that the destruction of humanity, through the processes of the Enlightenment, is a *fait accompli*.

Importantly, Honneth (2007: 60) concludes that if the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* merely attempts rhetorically to evoke a new and unfamiliar perspective on the social world without providing social-theoretical evidence “...the question ultimately remains open as to the kind of truth claims it can actually uphold.” In other words, Honneth believes that the credibility of the entire *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can be brought into question if it can be proved that Adorno and Horkheimer purposefully made use of rhetorical devices to further their arguments beyond the point which their evidence is able to support them.

Therefore, the use of rhetoric in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, especially exaggeration, together with the fact that the work was not completed, and that the intended sequel was never written, creates a significant dramatic tension which is never released in the provision of the counter-arguments which the authors at least initially believed should be expanded upon.

4. HABERMAS’ CRITICISM OF THE *DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT*

The following section of this paper will focus on Habermas’ criticism of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and will consist of three parts: firstly, an exploration of Habermas’ reading of Adorno and Horkheimer’s use of the Greek tragedy of Odysseus, and how it relates to Enlightenment, will be conducted; secondly, Habermas’ critique of Adorno and Horkheimer’s understanding of the use of instrumental reason in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* will be explored in order to show how Habermas argues that Adorno and Horkheimer begin to venture into a totalising critique of reason; and finally, an exploration of Habermas’ argument which criticises Adorno and Horkheimer for overextending Nietzsche’s approach to totalising critique and thereby ending up with a performative contradiction which they are unable to escape from.

4.1 Habermas’ Reading of Odysseus and Enlightenment in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Having already described the how the *Odyssey* is used in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the previous section, we can now turn our focus to Habermas’

reading of Adorno and Horkheimer's use of the story in their work. It is important to remember that, as we have already seen, Adorno and Horkheimer use the story of Odysseus to show how the processes of the Enlightenment were already in operation at the time of the formation of human subjectivity. In the first sections of "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", Habermas does not start immediately by offering an explicit criticism of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, but begins by summarising what he believes the main thrust of the work to be. In this summary, Habermas lifts from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* its argument that the Enlightenment has never allowed humankind to escape from the forces of myth by referring to the work's interpretation of the *Odyssey*. According to Habermas' reading of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, myth, as represented in the *Odyssey*, totalises and incorporates all phenomena into a unitary matrix of similarities and contrasts. Myth, according to Habermas, can be understood as a kind of magical thinking which does not allow for distinctions between things and people, and between objects which can be manipulated and those which have the agency to manipulate them. (Habermas, 1982: 19)

In "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", Habermas highlights the following salient ideas put forward with the *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* use of the Odysseus analogy in the following sequence: an original position which did not allow for identity formation within a subject; a cunning escape which brought relief and the attainment of a certain amount of subjectivity to the subject; the subject's growing fear of the revenge of the mythical forces; the subject's use of cunning through ritualistic sacrifice to the mythic forces to allay the fear of revenge (Habermas, 1982: 15; Hullot-Kentor, 1992: 102). Origin, escape, fear and sacrifice are the major themes lifted by Habermas from Adorno and Horkheimer's use of the *Odyssey* which he argues provides the backdrop to the development of the major thesis in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that the Enlightenment reverts back to myth. The sequence as highlighted above will now be explored in greater detail.

According to Habermas (1982: 14), the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* explores a hidden meta-narrative within the story of Odysseus which elucidates the existence of a drive within humankind to escape from the forces of myth for the purpose of creating and forging one's own subjectivity or identity. This analogy is further lifted to the general

level by Adorno and Horkheimer to incorporate the desire of all of humanity to do the same. Habermas sees Adorno and Horkheimer as arguing that the story of Odysseus shows that there is something within humankind that does not allow itself to fully and completely appropriate the mythic state. In other words, there is something within humankind that drives it to attempt to cast off this state since it finds that this state does not allow it the space, or promise, of developing a unique identity which it at this stage only believes to be a possibility (Habermas, 1982: 14). It is also significant that, in the story, Odysseus does not escape by overcoming myth with strength, but instead makes use of his cunning (Jay, 1976: 263).

For Habermas, Adorno and Horkheimer use the story of Odysseus to bring to light the importance of the idea of origin and escape. Whilst within the original position, or in the state of myth, man/woman experiences terror at the thought of having to escape, and it is only through courage and daring that he/she is able to make the first move. Once the original position has been escaped, there is a subsequent sense of relief. However, this relief is soon overcome by a new fear that the powerful mythic forces which were escaped from will now seek revenge on those who seemingly escaped from it (Ruderman, 1999: 143). Therefore, to avoid the revenge of these forces, humankind entered into the practice of ritual sacrifice by, once again, using cunning by symbolically offering up a substitute to these forces as a sacrifice. Once these sacrifices have been made, humankind once again experiences the relief of having escaped the fate which these mythic forces had in store for it. However, this relief is only temporary and humankind has to constantly return to the sacrificial altar in order to do away with the fear that these forces will eventually exact their revenge on them. (Habermas, 1982: 15; Ruderman, 1999: 138,143)

It is also important to note that Habermas (1982: 15) sees a genealogical element to the narrative proposed through the story of Odysseus. Humankind returns to the mythic state genealogically through the chain of generations. This genealogical understanding of how humankind is connected to a state of myth is significant since it is the root of the idea that the mythic state is in fact primordial: existing from the beginning. However, according to Habermas (1982: 15), Adorno and Horkheimer argue that every time humankind attempts to temporarily and symbolically return to the origin through ritualistic sacrifice, it only ends up widening the gap. To show this,

Habermas adds that Adorno and Horkheimer make use of Durkheim's theory that the ritual return to the origins guarantees social cohesion and simultaneously develops the egos of tribal members which drives their newly forming identities further away from the mythic state. (Habermas, 1982: 15; Schechter, 2010: 94)

In "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment" (1982: 16), Habermas proceeds by showing how the Enlightenment is then elevated from the individual level to the world historical level in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Humanity is understood by Adorno and Horkheimer to also have gone through the same processes as an individual would go through in the quest for subjectivity. Humanity is also thought to have distanced itself from its mythic origins and the Enlightenment is thought to be the greatest instance in which this distancing occurred. According to Adorno and Horkheimer however, the fate that befalls the individual, and that which Odysseus suffered, is the same fate which awaits humanity: the inevitable return to myth. The world which modern humankind inhabits only seems to be free from the operation of myth while in actual fact it remains ever ready to return to mythic states. Habermas (1982: 16) explains that

...demonic objectification [of external nature] and fatal isolation [of inner nature]... [are the] symptoms of an emancipation running loose in idle motion [and] express the revenge of the primordial powers upon those who tried to emancipate themselves and yet could not escape.

Habermas (1982: 16) explains further that in this interpretation of Enlightenment in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, humankind's compulsion to dominate and control the natural forces which impact on him/her from the outside has put humankind on a path which will see the forces of production increase *ad infinitum* for the sole purpose of self-preservation. In so doing, according to Habermas, the powers of reconciliation which transcend self-preservation are not allowed to develop and instead deteriorate into insignificance (Bernstein, 1991: 42-43; Habermas, 1982: 16). Therefore, for Habermas, by using the story of Odysseus, Adorno and Horkheimer develop and explain the fundamental thesis of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which states that instead of emancipation from myth, the Enlightenment has only allowed humankind to dominate and objectify external nature and repress his inner nature.

However, according to Habermas, this theory should have been known to Adorno and Horkheimer since it was already partly developed by Max Weber in a similar way (Habermas, 1982: 16). Here is the first instance where we observe that Habermas does not see the main ideas developed in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to be wholly original to the work, but as strands of thought already in existence and merely reopened by Adorno and Horkheimer. Schoolman (2005: 336) agrees that the Weberian idea that Western reason developed through societal rationalisation lies at the heart of Habermas' objection of Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of Enlightenment in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

4.2 Instrumental Reason in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

In his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987: 1), Habermas explains how classical social theorists understood modernity as following Weber's notion that the secularisation of Western culture, brought on by the disenchantment of world, led to the development of modern societies through the process of rationalisation. By rationalisation, Weber meant the differentiation and organisation of the value systems (approaches to theory, moral-practical, and aesthetic issues) around the "cores of the capitalist enterprise and the bureaucratic state apparatus." Habermas (1987: 2) explains further that

[t]he degree that everyday life was affected by this cultural and societal rationali[s]ation, traditional forms of life – which in the early modern period were differentiated primarily according to one's trade – were dissolved.

Similarly, Jay (1976: 259) argues that Adorno and Horkheimer agree with Weber's idea that the Enlightenment should be seen as *die Entzauberung der Welt* (the disenchantment of the world) as it demystifies and liberates humankind from the power and influence of myth in favour of science and reason. They agree that Weber's notion that the operation of reason is in fact a process of rationalisation was therefore appropriated by Adorno and Horkheimer who took it further by coupling it

with Lukács' concept of reification² which he described in his *History and Class Consciousness*. (Jay, 1976: 259)

In order to further expand on how modernity was affected by the processes of rationalisation, Habermas (1987: 2) claims that a change in the classical understanding of modernity took place in the 1950's as the term *Modernisation* began to be used as a technical term. Here, modernisation was elaborated upon to refer to a number of processes, such as: the formation of capital and the mobilisation of resources; the development of the forces of production and the increase in the productivity of labour; the formation of national identities and the centralisation of political power; the proliferation of political rights; increase in urban forms of life; and the secularisation of values and norms among others (Habermas, 1987: 2). This new way of thinking about modernisation performed the following two abstractions on Weber's concept of modernity according to Habermas (1987: 2):

It dissociates "modernity" from its modern European origins and stylis[es] it into a spatio-temporally neutral model for processes of social development in general... [and] breaks the internal connection between modernity and the historical context of Western rationalism, so that the processes of moderni[s]ation can no longer be conceived of as rationali[s]ation, as the historical objectification of rational structures.

Habermas proceeds to draw a link between the processes of rationalisation and *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* argument that the process of Enlightenment begins with the quest for self-preservation above all else. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that it is this impulse for self-preservation that in turn transforms reason in such a way as to utilise only its purposive-rational qualities for the goal of dominating outside nature and repressing inner nature. This specific use of reason is known as instrumental reason and is what Adorno and Horkheimer argue leads to reason destroying the humanity which itself made possible.

² Lukács' conception of reification is the combination his own idea of a contradiction between form and life with both Weber's theory of rationalisation and Marx's theory of value. According to Stahl (2013: 1) the core of Lukács' idea of reification is the claim that "the dominance of commodity forms in the economic sphere must necessarily lead to the dominance of rational calculation and formal reason in society as a whole".

Instrumental reason, or the instrumentalisation of reason for the purpose of self-preservation, as portrayed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, permeates through all spheres of life and eventually leads to the state where the entire Enlightenment project is threatened. Habermas sees the critique of instrumental reason in critical theory as a major interruption in the evolution of its program. In his, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, he states:

I want to maintain that the program of early critical theory foundered not on this or that contingent circumstance, but from the exhaustion of the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness. I shall argue that a change in paradigm to the theory of communication makes it possible to return to the undertaking that was interrupted with the critique of instrumental reason; and this will permit us to take up once again the since-neglected tasks of a critical theory of society. (Habermas, 1984: 38)

Habermas argues that the critique of instrumental reason which is depicted in many sections in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* does not prove that all of reason's qualities are appropriated under purposive rationality and suggests that there is much more to role of reason in modernity than merely its instrumental quality. Habermas argues that the classical social theorists develop an understanding of modernity that states that the "moderni[s]ation of the lifeworld is *not* determined *only* by structures of purposive rationality" (Habermas, 1987: 2 *emphasis mine*). Therefore, in attempting to show how reason is not merely relegated to its instrumental qualities, Habermas argues that the Enlightenment with its ideals of freedom, equality and truth, is still capable of harnessing the positive qualities of reason's effects on cultural modernity, especially noticeable in the spheres of science, justice and art. (Bernstein, 1991: 42-43; Habermas, 1982: 17)

Habermas contends that the internal theoretical dynamics and the self-reflective capacity of modern science outweigh the criticism in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and denies that the sciences themselves have been absorbed by instrumental reason for the purposes of merely generating technologically exploitable knowledge. The universalist foundations of law and morality embodied in institutions of constitutional states, democratic process and individualist patterns of identity formation are proof

enough for Habermas that reason has not been exorcized from morality and justice as Adorno and Horkheimer would argue. Finally, Habermas argues that the ability of an aesthetic experience to be a productive and liberating force shows that art is not merely fused with entertainment in contemporary mass culture and there remains more to it than being emptied of its critical and utopian content as thought of by Adorno and Horkheimer. (Habermas, 1982: 17-18)

Habermas states that this specific critique against reason rests upon the existence of two ideas: the separation of the cultural spheres; and the decline of reason through religion and metaphysics. These two ideas are used by Adorno and Horkheimer to argue that even the isolated manifestations of reason “regress into a purposive rationality at the service of a self-preservation gone wild.” The result of this is that reason becomes appropriated by power which has now fused with validity claims (Habermas, 1982: 17-18). In other words, Habermas sees Adorno and Horkheimer as wanting to show how a totalised purposive rationality has come to fuse together the claims to validity with the interests of those seeking self-preservation. With this fusion of validity claims with aspects of power, instrumental reason further eliminates the distance which the “modern decentred understanding of the world” had gained by overcoming magical thinking, or myth. (Bernstein, 1991: 42-43; Habermas, 1982: 22)

From this analysis, it is clear that Habermas sees the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a negative philosophy of history that attempts to show that it is the very nature of reason to eventually turn against itself and consequently into its opposite. He also finds the *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* search for the origins of a reason which is uncontaminated by power as a futile attempt. Instead, according to Rocco (1994: 73):

Habermas [therefore] seeks to salvage a procedurally unified reason with his concept of communicative rationality in order to use it both as a diagnostic aid in evaluating processes of life world colonization and as a normative standard against which he might judge evolution toward a rational society.

In *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984), Habermas argues that Adorno and Horkheimer do not recognise "the different complexes of rationality... which suggests a unity of rationality beneath the husk of an everyday practice that has been simultaneously rationali[s]ed and reified" (Habermas, 1984: 382). Habermas sees the difficulties which Adorno and Horkheimer experience results from their inability to accurately reconstruct the development of the Enlightenment more closely in Weberian terms. Schoolman (2005: 336) adds that Habermas believes that if Adorno and Horkheimer had done so they would have realised that

societal rationalization could be conceptuali[s]ed as the progressive differentiation of reason through the formation of expert cultures, whose work is to develop the logic of cognitive-instrumental, moral-ethical, and aesthetic spheres of rationality and to articulate validity claims belonging to each differentiated value sphere.

At the end of the second section of "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", Habermas claims that he has presented enough evidence that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* takes the sceptical view of reason too far by ignoring the continuous positive impact it has on cultural modernity. Now with this first stage complete, Habermas moves on by asking the question why Adorno and Horkheimer would have made their critique of reason so far reaching as to attempt to show how it jeopardises the entire Enlightenment project. In the attempt to explore the reason for this, Habermas turns his attention to examining how Adorno and Horkheimer moved away from the critique of ideology in the Marxian tradition towards a total critique with its related performative contradiction. (Habermas, 1982: 18)

Before we move on to the next section we need to explore Schoolman's argument which attempts to counter Habermas' criticism of Adorno and Horkheimer's ideas of the role of instrumental reason. Even though Schoolman states that Habermas' assessment of Adorno and Horkheimer's ideas are of considerable importance, he counters Habermas' position by arguing that it is however misdirected since "the fundamental issue eventually will turn on what constitutes the rational content of modernity and in what sense and in what ways it is a project that still can be completed" (Schoolman, 2005: 338). Schoolman maintains that Adorno and

Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was in fact attuned with normative critique and he also believes that modernity, in its later stages, was able to place humanity in a more positive and enlightened position. In order to justify his claim, Schoolman argues that Adorno and Horkheimer were in fact able to develop a theory where the rational content of society is explained to be more differentiated than Habermas was able to recognise. He notes that Adorno and Horkheimer were able to differentiate between the various value spheres and rational content of a society moving through the process of modernity by making use of their understanding of a differentiated aesthetic reason. (Schoolman, 2005: 338)

As Schoolman explains, a differentiated aesthetic reason is significant since it leads to an idea of an enlightenment which can be based on an alternative form of rationality. In other words, by following the idea of a differentiated aesthetic reason, not only does an entirely alternative enlightenment become a possibility, but the notion of a 'next enlightenment' comes into focus. (Schoolman, 2005: 338-9)

Schoolman (2005: 339) extends his argument against Habermas' critique of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* further by stating that Adorno and Horkheimer's understanding of the rational content of modernity is indeed similar to Habermas' own idea of modernity as an unfinished project, despite the conceptual leap which is necessary to describe what an alternative enlightenment would entail. He adds further that Adorno and Horkheimer's idea is as deeply embedded in modernity as that of Habermas' idea of communicative reason, and that

[t]he concept of differentiated aesthetic reason found in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* may be more sensitive to forms of communicative interaction than Habermas's theory of communicative action, because what counts as communication for Horkheimer and Adorno will prove to be broader conceptually than for Habermas. (Schoolman, 2005: 339)

According to Schoolman, Adorno and Horkheimer are indeed able to differentiate forms of rationality. He also attempts to show that, while focussing on their differentiation of aesthetic reason, Adorno and Horkheimer are able to flesh out the concept of aesthetic reason and establish its significance. In this way, Schoolman

hopes to create a foundation where the work of Adorno and Horkheimer, and in particular *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, can be reconsidered in order to show that it does in fact address the issues which Habermas claims it excludes or inadequately deals with. (Schoolman, 2005: 339)

Irrespective to Schoolman's attempt to support Adorno and Horkheimer, Habermas' claim that they become trapped in a position stands, since, as he claims, they have purposefully excluded the possibility that another form of rationality was able to survive the dominant processes brought on by instrumental reason. To them, a positive concept of Enlightenment is unable to be supported since their critique aims to show all the rational grounds able to justify it have been eviscerated by the universalising effects of instrumental reason. In maintaining this approach, Adorno and Horkheimer make the additional mistake by slipping into the paradox of, as Habermas (1987: 111) puts it, denouncing "Enlightenment's becoming totalitarian with its own tools". Without being able to utilise any rational criterion to base their critique of reason on, Habermas (1987: 127) sarcastically notes that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* suffers the "embarrassment of a critique that attacks the presuppositions of its own validity" and eventually gets trapped in an aporia. (Schoolman, 2005: 338)

4.3 Habermas' Claim of a Performative Contradiction in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

The following section of the dissertation will explore Habermas' criticism that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* falls into the trap of a performative contradiction. Habermas launches a pointed criticism against the main theses in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, by following a line of questioning that undercuts the very argument contained in its framework that attempts to coherently critique the nature of reason and its role in modernity (Habermas, 1982: 19). According to Jay (1992: 266-7), "Habermas' position is that by denying the rationality of all reason, Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of reason denies its own rationality."

In "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment" (1982: 19), Habermas argues that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* radicalises its critique to the point at which it becomes

total. He does so by explaining that when the critique of ideology is suspected of not being able to produce truths any longer, as in the case in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, critique has no other avenue left than becoming total critique. For instance, when the Marxist critique of ideology lost its belief in the potential for reason present in the Enlightenment, critical thinkers needed to find another path in order to further the quest for the emancipation of humankind. In their attempt to find another path, Adorno and Horkheimer begin to criticise the very functioning of reason itself, irrespective of the fact that they require the use of reason to do so. (Benhabib, 1981: 23; Habermas, 1984: 384; Habermas, 1982: 22; Rocco, 1994: 81-82)

Seyla Benhabib (1986) and Albrecht Wellmer (1991) also follow the same line as Habermas and criticise the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* for being guilty of performative contradiction. According to Wellmer (1991: 3-7), a paradox is created by Adorno and Horkheimer's argument that the Enlightenment is able to enlighten itself. Wellmer tracks the evolution of the paradox first initiated in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* through to Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* and *Aesthetic Theory* where he argues that it is recast in *Negative Dialectics* as conceptual thought desperately trying to find a way to rise above itself by means of concepts.

Similarly, Benhabib (1986: 169) develops her idea of how the performative contradiction is created in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by articulating that:

If the plight of the Enlightenment and of cultural rationalization only reveals the culmination of the identity logic, constitutive of reason, then the theory of the dialectic of the Enlightenment, which is carried out with the tools of this very same reason, perpetuates the structure of domination it condemns. The critique of Enlightenment is cursed by the same burden as Enlightenment itself.

The strong claim which Benhabib makes suggests that, by creating an aporetic situation, Adorno and Horkheimer find their critique of the Enlightenment counterintuitively hastening the onset of the kind of society which their work seeks to oppose. She also argues further that Adorno and Horkheimer do not leave

themselves any theoretical or conceptual tools to explain what the normative standpoint of their critical theory can be (Benhabib, 1986: 169). According to Schoolman (2005: 357), Benhabib dismisses Adorno and Horkheimer's turn to aesthetics in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* since she argues that aesthetic reason is not able to undo the universality of identity logic, and that it is not able to negate instrumental rationality.

In order to defend the *Dialect of Enlightenment*, Schoolman explores, and attempts to counter, the critique of the work which emanates from Habermas, Benhabib and Wellmer. Schoolman's main objective is to show how Adorno and Horkheimer avoid the embarrassment of being accused of entering into a performative contradiction by showing how the Weberian concept of a differentiated aesthetic rationality is in fact present in the main theses of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. With an aesthetic rationality present in the *Dialect of Enlightenment*, Schoolman aims to argue that this is how the work is able to escape from a performative contradiction, in effect neutralising the critique from Habermas, Benhabib and Wellmer. (Schoolman, 2005: 358)

Schoolman argues that Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the Enlightenment only appears to be aporetic, and for reasons not of their making, and that it actually opens up a second sphere of rationality which is able to transcend the effects of instrumental reason. In fact, according to Schoolman, this second sphere of rationality was always present in their critique of Enlightenment to begin with, where Adorno and Horkheimer proposed a reflective and pluralistic conception of aesthetic reason which contrasts with the exclusive and unreflective nature of instrumental rationality. (Schoolman, 2005: 358)

In defence of Habermas however, Wellmer (1991: 3-7) explains that truth gained through art remains localised only within the aesthetic experience and cannot be translated into philosophical concepts since it will only remain in the sensory realm. Schoolman counters this view of Wellmer by arguing that he misses the way in which an aesthetic experience is in actual fact mediated by aesthetic reason, and neglects how immediacy of an aesthetic experience can be transformed when rationality interacts in a dialectical manner. In this way, Schoolman attempts to show how art and philosophy are related to one another. Schoolman concludes by arguing that

since, in his opinion, Adorno and Horkheimer were actually able to flesh out the concept of a differentiated aesthetic reason, an alternative enlightenment becomes an interesting possibility. Therefore, for Schoolman, the indictment of Adorno and Horkheimer having stumbled upon a performative contradiction in their critique of Enlightenment in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can be attributed to critics such as Habermas having overlooked, or remaining blind to, the role they assign to art. (Schoolman, 2005: 357-358)

4.4 The Influence of Nietzsche on Adorno and Horkheimer's View of the Enlightenment

In the final section of this dissertation, Habermas' argument will be explored that states that, in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer not only follow the ideas of Nietzsche too closely, but overextend his arguments to the point that their position on the Enlightenment becomes untenable and unsustainable. Once Habermas has explained how Adorno and Horkheimer move into the performative contradiction which, according to Habermas, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is clearly guilty of committing, he asks the question where Adorno and Horkheimer could have received inspiration from to make such a move. Habermas finds the answer to this question in the influence of Nietzsche on the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. It is in this section of "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment" where Habermas reaches his final conclusion regarding his criticism of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which states that Adorno and Horkheimer fall into the same kind of performative contradiction which Nietzsche's work suffered from.

In an extract from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which Habermas quotes at length in his "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", Habermas (1982: 23) demonstrates what he describes as Adorno and Horkheimer's conflicting attitude towards Nietzsche. In the extract, Habermas shows how Adorno and Horkheimer conclude that "despite all his affirmation of life", Nietzsche's critique "was hostile to the spirit of reality" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992: 101). Habermas finds Adorno and Horkheimer's conflicting attitude to Nietzsche instructive since it "indicates that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* owes more to Nietzsche than just the strategy of a totalizing critique" (Habermas, 1982: 23). Therefore, Habermas sees the destructive

forces expounded in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as originating in Nietzsche's philosophy, and argues that Adorno and Horkheimer merely appropriate Nietzsche's idea that reason is purely an instrument of self-preservation and of power (Hohendahl, 1985: 15). Habermas argues that the authors of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* "accept, naturally, the identity of domination and reason, that is, the basis for a totalizing self-transcendence of the critique of ideology" and states that this idea emanates from the works of Nietzsche. (Habermas, 1982: 23)

Adorno and Horkheimer (1972: 44) seek to develop the themes of totalising critique found in Nietzsche's works in order to transcend the critique of ideology. However, Habermas claims that Nietzsche's attack on reason is so thorough that it removes reason's very ability to achieve determinate negation and it does so to such an extent that it "consumes the critical impulse itself". This becomes problematic for Adorno and Horkheimer since they maintain that determinate negation is the only methodological procedure which remains once reason itself becomes defective (Habermas, 1982: 23).

Hohendahl (1985: 5) agrees that the hostile tone of Habermas in his "Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment" towards the pessimistic outlook of the Enlightenment in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can mainly be attributed to its connection with the works of Nietzsche. Hohendahl goes further to state that Habermas does not necessarily offer a critique of Nietzsche's work as such in "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", but responds directly to the poststructuralist revival of the works of Nietzsche during the late 1970s and early 1980s by critically rereading *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and finding the traces of Nietzsche's philosophy ever-present therein. (Hohendahl, 1985: 5)

We have already seen how Habermas argues that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is guilty of performative contradiction or self-referential critique, but it is important to ask which aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy does Habermas think Adorno and Horkheimer appropriated in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*? The short answer to this question is their impulse and drive towards a final unmasking which they inherit from Nietzsche. At this point in "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment" Habermas gets to the key moment of his argument, or what may also be described as

frustration, with the main theses of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This moment in "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment" (1982: 23) warrants to be quoted at length:

It is still difficult to understand a certain carelessness in their treatment of, to put it quite blatantly, the achievements of Western rationalism. How can the two advocates of the Enlightenment (which they always claimed to be and still are) so underestimate the rational content of cultural modernity that they observe in its elements only the amalgamation of reason and domination, of power and validity? Is it Nietzsche who inspired them to derive the standards of their cultural criticism from the radical but isolated and somehow totalized experience of aesthetic modernity? The similarities in content are striking.

Habermas' unease with the line which Adorno and Horkheimer have followed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is most clearly articulated at this moment in "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment". Here we can see Habermas' most fundamental objections to *Dialectic of Enlightenment* spelled out; firstly, his disbelief that Adorno and Horkheimer have purposefully neglected to recognise what Habermas sees as the obvious achievements of Western rationalism; secondly, Habermas' surprise that what he believes to be two advocates of the Enlightenment could turn against it so completely; thirdly, and connected to the first point, Habermas' frustration that Adorno and Horkheimer so utterly reduced their argument to the conflation of power and validity thereby ignoring what Habermas implies to be the rich and fertile area of cultural modernity's rational content; and finally, Habermas' suspicion that Adorno and Horkheimer have been swept up in an analysis of modernity which follows too close a line to that of a Nietzschean analysis.

However, the most striking observation that can be drawn from this moment in "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment" is Habermas' disbelief that Adorno and Horkheimer could have thought that this radical and totalised critique of modernity (or performative contradiction) could be upheld, and that they could forward this argument knowing the positive and constructive influence which modernity, and the corresponding role of reason, has had on human history.

Habermas (1982: 24) deepens his argument by recognising that Adorno and Horkheimer have the same ideas of the primal history of human subjectivity as that of Nietzsche. In fact he notes that there are extremely close parallels with each other. In Nietzsche's view, the moment that human subjectivity lost its deep and primordial relationship with its instincts, the preeminent reliance on human consciousness ensued. This dependence on consciousness as a mechanism which objectifies and makes available external nature was an unfortunate turn of events for Nietzsche, since according to him, this reduced humankind to a creature which only saw cause and effect in the world, and lost its ability to connect to his/her instincts. (Habermas, 1982: 24)

With consciousness taking the leading role in humankind's subjective space, the instinctual basis which played such an important role up to then had to be domesticated and subdued. Likewise, the deep drives which humankind was able to spontaneously discharge had to now be repressed. According to Habermas (1982, 24), Nietzsche argues that this resulted in a situation that all these repressed instincts and drives had to be repressed inwardly since they were not allowed to express themselves outwardly. This process of internalisation meant that subjectivity developed "under the influence of renunciation or of 'bad conscience'" (Habermas, 1982: 24) and according to Nietzsche, this internalisation of humankind was the precursor for what humankind would later call his/her soul.

This is the source of Nietzsche's important thesis which states that when the domination over external and internal nature combine, the result is the institutionalised domination of humans over humans. Habermas quotes from Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*:

Those fearful bulwarks with which the political organi[s]ation protected itself against the old instincts-of freedom - punishments belong among these bulwarks - brought about that all these instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward against man himself (Kaufman, trans. 1968, 520; as quoted in Habermas, 1982: 24)

Therefore, Habermas argues that Adorno and Horkheimer follow too close a line of argumentation with Nietzsche here. Moreover, Nietzsche's ideas of knowledge and morality also find their way into Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of instrumental reason. For example, according to Habermas (1982: 24), Adorno and Horkheimer merely appropriate and recontextualise Nietzsche's idea that contained within Positivism's truth claims and Christianity's normative claims lie deep and overpowering drives towards self-preservation and domination. Habermas states that the manner which Nietzsche overtly and explicitly explains his point of view of modernity is not the same way which Adorno and Horkheimer explain the same idea since theirs is done in a more veiled and implicit manner in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. According to Habermas (1982: 24), Nietzsche's explicit explanation makes it much easier to understand than Adorno and Horkheimer's argument that an overly objectified nature and an overly moralised society is able to degenerate back into myth, "whether it be a perverted will to power or instrumental reason". (Habermas, 1982: 24)

Habermas argues that this specific view of modernity was identified by the philosophers, artists and thinkers of aesthetic modernity, of which Nietzsche was the first to do so. He notes that Nietzsche, having absorbed romantic ideas evident in his intellectual engagement with Richard Wagner, was able to articulate an aesthetic explanation of modernity even before it manifested in any artistic forms on the 20th Century. Habermas explains that an aesthetic view of modernity is based on a "deconstructed subjectivity freed from all constraints of cognition and morality as well as from all imperatives of work and utility" (Habermas, 1982: 25).

It is instructive to note that, in "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", Habermas pays particular attention to how Nietzsche undermines the validity and morality claims modernity. Habermas proceeds by conducting rather detailed and in-depth treatment of Nietzsche's attack on the validity claims of science and morality in "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", in order to expose the performative contradiction which he sees resulting from this line of argument (Habermas, 1982: 26-27). It should be remembered here that in undoing Nietzsche's argument in this section of "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", Habermas is directly attempting to undermining the central theses in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* which he

sees as finding its origin in Nietzsche's ideas on this issue. In "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment", Habermas proceeds to make the strong claim that "[i]f thought can no longer operate in the realms of truth and validity claims, then analysis and critique lose their meaning" (Habermas, 1982: 27).

By subscribing to Nietzsche's argument, one would also need to believe that contradiction and negation are only expressions of the want, or preference, to be different. However, if this is the case, Habermas asks that, if validity claims are replaced by value judgements which are merely claims to power, how is humankind able to differentiate between those powers which deserve esteem and those powers which need to be disparaged (Habermas, 1982: 27; Hohendahl, 1985: 15)? Nietzsche's answer to this question is not satisfying for Habermas.

Habermas explains that the dilemma which Nietzsche is faced with is that his theory of power cannot be allowed to harbour any notion that truth and falsity are in operation in the theory (Habermas, 1982: 27). For Nietzsche, there is no way to distinguish between reason and irrationality in the world, since one can only estimate value on a continuum of preferences. For Habermas, Nietzsche's world "has more or less intentionally relapsed into mythology" since he conscientiously removed all the cognitive elements which were able to transcend the idea of a world which contained only a variety powers vying for influence and domination. (Habermas, 1982: 27)

Habermas (1982: 27) begins concluding by stating that in an attempt to escape from this dilemma, Nietzsche has to enter into the realms of totalised critique. With negation being abandoned, Nietzsche returns to the particular strand of mythology which states that that which is original, or closer to the origins, should be esteemed. This genealogical critique is at once able to extend over all other forms of critique, and through its veneration of ancestry and origin, it is able rank social values, as well as become the criteria for judgement in a logical sense. By ordering power in through a genealogical criterion, Nietzsche attempts to show that "the powers of an earlier and more distinguished ancestry are the active and creative ones, whereas the reactive powers of later and lower descent express a perverted will to power" (Habermas: 1982: 27-28).

With this immensely powerful, or influential, system of thought, Nietzsche is able to launch one of the most devastating, if not *the* most devastating, attack on modernity and the notion of progress. With this conceptual ‘weapon’ in his hands, Nietzsche is able to substantially undermine and subvert modernity’s ideals of truth and morality. Nietzsche further considered the achievements of modernity as merely accidental and undertaken by the lower and reactive powers in the world which were temporarily able to achieve an ultimately reversible victory over the original and more venerable powers (Habermas: 1982: 28). It is exactly at this point in Habermas’ argument that we are able to see the uncanny resemblance to Adorno and Horkheimer’s argument that Enlightenment eventually reverts to back to myth. Habermas states that Adorno and Horkheimer find themselves in the same predicament as Nietzsche since both parties have followed a totalising, self-referential critique of the Enlightenment and modernity. The problem which results from a totalised critique, or the drive to conduct a final unmasking, is that one has to preserve at least one standard (rational criteria) which is able to explain how all the other standards (rational criterion) were in fact corrupt. Habermas sees both parties, Adorno and Horkheimer and Nietzsche, falling prey to this paradox or performative contradiction. (Habermas: 1982: 28; Hohendahl, 1985: 14)

Even though Nietzsche attempts to escape this paradox through his theory of power (active and the merely reactive powers), Habermas finds that it is still not sufficient to escape the pitfalls of a critique which undermines the validity of its own premises. Habermas argues that the best Nietzsche can hope for is that his theory of power could eventually prepare a path which may transcend the horizon of modernity (Habermas: 1982: 28-29). According to Habermas (1982: 29), unlike Nietzsche, Adorno and Horkheimer do not even attempt to resolve the performative contradiction which appears in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and argues that Adorno and Horkheimer pushed their level of reflexion so far that

...every attempt to set up a theory was bound to lead into an abyss: as a result, they abandoned any theoretical approach and practiced ad hoc determinate negation, thereby opposing that fusion of reason and power which fills in all the cracks [as in Nietzsche’s approach]. (Habermas, 1982: 29)

By way of concluding this section, Habermas sees a direct link between these two strands of thought: Nietzsche's attempt to unmask science and morality as "ideological expressions of a perverted will to power" and Adorno and Horkheimer's argument that science and morality are merely "embodiments of instrumental reason" (Habermas: 1982: 30). Also, according to Habermas, the objective of a final unmasking (which Adorno and Horkheimer attempt in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) is a result of the purist intention which finally ends up betraying itself. Habermas sees the purist intention which aims to expose the conflation of reason with power as similar to the attempts of ontology to separate essence and appearance which resulted in the same problems. (Habermas, 1982: 30)

However, Habermas (1982: 30) explains that "both spheres of power and validity are so interwoven that they can be separated only procedurally and step by step through the mediation of thought" and that "Enlightenment and justification are rightly intertwined" (Habermas: 1982: 30). He adds that convictions are formed and contested in a medium which is not pure or separated from the "world of appearances in the manner of the platonic ideals" (Habermas: 1982: 30). Habermas concludes by alluding to a thesis which he explores in his enormously influential *The Theory of Communicative Action* that "[o]nly a discourse which admits this everlasting impurity can perhaps escape from myth, thus freeing itself, as it were, from the entwinement of myth and Enlightenment" (Habermas, 1982: 30).

5. CONCLUSION

In order to summarise the debate opened up between the arguments presented by Adorno and Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and Habermas' criticism of them, the following main points were identified above: even though the genesis of the Enlightenment occurs at different times for both parties, they however agree that it started with the break with myth irrespective of when this happened. Both parties also agree that purposive, or instrumental reason, is an element within the Enlightenment which has a negative effect on humankind.

However, the degree or extent to which instrumental reason has a bearing on the unfolding of the Enlightenment is disputed between the parties. Adorno and

Horkheimer see instrumental reason as all-pervasive which results in the Enlightenment reverting back to myth and ultimately destroying any hope of freedom which humankind may have. Habermas, however, sees instrumental reason as being only one form of reason in operation in the Enlightenment or modernity, and that the Enlightenment continues to result in the opening of new freedoms for humankind in a project which is as yet unfinished. Another difference is that the end state which the project of Enlightenment will result in is seen as a cataclysm according to Adorno and Horkheimer, while Habermas holds a much more optimistic view of the end result.

Therefore, the terms of the debate do not revolve around the different ideas of when the Enlightenment started, or how Adorno and Horkheimer may have different understanding of the Enlightenment from how Habermas may understand modernity. Instead, the paper has shown that the terms of the debate are actually grounded on the fact that the concept of Enlightenment, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, and modernity, according to Habermas, are in fact more similar than they are different. The debate, then, occurs around the way in which these processes unfold; the degree to which instrumental reason manifests through these processes; and the quality of the end state which will result from these processes.

The paper has argued that Adorno and Horkheimer push their claim that reason is so fundamentally corrupted by purposive rationality that there is no other form of reason left behind which can rescue the Enlightenment. This, in turn, undermines their entire critical project since they in effect discredit the very reason they use to build their critical claims upon, eventually resulting in a fatal, and inescapable aporia.

However, the major finding of this paper is that this is not a situation which they necessarily intended to have occur. It was shown in this paper that there is no doubt that they not only intended to write a sequel to the work which would have expanded on the positive aspects which they saw in the Enlightenment, but that they actually were not able to complete the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to the degree to which they desired. We have also seen that the hurried consolidation of the text by Adorno purged the work of all instances which would indicate that the text was incomplete,

as well as all instances which may have described any positive traits of the Enlightenment. Schmidt (1998: 30) found that after its purging

[w]hat eventually became the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* now had a systematicity that was almost as relentless as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. But while Hegel's "path of despair" wound up at Golgotha, it at least held out the promise of a bacchanalia of spirits as its sequel. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* ends at Auschwitz, with its sequel unwritten.

Therefore, the stakes of the debate between Adorno and Horkheimer, and Habermas, presented in this paper could not be any higher: does the Enlightenment, or modernity, lead to humankind's freedom, or demise? But what this paper has found is that Adorno and Horkheimer did not intend to have their side of the debate to be left as we find it today. According to Schmidt (1998: 31), Adorno and Horkheimer originally intended the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to offer a critique of the Enlightenment as "relentless and unforgiving as that mounted by the Enlightenment's fiercest critics" whilst remaining "loyal to the Enlightenment's hopes." In this way, the importance of the book's unwritten sequel cannot be overstated, since, according to Schmidt (1998: 31) the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* expertly traced the process by which Enlightenment had turned into a nightmare, whilst the unwritten sequel would have shown how Adorno and Horkheimer operationalise the positive aspects they believe to be in existence in the Enlightenment in order to rescue it from the nightmare they describe in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

We have also seen that a possible reason why a sequel to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was never written could have been because Adorno and Horkheimer could not find a way out of the performative contradiction that they found themselves in after the work. For example, Schmidt found that in attempting to find a way out, Horkheimer lamented to Adorno that he could not identify any way out of the predicament they had landed themselves in other than returning to the positive dialectics expounded by Hegel. This they obviously could not do since it would have undermined their entire project. This finding by Schmidt only reinforces Habermas' claim that Adorno and Horkheimer moved themselves into an untenable position in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Further, Schmidt's findings that the sequel to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* would have shown the authors' ideas on the positive aspects of the Enlightenment makes Schoolman's defence of Adorno and Horkheimer largely mute. It is evident that Schoolman was not exposed to the previous drafts of the work, as well as the letters of the authors to each other and their peers, to the same degree to which Schmidt was exposed. If Schoolman was, he would have seen that the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was actually purposefully purged of all positive elements in the Enlightenment which would have been dealt with in the sequel, when written. Therefore, his claim that Habermas missed the aesthetic rationality which he finds in the work is in fact misguided since even Adorno and Horkheimer were not even aware of it themselves.

By concluding this paper in this way, it is therefore shown that Habermas' criticism does in fact effectively counter the main theses presented in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Adorno and Horkheimer's inability to write a positive sequel to the work corroborates Habermas' argument that they could not find a way out of their performative contradiction. This does not mean that the entire content of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is false, it only means that the underlying project is fundamentally flawed. There are many instances in the work which sheds light on various instances where purposive rationality, or instrumental reason, impacts negatively on modern society. However, their conclusion that the Enlightenment inevitably leads to the demise of humankind is a rhetorical exaggeration which perhaps may have received more attention than it deserves.

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