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**WEIMAR**  
ON THE **PACIFIC**

**EHRHARD BAHR**

**GERMAN EXILE CULTURE  
IN LOS ANGELES AND THE  
CRISIS OF MODERNISM**

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## The Dialectic of Modernism

When Theodor W. Adorno (1903–69) and Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) began to write their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (*Dialektik der Aufklärung*) in 1941, they unintentionally provided a theory for the experience of exile in Southern California and for a modernism that had become questionable to its practitioners who felt out of place in the vicinity of Hollywood. Developed in discussions between Horkheimer and Adorno and recorded by the latter's wife, Gretel Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was completed in mimeographed form under the title *Philosophical Fragments* (*Philosophische Fragmente*) in 1944 and first published under its current title by the publishing house Querido of Amsterdam in 1947. It was most fitting that Querido published this book because it had been the most important publisher of the exiles since 1933. Later, pirated editions were circulated during the student revolution in West Germany around 1968, and the book was republished by Fischer in Frankfurt in 1969.

Read in terms of the Weimar iconography of Los Angeles, this book is also a theory of modernism; its pessimism reflects the crisis of modernism after 1933. What is most remarkable about Horkheimer and Adorno's theory is that it covers such a wide field of creative endeavors and affected even those who had never heard of it or disagreed with it. Bertolt Brecht's sarcastic remarks about the Tuis (his nickname for the intellectuals of the Institute for Social Research, derived from the anagram "Tellect-Ual-In") are well known, and he even planned to write a novel on the Tuis. Yet Adorno raised issues about the authentic recep-

FIGURE 2. Max Horkheimer during the 1940s. Photograph courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main, Archivzentrum, Max Horkheimer-Archiv.

tion of art in his chapter on the culture industry that were similar to those the playwright addressed in his *Short Organon for the Theater* (*Kleines Organon für das Theater*), a new theory of the theater that was conceived in Los Angeles at the same time as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and later printed in East Berlin in 1949.

Horkheimer had come to Los Angeles from New York in April 1941 for health reasons. His doctor had advised him to move to a more temperate climate because of a heart condition. Adorno followed him in November 1941. After his arrival, Adorno sent an enthusiastic letter to his parents on November 30:

The beauty of the landscape is without comparison, so that even a hard-boiled European like me is overwhelmed. The proportions of mountains and ocean remind me of the French Riviera, near San Remo or Mentone, but it is not as sub-divided and *privé*, but on a much larger scale and more open. The silhouette of the mountains reminds me of Tuscany. The view from our new house lets me think of Fiesole. . . . But the most gorgeous are the intensive colors that you cannot describe. A drive along the ocean during the sunset is one of the most extraordinary impressions that my rather nonchalant eyes have ever had. . . . The southern architecture and the limited advertising have created a kind of *Kulturlandschaft* [cultured landscape]: one has the impression that the world here is populated by some human-like creatures and not only by gasoline stations and hot dogs. (*Briefe an die Eltern*: 107–8)

Both Adorno and Horkheimer settled on the Westside, Horkheimer in a bungalow at 13524 D'este Drive in Pacific Palisades and Adorno in a du-

plex at 316 South Kenter Avenue in Brentwood. For financial reasons Adorno preferred a rented apartment that was large enough for his library and a grand piano, while Horkheimer had the funds to build a new house that also had room for his friend Friedrich Pollock, a member of the Institute for Social Research who lived in Los Angeles until 1942 and to whom the mimeographed version of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was dedicated in 1944 (Wiggershaus 312). Horkheimer described his daily routine during that time in a letter of August 12, 1942, to theologian Paul Tillich, a colleague from the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University in Frankfurt, who had also been exiled to New York in 1933:

My life runs quite a regular course. In the morning, I take a short walk with Pollock, after which I write notes and drafts for a fairly methodical study; in the afternoons I usually see Teddie [Adorno] to decide on the final text with him. . . . The evenings belong to Pollock. . . . In between, there are seminars and business to do with practical questions involving the Institute. For nearly two months now I have been able to say that we are working on the real text. . . . There is already an imposing series of preliminary notes, but the final formulation of them will take years. This is due partly to the objective difficulties of the task of producing a formulation of dialectic philosophy which will take account of the experience of recent decades, and partly to our lack of routine, the cumbersomeness of thinking, and the lack of clarity on important points which we are still laboring under. (*Gesammelte Schriften* 17: 313)

Other members of the institute who came to Los Angeles included Leo Löwenthal, who was credited in the introduction of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* for his contributions to the chapter on anti-Semitism; Herbert Marcuse, who was likewise credited for parts of the book; and Friedrich Pollock, but all three left for Washington, D.C., when they were offered employment by government agencies that were involved in the war effort, such as the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the case of Löwenthal and Marcuse and the Department of Justice in Pollock's case. According to Horkheimer's plan, Marcuse was supposed to set up an office of the institute in Santa Monica and to participate in the book on dialectics, but these plans were abandoned when Marcuse accepted the job offer from the OWI in 1942. Although Horkheimer benefited from the theoretical work of the other members of the Institute for Social Research, he was also somewhat relieved when they accepted jobs with the U.S. government, because the institute's funds were running low and some of the members' salaries had to be cut.

Horkheimer was the director of the Institute for Social Research, which was founded in 1923 in Frankfurt/Main and ten years later

moved into exile, first to Geneva, then to Paris, and finally, in 1936, to New York, where it was affiliated with Columbia University. With Horkheimer's move to California the institute's activity shifted to the West Coast, although the Los Angeles office was considered only a branch office until the New York office closed in 1944. In Paris and then later in New York, the institute issued the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, continued in English as *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, which published seminal articles by members of the institute between 1933 and 1941. Martin Jay and Rolf Wiggershaus have written comprehensive histories of the institute.

It is important to note that Horkheimer tried to imitate the New York office and affiliate the Los Angeles office with a local university. It was his plan to establish a branch (*Zweigstelle*) at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1940, but the proposal was turned down by Robert G. Sproul, the president of the University of California, because the institute was not prepared to submit its appointments and promotions to peer review, as was required for faculty members of the University of California. The institute had planned to appoint Horkheimer as director of research and Herbert Marcuse as his assistant. They were prepared to lecture and conduct seminars on eighteenth-century philosophy, German and other European philosophy from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present, the history of sociology since August Comte, and the history of ideas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The institute was willing to contribute \$8,000 annually in support of this venture, but the university was not persuaded by the financial offer ("Memorandum"). In 1949, both Adorno and Horkheimer returned to West Germany, convinced that they "would be able to achieve more there than elsewhere" (DE xii). They reestablished at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University in Frankfurt/Main the Institute for Social Research, which played a decisive role in the intellectual and political culture of the Federal Republic of Germany, even after Adorno and Horkheimer had died. The term "Frankfurt School" was first used to refer to members of the institute by outsiders in the 1960s, but the group's founders and spokesmen adopted the label without hesitation. In Germany it is customary to speak of a first and second generation of the Frankfurt School (Wiggershaus 1). Jürgen Habermas, Adorno's most distinguished student in West Germany, belonged to the second generation and continued the tradition of the Frankfurt School long after Adorno had died, and even when Habermas was no longer associated with the Goethe University. In the United States, the most common way of referring to the Frankfurt

FIGURE 3. Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt/Main during the early 1930s. Photograph courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main, Archivzentrum, Max Horkheimer-Archiv.

School was to use the term “critical theory,” because much of the group’s work was done in exile and not in Frankfurt (Kellner 1).

It is my argument that *Dialectic of Enlightenment* provides a comprehensive assessment and analysis of modernism and its crisis during the 1940s. Since it is not limited to the discussion of aesthetics or art—although they form an important part of the modernist project—it has universal appeal and relevance, as indicated by the chapter “Elements of Anti-Semitism.” It has been argued that Adorno and Horkheimer were not really familiar with American culture and treated most subjects with an obvious European bias, but this element of alienation served to explain the specific exile situation in Los Angeles to a degree that they themselves may not have been aware of. As foreigners they suffered from displacement, and their alienation, also inherent in modernism, required a new and philosophical response. It was not simply that they rejected modern America, but that they needed to reject it in order to identify and analyze the crisis of high culture. As Peter Uwe Hohendahl has persuasively argued, Adorno was aware of the problematic position of modernism before he came to the United States and “was therefore critical of

a position that would identify 'bad' mass culture with America and 'good' high culture with Europe." The difference between Europe and America was the greater extent of "the systematic transformation of literature and the arts under the impact of monopoly capitalism" in the United States, but it was a difference only by degrees (Hohendahl 22). As Adorno says in his autobiographical essay about his experiences as a European scholar in America, he resisted adjustment and socialization not out of arrogance, as was sometimes suspected, but as a methodology of research. He did not want to perceive American phenomena as obvious, as Americans typically did, but rather wanted to "alienate" these phenomena so that they might reveal elements essential to them that were hidden to the American observers. Adorno admitted that he was indebted to Brecht for his use of the term "alienation" ("Scientific Experiences" 217). He also could have referred to Brecht's "Refugee Conversations" of 1940, in which the playwright says that "emigration is the best school of dialectics. Refugees are the sharpest dialectic thinkers. They are refugees as a result of changes and their sole object of study is change" (GBA 18: 264). This describes exactly the position that Adorno and Horkheimer took when writing *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Adorno says that in the United States he was "liberated from a naïve belief in culture, [and] acquired the ability to see culture from outside." There was not the "reverential silence [that] reigned before everything intellectual as it [did] in Central and Western Europe far beyond the so-called cultivated classes." The absence of this respect induced in Adorno "the spirit to critical self-reflection." A few pages later he alluded to Hegel as the master dialectician who had emphasized that "speculative thinking is not distinct from so-called healthy common sense [*gesunder Menschenverstand*] but rather essentially consisted in its critical self-reflection and self-scrutiny" ("Scientific Experiences" 239-42).

It is important to emphasize that Adorno and Horkheimer did not believe that German high culture was destroyed by the Nazis in 1933, but rather that its destruction was a long process that had begun already during the 1920s. Therefore, they did not expect German culture simply to be restored after World War II, but instead expected it to be reconfigured in terms of American mass culture (Hohendahl 33). Modernism was not immune to German fascism. On the contrary, fascism had developed its own modernism, and left-wing modernism had adopted some of the stylistic features and topoi of fascist modernism, as Adorno and Horkheimer did not hesitate to show in regard to Alfred Döblin, a fellow exile in Los Angeles. The protagonist of Döblin's famous novel

*Berlin Alexanderplatz* was compared to desperate characters in mediocre films (DE 123). The year 1933 marked only the date of the final split between right-wing, left-wing, and central modernism that was effected by the external force applied by German fascism, and even that split was not clean, as the examples of Brecht and Werfel showed.

When Adorno and Horkheimer announced their project—namely, the presentation of their momentous discovery that “humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism,” in the preface of their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (xiv)—in 1944, they were looking back at a learning process of more than ten years. This insight, which had the ring of a similar declaration by Friedrich Schiller in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* of 1795, dated back to the 1930s. Although it was the French Revolution that served as a sobering influence on Schiller, it was the experience of the collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise to power of the Nazi party that shaped Adorno and Horkheimer’s assessment of modern culture and its development. Realizing that the conditions of Nazism were already present in the Weimar Republic of the 1920s, Adorno and Horkheimer came to the conclusion that enlightenment always contained the seeds of its own destruction or reversion to mythology, or irrationality, unless it reflected on this “regressive moment” (DE xvi).

Although they acknowledged the presence of the individual self and were convinced that “freedom in society is inseparable from enlightenment thinking,” Adorno and Horkheimer nevertheless believed that this very notion, “no less than the concrete historical forms, the institutions of society with which it is intertwined,” already contained “the germ of regression” (DE xvi). They saw this regression as universally apparent not only in the 1920s and 1930s, but also in the 1940s, and not only in Central Europe, but also in the United States. Since their argument was not strictly historical, but instead based on structures, patterns, and process, they could claim that the threat of fascism existed also in the United States (Hohendahl 34). Although in fact the United States was involved in a war against fascism as of December 1941, Adorno and Horkheimer were eager to point out similarities in the forms of mass control and mass entertainment used in Nazi Germany and the United States. In this context, fascist Germany appeared as “the alternative version of modernity” (Hohendahl 34). As Hohendahl explains, “For Adorno and Horkheimer, an analysis of the American society included, explicitly and implicitly, an analysis of modern Germany, since they saw both the political system of the National Socialists and the organization

of culture in North America as aspects of the same historical dialectical of reason” (34). While Adorno and Horkheimer admitted that the increase in economic productivity had furnished “the conditions for a more just world,” they saw the individual “entirely nullified in face of the economic powers.” Even if the economic apparatus provided better for individuals than ever before, they vanished “before the apparatus they serve[d]” (DE xvii).

Adorno and Horkheimer considered the “disenchantment of the world” the legacy of the Enlightenment. They employed Max Weber’s famous formulation to explain the Enlightenment in terms of the dissolution of myths and the overthrow of “fantasy with knowledge” (DE 1). They saw this phenomenon initiated by Francis Bacon (1561–1626), the father of modern science. Although Bacon was credited with the inspiration behind the Royal Society, established in 1660, and figured as founder of the inductive method in modern science, he emerges as a less favorable figure in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Here he appears as a promoter of preindustrial capitalism that used scientific knowledge and method in order to reduce nature to a resource for economic production. Using Bacon as their prime example, Adorno and Horkheimer explain the Weberian “disenchantment of the world” as a result of the scientific dominion over nature. While for Max Weber the “disenchantment of the world” is a general tendency toward rationalization in all areas of human endeavor, Adorno and Horkheimer reduce it to the impact of science on society. Adorno and Horkheimer show Bacon to have introduced science as a tool for the economic exploitation of nature in his “Praise of Human Knowledge.” Quoting from his works, they expose his program, pointing out that Bacon had singled out the printing press, artillery, and the compass as the three things that changed the world: the first in the domain of learning, the second in the domain of war, the third in the domain of treasure, commodities, and navigation. Bacon believed that knowledge made man “the master of nature” and that kings could not buy knowledge “with their treasure, nor with their force command” (DE 1). This proud pronouncement was met with total disagreement by Adorno and Horkheimer, who had the benefit of historical hindsight in concluding that, for the modern period, “knowledge, which is power, knows no limits, either in its enslavement of creation or in its deference to worldly masters. Just as it serves all the purposes of the bourgeois economy both in factories and on the battlefield, it is at the disposal of entrepreneurs regardless of their origins” (DE 2).

The mechanical methods that evolved during the seventeenth century

turned into the technology of the twentieth century, which was branded in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as “the essence of [modern] knowledge.” Adorno and Horkheimer perceived modern technology as disregarding original thinking and producing only “method, the exploitation of the labor of others, [and] capital” instead (DE 2). It was not difficult for them to see “the radio as a sublimated printing press, the dive bomber as a more effective form of artillery, remote control as a more reliable compass.” They perceived as the goal of science that human beings “seek to learn from nature . . . how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings” (DE 2).

The next step of their argument was that “human beings have discarded meaning” in the process of rationalization: “on their way toward modern science, . . . the concept is replaced by the formula, the cause by rules and probability” (DE 3). By limiting the process of rationalization to the progress of modern science, Adorno and Horkheimer assigned all other categories, such as substance and quality, activity and suffering, and being and existence, to philosophy and claimed that “science could manage without such categories” (DE 3). It was science that subjected everything to “the standard rule of calculability and utility” (DE 3). By identifying the Enlightenment with modern science and its application in the form of technology, Adorno and Horkheimer concluded that the Enlightenment recognized as “an existent [*Sein*] or an event [*Geschehen*] only what can be encompassed by unity [*Einheit*],” and declared that “its ideal is the system from which everything and anything follows” (DE 4). With this conclusion they placed Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, for example, exclusively in the realm of science and pronounced “the multiplicity of forms . . . reduced to position and arrangement, history [diminished] to fact, things [changed] to matter” (DE 4). In their attacks formal logic was singled out as “the high school of unification” that “offered Enlightenment thinkers a schema for making the world calculable” (DE 4). Declaring that “number became enlightenment’s canon,” they resorted to Marxist arguments when they included in this discussion an argument that bourgeois society was “ruled by equivalence.” According to Adorno and Horkheimer, equivalence “makes dissimilar things comparable by reducing them to abstract quantities. For the Enlightenment, anything which cannot be resolved into numbers, and ultimately into one, is illusion” (DE 4). It is ironic that this attack was extended to a polemical dig against analytic philosophy, whose major proponent, Bertrand Russell, they mentioned by name. It could not have escaped them that Russell had taught at UCLA during 1939–40 and was denied a teaching position

at the College of the City of New York in 1941 because of his controversial ideas on marriage and family. Russell could have been recruited as a political ally—John Dewey published a book in his defense (*The Bertrand Russell Case*)—but Adorno and Horkheimer included him in their condemnation of analytic philosophy, which—in addition to pragmatism—dominated American philosophy.

Dealing with myth, the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* again relied heavily on Max Weber's essays on the sociology of religion, substituting enlightenment for his principle of rationalization in the process of disenchantment. Although Weber was ambivalent about rationalization, Adorno and Horkheimer were not. They saw myths as not only falling victim to the Enlightenment, but also emerging as products of the Enlightenment. Myths also offered explanations, and that tendency "was reinforced by the recording and collecting of myths" (DE 5). In their opinion, the myths that the masters of Greek tragedy employed for their works were already characterized by the structures of discipline and power that became characteristic for modern science associated with Francis Bacon: "The local spirits and demons had been replaced by heaven and its hierarchy, the incantatory practices of the magicians by the carefully graduated sacrifice and the labor of enslaved men mediated by command" (DE 5). The end result was myth being turned into enlightenment, and the mystery of nature that myth was supposed to maintain being turned "into mere objectivity" (DE 6). Men had to pay a price for this increase of their power, and that price was alienation from nature, over which they exercised their power. The result was that enlightenment stood "in the same relationship to things as the dictator to human beings. He knows them to the extent that he can manipulate them. The man of science knows things to the extent that he can make them" (DE 6).

One of the unique arguments of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was the dialectical alignment of myth and enlightenment in a common process in which myth turned into enlightenment, which, "with ineluctable necessity subjected every theoretical view . . . to the annihilating criticism that it is only a belief" (DE 7). While "myths already entail enlightenment, with every step enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology" (DE 8). Or, as they announced in the preface of 1944, "myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology" (DE xviii).

In his book *A Singular Modernity*, Fredric Jameson identifies this process as the model of modernist innovation: "Each supposed advance

in knowledge and science is grasped as a kind of defamiliarization which relegates the previous moment of rationality to the status of a superstition." He argues that this perspective grounded the "telos of modernist innovation in a far more satisfactory and intelligible process." Each generation feels limited by some artificial conventions, "which it is challenged to replace." What looked like the progressive discovery of new territory "is now seen to be a perpetual process of unnamng and refiguration which has no foreseeable stopping point" (157).

Although Jameson gave this model a positive spin, for Adorno and Horkheimer this process was negative because it was governed by instrumental reason and mythology dominated society as a belief system that, unlike myth, defied explanation. They reinterpreted Hegel's concept of the movement of thought through the ages as a negative process by defining enlightenment as "totalitarian" (DE 4, 18). There was no return to the old forms of myths in harmony of nature, but rather compliance with an enlightenment that highlighted only the negative side of myths.

There was no space reserved for reason to escape this mechanism of domination by either enlightenment or mythology, except for the last sentence of the chapter on anti-Semitism, in which the authors express the hope that "enlightenment could break through the limits of enlightenment" (DE 172). As J. M. Bernstein argues in his analysis, Enlightenment reason turned out to be "disenchanted, rationalizing, and universalizing," and, therefore, negative. He attributed this fact to Adorno and Horkheimer's failure to account for the conditions of reason in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno 134).

What was different during the time of myth was equalized by enlightenment, but "the identity of everything with everything else [was] paid for" with the loss of individual identity: "Enlightenment dissolves away the injustice of the old inequality of unmediated mastery, but at the same time perpetuates it in universal mediation, by relating every existing thing to every other" (DE 8). In a demonstration of the dialectic of enlightenment, Adorno and Horkheimer show that equality led to social control: "The unity of the manipulated collective consists in the negation of each individual and in the scorn poured on the type of society which could make people into individuals. The horde, a term which doubtless is to be found in the Hitler Youth organization, is not a relapse into the old barbarism but the triumph of repressive *égalité*, the degeneration of the equality of rights into the wrong inflicted by equals" (DE 9). The authors could have pointed to equality as a questionable achievement of the French Revolution, as Horkheimer did in his essay "The Jews and Eu-

rope” of 1939, in which he made the French Revolution a forerunner of the Nazi regime, but in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* the authors preferred a more contemporary analogy to make the point that such qualitative changes were typical in the course of European civilization.

Their special distrust focuses on abstraction as “the instrument of enlightenment.” They ascribe to abstraction the type of power that fate possessed during mythic time, and they expect abstraction to act like fate by destroying its objects (DE 9). In the modern era the individual is subjected to the domination of abstraction and of industry. They perceive the distance between subject and object as “presupposition of abstraction” as a reflection of the distance that the master keeps from those whom he masters. Domination in the conceptual sphere is based on the foundation of power in reality. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that “the self which learned about order and subordination through the subjugation of the world soon equated truth in general with classifying thought, without whose fixed distinctions it [truth] cannot exist” (DE 10). Horkheimer and Adorno consider even the deductive form of science the reflection of hierarchy and compulsion: “the entire logical order, with its chain of inference and dependence, the superordination and coordination of concepts, [was] founded on the corresponding conditions in social reality, that is, on the division of labor” (DE 16). This socioeconomic approach to abstraction and logic make the individual subject to a kind of power that appears to be universal. Its universality renders power as “the reason which informs reality” (DE 16): “The power of all the members of society, to whom as individuals no other way is open, is constantly summated, through the division of labor imposed on them, in the realization of the whole, whose rationality is thereby multiplied over again” (DE 16).

According to their sociological analysis, the domination of all members by the privileged few always takes “the form of the subduing of individuals by the many.” In their opinion, social repression always exhibits “the features of oppression by a collective.” They see “this unity of the collectivity and power, and not the immediate social universal, solidarity, which is precipitated in intellectual forms” (DE 16). In light of these conclusions, they could expose the philosophical concepts with which Plato and Aristotle represented the world as merely a reflection of their society and explain that the Greek philosophers only elevated the conditions that substantiated their society to the level of true reality by the claim of universal validity. Quoting Giambattista Vico, who said that the concepts of Greek philosophy originated in the marketplace of

Athens, they elaborate that these concepts reflected “with the same fidelity the laws of physics, the equality of freeborn citizens, and the inferiority of women, children and slaves.” Language was seen as complicit with domination:

Language itself endowed what it expressed, the conditions of domination, with the universality it had acquired as the means of intercourse in civil society. The metaphysical emphasis, the sanction by ideas and norms, was no more than hypostatization of the rigidity and exclusivity which concepts have necessarily taken on wherever language has consolidated the community of the rulers for the enforcement of commands. (DE 16–17)

As a result, ideas became all the more superfluous because they served only as a means of reinforcing the social power of language, and the language of modern science finally put an end to ideas. Adorno and Horkheimer criticize especially the neutrality of the language of science, which serves only to camouflage power relationships. Anything new but powerless is deprived of its appropriate means of expression, while existing power relationships are expressed in a language that pretends to be impartial but actually confirms the power structure in place.

Adorno and Horkheimer attribute the specific untruth of the Enlightenment to the fact that the process was always prejudged from the start. This was a criticism of the mathematical approach in the sciences. They argue that in mathematical procedure, “when the unknown becomes the unknown quantity in an equation,” this marks it as something well known “before any value has been assigned” (DE 18). In the tradition of Goethe’s scientific aversion toward Newton, they deduce from the procedures of mathematical equations that “Nature . . . is what can be registered mathematically; even what cannot be assimilated, the insoluble and irrational, is fenced in by mathematical theorems. In the preemptive identification of the thoroughly mathematized world with truth, enlightenment believes itself safe from the return of the mythical. It equates thought with mathematics” (DE 18). Adorno and Horkheimer jump to the conclusion that mathematics has been made the ultimate authority in the scientific exploration of nature. Quoting Edmund Husserl, they refer to “Galileo’s mathematization of nature” and argue that thinking has been degraded to “an automatic process” that imitates the machine, which thinking produced so that the machine could ultimately replace it. Their conclusion was that “Enlightenment pushed aside the classic demand to ‘think thinking,’ . . . because it distracted philosophers from the command to control praxis. . . . Mathematical procedure be-

came a kind of ritual of thought. Despite its axiomatic self-limitation, it installed itself as necessary and objective: mathematics turned into a thing—a tool, to use its own term” (DE 19).

Horkheimer employs the negative concept of “instrumental reason” that dominated his later philosophy for the first time in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—although the German text has “*Werkzeug*” (tool) and not yet “*Instrument*”—as a wholesale attack on analytic philosophy. Instrumental reasoning was characterized as a kind of mimesis that identified universal thought with the world and turned factuality into the unique object of thinking. With a sarcastic reference to positivism as “the court of judgment of enlightened reason,” the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* explained that positivism did not deal with atheism because digressions into intelligible worlds were no longer merely forbidden on procedural grounds, but constituted meaningless chatter: “[Positivism] does not need to be atheistic, since objectified thought cannot even pose the question of the existence of God” (DE 19). The business of thought was adjusting actuality, or, in another favorite phrase, mastery of nature. Anything else was declared metaphysical and therefore meaningless, even atheistic.

These arguments also include a criticism of Kant, who had declared in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that there was no form of being that science could not penetrate, but what could be penetrated by reason was not being: “Philosophic judgment . . . aims at the new yet it recognizes nothing new, since it always merely repeats what reason has placed into the objects beforehand” (DE 19–20). Adorno and Horkheimer perceive the defeat of the thinking subject as a backlash against this Kantian philosophy as it constituted itself as “world domination over nature.” Nothing was left of the thinking subject but that eternally same “*I think*” that must accompany all his ideas. Adorno and Horkheimer charge that the claim and approach of philosophical cognition was abandoned by Kant. Their goal was to comprehend the given conditions and their underlying causes as such. It was not enough to determine the abstract spatio-temporal relations of the facts in order to grasp them, but, on the contrary, to conceive them as superficial surface phenomena, as mediated conceptual moments that revealed their full meaning only in the development of their social, historical, and human significance. They argue that knowledge does not consist of mere apprehension, classification, and calculation, “but precisely in the determining negation of whatever is directly at hand [*in der bestimmenden Negation des Unmittelbaren*]” (DE 20). In other words, the goal was to negate the surface phenomena

as they occurred or presented themselves and to inquire into their causes and conditions. This “determining negation of whatever is directly at hand” constitutes the core of the critical theory developed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The authors charge that mathematical formalism, whose medium is numbers—the most abstract form of the immediate—limits thinking to mere immediacy. They concede that factuality is winning the day, arguing that cognition is restricted to its repetition, and therefore thought has become mere tautology. Their conclusion is that “the more completely the machinery of thought subjugates existence, the more blindly it is satisfied with reproducing it.” Their final verdict is that “enlightenment thereby regresses to the mythology it has never been able to escape” (DE 20).

According to Adorno and Horkheimer, mythology confirms the status quo. For philosophy this implies that the world is nothing but “a gigantic analytic judgment” (DE 20). As mythology tends to legitimize factuality—as, for example, the abduction of Persephone in Greek mythology explains the cycle of spring and autumn—it also exercises deception. Likewise, the absorption of factuality into mathematical formalism is a deception since it makes “the new appear as something predetermined which therefore is really the old” (DE 21). Not existence itself but knowledge is without hope for true renewal, since in the mathematical symbol existence is appropriated and perpetuated as a schema. That the production of human existence follows a predetermined schema is the enormous deception perpetrated upon mankind according to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. This deception was instituted in order to prevent change and innovation, not to speak of revolution.

Adorno and Horkheimer see mythology as permeating the sphere of the profane in the modern world. Reality appears to have assumed the numinous character that the ancient world had attributed to demons. Presented as facts of life, the social injustice from which those facts arise is now sacrosanct, “as the medicine man once was under the protection of his gods” (DE 21). The return to Marxist terminology is camouflaged by the anthropological context when the authors say that not only is domination accepted and “paid for with the estrangement of human beings from the dominated objects,” but it also effects “the objectification of mind” and causes “the relationships of human beings, including the relationship of individuals to themselves, [to become] bewitched” (DE 21). The individual is reduced to conventional responses and modes of operation that are expected of him. Industrialism is listed as the cause for the objectification of the souls of men. Here the argument turns exclu-

sively Marxist; the authors say that “with the ending of free exchange, commodities have forfeited all economic qualities except their fetish character, [and] this character has spread like a cataract across the life of society in all its aspects” (DE 21).

With this reference to mass production, the economic argument is turned into a cultural one. The culture of mass production impresses upon the individual a certain number of standardized modes of behavior “as the only natural, decent, and rational ones” (DE 21). Accordingly, individuals define themselves as things, as figures of statistics, “as successes or failures.” Their goal is self-preservation, defined as “successful or unsuccessful adaptation to the objectivity of their function and the schemata assigned to it” (DE 21 f.). Everything else, from individual thought to personal crime, is subject to the force of the collective that monitors conduct “from the classroom to the trade union.” But even the threatening collective is perceived as only the deceptive surface, under which there are concealed mysterious powers that manipulate the collective as the instrument of power. The brutality that the collective employs to discipline the individual is said to represent “no more the true quality of people than value represents that of commodities” (DE 22). Again, the distorted form that things and men have assumed in the light of so-called unprejudiced cognition is attributed to domination. The fatalism by means of which prehistory sanctioned the incomprehensibility of death is transferred to wholly comprehensible real existence in the modern world. Adorno and Horkheimer do not perceive the modern world as a world without fear due to the rule of reason. On the contrary, they conclude that men are dominated by panic, as they were in prehistory, and that they expect the world “to be set ablaze by a universal power which they themselves [constitute] and over which they are powerless” (DE 22). No doubt, this insight was influenced by the war against Germany and Japan.

Rather than dealing with class struggle, Adorno and Horkheimer concentrate on the division of labor, which results in alienation. In their discussion of the self, they perceive the social work of every individual in bourgeois society as mediated through the principle of self. For one group, labor is supposed to bring an increased return on capital, for another, the energy for extra labor. Their special warning is directed against alienation that they attribute to the bourgeois division of labor: individuals “must mold themselves to the technical apparatus body and soul” (DE 23). Individual thinking is abandoned as being too subjective. Again, analytic philosophy is identified as the culprit and blamed for

having removed the last agency differentiating between individual behavior and the social norm:

Reason serves as a universal tool for the fabrication of all other tools, rigidly purpose-directed and as calamitous as the precisely calculated operations of material production, the results of which for human beings escape all calculation. Reason's old ambition to be purely an instrument of purposes has finally been fulfilled. (DE 23)

Academic philosophy is blamed for the ills of bourgeois society, as indicated by their statement that "the expulsion of thought from logic ratifies in the lecture hall the reification of human beings in factory and office" (DE 23). The process that they analyze is a prime example of the dialectic they want to elucidate: "Enlightenment [encroaches] on mind, which it itself is" (DE 23).

This analysis also provides an insight into the dehumanizing effect of the dialectic of enlightenment. Nature as self-preservation is unleashed "by the process which promised to extirpate it," manifesting itself "in the individual as in the collective fate of crisis and war" (DE 23). Adorno and Horkheimer promote interdisciplinarity, because they consider specialized research an abandonment of reason to instrumental logic. They express the fear that in a society of theoretical specialists, "praxis must be handed over to the unfettered operations of world history" (DE 24). For the sake of self-preservation, the individual defined in terms of civilization resorts to an element of the inhumanity that from the beginning civilization aspired to evade. Adorno and Horkheimer predict that a time will come when self-preservation is automated and reason is abandoned by those who, as administrators of production, profit from its inheritance and now "fear it in the disinherited" (DE 25). Their vision of the future is painted in dark colors: "The essence of the enlightenment is the choice between alternatives, and the inescapability of this choice is that of power. Human beings have always had to choose between their subjugation to nature and its subjugation to the self" (DE 25). Again and again, they repeat their gloomy predictions that "the curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression" (DE 28) and that "enlightenment forfeited its own realization" (DE 33). In the end, they claim "enlightenment is as destructive as its Romantic enemies claim" (DE 33). They do not preclude the chance that enlightenment might come into its own, but that will happen only if it surrenders its last remaining agreement with Romanticism and dares "to abolish the false absolute, the principle of blind power." They predict that "the spirit of such unyielding theory

would be able to turn back from its goal even the spirit of pitiless progress" (DE 33).

Referring to Francis Bacon as the herald of a new age that introduced modern science as one of the things "that kings with their treasures could not buy nor with their force command," Adorno and Horkheimer identify the modern bourgeoisie as the enlightened heirs of those kings. Not only do they see its power multiplied by the bourgeois economy through the mediation of the market, but they also consider this power extended to such a degree that for its administration it needs the involvement not just of kings, nor the middle class, but of all men. With this democratic turn, an optimistic tone is introduced, a tone that is carried through to the end of the first chapter with the exception of the last sentence. All human beings finally learn "from the power of things . . . to forgo power" (DE 33). There is no reason given for this optimism:

Enlightenment consummates and abolishes itself when the closest practical objectives reveal themselves to the most distant goal already attained. . . . Today, when Bacon's utopia, in which "we should command nature in action," has been fulfilled on a telluric scale, the essence of the compulsion which he ascribed to unmastered nature is becoming apparent. Knowledge, in which, for Bacon, "the sovereignty of man" unquestionably lay hidden, can now devote itself to dissolving that power. (DE 33-34)

This optimism, however, is dampened by the final sentence, which claims that enlightenment, "in the service of the present, is turning itself into an outright deception of the masses" (DE 34).

Adorno and Horkheimer appended two lengthy expositions of their main points, "Excursus I: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment" and "Excursus II: Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality." They had made the case for Odysseus in the introductory chapter, "The Concept of Enlightenment," and needed only to elaborate on their previous interpretation of the Homeric hero as "the prototype of the bourgeois individual" (DE 35). The second chapter on de Sade, however, introduces a new idea that begins with a discussion of Kant's ethics and also relies heavily on Nietzsche's discussions of morality. The chapter begins with a discussion of Kant's classical definition of enlightenment as "the human being's emergence from self-incurred immaturity." They elaborate that Kant's statement that "understanding without the guidance of another person" refers to "understanding guided by reason" (DE 63). But as Kant had failed to derive morality from reason and had to take recourse to treating "moral forces as facts" (DE 67), he identified a dilemma that

he had already posed in his *Critique of Pure Reason* and was reconfirmed later by Nietzsche in his *Genealogy of Morals*, namely, that morality cannot be explained in terms of reason. Kant needed the categorical imperative in order to institute his concept of morality. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that fascism and its treatment of people were in a perverse way more in accord with pure reason than the moral teachings of the Enlightenment because the latter were based on claims of reason that could not be substantiated. To illustrate their point, they draw on the shock value of the work of the Marquis de Sade. They declare that his novels were actually a portrayal of Kant's "understanding without the guidance of another person." Sade's protagonist, Juliette in *Histoire de Juliette* of 1797, proceeded rationally and efficiently as she went about her work of perversion: "In the sexual teams of *Juliette* . . . no moment [was] unused, no body orifice neglected, no function left inactive" (DE 69). Adorno and Horkheimer do not hesitate to compare the architectonic structure of the Kantian system to the gymnastic pyramids of Sade's orgies that prefigured "the organization, devoid of any substantial goal, which was to compass the whole of life. What seems to matter in such events, more than pleasure itself, is the busy pursuit of pleasure, its organization" (DE 69). For them, Juliette epitomizes the supreme attack on civilization with its own weapons: "She loves systems and logic. She wields the instrument of rational thought with consummate skill" (DE 74). In regard to self-control, Juliette's directions were related to Kant's as she preached on the self-discipline of the criminal. Juliette believed in science and declared each of the Ten Commandments null and void before the tribunal of formal reason (DE 76, 91). For her, reason displaced all love (DE 91).

Adorno and Horkheimer praise de Sade and Nietzsche for the fact that they did not gloss over or suppress "the impossibility of deriving from reason a fundamental argument against murder" (DE 93). This pessimistic assessment ends, however, on an unexpectedly positive note, changing despair into its dialectic opposite. The fact that de Sade and Nietzsche insisted on reason serves Adorno and Horkheimer as an argument for invoking the secret utopia, contained in the Kantian notion of reason as in every great philosophy: "the utopia of humanity which, itself no longer distorted, no longer needs distortion" (DE 93).

It was not surprising that Adorno and Horkheimer placed the chapter "Elements of Anti-Semitism" last in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, because Jewish emancipation had been one of the greatest promises of the Enlightenment and was now in gravest jeopardy. However, this chapter,

which was supposed to explicate the main points of “a philosophical pre-history of anti-Semitism” (DE xix), is the least convincing. Although the chapter fails to demonstrate that anti-Semitism was central to the dialectic of the Enlightenment project, it points to a problem of modernism and its dealings with anti-Semitism. Neither Brecht nor Döblin made anti-Semitism a central topic of their works during the 1940s, but Lion Feuchtwanger did, as did Thomas Mann, although to a degree his treatment of the subject was quite problematic. Franz Werfel and Arnold Schoenberg made it a central topic of some of their works.

Adorno and Horkheimer offer seven competing theses for their analysis of anti-Semitism in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Their presentation of these theses without indicating their preference for one or arranging them according to a hierarchy of validity makes this chapter less than satisfying. For the fascists, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, the Jews were “the antirace, the negative principle as such” (DE 137). This view inevitably led to the extermination of the Jews to secure a fascist world order and world domination. Although this thesis about German fascism was true to the extent that in Germany fascism had branded Jews as absolute evil and intended to annihilate them as such, it did not require an extensive explanation. The issue was different in the case of the liberal point of view that denied the existence of a Jewish national identity. As the authors state, the liberal theory considered the Jews “free of national or racial features,” but that they “simply form a group through religious belief and tradition and nothing else” (DE 137). Adorno and Horkheimer were among the first to state that assimilation was the heavy price paid by Jews for the realization of this theory. Yet the practice of this theory had not saved assimilated Jews from persecution. The harmony of society, in which assimilated Jews believed, had turned against them in “the form of the national community [*Volksgemeinschaft*],” from which by definition they were excluded (DE 138).

The second thesis deals with anti-Semitism as a populist movement. Here the authors consider the various elements that in their opinion had contributed to anti-Semitism as a mass movement, and they dismissed political, economic, and social reasons for its development. Anti-Semitism as a populist movement, they conclude, was based on the urge on the part of the masses “to make everyone the same [*Gleichmacherei*]” (DE 139). In other works, it was founded on the pleasure of watching those more privileged being robbed of all their possessions and seeing them lowered below the level of the underprivileged masses. Anti-Semitism was considered devoid of economic benefit for the masses: anti-

Semitism was “a luxury” for the common people (DE 139). Adorno and Horkheimer point to the so-called “Aryanization” of Jewish property in Nazi Germany and to the pogroms in Czarist Russia, both of which rarely brought any economic benefit to the masses but were obviously advantageous to members of the privileged classes. Only as an outlet for the blind anger of the masses did anti-Semitism appear to serve the social function of a ritual of civilization. Men who were robbed of their individuality in modern society were let loose as individuals to find collective approval of their anger. But since the victims were interchangeable according to circumstances—with gypsies, Jews, Protestants, and Catholics serving equally well as scapegoats—there was no genuine anti-Semitism as a populist movement according to Adorno and Horkheimer. Everything alien that appeared privileged became the target of the destructive impulse of the masses that were unable to fully participate in the process of civilization.

Adorno and Horkheimer point to a specific economic purpose of bourgeois anti-Semitism: “to conceal domination in production” (DE 142). The Jews were made the scapegoat for the economic injustice of the capitalist system, whose development is attributed to them. Anti-Semitism, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, is in one sense the self-hatred of the bourgeoisie projected onto the Jews, who in fact were relatively unimportant economically, since they were mostly confined to the sphere of distribution and did not have access to the means of production. Within the distribution sector, however, they became the visible representatives of the whole system, drawing the hatred of others upon themselves. The masses, disappointed in the economic progress that had been promised to them, turned their fury on the Jews in the mistaken belief that what was denied to them was withheld and controlled by Jewish entrepreneurs.

Religious anti-Semitism is dismissed as nonexistent in the context of fascism. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, “Nationalist anti-Semitism seeks to disregard religion. It claims to be concerned with purity of race and nation. Its exponents notice that people have long ceased to trouble themselves about eternal salvation. . . . To accuse the Jews of being obdurate unbelievers is no longer enough to incite the masses” (DE 144). The authors realize, however, that secularized forms of religion were retained by fascism and proved beneficial to the Nazis: “Religion as an institution is partly meshed directly into the system and partly transposed into the pomp of mass culture and parades” (DE 144).

While the authors clearly note that Christianity has become largely

neutralized, they nevertheless conclude that Christian rationalizations of anti-Semitism are still of considerable influence. As the religion of the "Son," as they put it, Christianity contains an implicit antagonism against Judaism as the religion of the "Father" and against the Jews as its surviving witnesses. This antagonism was exacerbated by the fact that the Jews, clinging to their own religious culture, rejected the religion of the "Son," and by the circumstance that the New Testament blamed them for the death of Christ.

In the fifth of their theses Adorno and Horkheimer introduce the concepts of idiosyncrasy and mimesis. Anti-Semites were wont to use idiosyncrasy to explain their behavior. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the emancipation of society from anti-Semitism depends on whether this particular idiosyncrasy is elevated to a rational concept, that is, whether its meaninglessness is recognized. In order to explain their concept of idiosyncrasy, the authors have to turn to some far-fetched theories pertaining to biological prehistory. According to their definition, idiosyncrasy consists of the escape of single human organs from the control of the subject and of reaction to fundamental biological stimuli. Such behavior is based on mimesis, that is, adaptation to nature in a dangerous situation. Uncontrolled mimesis, however, is condemned in modern civilization. Modern man experiences his mimetic heritage only in certain gestures and behavior patterns that he encounters in others and that strike him as embarrassing rudimentary elements that have survived in his rationalized environment. What seems "to repel them as alien is all too familiar" (DE 149). The allegedly typical Jewish gestures of touch, soothing, snuggling up, or coaxing, for example, are enumerated by Adorno and Horkheimer as examples of mimetic behavior developed to survive old forms of domination. Such behavior arouses anger because it reminds modern man of his old fears that must be suppressed in order to survive. The anti-Semite cannot stand the Jew because he reminds him of his old anxieties that he does not dare to admit. He projects his own fears onto the Jew, who, as victim, becomes the false counterpart of the dread mimesis.

The sixth thesis is a continuation of the fifth. Adorno and Horkheimer link the discussion of mimesis (i.e., adaptation to the environment) to false projection (i.e., adaptation to the environment according to individual perception). Anti-Semitism, the authors conclude, is based on a false projection or repressed mimesis, not true mimesis. For mimesis, "the outward becomes the model to which the inward clings, so that the alien becomes the intimately known." False projection, on the other

hand, confuses the inner and outer world, defining as hostile the most intimate individual experience: “Impulses which are not acknowledged by the subject and yet are his, are attributed to the object: the prospective victim” (DE 154). In psychological terms, this process is known as transference. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, under fascism this behavior pattern was politicized.

To make projection, as well as the manner in which it was deformed into false projection, understandable, the authors employ a rather naïvely realistic physiological theory of perception. This theory explains the perceptual world as the mirror reflection—controlled by the intellect—of data that the brain receives from actual objects. Adorno and Horkheimer maintain that “anti-Semitism is not projective behavior as such but the exclusion of reflection from that behavior” (DE 156). The individual loses the ability to differentiate, he becomes paranoid, and with his false projection he invests the outer world with the contents of his mind and thus perceives the world as being populated by people who, in his opinion, are bent on destroying him. The Jews appear as a “predestined target” for such projection (DE 164). The authors declare that “the person chosen as foe is already perceived as foe” (DE 154).

Quite astoundingly, in the concluding section of the chapter the authors proclaim with great confidence, yet without any objective proof, that “there are no longer any anti-Semites.” Going even beyond this bewildering statement (see Israel 118), they perversely maintain that the German fascists were not anti-Semites, but rather “liberals who wanted to express their antiliberal opinions” (DE 165). Such an aphoristic statement, which contains only a kernel of truth insofar as it points to the decline of liberalism, does not amount to a historical analysis of German anti-Semitism in view of the evidence brought to light by the liberation of the concentration camps—not to speak of the extermination camps—in 1945. It is revealing that the term “concentration camp” is absent from this particular chapter, although it appears in other chapters.

Adorno and Horkheimer become victims of their own theory that fascism is the perversion of enlightenment. Instead of pointing to the policies of the extermination camps or the dangers of the survival of anti-Semitism in postwar Germany, they concentrate their efforts in the last section on detecting potential fascism, including anti-Semitism, in the United States. The seventh and last thesis, added to the chapter in 1947, not only accuses the United States of anti-Semitism, but also places American anti-Semitism on the same level as the Nazi strategy of planned extermination. They consider American anti-Semitism more dangerous

for the future than the German variety. In developing their unique thesis, the authors argue that anti-Semitism has always been based on stereotyped thinking. After the defeat of fascism in Europe, stereotyped thinking was all that remained of the anti-Semitism of the period before 1945. Adorno and Horkheimer regard this type of thinking as especially prevalent in the American political party system. They see anti-Semitism surviving in the United States in the “ticket mentality,” a political behavior characterized by voting the straight ticket of “belligerent big business” (DE 166). The Allied defeat of Hitler’s regime might have eliminated the most obvious forms of anti-Semitism, but the victors had done little to eradicate the causes of anti-Semitism at home. Equating capitalism and fascism in an unhistorical fashion, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that anyone who subscribed to the breaking of the trade unions and the crusade against Bolshevism automatically subscribed also to “the settlement of the Jewish question” (DE 166). As distasteful as reactionary politics may be, such a conclusion was neither historically nor logically true. For Adorno and Horkheimer, anti-Semitism became a coded message in the platform of not only reactionary but also progressive parties, because the progressive parties in America also relied on the “ticket mentality.” Without any dialectic mediation the authors maintain that “it is not just the anti-Semitic ticket which is anti-Semitic, but the ticket mentality itself” (DE 172). Adorno and Horkheimer therefore place their hopes for the eradication of anti-Semitism not on the progressive parties, but on the absolute meaninglessness of the fascist program that could be permanently concealed from the undiscerning population “only by their total abstention from thought” (DE 172). Since this abstention will probably not happen, they place their trust in enlightenment, which had “mastered itself and assumed its own power,” and “could break through the limits of enlightenment” (DE 172).

Later, when the full extent of the German genocide of the Jews became known, Adorno and Horkheimer realized that their trust in the self-criticism of reason was misplaced. They changed their positions and did not allow any ambiguity in their assessments. In 1951 Adorno issued for the first time his often-cited dictum that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” in an essay on cultural criticism and society (“Cultural Criticism and Society,” *Prisms*, 34). This essay did not receive much attention until the publication of “Commitment,” originally published in 1962, but widely read in Adorno’s *Notes to Literature III* in 1965.

It would be naïve to substitute Adorno and Horkheimer’s concept of enlightenment with that of modernism because modernism is only a spe-

cific phase in the history of the Enlightenment and is related—in the narrow sense—almost exclusively to art, literature, and philosophy, while the Enlightenment also includes science as well as economic and political theory. As they describe it, the Enlightenment expressed “the real movement of bourgeois society as a whole from the perspective of the idea embodied in its personalities and institutions” since the end of the seventeenth century (DE xvi). On the other hand, modernism is the movement in art, literature, and philosophy since the beginning of the nineteenth century, or, as other—more limited—definitions have it, since the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The underlying principles are, however, similar. As the Enlightenment, in Adorno and Horkheimer’s words, “has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters” (DE 1), so was modernism in its various forms and expressions directed at a utopian society, even if some utopias may not have corresponded to the demands for a more humane society, as it turned out during the crisis of modernism in the early 1930s.

The most obvious parallels between enlightenment and modernism pertain to the future. Although the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* declare that “the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity” (DE 1), the liberal proponents of modernism had to admit by 1933 that modernism had not kept its promise of more humane conditions. On the contrary, right-wing and leftist strains of modernism were marching in a direction that suggested similar disasters in the near future, as Adorno and Horkheimer had predicted. In this respect, the Enlightenment and modernism had a major concern in common: the “negation of reification” (DE xvii). Borrowed from Karl Marx and Georg Lukács, the term “reification,” which stood for the perversion of social relations and alienation in capitalism, is here used to define the negative that was to be overcome by enlightenment. But that promise was not fulfilled. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, authentic thought cannot survive where it is treated as a cultural commodity and distributed to satisfy consumer demands, as it is in capitalist society. Neither can it survive where it is appropriated by nationalist or racist mythologies or subjected to the needs of dictatorships that rule over disenfranchised masses.

While Horkheimer continued to discuss the philosophical implications of enlightenment in his *Eclipse of Reason* of 1947, Adorno began to specialize in the criticism of high art and aesthetic theory. He relied

on this bourgeois “confidence in art” when he placed the works of the bourgeois canon at the center of his discussions of modernist literature and music in his later essays, *Philosophy of Modern Music* (1949), which was partially written before *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and his *Aesthetic Theory*, published posthumously in 1970.