

# *The Eclipse of Reason and the End of the Frankfurt School in America*

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On May 22, 1947, Leo Lowenthal stepped out of an elevator on the sixth floor of the New York office of Oxford University Press and—as he wrote to Max Horkheimer that night—discovered that “a surprise expected [*sic*] me”: “You remember that there is a showcase next to the entrance door where the Press exhibits their newest publications. There was nothing else in the case but your book. Fourteen copies of it, and an extremely funny astronomical symbolism, showing a sun in its various ecliptical stages.”<sup>1</sup> The book that surprised Lowenthal was *Eclipse of Reason*, a work that—as Horkheimer explained in its preface—was intended “to present in epitome some aspects of a comprehensive philosophical theory developed by the writer during the last few years in association with Theodore [*sic*] W. Adorno.”<sup>2</sup>

Lowenthal reported to Horkheimer that Oxford was “proud and happy with the book because they think it is one of the few serious publications that

1. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, May 22, 1947 (folder 36), Leo Lowenthal Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Unless otherwise indicated, citations of Lowenthal’s correspondence refer to this collection, discussed in n. 24. The 587 letters to Horkheimer dating from 1934 to 1966 are contained in forty-seven folders cataloged as bMS Ger 185 (78). The 684 letters from Horkheimer to Lowenthal are cataloged as bMS Ger 185 (47). I cite the letters by date and folder number and have silently corrected minor errors in spelling and punctuation.

2. Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), vi–vii. Hereafter cited as *ER*.

have come out in this country for a number of years.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, expectations for the book ran high in Horkheimer’s circle during the spring of 1947. Shortly after its publication, Lowenthal wrote Horkheimer that his Columbia University colleagues Robert Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld “are highly excited and studying the book with great passion.”<sup>4</sup> A few months later, Lazarsfeld himself wrote Horkheimer and hailed the book as “a real step forward. . . . The book is written in such a way as to make it understandable to many people and will undoubtedly also influence many readers. As a matter of fact, I, myself, have never so clearly understood before some of your basic ideas.”<sup>5</sup> Such praise would seem to confirm Lowenthal’s initial assessment of the manuscript from a year and a half earlier: “You have achieved a document which, for the first time in the English language, can give an adequate idea about the impression of one philosopher’s voice in the desert of streamlined society of today. Since I believe in the presence of unknown spiritual friends even on this continent, I look forward to the time when people will contradict the smooth critics who see in Ernst Cassirer the non plus ultra of philosophical thinking in this epoch.”<sup>6</sup> On that May morning when Lowenthal stepped from the elevator, it was not unreasonable to hope that Horkheimer’s book might achieve the sort of success with educated readers that Cassirer had recently attained with his posthumously published *Essay on Man* and *Myth of the State*. The ultimate fate of Horkheimer’s book, however, must have been a disappointment. A few reviews appeared—some positive, some negative—and the book soon lapsed into obscurity.

Today *Eclipse of Reason* is viewed as a postscript to the work now seen as the magnum opus of the Frankfurt School’s American exile: *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Rolf Wiggershaus’s treatment in his history of the Frankfurt School is typical: the section dealing with *Eclipse of Reason* carries the title “Horkheimer’s ‘Dialectic of Enlightenment.’”<sup>7</sup> Commentators who have dismissed Horkheimer’s book are in good company: the author himself had misgivings. While drafting the series of public lectures that were the basis for the book, Horkheimer wrote to his lifelong friend and colleague Friedrich Pol-

3. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, May 22, 1947 (folder 36).

4. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, April 19, 1947 (folder 35).

5. Lazarsfeld to Horkheimer, July 19, 1947, in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996), 17:846. Hereafter cited as *GS*. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer’s praise for the book in his letter to Horkheimer of March 15, 1950, in *GS*, 18:122–23.

6. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, January 17, 1946 (folder 29).

7. Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its Histories, Theories, and Political Significance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 344.

lock, wondering whether the results were worth the effort: "Reading a page of these lectures as I now start to dictate them, and comparing it with a page of my own texts, I must say it is almost a crime."<sup>8</sup> Two years later, as he worked to turn the lectures into a finished manuscript, he was still plagued by doubts. He confessed to Pollock, "It is not the English exoteric version of thoughts already formulated which matters, but the development of a positive dialectical doctrine which has not yet been written."<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, this peculiar fruit of the Frankfurt School's American exile repays closer scrutiny. The writing of the book reveals much about the last years of this exile, and a peculiar circumstance enables us to know quite a bit about its genesis. Horkheimer wrote the book in California, but much of the copyediting and preparation of the manuscript took place in New York, under Lowenthal's supervision. Lowenthal preserved much of his correspondence with Horkheimer, including extensive documentation of the writing, revision, publication, and reception of *Eclipse of Reason*. He made this material available to Martin Jay when he was writing *The Dialectical Imagination*, and, after the completion of that book, Jay arranged to have Lowenthal's papers deposited in the Houghton Library at Harvard University.<sup>10</sup>

In recounting the story of the Frankfurt School in America, commentators have rightly given pride of place to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the "message in a bottle" that Horkheimer and Adorno let slip into a world that was hardly aware of its existence.<sup>11</sup> Written in German and daunting in its complexity, this work has come to be seen as epitomizing the experience of this stalwart group of German-Jewish intellectuals who, driven from Germany, remained uncomfortable in America and—while awaiting the day when the madness that had descended upon Europe at last lifted—stubbornly persisted in "speaking a language that is not easily understood."<sup>12</sup> Yet if we look at the closing years of their exile from the perspective opened by Lowenthal's papers,

8. Horkheimer to Pollock, January 7, 1944, in *GS*, 17:539.

9. Horkheimer to Pollock, December 18, 1945, in *GS*, 17:687–88.

10. Jay notes that his "access to the extremely valuable Horkheimer-Lowenthal correspondence was qualified by an understandable reluctance on the part of the correspondents to embarrass people who might still be alive" (*The Dialectical Imagination* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1973], xvii). The terms of the deposit stipulated that the papers would remain restricted until December 31, 1998.

11. On the image of the "message in a bottle" see Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974), 210; and Martin Jay, ed., *An Unmastered Past: The Autobiographical Reflections of Leo Lowenthal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 63, 148, 237.

12. Max Horkheimer, "Art and Mass Culture," in *Critical Theory* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 290.

things appear in a somewhat different light. They remind us of the hopes once placed in this now-forgotten book, published by a prestigious New York press, which attempted to articulate, for an anglophone audience, the philosophical position that animated *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Thus if *Dialectic of Enlightenment* shows us Horkheimer and Adorno at their most uncompromising, *Eclipse of Reason* reveals an attempt, if not to compromise, then at least to find a language that was not so difficult to understand. Here, in other words, was a book intended as something other than a message in a bottle.

### ***Troubled Times on Morningside Heights***

Horkheimer closed the preface to *Eclipse of Reason* with the following words: “Finally, it is to be set down here, as an abiding recognition, that all of my work would have been unthinkable without the material assurance and the intellectual solidarity that I have found in the Institute for Social Research through the last two decades” (*ER*, vii). The acknowledgment would seem as unexceptional as the location and date Horkheimer attached to the preface: “Institute for Social Research (Columbia University), March 1946.” But here, as elsewhere in the record Lowenthal has left us, things turn out to be somewhat more complicated.

Institute for Social Research was the name of the corporate entity that the philanthropist Hermann Weil had established in 1924 at the University of Frankfurt. The institute took an avowedly Marxist perspective on economic and social questions, as did Weil’s son, Felix, who—thanks to his father’s largesse—was able to begin an academic career with the institute. Horkheimer became director in 1931 and, after Hitler seized power, went into exile with his colleagues and reconstituted the institute in 1934 at Columbia. The material assurance to which Horkheimer alluded in the preface had been drawn from the institute’s endowment, which had been moved to accounts outside Germany prior to the collapse of the Weimar Republic and hence remained a source of support for the institute’s associates throughout their exile. Testimony to the “intellectual solidarity” that the institute provided could be found in the rich corpus of work that Horkheimer and his associates produced for the institute’s journal, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, and in the various seminars at its building on Morningside Heights. In Anson Rabinbach’s apt image, the institute was the ark that rescued Horkheimer and his colleagues from the flood that had engulfed Europe.<sup>13</sup>

13. Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 196.

However, by the time Horkheimer wrote his preface, the institute's relationship with Columbia had become so tenuous and its continued existence so questionable that he chose not to list the affiliation in his initial draft. The omission sparked a protest from Felix Weil when he read the page proofs with Horkheimer during a meeting in San Francisco in late October 1946.<sup>14</sup> Weil noted that "even Neumann and Marcuse"—individuals viewed by Horkheimer as peripheral to the institute—had dated their books from the institute, and Horkheimer immediately rectified the omission in a telegram to Lowenthal: "Since Preface dated March could possibly add Columbia University in parenthesis to Institute dateline, but only if really permissible. Otherwise suggest adding New York NY."<sup>15</sup>

The dating of the preface was critical because, in the period between its writing and Horkheimer's revision of the proofs, the institute had severed its ties with Columbia.<sup>16</sup> By the time Horkheimer was making his corrections, he was in contact with officials at the University of California, Los Angeles, in hopes of arranging for an affiliation between that university and the institute.<sup>17</sup> The negotiations, however, were still in limbo, and when *Eclipse of Reason* appeared in the spring of 1947, the institute was unaffiliated. Hence the significance of the preface's dating: it recalled a relationship that no longer existed.

The break with Columbia in the summer of 1946 resolved what had become a rather troubled relationship between the institute and the university. Horkheimer left for California in April 1941, seeking to free himself from his administrative responsibilities so that he could commence work on his long-projected book on "dialectical logic."<sup>18</sup> With Horkheimer's departure, the institute's continued viability became more and more uncertain. The decline of the American stock market had taken its toll on the institute's endowment, and for several years Horkheimer and Pollock had been struggling to cut costs, including reducing stipends for the institute's less central associates and not-so-subtle efforts to persuade them to find other sources of income.<sup>19</sup> Lowenthal reported

14. For a discussion of the meeting see Horkheimer to Lowenthal, November 1, 1946 (folder 30).

15. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, October 28, 1946 (folder 29).

16. See Horkheimer to Frank D. Fackenthal, president of Columbia University, June 12, 1946, in *GS*, 17:736–37.

17. These efforts are discussed in Horkheimer to Lowenthal, November 1, 1946 (folder 30). As late as March 3, 1948 (folder 37), Horkheimer telegraphed Lowenthal that the attitude of the sociology department at UCLA was "very favorable."

18. Horkheimer to Juliette Favez, February 17, 1939, in *GS*, 16:561. For a discussion of his plans for this work see James Schmidt, "Language, Mythology, and Enlightenment: Historical Notes on Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," *Social Research* 65 (1998): 807–38.

19. On this period see Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 291–302.

to Horkheimer that their colleague Franz Neumann doubted not only whether the institute could continue to maintain a presence in New York with Horkheimer in Los Angeles but also whether Horkheimer would ever be able to complete his magnum opus.<sup>20</sup> By January 1942 Horkheimer was contemplating the possibility of putting “our most drastical [*sic*] reduction plans into effect” and by November had settled on what he termed the “two room solution”: the institute would confine its operations to two rooms and lease its remaining New York offices to other tenants. Herbert Marcuse and Neumann would be encouraged to take government positions. If any difficulties were encountered in implementing these plans, “we close down.”<sup>21</sup>

The arrangement freed Horkheimer to pursue his collaboration with Adorno (who had left New York in November 1941) in Los Angeles and pushed Neumann and Marcuse (the latter had initially gone to California to work with Horkheimer but had returned to New York prior to Adorno’s departure for Los Angeles) to peripheral roles in the institute. Pollock divided his time between Washington and New York (along with periodic visits to Los Angeles), though he appeared to Lowenthal to be so pessimistic about the prospects for success of any of the institute’s research initiatives, and so incapable of dealing with other people, that his contribution to running the institute was marginal.<sup>22</sup> Lowenthal was left to run what remained of the New York branch, where his responsibilities included editing the last volumes of the institute’s journal, maintaining contacts between the institute and Columbia, and editing the work that Horkheimer and Adorno had begun to produce in California. He also met with the financial planners retained to provide advice about investing the institute’s shrinking endowment and visited the housing development in which the institute had invested, where he assisted real estate brokers during sales campaigns (the thought that, even today, there may be families living in suburban homes constructed with financing from a Marxist institute is surely one of the more unexpected legacies of the Frankfurt School’s American exile).<sup>23</sup> His most important role, however, was to be

20. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, September 19, 1941 (folder 12); Lowenthal to Horkheimer, May 1, 1941, in *GS*, 17:32.

21. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, January 20, 1942 (folder 9); Horkheimer, summary of telephone conversation with Lowenthal, November 8, 1942 (folder 13).

22. For discussions of Pollock’s difficulties in dealing with other members of the institute see Lowenthal to Horkheimer, September 23, 1941 (folder 13); January 21, 1942 (folder 16); and October 29, 1942 (folder 21).

23. Most of the documentation of the financial side of Lowenthal’s activities is contained in his letters to Pollock, BMS Ger 185 (82). For reports of visits to brokerage firms see the letters in folder 2.

Horkheimer's eyes and ears in New York, and in this capacity he wrote Horkheimer letters almost daily (and sometimes more than one letter a day) about what was taking place.<sup>24</sup> From those letters it is possible to reconstruct the tensions that plagued the institute after Horkheimer's resettlement in Los Angeles.

The institute's relationship with Columbia's sociology department was a prime concern in Lowenthal's correspondence with Horkheimer. As recent studies by Thomas Wheatland have shown, the department had been instrumental in bringing Horkheimer and his colleagues to Columbia.<sup>25</sup> A few months after going into exile, the institute had contacted several American colleges and universities about its members' research projects, sending copies of its journal, a preliminary report of the institute's studies on authority and the family, and a letter written by Erich Fromm and Julian Gumperz that raised the possibility of affiliation with an American university.<sup>26</sup> The presentation, Wheatland argues, was particularly attractive to the Columbia sociologist Robert Lynd, who had been brought to the department in hopes that he might raise its profile in empirical research. An affiliation with the institute seemed to offer the department a way to strengthen its empirical research without incurring additional expenses. The department's interest in the institute was thus based on expectations that would quickly prove impossible to fulfill. Fromm's bitter dispute with Horkheimer and withdrawal from the institute in 1940 was particularly troubling for Lynd, both because of his own interest in Fromm's efforts to bridge the fields of psychoanalysis and sociology and because Fromm had been responsible for most of the empirical research that had first attracted Lynd to the institute's work.<sup>27</sup>

As the institute's financial situation worsened, its relationship with the sociology department became ever more important. During the spring and summer of 1941, Horkheimer sought to negotiate appointments within the

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For the real estate venture see Lowenthal to Pollock, July 1, 1942 (folder 5); August 7, 1942 (folder 6); and August 17, 1942 (folder 6); and the series of letters to Pollock from 1944 and 1945 in folder 7.

24. Lowenthal preserved carbon copies of his letters to Horkheimer as well as copies of Horkheimer's responses. It should be noted that Lowenthal's letters to Horkheimer were in German at first but switched to English in January 1942. While there is no explanation for the alteration in the letters themselves, the change probably stems from a desire to avoid communication in what, after December 8, 1941, would have been the language of a nation with which the United States was at war.

25. For an exhaustive and insightful discussion based on archival sources in Frankfurt and at Columbia see Thomas Wheatland, "The Frankfurt School's Invitation from Columbia University: How the Horkheimer Circle Settled on Morningside Heights," *German Politics and Society* 22, no. 3 (2004): 1–32.

26. See *ibid.*, 11–13.

27. On Lynd's interest in Fromm's work see *ibid.*, 23–26.

department for some of the institute's members.<sup>28</sup> Lowenthal continued these efforts in Horkheimer's absence and, more generally, kept Horkheimer informed about tensions festering between the department's empirical wing, led by Lynd, and the more theoretical wing, led by its chairman, Robert MacIver. The presence of two other figures further complicated matters: both Paul Lazarsfeld and Neumann had rather complex relationships with the institute and both would go on to distinguished careers at Columbia. Contacts between Lazarsfeld and the institute date from the mid-1930s, when he was involved in some of the empirical research for the institute's *Studies on Authority and the Family*, and his importance for the institute only increased with the departure of Fromm. Lynd had known and respected Lazarsfeld for a number of years and had been instrumental in bringing Lazarsfeld's Radio Research project to Columbia, where it would eventually become the foundation for the university's Bureau of Applied Social Research.<sup>29</sup> Neumann—who, prior to the collapse of the Weimar Republic, had been politically active as a lawyer for the Social Democratic Party—had come to Columbia in 1936 after completing his doctoral studies with Harold Laski and Karl Mannheim at the London School of Economics. He served as a legal adviser to the institute's London branch and became an active participant in New York in the institute's seminars and discussions. While he was never close to Horkheimer, he became, after Fromm's departure, the member of the institute who commanded the greatest respect among Columbia's sociologists. Yet as Neumann's reputation rose among them, his future within the institute became ever more doubtful. As early as September 1939, Horkheimer had informed him that his stipend from the institute would be terminated within a year's time as part of the strategy for reducing costs, though—in response to a plea from Neumann for more time to consolidate his academic reputation—the termination date was eventually extended until the end of 1942.<sup>30</sup>

28. See Thomas Wheatland, "Isolation, Assimilation, and Opposition: A Reception History of the Horkheimer Circle in the United States, 1934–1979" (PhD diss., Boston College, 2002), 141–43.

29. See Thomas Wheatland, "Paul Lazarsfeld, the Horkheimer Circle, and Columbia University" (paper presented at the conference "Contested Legacies," Bard College, August 2002); and Paul Lazarsfeld, "An Essay in the History of Social Research: A Memoir," in *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960*, ed. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 274–75, 289. Lazarsfeld also served, along with Adorno and Benjamin, as a representative of the institute in a private discussion, with a group of thinkers associated with the Vienna Circle, of Horkheimer's article "The Latest Attack on Metaphysics." For a brief mention of this rather curious event, held in Paris in the summer of 1937, see Adorno to Horkheimer, August 7, 1937, in *GS*, 16:210.

30. Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 223–29.

In hopes of improving relations with the sociology department and, more generally, increasing the visibility of the institute at Columbia, Horkheimer proposed a series of lectures by institute members.<sup>31</sup> He assumed that, as director, he would have the honor of delivering the first lecture. But, as Lowenthal informed him in a letter dated January 23, 1942, the department's preference was to have Neumann launch the series, thus raising the prospect that a "former member" would give the first of the institute's lectures.<sup>32</sup> The news could not have been more troubling to Horkheimer, who already feared that Neumann was seen as "the most important person at the Institute" at the very moment when Horkheimer was attempting to get rid of him.<sup>33</sup> Seeking clarification on how things stood, Lowenthal spent the evening of January 23 attending a going-away party for some members of Lazarsfeld's project who—with the entry of the United States into World War II—were leaving for positions in Washington or in the army. Learning that Lazarsfeld had spoken with Lynd about the institute's lectures, Lowenthal attempted to extract information from Lazarsfeld about where matters stood, a task that—as he later explained to Horkheimer—"was not so easy, since we both were a little bit drunk, and I had to pilot him out of the place of joy and to lure him into his private office." In a letter recounting the conversation to Horkheimer—written after the party ended—an apparently tipsy Lowenthal apologized for the somewhat rambling account, explaining that "it's late and, as I told you in the beginning, it was quite a wet party."<sup>34</sup>

While Lazarsfeld assured Lowenthal that it would be wrong to assume that "any intrigue is under way against the Institute or its director, that any resentment or ill-feeling or conspiracy plays any role" in selecting the lecturer, his account of how things stood in the department must have alarmed Horkheimer. The department's preference for Neumann, as Lazarsfeld saw it, was the consequence of a yearlong struggle "between the more theoretical and the more empirical approach." The empirical wing was winning, and MacIver was losing his grip on the department: hence his desire to avoid conflicts with Lynd, who recognized that it would be an embarrassment not to give the initial lecture to Horkheimer and had spoken to MacIver about "how to get around Horkheimer." Lazarsfeld also revealed that the department was less interested in having a rotating series of lectures than in appointing one member of the

31. Since 1936 the institute had offered a course, listed in the sociology department, in the extension division. See Wheatland, "Isolation, Assimilation, and Opposition," 126–27.

32. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, January 23, 1942 (first letter) (folder 16).

33. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, January 20, 1942 (folder 9).

34. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, January 23, 1942 (second letter) (folder 16).

institute to a position that could be renewed each year. As Lowenthal explained, the department had ranked Horkheimer at the bottom of the list of those it preferred to fill such a position. Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer (who would, like Neumann, eventually join the Columbia faculty) topped the list. Lazarsfeld thought that it might be possible, with much effort, to have the lectureship assigned to Lowenthal or, “with much more difficulty and against much more antagonism,” to Adorno.<sup>35</sup>

His worst fears confirmed, Horkheimer responded:

I think you realize the impossible situation of our Institute working under the Directorship of a man, whom you yourself designate as illoyal to the highest degree and whose scientific ideas which I personally respect are in no way typical of our work. And Neumann—there is not the slightest doubt—will become the most important person in the Institute. He will appear as the one who does the work. . . . Not only in Columbia “the more empirical approach” has won over “the more theoretical,” also in our institute.<sup>36</sup>

The only recourse Horkheimer could see was to cut Neumann’s ties with the institute while attempting to make it clear that this step expressed no “disregard” for Neumann, and to proceed with the “two room plan” at Columbia while building up the institute’s Los Angeles branch.<sup>37</sup> In the fall of 1942 Horkheimer directed Lowenthal to sublet all but two of the institute’s offices and to “crowd the two roof-rooms so much with books that nobody can work there.” He proposed that the institute’s name be removed from the door, “since it suggests activities which at present we cannot maintain.”<sup>38</sup>

Horkheimer had an additional motive for paring down the institute’s activities. His collaboration with Adorno had begun to bear fruit. The first chapter of *Philosophische Fragmente* (the original title of the work that would eventually be published as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) had begun to take shape over the summer of 1942, and, in an August letter to Lowenthal, Horkheimer described the last months as “some of the most enlightening ones I ever lived through.”<sup>39</sup> He toyed with the idea of turning over the institute’s directorship to Pollock, and, back in New York at the start of September to secure

35. Ibid.

36. Postscript dated January 25, 1942, in Horkheimer to Lowenthal, January 20, 1942, in *GS*, 17:247–48.

37. Ibid., 248.

38. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, October 31, 1942, in *GS*, 17:367.

39. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, August 16, 1942 (folder 12).

financing for the institute, he sent Adorno a bitter assessment of the talents needed to do the job properly:

If, in addition to the glamour which a director of an Institute connected with Columbia University possesses, I should have at least some of the qualities which are expected of such a functionary, for instance, a mastery of the English language, a natural behaviour free of aggression, a grown up attitude etc., I have little doubt that there would not be the slightest difficulties to get the necessary amounts of money. I am, however, completely deprived of such talents.<sup>40</sup>

Faced with the prospect of a fruitless pursuit of funding to keep the institute afloat, Horkheimer was inclined to eliminate the New York branch and turn his full attention to his work with Adorno in Los Angeles. However, thanks largely to the efforts of Neumann and Lazarsfeld, a temporary solution for the institute's financial difficulties emerged.

Neumann, who had been pursuing government positions in Washington, alerted Horkheimer during the summer of 1942 that a change in the directorship of the research department at the American Jewish Committee had revived the prospects for funding a research project on anti-Semitism that the institute had submitted several years earlier.<sup>41</sup> Lazarsfeld provided advice on how to frame the proposal to make it more attractive to the committee, and in March 1943 funding was approved.<sup>42</sup> While the grant provided the support needed to maintain not only a presence at Columbia but also the research project in Berkeley that would eventually produce *The Authoritarian Personality*, the new initiative proved a mixed blessing. Horkheimer found himself forced—as he complained to Lowenthal—to turn his attention “from philosophy to the project.” The decision left him “very sad”:

The last weeks and even months have been taken [up] by the most exhausting thinking which I ever did in my life. Besides of some aphorisms I have not written anything, but I think that I [have] arrived now at a definite theory of dialectics, at an aim for which I have been striving during so many years. The formulation of that theory would have taken me the next half

40. Horkheimer to Adorno, September 17, 1942, in *GS*, 17:331.

41. A version of the proposal, written in 1939, was published as “Research Project on Anti-Semitism,” *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9 (1941): 124–43. See also Horkheimer to Edward S. Greenbaum, inquiring about the status of the proposal, June 18, 1940, in *GS*, 16:719–25.

42. Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School*, 350–57.

year and now I must start conversations with innumerable people in order to organize some worthwhile empirical study. I won't be able to show a documentation of my work, not even a fragmentary one.<sup>43</sup>

Horkheimer was able to resume work with Adorno on *Philosophische Fragmente* that autumn, at which point they appear to have been completing the chapter on the “culture industry.”<sup>44</sup> By the next January, however, Horkheimer viewed his situation as “absolutely impossible”: “If we could devote our whole time to the work to which we decided to devote our lives, and which nobody besides us can do, we could present—in a year’s time—a volume which would justify our whole existence. Now, not you alone, but also I, are splitting up our time and living under an almost senseless pressure.”<sup>45</sup> The first version of *Philosophische Fragmente*—which would be distributed shortly before the end of 1944 in a mimeographed edition of five hundred copies—was more or less finished by the end of the spring. In his usual role of proofreader and censor, Lowenthal continued to work with the manuscript throughout the summer, struggling to find ways to untangle Horkheimer and Adorno’s sentences and voicing reservations about passages that “may bring about the impression that democratic society is everywhere conceived as a preceding stage to fascism, and with formulations which, if taken out of context, and used maliciously, may create the impression that the program of free love is proclaimed.”<sup>46</sup>

Acknowledging the enthusiastic letter that Lowenthal sent him after receiving the final draft of *Philosophische Fragmente*, Horkheimer responded, “It is a fine thing that you like the book and I hope that the second part will still be much better.”<sup>47</sup> That part was a proposed sequel—tentatively titled “The Rescue of Enlightenment”—on the “positive theory of dialectics” that was to be the ultimate fruit of Horkheimer’s labors. However, no such work appeared, and the few notes that exist for it suggest that little work was done on it. The reason is not difficult to see: the research project on anti-Semitism would claim almost all of Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s time over the next few years. While the project would ultimately bring Horkheimer and his associates the

43. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, March 26, 1943, in *GS*, 17:438–39.

44. For a progress report see Horkheimer to Lowenthal, September 29, 1943 (folder 16).

45. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, January 3, 1944 (folder 16).

46. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, August 10, 1944 (folder 26). The same file contains a proposal from Lowenthal, dated August 24, to rearrange the book’s table of contents, an arrangement that corresponds to the version that was published. I have not been able to determine the original order of the chapters.

47. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, June 14, 1944 (folder 17).

American audience that had long eluded them, it would not be without its cost. The “Rescue of Enlightenment” would remain unwritten, and though Horkheimer and Adorno’s philosophical fragments would eventually be published in a more conventional form as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the book would still remain, in important ways, as incomplete as it was at the time of its initial appearance in mimeograph.<sup>48</sup> The most finished of the products of Horkheimer’s California sojourn would turn out to be the work that has commanded the least respect, and it is to this work that I now turn.

### ***The Lectures and the Book***

As Horkheimer explained in its preface, *Eclipse of Reason* began as a series of lectures he delivered at Columbia in February and March 1944. The impetus for the lectures was an invitation—in which Horkheimer’s friend Paul Tillich may have had a hand—from Columbia’s philosophy department.<sup>49</sup> Discussions of possible lecture topics began in January 1943, a year after Horkheimer’s initial overture to the sociology department and several months before he sent Lowenthal the first samples of what would eventually become *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.<sup>50</sup> At the end of January, Horkheimer mailed Lowenthal outlines for six possible topics: “Society and Reason,” “Philosophy and the Division of Labor,” “Theories of Philosophy and Society,” “Philosophy and Politics,” “American and German Philosophy,” and “Basic Concepts of Social Philosophy.”<sup>51</sup> The choice of which set of lectures Horkheimer would deliver was left to Lowenthal, who appears to have discussed the alternatives with Tillich and eventually settled on the first topic.

It is worth reflecting for a moment on the ones Lowenthal did not choose. “Philosophy and the Division of Labor” recalled some of the themes broached in Horkheimer’s first articles in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* and proposed to explore the “scientification of philosophy under modern industry,” using psychology and sociology as examples; the final lecture would discuss attempts to unite philosophy and the social sciences. The proposed lectures on theories of philosophy and society went back even further and, like some

48. I discuss the unfinished character of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in “Language, Mythology, and Enlightenment.”

49. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, February 5, 1943 (folder 15), refers to “Tillich’s demands” for titles for the lectures.

50. This material was sent in February and March 1943. See Horkheimer to Lowenthal, February 24, 1943; March 3, 1943; and March 13, 1943 (all folder 15).

51. Several versions of this outline exist in the Lowenthal papers (see folder 14). One includes penciled annotations of the dates for the lectures.

of the courses Horkheimer gave at Frankfurt at the end of the 1920s, compared the “role of the philosopher in ancient and modern philosophy”; examined the utopias of More, Campanella, and Bacon; analyzed the “political theories of enlightenment and romanticism”; discussed the “Marxian doctrine of ideology”; and concluded with a lecture on “modern sociology of knowledge.” The lectures on philosophy and politics were also framed as a straightforward historical account of “the dissolution of feudal society and the rise of modern philosophy,” “absolutism and reason,” the “French Enlightenment as a political movement,” “philosophies of counterrevolution,” and, finally, the “philosophy of modern democracy.” The lectures contrasting American and German philosophy, which Lowenthal judged as demanding too much from Horkheimer, proposed to begin with the different conceptions of philosophy in both countries and then contrast their views of history, culture and civilization, and freedom and authority, followed by speculation on the “function of philosophy in world reconstruction.” Finally, the series “Basic Concepts of Social Philosophy” recalled the topics that Horkheimer had initially proposed to examine in his work on dialectical logic: society and the individual, progress and retrogression, freedom and necessity, ideas and ideologies, and the idea of justice.

In advising Horkheimer to discuss society and reason, Lowenthal selected the one topic on Horkheimer’s list that would draw on his current work. While some of the other topics would have reprised themes that Horkheimer had long ago addressed and others would have required him to venture into areas that he had not yet explored, Lowenthal’s choice was tailor-made to allow Horkheimer to pull together the work that he had been doing with Adorno. Lowenthal’s advice is all the more striking because, at the time he tendered it, he would have been familiar only with the first product of Horkheimer’s collaboration with Adorno, the 1941 essay “The End of Reason.”<sup>52</sup>

The lectures were delivered between 4:10 and 6:00 p.m. on five successive Thursdays beginning on February 3, 1944, in a seminar room in Philosophy Hall that, by Lowenthal’s reckoning, could hold from twenty-five to sixty people.<sup>53</sup> Prior to his departure for New York, Horkheimer voiced his usual misgivings about the undertaking in a letter to Pollock:

52. Max Horkheimer, “The End of Reason,” *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9 (1941): 366–88.

53. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, October 11, 1943 (folder 24); the letter also contains other information about arrangements for the lectures.

It is a great pity, it is almost a catastrophe that I have to interrupt my work in order to deliver lectures in a language which I do not master. I am quite aware that it is I who insisted on getting this appointment. I did it because of the well-known motives. Now I must bear the consequences. However, I want to state that the four months, one third of a year, which I sacrifice for this purpose, are a terrible investment. I could have devoted time to our philosophical work, which is now in a decisive state. Never in my life did I feel so deeply the victory of external life over our real duties. . . . The world is winning, even in our own existence. This makes me almost desperate.<sup>54</sup>

He informed Lowenthal that he would be arriving in New York with three of the five lectures drafted, but not “checked over linguistically,” and hoped that Lowenthal would help him “in a day and night effort to achieve something which will represent a popular version of some of our views.” He also requested that Lowenthal obtain the services of an “experienced American stylist to do the editing.”<sup>55</sup> Lowenthal arranged to have Norbert Guterman (a fellow exile born in Warsaw, who had frequented surrealist and Marxist circles in Paris during the 1920s and had worked as a translator for the institute) and Joseph Freeman (an American who had also done editing and translating for the institute) work with Horkheimer on a final version of the lectures.<sup>56</sup>

As Horkheimer explained in a subsequent letter to MacIver, the lectures “were composed almost entirely during my stay in New York, that is, in the intervals between the Thursdays on which they were delivered. I did this because I wanted to adapt them to the specific interests of the audience.”<sup>57</sup> The typescript of the final version of the lectures confirms that a significant portion of the manuscript responded to questions raised by the audience at previous lectures. The second lecture, for instance, contains an extended discussion of Dewey prompted by a comment that Dewey’s “philosophy of experience” might provide a “way out of the impasse” discussed in Horkheimer’s first lecture.<sup>58</sup>

54. Horkheimer to Pollock, January 7, 1944, in *GS*, 17:538–39.

55. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, January 3, 1944 (folder 16).

56. In a telegram to Lowenthal of January 13, 1944 (folder 16), Horkheimer wrote that he would “prefer an American instead of Guterman but Freeman unknown to me.” Guterman, nevertheless, contributed much to preparing the lectures for publication.

57. Horkheimer to MacIver, August 9, 1944, in *GS*, 17:591.

58. See Max Horkheimer, *Society and Reason: Five Public Lectures Delivered at the Department of Philosophy of Columbia University* (February–March 1944), Max Horkheimer Archive, Frankfurt, LIX, 36, 6a, lecture 2, 5–12. Hereafter cited as *SR*. After the discussion of Dewey, Horkheimer notes, “The objections which I had expected to be raised against my analysis last time were different from those which I have just noted.”

The lectures that Horkheimer delivered at Columbia differed in significant ways from the book that grew out of them. The topics of the five lectures that made up *Society and Reason* were as follows:

- I. Reason as the basic theoretical concept of Western civilization.
- II. Civilization as an attempt to control human and extra-human nature.
- III. The rebellion of oppressed nature and its philosophical manifestations.
- IV. The rise and the decline of the individual.
- V. The present crisis of reason.<sup>59</sup>

The last three lectures most closely correspond to the contents of *Eclipse of Reason* and include material subsequently reworked in the book's last three chapters. Much of the fourth lecture appeared in the identically titled fourth chapter, though there were extensive revisions. The same can be said for the relationship between the fifth lecture and the book's closing chapter, "On the Concept of Philosophy," and—to a lesser degree—for the relationship between the third lecture and the third chapter, "The Revolt of Nature."<sup>60</sup> However, the first two lectures were subjected to revisions so extensive that even the passages retained in *Eclipse of Reason* appear in a context that differs markedly.

So much of the second lecture was taken up with responses to objections raised in discussing the first lecture that Horkheimer arrived at its announced theme only shortly after its midpoint and—after outlining the points he hoped to discuss—noted that he would have to survey this material "more sketchily than I planned since I have already devoted a considerable part of this lecture to answering objections" (*SR*, lecture 2, 18).<sup>61</sup> Likewise, rather little of the first lecture survived the revisions that produced *Eclipse of*

59. See the printed card announcing Horkheimer's lectures in Horkheimer's letters to Lowenthal, folder 17. The topics are repeated on the front page of the lecture manuscript.

60. Horkheimer seems to have planned to discuss Romanticism in his third lecture and, as a result, prefaced the lecture with discussions of German idealism that were dropped from the book, as were the lecture's apologies about not discussing Romanticism and also its concluding discussion of Hegel (see *SR*, 25–28).

61. The lecture ends twelve pages later. Some of the points raised in the last part, including a brief discussion of culture's role in enforcing conformity, later found a home in the third and fourth chapters of *Eclipse of Reason*.

*Reason*. Horkheimer's alterations may have been motivated, in part, by the objections that the lecture met at Columbia. With so much of the second lecture devoted to answering objections to the first one, it is hardly surprising that Horkheimer decided to frame things differently in the book's opening. Other revisions, however, may have been the result of Horkheimer's long-standing desire to conceal his political allegiances in his published works.

Among the material cut was an introduction noting that the title of the lectures "may be misleading" in that it might suggest that "I am designating those elements in our society which are irrational, so that I may proceed to suggest how to overcome the irrational ones and to achieve the identity of society and rationality." Such a project, he noted, had been central to the program of "European socialism":

But the period in which these theories originated is ours no longer. It was the time of the free market, universal competition, the so-called anarchy of production, and these theories advanced the principle of rationality against the prevailing anarchy. I do not say that these categories have lost their validity under the conditions of present-day economy, but a new problem has arisen in the meantime; rationality has permeated human life to a degree which those older schools did not anticipate. (*SR*, lecture 1, 1)

In other words, Horkheimer returned to New York bearing the bitter message that he and Adorno had been preparing in California: the socialist dream of subjecting the irrationality of capitalist production to scientific planning had, in effect, been realized under the conditions of monopoly capitalism but, in the process, its full monstrosity had become evident. This was a message whose cruel irony presupposed an audience that had once shared that dream. *Eclipse of Reason* was intended for different readers.

It is not clear when Horkheimer decided to publish the lectures. In a letter to MacIver of August 9, 1944, he was "still uncertain whether or not the lectures should be printed."<sup>62</sup> A possible impetus may have been provided by Lowenthal's letter of September 25, which reported that Lynd had informed him that "the University authorities feel that we have not 'come through in a big way' in the same sense as in Germany."<sup>63</sup> The need to raise the institute's profile with a significant publication could only have become more pressing in the coming year as the university began evaluating its relationship with the institute. Whatever the motivation, by the autumn of 1945 the book had been

62. Horkheimer to MacIver, August 9, 1944, in *GS*, 17:591.

63. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, September 25, 1944 (folder 26).

accepted at Oxford, and Horkheimer was at work revising the manuscript, with a promised delivery date of January 1946.

“Ends and Means,” the first chapter, drew on the distinction between formal and substantive conceptions of reason that had been elaborated in *Society and Reason* but incorporated much new material, including an extended discussion of pragmatism (*ER*, 42–57). “Conflicting Panaceas,” the second chapter, juxtaposed the neo-Thomist understanding of reason to naturalist approaches. This chapter originated in an earlier essay written by Horkheimer in response to a series of articles by Sidney Hook, Dewey, and Ernest Nagel in the *Partisan Review*.<sup>64</sup> These two revisions resulted in a work that opened not with a lament for the lost cause of European socialism but with a critique of recent trends in American philosophy. While the changes meant that the book would engage American philosophy in a way that the lectures had not, they would also result in significant difficulties both for Horkheimer and for the book’s reception.

Horkheimer’s response to Hook, Dewey, and Nagel was originally written in German, and the English translation was assigned to Benjamin Nelson, whom the institute had engaged to perform various editorial tasks. Horkheimer’s dissatisfaction with the pace and the results of the translation led to a bitter dispute during the spring and summer of 1944, with Horkheimer attributing the problem to Nelson’s sympathy for Hook’s position. “After all,” Horkheimer explained to Lowenthal in one of his milder assessments of the situation, “he is deeply rooted in the tradition in which he was brought up.”<sup>65</sup> The material on pragmatism in the first chapter was added in response to a request by one of the readers of the manuscript for Oxford: a young Columbia sociologist named C. Wright Mills.<sup>66</sup>

Horkheimer, however, knew rather little about pragmatism when he first delivered the lectures.<sup>67</sup> The extended discussion of Dewey at the start of the second lecture was prompted by the suggestion (which would have been

64. Horkheimer first mentioned the article in his letter to Herbert Marcuse of September 11, 1943, in *GS*, 17:471.

65. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, March 28, 1944 (folder 17). Lowenthal defended Nelson in his letter of August 4, 1944, in *GS*, 17:585–86.

66. Lowenthal informed Horkheimer that Mills was one of the book’s readers in his letter of November 13, 1945 (folder 28).

67. He appears, for example, to have been completely unfamiliar with the work of George Herbert Mead. In an October 4, 1943, letter to Horkheimer about a young woman being hired by the institute, Lowenthal wrote, “Her favorite reading in college was George H. Mead and if you look it up in the *Encyclopedia of Social Science* you will find that this Mead apparently was a philosopher and sociologist with genuine problems” (folder 23).

hardly surprising from an audience at Columbia) that Dewey's philosophy offered an alternative to the impasse sketched in the opening lecture (SR, 5–6). Giving little indication that he was aware of the broader tradition with which Dewey was associated, Horkheimer focused on Dewey's "philosophy of experience," which he argued was similar to Bergson's philosophy, thus allowing Horkheimer to repeat criticisms that, he informed his audience, "once brought me Bergson's personal acknowledgement that although he could not agree with me, he felt that it was the most lively and pertinent objection which he had yet encountered" (SR, 8). The material on pragmatism was among the last additions to *Eclipse of Reason*, and when Horkheimer sent the revisions to Lowenthal he noted, "You can see from my quotes that I read not a few of these native products and I have now the feeling to be an expert on it." Yet he persisted in interpreting pragmatism in light of European philosophical traditions with which he had long been familiar: "The whole thing belongs definitely into the period before the first World War and is somehow on the line of empirico-criticism."<sup>68</sup>

As the date for delivering the manuscript approached, a host of editorial decisions remained unresolved. As late as a month before the due date, the book still lacked a title: *The Agony of Reason*, *Subjectivization of Reason*, and *Objective and Subjective Reason* were considered and found wanting. *Twilight of Reason* was provisionally adopted, although by February Horkheimer had misgivings: it was too close to the title of "The End of Reason," it reminded him of *Götterdämmerung*, it was "too pessimistic," "'twilights' and 'of reason' are legion," and "the book does not correspond to it."<sup>69</sup> When a form arrived from Oxford in March requesting information from Horkheimer for its files, he had still not picked a title.<sup>70</sup> In the end, Philip Vaudrin, an Oxford editor, suggested the final title.<sup>71</sup> A decision also had to be reached about what to do about the preface: Horkheimer had written one but was dissatisfied with it and requested that Guterman draft an alternative. In the end, Horkheimer wrote a new preface in January, after reviewing the manuscript.<sup>72</sup> Suggestions from Adorno for additions and alterations in the manuscript were being sent to Lowenthal by Horkheimer throughout January 1946, as an increasingly desperate Horkheimer complained of his deteriorating physical

68. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, December 21, 1944 (folder 20).

69. *Ibid.*; Horkheimer to Lowenthal, January 17, 1946 (folder 20); February 5, 1946 (folder 21).

70. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, March 20, 1946 (folder 23).

71. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, March 20, 1946 (folder 31). At this point Lowenthal and Guterman seemed to favor *The Shadow of Progress*.

72. See Horkheimer to Lowenthal, December 28, 1945, and January 10, 1946 (folder 20).

condition: “During the nights I have arterial cramps in the arms and legs and uncomfortable headaches; during the day, at least with the slightest exertion, there are the well-known heart-pains.”<sup>73</sup> He had also begun to have serious reservations about the concluding chapter:

The book, as it is, opposes the concept of nature so directly to that of spirit, and the idea of object to that of subject, that our philosophy appears as much too static and dogmatic. We have accused the others, both Neo-Thomists and Positivists, of stopping thought at isolated and therefore contradictory concepts and, as it is, it would be only too easy for them to accuse us of doing the same thing. . . . I do not feel any doubt that in the last chapter this gap should be filled.<sup>74</sup>

At almost the last moment, parts of a manuscript written years earlier, “Sociology of Class Relations,” were inserted into the book’s discussion of the decline of the individual, and—after incorporating the editorial changes that Horkheimer transmitted in a massive telegram—Lowenthal delivered the manuscript to Oxford at the end of January.<sup>75</sup>

For the moment, Horkheimer seemed satisfied with the work. When Margaret Nicholson, his copyeditor at Oxford, suggested a few stylistic revisions, he resisted, explaining to Lowenthal that “this book is antagonistic to present-day literary habits in philosophy as well as related subjects. Therefore its form cannot be ‘adjusted’ to this kind of stuff. For instance there is no point in ‘leading up to my thesis’ as she states . . . for there is no ‘thesis’ in dialectical reflections like ours. The book should now be published as it is and she will be surprised how much response it will have.”<sup>76</sup> But the arrival of proofs at summer’s end sparked further anxieties from Horkheimer about the book’s style, and Lowenthal sought to ameliorate them by suggesting that he would have the proofs read by “Harold Rosenberg or one of the other members of the literary avant-garde.”<sup>77</sup> In November 1946, with the book now three months from its initially scheduled publication date, Horkheimer inquired whether it might be possible to insert subtitles in the margins, prompting an exasperated Lowenthal to point out that Oxford would surely reject such

73. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, December 28, 1945 (folder 20).

74. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, January 10, 1946 (folder 20).

75. Horkheimer sent Lowenthal a letter to Margaret Nicholson, his editor at Oxford, dated January 30, 1946, which was to be included with the manuscript when delivered (folder 22).

76. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, March 6, 1946 (folder 23).

77. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, August 23, 1946 (folder 27).

a proposal, since it would involve resetting the entire book, and to request, "Please do me the favor and enjoy the completion of this work."<sup>78</sup>

### ***The Reception of Eclipse of Reason***

Whatever contentment Horkheimer might have taken from the publication of *Eclipse of Reason* was fleeting.<sup>79</sup> Shortly after receiving a copy, he wrote to Lowenthal expressing concern about what he saw as a "distorting error" in the summary of the book's argument on its inside cover, observing that the mistake "gives me the idea that advertisement and plugging are not handled too well with regard to the book."<sup>80</sup> He went on to urge Lowenthal to have Guterman "see to it that we get prominent reviews in the *New York Times Book Magazine* and at other prominent places," a request he would repeat in subsequent letters.<sup>81</sup> The notion that book reviews could be arranged by applying influence was consistent with the account of the culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Horkheimer and Adorno had argued that the idea that independent entrepreneurs brought goods to the market, where they succeeded or failed on their own merits, was a quaint illusion of a long-lost world. Modern monopoly capitalism was a world of "rackets," where power and influence were the keys to success.<sup>82</sup> In one of his contributions to Lazarsfeld's radio research project, Adorno had concluded that radio stations do not play what listeners want to hear; they play what has been "plugged." As Horkheimer brought the fruits of his labor to market, he was not about to forget how the culture industry worked.

Over the next several months he continued to press Lowenthal to make sure that Oxford was doing whatever it could to ensure that *Eclipse of Reason*

78. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, November 4, 1946 (folder 30); Lowenthal to Horkheimer, November 8, 1946 (folder 34).

79. The publication of the book was announced in the *New York Times*, May 8, 1947, though copies were circulating among Horkheimer's friends and associates for about a month prior to this date. The publication note in the *Times* offered the following summary: "An analysis of 'the disintegration of the basic concepts of Western civilization.'"

80. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, April 23, 1947 (folder 31). Horkheimer was displeased with "the beginning of the second paragraph" on the inside jacket: "Industrial civilization, with its emphasis on practical means, has undermined the concepts designed to represent such an objective truth." While it is difficult to determine specifically what bothered Horkheimer about this, it is possible that he was troubled by the suggestion that the book was to be read simply as a defense of "objective reason."

81. See Horkheimer to Lowenthal, April 29, 1947 (folder 31), and May 12, 1947 (folder 32).

82. Horkheimer had hoped to incorporate an account of "rackets" into *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, but little was actually written beyond a 1943 manuscript, "On the Sociology of Class Relations," parts of which were imported into *Eclipse of Reason*. Originally written in English, the manuscript has been published as "Zur Soziologie der Klassenverhältnisse," in *GS*, 12:75–104.

would find an audience. “I have the definite feeling,” he wrote to Lowenthal about Oxford’s efforts to secure reviews, “that they are utterly neglecting this matter which, for us, is vital indeed.”<sup>83</sup> When the press failed to send copies of the book to an additional list of names that Horkheimer had supplied, he informed Lowenthal that he himself would buy copies and send them to those on the list who were “particularly important.”<sup>84</sup> He followed the advertising of the book closely and, at the end of July, expressed dismay to Lowenthal that he had yet to see an ad in the *Saturday Review*, “where, in my opinion, it belongs.”<sup>85</sup> When a review of a book by their fellow exile Ludwig Marcuse appeared in the *New York Times*, Horkheimer was quick to note its appearance and to observe, “His Plato has certainly more affinity for this medium than my Hegel.”<sup>86</sup> Unsure whether it would be appropriate to send Oxford some of the letters he had received praising the book, he suggested that Lowenthal should have the press contact the individuals directly.<sup>87</sup> He mused about the possibility of having his friend Ruth Nanda Anshen, a prominent New York writer and editor, organize “a miniature fan-mail for me,” explaining that “she is enthusiastic without reserve.”<sup>88</sup>

Lowenthal did his best to alleviate Horkheimer’s anxieties. He urged him not to overestimate Guterman’s influence on journals and noted that Oxford had an “excellent publicity director” and that it would be “awkward to put pressure behind such a large organization as the press.”<sup>89</sup> He kept Horkheimer informed about the progress of reviews, though—as it turned out—there was rather little to report. By September, Lowenthal was reduced to clutching at straws: a passing reference to the book in an article by Helen Lynd in the *Nation* was enough to warrant notice.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, he held out hope that the book might draw more attention in professional journals and informed

83. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, May 12, 1947 (folder 32).

84. Ibid.

85. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, July 30, 1947 (folder 34). Oxford purchased at least one advertisement in the *New York Times Book Review* (June 8, 1947), where the book was one of six listed. There is no description of its contents beyond a blurb from the novelist, social historian, and political activist Waldo Frank: “A diagnosis, lucid and profound, of the basic disease of our civilization. . . . I hope that this significant, urgent essay will be read in the universities, churches, and progressive organizations of the country.”

86. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, August 30, 1947 (folder 34). The work in question was Ludwig Marcuse, *Plato and Dionysius: A Double Biography*, trans. Joel Ames (New York: Knopf, 1947).

87. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, July 30, 1947 (folder 34).

88. Horkheimer to Lowenthal, August 8, 1947 (folder 34).

89. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, May 10, 1947 (folder 36).

90. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, September 26, 1947 (folder 38). The reference appears in the *Nation*, September 27, 1947.

Horkheimer that he had been contacted by Herbert Schneider, the editor of the *Journal of Philosophy*, about a possible reviewer and had suggested the historian Charles Trinkaus who, as Lowenthal explained to Horkheimer, is “a great admirer of yours, and a former collaborator of the *Zeitschrift*.”<sup>91</sup>

Horkheimer received the first of the reviews—which, as it turned out, would be by far the most favorable—several months prior to its publication. It was written by Arthur E. Murphy and appeared in the *Philosophical Review*.<sup>92</sup> Though he is not well known today, Murphy was one of the leading American philosophers of the time. He had been one of the editors of George Herbert Mead’s posthumously published works and, while generally sympathetic to pragmatism, had argued in his 1943 book *The Uses of Reason* that the movement’s leading figures had never been able to overcome their “early fright of metaphysics” and, leery of making claims about “reality,” wound up weakening their theory of truth in ways that left them open to the charge of skepticism and relativism.<sup>93</sup> Horkheimer learned of Murphy’s book only after the publication of his own and, expressing admiration for Murphy’s work, sent him a copy of *Eclipse of Reason*.<sup>94</sup> In his response, Murphy noted that, thanks to “an interesting coincidence,” he had already read the book; he enclosed a copy of his forthcoming review.<sup>95</sup>

The review hailed the book as “a remarkably penetrating study” and found it particularly “striking and valuable” in its attempt to “trace the social background and implications of the philosophical theories in which this merely subjective use of reason is justified or exemplified” (190–91). While granting that the “positivistic and instrumentalist philosophers” criticized by Horkheimer would be likely to regard the book as “just another misinterpretation of their doctrine,” Murphy found Horkheimer’s claim that such approaches reduced philosophy to “social engineering” compelling and characterized Horkheimer’s description of the “cultural consequences of this self-liquidation of reason” as “brilliantly sketched” (191). Murphy was also impressed that, having

91. Lowenthal to Horkheimer, August 4, 1947 (folder 37).

92. Arthur E. Murphy, review of Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Philosophical Review* 57 (1948): 190–92.

93. On this point see Arthur E. Murphy, *The Uses of Reason* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 88–91.

94. Horkheimer to Murphy, May 29, 1947, in *GS*, 17:816.

95. Murphy to Horkheimer, June 22, 1947, in *GS*, 17:822–23. While it is possible that, given his anxiety about securing reviews of *Eclipse of Reason*, Horkheimer may have learned from other sources that Murphy was reviewing the book, the fact that Horkheimer sent his letter to the University of Illinois, where Murphy was teaching at the time of the publication of *The Uses of Reason*, rather than Cornell University, his current position, makes this doubtful.

criticized the reduction of reason to technology, Horkheimer did not—as was “the fashion of the times”—make “an appeal to the irrational” but instead recognized that “the cure for the limitations of reason is to be found not in the rejection of reason but in a more just and comprehensive understanding of its meaning and use” (192). Indeed, this had been the central point of Murphy’s own work. In a contribution to a symposium in the *Philosophical Review* on the last hundred years of American philosophy that appeared at about the time of his response to Horkheimer, Murphy offered an interpretation of philosophical developments from 1917 to 1947 that converged in significant ways with Horkheimer’s diagnosis.<sup>96</sup>

In his survey, Murphy argued that over the last quarter century philosophical ideas have “lost their status as reasons addressed to a community and maintained by a process within which their claims make sense and have a social function” and instead have been transformed into “tools” and “weapons in a world-wide struggle for power” (“Ideas,” 378). In a contrast that paralleled Horkheimer’s discussion of the “conflicting panaceas” of empiricist and traditionalist approaches, Murphy argued that what he termed “critical philosophy” had reached a point where “in a properly selected language we can say with logical impunity almost anything we please so long as we do not attempt to give a philosophical reason for it,” while “speculative philosophy” had become “increasingly dubious in its rational foundations and increasingly ready to turn to uncriticizable intuition and traditional authoritarian support for the confirmation of its claims” (“Ideas,” 381).<sup>97</sup> Against attempts to recast liberalism as one more “ideology,” one in need of support through appeals to “eternal verities,” Murphy insisted that liberal societies regard their central ideas as reasons that have the capacity “to justify themselves in the open, to the common sense and purpose of co-operative life” (“Ideas,” 388). For Murphy, this central ideal sustained the work of Peirce, Royce, and Dewey at the start of the century, and it remained for him “the highest point of self-understanding that American philosophy has so far reached” (“Ideas,” 388).

96. Arthur E. Murphy, “Ideas and Ideologies: 1917–1947,” *Philosophical Review* 56 (1947): 374–89. Hereafter cited as “Ideas.” It is likely that this is the article to which Murphy alluded in his letter to Horkheimer of June 22, 1947, which promised to send “a reprint of a recent article of mine in which I think I have come somewhat closer to your views (though I had not seen them when the article was written),” in *GS*, 17:822.

97. On the latter point see Murphy, “Tradition and Traditionalists,” in *The Authoritarian Attempt to Capture Education*, by John Dewey, Sidney Hook, Arthur E. Murphy, Irwin Edman, et al. (New York: King’s Crown, 1945), 18–25.

Murphy faulted *Eclipse of Reason* on only one point. He remained puzzled about the alternative Horkheimer was proposing: “Where . . . are we to find a rational basis for the objective evaluation of social ends?” Citing a “difficult sentence” from *Eclipse of Reason*—“Philosophy confronts the existent, in its historical context, with the claim of its conceptual principles, in order to criticize the two and thus transcend them” (*ER*, 192)—Murphy confessed, “I wish I could see quite specifically what this means, for I think it means something important” (review, 192). The sentence might have suggested “something important” to Murphy because he may have sensed an affinity to his own work. In his conception of philosophy as an attempt to engage in public reasoning about the “sense and purpose of co-operative life,” Murphy echoed Kant’s famous definition of enlightenment as the “public use of reason” and raised a set of concerns that would eventually be taken up by Jürgen Habermas several decades later in his own attempt to reformulate Horkheimer’s conception of critical social theory. The review closed with the hope that Horkheimer might, in a future work, explore such issues more fully: “If it were as good a book on the constructive side as *Eclipse of Reason* is on the critical, it would be a valuable contribution to contemporary philosophy” (review, 192). But the “constructive” sequel to *Eclipse of Reason* remained unwritten, and later reviewers of Horkheimer’s book would be a good deal less generous than Murphy.<sup>98</sup>

The most scathing review appeared in *Ethics* by the Duke University philosopher Glenn Negley.<sup>99</sup> It began by noting that, during the war, the “analytical differences” between philosophers had been overshadowed by their “moral and emotional agreement.” Negley expressed the hope that, should this

98. The review by J. B. Mabbott in the British journal *Philosophy* 23 (1948): 368–69 confined itself to summarizing the book’s argument; it concluded by noting the rather sketchy character of Horkheimer’s proposed alternative (a complaint found in all reviews of the book) but nevertheless praised the book’s argument as “impressive and convincing.” While Mabbott found the book “not easy to read” and thought that it mixed philosophy and sociology in a way that “is difficult to disentangle,” he judged it to be “written with great spirit and seriousness” and to contain “many stimulating and striking observations” (369). Charles Denecke’s review in the Fordham University journal *Thought* 23 (1948): 348–49 also consisted for the most part of a summary, with a few comments at the end criticizing the book for misunderstanding Thomism.

99. Glenn Negley, review of Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Ethics* 58 (1947): 75–77. In his memorial notice on Negley in the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association* 56 (1982): 98–99, Peyton Richter described him as “a tough-minded political and legal philosopher who took delight in defending normative ethics, metaphysics, and utopian speculation against their enemies.” Negley received his doctorate from Chicago in 1939 and combined his graduate studies with work as a legislative assistant in the Illinois State Senate. He came to Duke in 1946 and, at the time of his review of Horkheimer, had published one book, *The Organization of Knowledge* (1942). He was later responsible for assembling a large collection of utopian literature at Duke.

spirit of cooperation continue, it might aid in “clarifying for our predominantly individualistic philosophy the fundamental concepts of corporate value.” Such an effort, as Negley understood it, would involve translating the concepts of “corporate analysis” into the context of democratic philosophy, a process that would require “forebearance toward that which is culturally different” and a “sincere effort to understand and to be understood despite confusions of terminology.” Negley closed his opening paragraph with the observation that Horkheimer’s book, “like so many others, evidences none of these essential characteristics.” And then, for the rest of the review, he trashed the book.

The argument of Horkheimer’s book struck Negley as yet another example of “an all too familiar pattern”: “Western civilization is vulgar materialism, subjectivization of reason is rushing men to madness, positivistic instrumentalism has no regard for truth and reality, and philosophy has become the unwitting tool of practical science or the witless perpetrator of traditional mythology” (review, 75). Arguing that, in the face of such criticisms, it would be advisable to “examine the use of reason by the person who proclaims the absence of reason in others,” Negley offered a few quotations from the book’s opening chapter and then cited, at length, a passage in which Horkheimer—paraphrasing arguments that Adorno had articulated at greater length in his essays on musical listening—argued that the “average concertgoer” has lost all sense of the “objective meaning” of Beethoven’s *Eroica* symphony. To this Negley responded:

It is only a surfeit of the pretentious insolence of such remarks that prompts consideration of them. I personally resent being told that I am not capable of listening to Beethoven. It seems to me a very questionable analysis of fact to assume that, because concert-goers today are so numerous as to constitute what can be called a “mass,” this must imply that the concert-goer today cannot achieve the sophisticated appreciation of the relatively small elite of Beethoven’s audience. (75)

He also took issue with book’s treatment of pragmatism, suggesting that here, too, Horkheimer was repeating familiar criticisms with his attacks on this “devilish kind of philosophy,” but had failed to distinguish between “the activity of scientific research, the analysis of scientific research, scientific methodology, the analysis of scientific method, and the material products of scientific investigation” (75–76). But having made these distinctions, Negley did nothing with them and instead criticized Horkheimer’s claim that, because of its neutrality with regard to ends, formal reason could not be prevented from serving “the most diabolical social forces.” As counterevidence, he con-

fidently cited a *New Yorker* article that quoted a report on scientific research in the Third Reich that “found no studies of even the most routine interest that were based on reprehensible or unethical methods.”<sup>100</sup>

Negley’s attacks on Horkheimer became more shrill as the review proceeded. He characterized Horkheimer’s use of the term *cultural commodity* to refer to the products of the culture industry as an example of “uncritical name-calling” that “cheapens the analysis, not the art” (review, 77). Observing that Horkheimer had criticized the modern insensitivity to nature and had expressed concern for the treatment of animals yet nevertheless thought “rather highly of the Platonic philosophy,” he suggested that Horkheimer “ought to be reminded that Plato advised that the testimony of slaves should be accepted only when they are subjected to torture” (77). And while he purported to share Horkheimer’s concern that, in the face of starvation in much of the world, a large part of its machinery nevertheless stands idle and hours are devoted to “moronic advertisements and to the production of instruments of destruction” (quoted from *ER*, 143), he confessed that “I can more easily stomach the sight of idle kilns than the stench of human bodies burning twenty-four hours a day” (review, 77), thus implying that Horkheimer’s arguments ultimately lent support to the same forces that had driven the institute into exile. He concluded that Horkheimer’s book itself must be regarded as a prime example of that “eclipse of reason” which “occurs whenever methods of inquiry are enforced which are contrary to known fact,” and while he seemed to grant Horkheimer’s argument that the task of philosophy is to foster a “mutual critique” of philosophical systems, he was adamant that such a mutual critique could “be based only upon a body of fact acceptable because arrived at by reasonable methods of inquiry” (review, 77). On the question of what, exactly, might constitute a “reasonable” method of inquiry, Negley was silent.

The review of *Eclipse of Reason* in the *Journal of Philosophy* was written not, as Lowenthal had hoped, by Horkheimer’s admirer Trinkaus but by a Columbia philosopher named John R. Everett.<sup>101</sup> While more temperate than Negley’s, in the end the review was no less critical. It is apparent that

100. The citation refers to an article by Berton Rouché, *New Yorker*, August 9, 1947.

101. John R. Everett, review of Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason*, *Journal of Philosophy* 45 (1948): 603–5. Everett did his graduate work at Columbia, obtaining an AM in economics in 1943 and a PhD in religion in 1945 (with a dissertation titled “Religion in Economics: A Study of John Bates Clark, Richard T. Ely [and] Simon N. Patten”). He also obtained a BD from Union Theological Seminary in 1944. He was a lecturer in philosophy at Columbia in 1943 and 1944 and was appointed assistant professor of philosophy in 1948; he resigned his position effective June 30, 1950, to become president of Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia, and in 1964 returned to New York as president of the New School for Social Research.

Everett was already familiar with Horkheimer's general position, and he began by observing that "Professor Horkheimer has written a book which states more clearly than he had done previously his fundamental thesis regarding the decline of the West. His avowed purpose is to show how the condition of Western philosophy indicates the disintegration of meaningful society. True to his dialectical heritage he sometimes blames philosophy for the social collapse, and at other times charges commercialized capitalism with responsibility for bad philosophy" (603). Everett took issue with the way Horkheimer had treated "naturalistic" approaches in the second chapter, arguing that he "appears ignorant of some of the most important work done by contemporary naturalistic philosophers. . . . His own rather thinly disguised left-wing Hegelianism allows him to lump all who disagree into categories called either positivism or neo-positivism" (605).

While Everett was willing to grant that it might be "possible to criticize contemporary naturalism fairly by saying that it has not yet developed theories of value which satisfy the crying needs of our time," he found Horkheimer's treatment of Dewey "particularly inappropriate," since it failed to take note of Dewey's "forthright social philosophy, based on an ethic of self-realization, and issuing in his concept of a 'new individualism'" (605). He closed the review by noting that, despite the "excesses" of the book's "attacks upon naturalism," Horkheimer attempted to "achieve a balance" in his conclusion by expressing reservations about potentially reactionary aspects of "objective reason." Everett was, however, unimpressed by the attempt, observing that what Horkheimer was seeking was nothing more than what "most balanced philosophers" have always sought: "A mutual critique which takes the best from rationalism and the best from empiricism" (605). He doubted that Horkheimer's work contributed much to this reconciliation. "To place all the ills of the present world on the doorstep of empiricism," Everett concluded, "is a rather jaundiced peace-offering" (605).

The reception of *Eclipse of Reason* could not have been very heartening for Horkheimer. Murphy's willingness to engage the book's arguments was lacking in the other reviewers. Everett appeared to be settling old scores—Lowenthal indicates in one of his letters that the Columbia philosophy department viewed Horkheimer with some suspicion<sup>102</sup>—and Negley's nasty polemic was hardly an invitation to dialogue. It must have been particularly troubling

102. In his letter to Horkheimer of January 4, 1943, Lowenthal reported that Tillich had told him that the department "minds two things. First, that both of you are living on much too large a scale while the assistants and collaborators have a very hard life and secondly, that terrible speculations have ruined the Institute's fortune" (folder 22).

that the reviewers had taken aim at what Horkheimer himself recognized as the book's weakest part: its failure to elaborate a compelling alternative to the opposition between "substantive" and "formal" reason that had been sketched in the opening chapters. Worse still, the additions Horkheimer had made to the manuscript to engage recent trends in American philosophy only exposed him to the charge that he had, at best, a superficial understanding of the traditions he criticized. Even Murphy's generous review bore no fruit: Horkheimer made no use of Murphy's work in any of his later writings, nor did Murphy ever speak of Horkheimer's work again.

Horkheimer's attempt to present a summary of his philosophy to an American audience thus fell almost entirely on deaf ears. Ultimately, however, this failure became, at most, a footnote in the story of the American exile of the Frankfurt School. Since the end of the war, Horkheimer had been exploring the possibility of reopening a "branch" of the institute at Frankfurt.<sup>103</sup> With negotiations over affiliations between the institute and American universities stalled, the prospect of a move to Frankfurt looked quite appealing. Horkheimer returned, bringing Adorno and Pollock with him; Lowenthal, Marcuse, and Neumann remained behind.

### *Epilogue: The Culture Industry Cuts Its Losses*

On July 27, 1952, the *New York Times* carried an advertisement from Gimbels department store that asked, "Ever see 49 TONS of books?" It went on to explain, "A book weighs about 1 pound. . . . thrifty Gimbels sells 98,000 pounds, all originally published at \$1 to \$6." Lest patrons of the store that promised "Nobody but Nobody Undersells Gimbels" suspect that the place was going highbrow, the ad continued:

Does Gimbels have 49 tons of books because we're bookish? Not at all—even if our copy writers do use Phi Beta keys to open their lockers. We've got lots of books because we can sell lots of books. Big things just naturally come to Gimbels (take our famous table sales!) If you can't read, there are picture books. If you can't cook, there are cook books. If your who-dun-it fan is yearning for fresh blood and gore, find enough mysteries to bury him to the ears in clues.<sup>104</sup>

103. See, e.g., Horkheimer to Lowenthal, July 29, 1946 (folder 25), which reports that Horkheimer's friend and neighbor William Dieterle, a Hollywood director and member of the institute's board, who was about to depart for Europe in search of new talent for the producer David O. Selznick, had promised to raise the issue of a possible branch office with officials at the University of Frankfurt.

104. *New York Times*, July 27, 1952. An earlier version of the ad, with a similar listing of books but without the discussion of their weight, had appeared in the *Times* of May 18, 1952.

Stretching down the page in three columns was a list of what could be had for the bargain price of two books for one dollar (single titles were fifty-nine cents) along with brief descriptions.

The list offers a snapshot of what Americans in the early 1950s could grab at bargain-basement prices. Under the heading “Current Events,” customers could pick up Vannevar Bush’s *Modern Arms and Free Men*—an account of “modern scientific warfare”—or John Fischer’s *Why They Behave Like Russians* (described as “an informed account”). The section labeled “Economics—Sociology—Law” included Ashley Montagu’s *Statement on Race* and Robert Payne’s *Zero—The Story of Terrorism*. Under “Sports—Hobbies—Humor” one could find books on how to play canasta and checkers as well as Frederick van de Water’s *In Defense of Worms* (which, it turns out, was a book about fishing). There were biographies, some expected (an illustrated life of Franklin Roosevelt), some surprising (Esther Meynell’s *Portrait of William Morris*). Finally, there was a section on religion and philosophy, where—along with *Christ in You* (“Automatic Writing of a Psychic”) and C. F. Ramuz’s *What Is Man?* (“A Christian answer to Communism”)—the following item was listed:

**Eclipse of Reason.** By Max Horkheimer. Decline of traditional values in modern life . . . . . Pub. at 2.75.

And so Horkheimer’s attempt to present “in epitome” the dark account of the modern world that he and Adorno had conceived under sunny California skies wound up with “49 TONS of books” on the bargain tables of a New York department store. Some New Yorkers, interested in learning something about the “decline of traditional values in modern life,” may have paid their money and taken their chances. One wonders what they made of it. Perhaps a few of those who shopped at Gimbels in the summer of 1952 discovered that the bag of books they purchased included a message in a bottle, bearing tidings from “unknown spiritual friends” who now lived an ocean away.