



*Dialectic of Enlightenment*

**This is a five-week summer course that will be conducted via Zoom.** Zoom details will be emailed to participants. The course is a reading group.

**The book: Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*.** The book appeared in 1947 (although the publishing history is complex). The book comprises five interconnected sections together with some prefaces and some ‘Notes and Sketches’. The overarching theme is that the Enlightenment is destroying itself. Particular themes include: ‘the culture industry’ (as ‘mass deception’); anti-Semitism; morality and ‘the dark writers of the bourgeoisie’ (who include Nietzsche and de Sade); and what Wittgenstein called philosophy’s craving for generality. The chapters are fairly dense, slightly aphoristic, and unrespectful of disciplinary boundaries.

**Editions.** There is an older translation by J. Cumming and a newer, fair-bit-better translation by E. Jephcott. The Jephcott edition is published by Stanford University Press (2002); its ISBN (for the paperback edition) is 9780804736336. That Jephcott edition, which is the one I recommend, is reasonably priced. Stanford has an electronic edition but I do not know its quality. (There is also the German version, available from Suhrkamp and perhaps from other publishers.)

**In our first week** I will give some introduction to the book and we will discuss the various prefaces and the section that is entitled, ‘The Concept of Enlightenment’. We will be reading some thirty pages each week.

**Secondary literature.** (For the keen.) Probably the best general introductory book on Adorno is Thomson’s *Adorno: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Thomson devotes fewer than ten pages to *Dialectic of Enlightenment* but further parts of his book are relevant to it. Several chapters of Cook’s *Adorno: Key Concepts* are relevant too.

TUTOR            Dr Nicholas Joll.

DATES            *May 6<sup>th</sup> – June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021.* (Five sessions.)

DAY & TIME    *Thursdays, 2–4pm* (with a break in the middle of each session).

VENUE           Zoom.

COST            £27 (twenty-seven pounds), payable to the Institute (either in person – if the Institute is open – or by posting a cheque or else via the Institute’s website).