

# Aspects of the New Right-Wing Extremism

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So, ladies and gentlemen, I will not attempt to present a theory of right-wing extremism with any claim to comprehensiveness but, rather, I will highlight with some informal observations a few things of which you may not all be aware. It is thus not my intention to invalidate other theoretical interpretations, simply to add a little to what is generally thought and known about these matters.

In 1959 I gave a lecture entitled 'The Meaning of Working through the Past', in which I developed the thesis that the reason for right-wing extremism, or the potential for such a right-wing extremism, which was not yet truly visible at the time, is that the social conditions for fascism continue to exist. So I will work on the assumption, ladies and gentlemen, that, despite the collapse of fascism itself, the conditions for fascist movements are still socially, if not politically, present.

Here I am thinking especially of the still prevailing tendency towards concentration of capital, which one can calculate away with all manner of statistical arts but which cannot seriously be doubted. At the same time, this tendency towards concentration still creates the possibility of constantly downgrading strata of society that were clearly bourgeois in terms of their subjective class consciousness and want to cling to, and possibly reinforce, their privileges and social status. These groups still tend towards a hatred of socialism, or what they call socialism; that is, they lay the blame for their own potential downgrading not on the apparatus that causes it, but on those who were critical towards the system in which they once had a status, at least in a traditional sense. Whether they are still critical and have the same practices today is another matter. Now, the transition to socialism or, more modestly put, even just to socialist organizations has always been very difficult for these groups, and today, at least in Germany – and naturally my experiences relate primarily to Germany – it is even harder than it used to be. This is mostly because the SPD, the German social democratic party, is identified with a Keynesianism, a Keynesian liberalism that, on the one hand, deflects the potential for a change in social structures that was part of classical Marxian theory and, on the other hand, increases the threat of impoverishment, at least as a final consequence, for the social strata to which I referred. Let me remind you of the simple fact of the creeping, yet very noticeable inflation, which is a consequence precisely of Keynesian expansionism.

Let me also recall a thesis that I developed in that study eight years ago, and which has meanwhile begun to gain relevance considerably, namely that, despite full employment and all such symptoms of prosperity, the spectre of technological unemployment continues to haunt society to such a degree that in the age of automation, which is less advanced in Central Europe but will undoubtedly catch up, even the people who stand within the production process already feel potentially superfluous – I put this very starkly – they really feel potentially unemployed. In addition there is the fear of the East, both because of the lower standard of living there and because of the lack of freedom, which is experienced in very direct and real terms by the

people, the masses too, and also, at least until recently, the feeling of a foreign threat.

We must now remind ourselves of the remarkable situation that currently prevails with regard to the problem of nationalism in the age of the great power blocs. For, within these blocs, nationalism lives on as an organ of collective interest groups within the large-scale groups under discussion. It is beyond doubt that, in both socio-psychological and real terms, there is a very widespread fear of being absorbed by these blocs and, in the process, being severely impaired in one's material existence. Thus, when it comes to the potential of right-wing extremism in agriculture, there is no doubt an extremely great fear of the EEC and the consequences of the EEC for the agricultural market. At the same time, however – and this touches on the antagonistic character of the new nationalism, or right-wing extremism – there is something fictitious about it if one looks at the grouping of the world of today into these few oversized blocs, where the individual nations and states really play only a secondary part. No one really believes in that any more. The individual nation's freedom of movement is heavily restricted by its integration into the large power blocs. One should not, however, draw the primitive conclusion from this that, because it is now obsolete, nationalism no longer plays a significant role; on the contrary, it is very often the case that convictions and ideologies - precisely when the objective situation has deprived them of substance - take on their demonic, their genuinely destructive character. The witch trials, after all, took place not at the height of Thomism but during the Counter-Reformation, and something similar is probably the case with, if I may term it thus, the 'pathic' nationalism of today. This aspect of selling something to people in which they themselves do not entirely believe was, incidentally, already evident in Hitler's day. And this fluctuation, this ambivalence between an overwrought nationalism and the doubt about it, which has to be covered up so that one can convince oneself and others, so to speak – this could already be observed back then. Now, let me draw a few initial conclusions from these rather basic theses. For I think that what I have told you – that it is essentially about a fear of the consequences of overall social developments – explains what has been observed everywhere by polling institutes and was also confirmed by our own work, namely that the adherents of old and new fascism can be found in all areas of today's society. I think the very widespread belief that all these movements are a specifically petty bourgeois phenomenon, as observed recently in French Poujadism, is accurate in terms of their social character, shall we say, but that this thesis is inaccurate when it comes to their distribution, even though certain petty bourgeois groups are undoubtedly susceptible, especially small merchants who are directly threatened by the concentration of the retail sector in department stores and similar institutions. Aside from them, another major group is the farmers, who are in a constant crisis, and I would think that, until the agricultural problem is solved in a radical way, one that is not artificial and based on subsidy and problematic in itself, until a sensible and rational collectivization of agriculture is achieved, this virulent breeding-ground will remain fertile. Beyond this, however, these movements also show something like... ... an increasing discrepancy between provincial and urban areas. Specific groups, such as the small winery owners in the German Palatinate region, also seem especially susceptible. As far as the industrial backing of these movements is concerned, we do not yet have genuinely concrete evidence of this. One must be very careful in all these matters not to think too schematically, for example by applying the schema of industry pushing fascism – one must not operate carelessly with such models. One must also bear in mind that fascism, whose apparatus always has a tendency to take on a life of its own in relation to the central economic interests, is not actually convenient for big industry, and that fascism was adopted in Germany as a last resort, at the moment of an extremely

severe economic crisis that evidently left the Ruhr industry, which had gone bankrupt, with no alternative. Of course there are old Nazi cadres. But here too, I would say – based merely on observations that have been made in empirical social research – that one should not think one is dealing simply with the so-called incorrigibles, the type of people we merely shrug our shoulders about. Young followers are undoubtedly being attracted too, especially the kind who experienced the collapse in 1945 as fifteen-year-olds, shall we say, and developed this extremely strong feeling that ‘Germany has to be on top again.’ Perhaps I can say from a socio-psychological perspective, though goodness knows I do not consider these to be primarily psychological matters, that in 1945 there was no true panic, no true breakdown of identification with the regime and discipline as took place in Italy, but that it remained coherent to the end. Identification with the system was never really radically destroyed in Germany, and this is naturally one of the possibilities: that the groups I am referring to can take this up again. One very often hears, especially when it comes to such categories as the ‘eternally incorrigible’ and similar consolatory phrases, the claim that there is a residue of incorrigibles or fools, a so-called lunatic fringe, as they term it in America, in every democracy. And then there is a certain quietist bourgeois comfort in reciting that to oneself. I think the only response to this is that, yes, something like this can be observed to a varying degree in every so-called democracy in the world, but only as an expression that, in terms of its content, its socio-economic content, democracy has not yet become truly and fully concrete anywhere but is still formal. In that sense, one might refer to the fascist movements as the wounds, the scars of a democracy that, to this day, has not yet lived up to its own concept. Furthermore, to correct certain clichéd notions about these matters, I would also say that the relationship between these movements and the economy is a structural relationship, that it lies in that tendency towards concentration and immiseration, but that one should not imagine it as a short-term phenomenon, and that, if one simply equates right-wing extremism with economic developments, one can arrive at very wrong conclusions. Thus the successes of the NPD in Germany were already somewhat alarming before the economic setback, and in a sense anticipated - or, if you will, discounted it. One might say that they forestalled a fear and terror that only subsequently became truly explicit. I think this reference to anticipating terror touches on something very central that, as far as I can see, is given far too little attention in the usual views about right-wing extremism, namely the very complex and difficult relationship with the feeling of social catastrophe that prevails here. One might speak of a distortion of Marx’s theory of collapse that takes place in this very crippled and false consciousness. On the one hand, on the rational side of things, they ask, ‘What will happen if there is a big crisis?’ - and that is where these movements are attractive. On the other hand, they also have something in common with the type of manipulated astrology one finds today, which I consider an extremely important and typical socio-psychological symptom, because, in a sense, they want the catastrophe, they feed off apocalyptic fantasies of the kind that, as it happens, could also be found among the Nazi leadership, as documents show. If I had to speak psychoanalytically, I would say that, of the forces mobilized here, the appeal to the unconscious desire for disaster, for catastrophe, is by no means the least significant in these movements. But I would add - and I am speaking especially to those of you who are rightly sceptical about any merely psychological interpretation of social and political phenomena - that this behaviour is by no means purely psychologically motivated; it also has an objective basis. Someone who is unable to see anything ahead of them and does not want the social foundation to change really has no alternative but, like Richard Wagner’s Wotan, to say, ‘Do you know what Wotan wants? The end.’ This person, from the perspective of their own social situation, longs for demise - though not the demise of their own group, as far as possible, the demise of all. If I could

say one more thing about the specifically German aspect of the rise of the NPD, the function of the concept of organization surely plays a very important part here. For the first time, alone by adapting its name to those of the other parties, the NPD carried out something like an organizational mass appeal without the sectarian whiff that clung to the NPD's extremist forerunners, the Socialist Reich Party and the rest of them. What works in Germany - and this seems to be a specifically German element that cannot automatically be transferred to Austria - is something tightly and centrally organized, whereas anything that gives even remotely the impression of a sect, that does not present itself from the start as having all manner of support, is viewed with suspicion in Germany and cannot have any mass appeal. It is one of the basic tenets of German ideology that there must be no loners. It is no coincidence that people repeatedly quoted Hindenburg as saying, 'Be united, united!'; and the fight against the 'party nuisance' - the idea that political compromise per se is already something degenerate - this is such a deep-seated belief in the German bourgeoisie that to this day, even with the change of political form, little about this ideology has changed. So people want to have support behind them, and that explains the major role of the so-called bandwagon effect, as the Americans term it, namely that these movements always act as if they have already had great successes and attract people through the pretence that they offer guarantees for the future and have all manner of backing. No doubt a further element in this unity complex is the fact that, in Germany, the nation-state is something that was realized only very belatedly, compared above all to England and France. And the people in Germany seem to live in perpetual fear for their national identity, a fear that clearly contributes to an overvaluation of national consciousness. This would also explain the panic that seizes Germans at the thought of division. One should not underestimate these movements on account of their low intellectual level and lack of theory. I think it would show a very weak political eye if one concluded from this that they are unsuccessful. Rather, what characterizes these movements is an extraordinary perfection of certain methods, first of all of propagandist methods in the broadest sense, combined with the blindness, indeed abstruseness, of the aims they pursue. And I think that precisely this constellation of rational means and irrational ends, if I can put it in such a simplified form, in a sense corresponds to the overall tendency of civilization, which leads to such a perfection of techniques and means while the overall social purpose falls by the wayside. The ingenuity of the propaganda used by these parties and movements is that it balances out the difference, the unquestionable difference between the real interests and the fraudulent aims they espouse. It is the very substance of the matter, just as it was with the Nazis. When the means increasingly become substitutes for aims, one can almost say that, in these extreme right-wing movements, propaganda actually constitutes the substance of politics. And it is no coincidence that the so-called leaders of German National Socialism, the likes of Hitler and Goebbels, were first and foremost propagandists, and that their productivity and imagination went into propaganda. I do not, incidentally, think one should exaggerate the conflicts in the controlling body of the German NPD. If my impression is correct, the so-called hard or radical wing has triumphed. Here we should recall the former relationship between the Nazi Party and Hugenberg's German Nationalists. They still have no mass base, and the mass base seems to go hand in hand with that element of disaster politics, of self-exaggeration, if you like, of that element of delusion. In this context it is also interesting, and should be noted by political scientists and especially by the actual politicians who analyse these things, despite the disasters, have a peculiar constancy; that, despite the great catastrophe, something like the fact that the German Nationalists were defeated in the power struggle with the National Socialists seems to be repeating itself in the power struggles within the NPD. Political groupings outlast systems and disasters. In Germany, for example, old National Socialist centres like

northern Hesse, where there was already a wild anti-Semitic movement in the 1880s, and northern Bavaria seem to be especially susceptible. Groups that define themselves almost automatically in opposition to both conservatism and the left, because of this double front, tend towards right-wing extremism, and I should imagine that you have observed this structure in Austria too. Of course, one should not fail to mention all the manipulation and coercion of these movements, the fact that they are somewhat akin to the ghost of a ghost. It would be wrong, and it would be hysterical, if one imagined these things in Germany today as a form of spontaneous mass movement. But certainly such a movement can develop if the potential offered by the objective conditions is seized and exploited in escalating situations. And in this case it is no doubt true that the extremist groups gain the upper hand through a dynamic that repeatedly shows itself in these situations. We have not reached that point yet, but, on the other hand, one should not take the numbers arrived at by the pollsters - which are, incidentally, far from insignificant - as invariants. The fact that people do not fully believe in the cause does not make things any better. This does offer a possibility to develop a defence - one can certainly use these contradictions, and this only partial belief, to combat such tendencies - but herein also lies the possibility, the potential of these movements themselves: they grow into delusional systems, and there can no longer be any doubt that so-called mass movements of a fascist nature have a very deep structural connection to delusional systems. One important factor here is the anthropological type, which I referred to in *The Authoritarian Personality* as the 'manipulative type' - at a time, incidentally, when all the material about the likes of Himmler, Höss or Eichmann had not yet even come to light, working purely with the material that we had gathered in our empirical social research. So these are people who are simultaneously cold, without relationships, strictly technological in their mindset - but also insane in a certain sense, as Himmler was to a prototypical degree. And this strange unity of a delusional system and technological perfection, this seems to be on the rise and once again playing a decisive part in these movements. On the other hand, ladies and gentlemen, one must naturally place great emphasis on the differences compared to the Weimar period if one is to avoid thinking in schematic analogies again. The first thing to mention is the after-effect of defeat. This defeat, however, was covered up by the period of prosperity. And this is where a decisive opposition to these things can begin. One should not operate primarily with ethical appeals, with appeals to humanity, for the word 'humanity' itself, and everything associated with it, sends the people in question into a rage; they see it as fear and weakness - just as, in particular incidents I know about, the mention of Auschwitz led to calls of 'Hooray for Auschwitz' and the mere mention of Jewish names already caused laughter. The only thing - I will jump to this now, because I think it is one of the most crucial aspects of how to resist this movement - the only thing that really strikes me as effective is to warn the potential followers of right-wing extremism about its own consequences, to convey to them that this politics will inevitably lead its own followers to their doom too, and that this doom was part of it from the outset, just as Hitler started saying, at an early stage, "Then I'd rather put a bullet in my head", and then repeated the claim at every opportunity. So if one is serious about opposing these things, one must refer to the central interests of those who are targeted by the propaganda. This applies especially to young people, whom one must warn about every kind of drill, about the restriction of their privacy and their lifestyle. And one must warn them about the cult of a so-called order that does not answer to reason, especially the concept of discipline, which is presented as an end in itself, without anyone asking 'Discipline for what?' And obviously the fetishization of everything military expressed in such lovely phrases as 'soldierly man' belongs in this context. A further difference one must keep in mind is that of political intertwinement. Today, Germany is not a political subject in anything like the way it was in the Weimar

period. There is even a risk that precisely this movement might remove Germany from world politics, from the tendency of world politics as such, and completely provincialize it. On the one hand, this places far greater real-world restrictions on such a politics, unless other and far more powerful countries also experience a triumph of right-wing extremism. On the other hand, that very fact stirs up anger. And this anger is likely to be vented especially in what one calls the 'cultural sector'. I would therefore argue - to say nothing about the direct interests that a cultured person has in these matters - that, from the political perspective too, the symptoms of reactionary culture and forced provincialization must be observed with particular vigilance, because this - simply because these movements have no room for manoeuvre in foreign policy terms - is the area in which they can rage most and will surely try and try even more to rage. There is a whole array of designated enemies. One of these is the imago of the communist. In the Weimar Republic, the Communist Party was very strong in numbers, and there was at least a certain plausibility in the political rivalry between the Nazis and the communists, although the deployment of the Reichswehr undoubtedly inflated the true significance of what was called the 'communist threat'. Today there is no longer a communist party in Germany, and this has really given communism a sort of mythical character - that is, it has become completely abstract; and this peculiar abstractness means that anything that somehow does not fit is subsumed under this all-purpose term 'communism' and opposed as something communist. The notorious 'Congo Müller', for example, a man who lived in Germany, a German who had evidently played an especially gruesome part among the mercenaries in the Congo, declared that, wherever in the world communism needed to be opposed, he would immediately join the fight, because this was in keeping with democracy. Now, this is divorced from any knowledge about the matter. Communism has been reduced to a bugbear. One factor in this - as another bugbear - is the concept of materialism, though people confuse, in a very primitive fashion, the materialism of the pursuit of profit and the interest in material advantages with the materialist theory of history, thus behaving as if those who want to change this system were nothing but vulgar materialists who simply want more. Incidentally, I consider it one of the more peculiar divisions that still exist within class consciousness - and we have quite concrete material on this - that those who identify with bourgeois class consciousness in the broadest sense consider themselves idealists, whereas the workers, who are still the ones who have to foot the bill, show a certain kind of scepticism that has little to do with the theory but stands in extremely sharp opposition to the ideological nature of that so-called idealism, which is a vulgar idealism - for there is not only vulgar materialism but also vulgar idealism. Then another *bête noire*, of course - as long as one cannot be openly anti-Semitic and as long as one cannot murder the Jews, because that has already happened - consists of the intellectuals, who are especially hated. The phrase 'left-wing intellectual' is another one of these bugbears. It appeals first of all to the German distrust towards anyone who does not hold some office, some established position, who is viewed as a kind of vagrant in life, an 'air person', as one used to call it in Poland. According to this ideology, whoever does not participate in the division of labour, whoever is not bound by their profession to a particular position and thus also to quite particular ideas, but has instead preserved their freedom of spirit, this person is a kind of rascal who needs to be brought into line. The age-old resentment of the manual labourer towards intellectual work also plays a part here, of course, but it has been shifted and become entirely unrecognizable to itself. Because these movements, which, as I say, are essentially no more than techniques of power and by no means based on any developed theory - because they are helpless in the face of the spirit, they attack the bearers of spirit. As Valéry, who can hardly be accused of being left-wing, so eloquently put it: 'If someone is cleverer than oneself, he is a sophist.' Here

the separation of so-called rationality and so-called feeling is reified. In this context I cannot refrain from pointing out that the observations I made about the role of the concept of the existential and existence in existential philosophy, at least in its Central European manifestations, those observations I made in *The Jargon of Authenticity* have been confirmed. In a recent polemic against a professor who does not suit their agenda, for example, the right-wing extremists said, 'We will not have any discussions with her; it is a matter of existential opposites.' So you can see from this how directly the concept of the existential is placed in the service of irrationalism, of the rejection of rational argumentation, of discursive thought as such. And I do think the toxic climate of existential philosophy that prevails in German-language thought bears a considerable share of the blame for the preparation of anti-intellectualism among intellectuals. Obviously, in spite of everything, anti-Semitism continues to be a 'plank of the platform'. It outlived the Jews, one might say, and that is the source of its own ghostly nature. In particular, feelings of guilt are fended off by rationalization: 'There must be something in it, otherwise they wouldn't have killed them.' Now, of course, there has been official legislation to make these things taboo. But even the taboo about mentioning the Jews becomes a means of anti-Semitic incitement, with a wink and a nudge: 'We're not allowed to say it, but we understand each other. We all know what we mean.' And, in this technique of allusion, the mere mention of a Jewish name is already sufficient to create certain effects. One technique in the new manipulation of anti-Semitism to which I would like to draw your attention, so that you can perhaps study it a little more closely and resist it, is cumulative effect. A publication like the *Soldaten-Zeitung*, that is, the *National-Zeitung*, has developed a remarkable virtuosity in never writing anything in one issue that is extreme enough to warrant intervention based on the current, quite firm laws against anti-Semitism or neo-Nazism. On the other hand, if one looks at a number of issues in succession, one must truly be stricken with the spirit of formalism not to see what they mean. And this danger, this form of allusion that has been elevated to a sophisticated technique, is one of those things that should not only be studied closely and pinpointed; one should surely also try to find legal means by which a democratic state would be able to intervene. So, as far as this ideology goes, the law prevents it from expressing itself fully. One might say that all ideological expressions of right-wing extremism are characterized by a constant conflict between not being allowed to say something and those things that, as one agitator recently described it, are intended to bring audiences to boiling point - and it did not succeed in this, you will be reassured to know. This conflict is not only external, however, for the requirement to adapt to democratic rules also leads to a certain change in behaviour, and in this sense there is an element - how shall I put it? - an element of inner division that these movements tend to have in their revenant stage. Openly anti-democratic aspects are removed. On the contrary: they constantly invoke true democracy and accuse the others of being anti-democratic. And there is a certain contradiction in the concessions to democratic rules, as the demagogic element can no longer be indulged in so unreservedly. Recall the problem of intra-party democracy, for example, which is guaranteed by the German constitution. Where intra-party democracy is violated, a party risks being banned. If it is maintained, however, this political form is essentially irreconcilable with what is being espoused. This is another aspect that should be taken into account in strategies for opposition. In its content, of course, this ideology, in so far as it is an independent, fully developed ideology - and I consider the ideological component entirely secondary to the political will to have one's turn - is essentially based on Nazi ideology. When one reads the documents, it is amazing how little in the way of new elements has been added to the old repertoire, how secondary and rehashed it is. At most, they have tried to usurp European integration, to speak of a 'European nation', but this has evidently proved highly unappealing for

reasons of nationalism, which is an attempt to assert oneself in the midst of integration and is a stronger force. So here we find another form of contradiction. Something that plays a very important part in the ideology - and here I am genuinely referring to a scientific problem, albeit a problem to which I cannot presume to offer you any real solution - is anti-Americanism, which was prefigured in the talk of 'plutocratic' nations and such things in the Nazi period. In keeping with this anti-Americanism, it attempts to usurp the idea of Europe as a 'third power'. It is difficult to say what is behind anti-Americanism. It probably stems partly from something that is genuinely felt, namely that, even under formal democracy, people feel deprived of the full freedom of political choice by the system of blocs - and this is not only a feeling. I would like to point out here - perhaps I can say this in passing - that by no means all elements of this ideology are simply untrue, but that true elements are also used in the service of an untrue ideology, and that the art of opposing this lies substantially in picking out the abuse of truth for untruth and resisting it. The most important technique whereby the truth is placed in the service of untruth is that true or accurate observations are taken out of their context, isolated, for example, by saying, 'Life under Hitler was fine until he started that stupid war', without seeing that the entire boom between '33 and '39 was only possible because of the hectic war economy, by the preparations for war. And there are a hundred similar things. So this follows on from the whole complex around autonomy, which is after all the aim of democracy but is not fully realized in the prevailing system. If I am not mistaken, some of the most effective slogans of neo-fascism use phrases like 'Now one can choose again.' Or that - in a variation on a slogan by Goebbels, with his reference to the 'system parties' - they speak of the 'licence parties' - that is, the parties that were licensed by the former occupying powers. And this was incredibly effective, because people had the feeling that now, with this movement that seeks precisely to abolish freedom, they are regaining their freedom, their freedom of decision and spontaneity. I think it would be important in particular to examine very closely this motive, which is very much interwoven with that of anti-Americanism. A fundamental aspect of this ideology is its fragmentary nature. Many 'planks' such as the eastward expansion, imperialism in the true sense, have fallen away willy-nilly. The prospect of 'tomorrow the whole world' is completely absent, which gives the whole thing rather a lack of impetus and makes it rely more on desperation than was subliminally the case in National Socialism. But let me say again that there was never a truly, fully developed theory in fascism; it was always implied that what mattered was power, conceptless praxis and, ultimately, unconditional domination, and that spirit of the kind that expresses itself in theory was secondary by comparison. And that in turn gave these movements an ideological flexibility, of course, that can be observed so widely. This is also part of the Zeitgeist: the predominance of a conceptless praxis, which also has consequences for propaganda. Let me close with some reflections on propaganda, which, as I hinted earlier, I really consider the centre, even the matter itself in a certain sense. This propaganda is less concerned with the dissemination of an ideology which, as I told you, is too thin to draw in the masses. So propaganda here is primarily a technique of mass psychology. It is based on the model of the authority-bound personality, in the same way today as in the time of Hitler or in the movements of the 'lunatic fringe' in America or anywhere else. The unity lies in this appeal to the authority-bound personality. One hears time and again that these movements all promise something, and that is true as a characteristic of the lack of theory. But it is false in the sense that there is a very specific, emphatic unity in this appeal to the authority-bound character. You will never find a single utterance that does not correspond to the schema of the authority-bound personality. And if one uncovers this structure of the appeal to the authority-bound personality, this truly sends the right-wing extremists into a rage, and I think this constitutes a degree of



proof that one has struck a sore point in this structure. So the unconscious tendencies that feed the authority-bound personality are not brought to light by this propaganda; on the contrary, they are forced even deeper into the unconscious; they are kept artificially unconscious. Consider the excessive significance of so-called symbols that characterizes all these movements. But if one brings these things up, people suddenly become very scientific; they explain that the evidence of the authority-bound personality, that this cannot be proved statistically with the necessary exactitude, and so on and so forth, and they use the methods of a perverted positivism to inhibit experience, living experience. This, incidentally, is the point at which the problems I had the privilege of speaking to you about last night directly converge with those I am discussing today. Psychoanalysis is hated most of all, of course, along with anti-intellectualism, the fear that the unconscious will become conscious, and the authoritarian character, which form a kind of syndrome together. This propaganda technique rests on both certain formal traits and varying isolated individual topics. It has long been my conviction - and Horkheimer and I have already worked on this particular problem in America - that there are a relatively small number of recurring, standardized and completely objectified tricks that are very poor and thin in themselves yet, by being constantly repeated, gain a certain propagandist value for these movements. On the formal side of things, I would first like to draw your attention to something one must take into account in one's opposition, and it is not such an easy matter. It is the appeal to concretism, as I call it. The approach - and this is evidently cultivated especially by the NPD in Germany - is always to work with an accumulation of data, especially numbers, to which one cannot usually respond, with an undertone like this: 'What? Any child knows that! And don't you know Rabbi Nussbaum once demanded that all Germans be castrated?' So, completely mad and fantastic stories. I invented this example, I should add, but the arguments are of that kind. They boast of knowledge that is difficult to verify but which, because they are unverifiable, lend the person who presents them a special form of authority. I think it is therefore wise to be especially vigilant whenever people operate with such seemingly very concrete assertions. This is combined with the famous Hitlerian technique of the bare-faced lie. Thus, at German election rallies, the NPD exaggerated the payments, the compensation payments to Israel, tenfold - and systematically so. But then it came out, and there were energetic demonstrations against it, and they are now having considerable problems because of it. Something that belongs in the same context is the 'salami method', as some term it with a flippant German expression - that is, cutting off a piece from a complex, then another and then another. So, for example, using the pseudo-scientific pedantry peculiar to these movements, they cast doubt on the number of murdered Jews. And first they say, 'Well, it wasn't six million, only five and a half', and from that point it soon becomes dubious whether any were murdered at all, and finally things are presented as if it had actually been the other way around. So I think that one should view these matters with particular vigilance. A further important characteristic of this way of thinking - and this is the complement to concretism, as it were - is formalism. Especially a formalism of the juridical kind. For example, saying that the Munich Agreement was signed voluntarily by the Western powers and is therefore still legally valid, including all the resulting claims - including the Sudetenland, for example, and whatever else. Then I think I have already said - no, I have not spoken about it yet, it is something that I am not sure applies also to Austria; it definitely applies to Germany, and I could imagine that it is also an immediate concern here. It is what I call the trick of the official or the certified, by which I mean that these groups use nomenclature that suggests they are approved and supported by some official authorities. For example, the most widely read rightist magazine, which is aimed at students, is called Studenten-Anzeiger, which creates the impression, to the naive observer, that it is produced by a student organization with the

backing of the students, whereas it is actually a purely propagandist affair. Similarly, the word 'German' is monopolized. Every conceivable thing is referred to as 'German', while the opposing parties, simply because they are at home in Germany and operate there, are just as German as those who monopolize the word. But I would still like to address one trick here, for it is by no means a mere trick but something one seriously encounters time and again. This is the trick of 'One has to have an idea.' It is something one also finds among relatively harmless and merely rather simple people, who say, 'Well, what is to become of our young people? These young people have no idea, and at least they give them an idea.' Now, I spoke to you earlier of vulgar idealism. I think this is really the prototype of what I meant by vulgar idealism, because here the concept of the idea is pragmatically turned into its opposite. That is, the idea is meant to exist not because it is true, not for its objective substance, but only for the pragmatic reason that one allegedly cannot live without an idea, that it is supposed to be good to have an idea. The actual content of the idea does not matter. But if one simply bangs on the table in the right way and says, 'We have an idea', then this is already an effective surrogate for such an idea. So I would say that here, whenever one hears the call 'We must have an idea again', one should also be especially vigilant. As far as nationalism is concerned, it does not usually appear in a general form in the propaganda but concentrates very skilfully on certain allergic points. For example, the claim that Germans suffer discrimination in the world, to which one must quite simply respond that, after the monstrousness of what happened, it is actually surprising how little resentment has remained, how quickly it was forgotten. Or they speak of denigrating national symbols, something that then leads directly to fits of rage and acts of violence. The autonomy of the symbol in relation to what it represents is another one of these allergic points that should be very precisely analysed. The reason is probably that, in addition to the expressive content of these symbols, there are implicit meanings quite different from the merely national element they supposedly stand for, and that the unconscious reacts to quite different threats when these symbols are allegedly not adequately respected, as this propaganda pretends. There is a similar tendency to brand those people who recognize the Oder - Neisse line as 'traitors to the country'. There have been similar things before - one spoke of 'fulfilment politicians' in the Weimar Republic. This is the complex one could term 'punitiveness' towards others. Recently a major institution of public communication in Germany had a meeting with a few NPD leaders to find out what concrete suggestions they actually had. And the only concrete suggestion that came out of it - and this is very telling - was that the death sentence for the murderers of taxi drivers should be reintroduced. That is, I think that sounds very laughable and insignificant, but it shows how significant a part sadism cloaked in legal ideas continues to play in these matters. I will refrain from analysing in detail some of the other tricks that are typical of the current situation. Such as the phrase, 'So we're not allowed to do what every negro state is allowed to?' - which raises the question of what that actually is. Or the claim that German business has sold out to foreign capital at the same time as there is a lack of capital within German industry. Or the claim of foreign domination through guest workers - when the need for labour power, despite increasing unemployment, is in fact so great in a whole range of professions, the most menial ones, that this need for foreign workers - I prefer 'foreign worker' to 'guest worker', for I consider 'guest worker' an ideological term - this need continues. Then obviously the whole complex of 'degenerate art', 'cleanliness', 'clean canvas' and whatever else is connected to these things. This area also includes the complex 'enough admissions of guilt', which were never really demanded anyway. Then the claim that National Socialism was initially healthy and then 'got out of hand'. Generally the doctrine of the healthy core. Then the claim of tallying up guilt. And finally the polemic against the Nazi trials; Fritz Bauer once

observed quite correctly that the same people who insist on reintroducing the death penalty demand that the murderers of Auschwitz go unpunished, something one should definitely point out in this context, though I will not deny that there is a very serious contradiction here, a contradiction I have racked my brains to address theoretically. Now, let me say just a few more words about the matter of resistance. I think the 'hush hush' tactic - that is, the tactic of keeping quiet about these things - has never paid off, and this development has surely advanced much too far today for it to work. I have already told you that one should appeal to the real interests instead of moralizing; I can only repeat it once more. Perhaps I can also remind you of one of the findings from our Authoritarian Personality research in America, which revealed that even prejudiced personalities, who were certainly authoritarian, repressive, politically and economically reactionary, when it came to their own transparent interests, transparent to themselves, reacted quite differently. So they were mortal enemies of the Roosevelt administration, for example, but with those institutions that were of direct benefit to them, such as tenant protection or cheaper medicines, that was where their anti-Rooseveltianism immediately stopped and they behaved relatively rationally. This split in people's consciousness strikes me as one of the most promising points of departure to counter the developments I have discussed. A further aspect is the turn inwards. What I mean is that, in opposing these movements, one tries to convey that the substance of this entire complex of authority-bound personality and extreme right-wing ideology is not, in reality, the designated enemy, not about the people they rage against; rather, it is about elements of projection. That is, the real subjects of a study that would need to be understood and changed are the right-wing extremists, not those against whom they mobilize their hatred. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I am not so naive as to think that one can achieve a great deal with the people in question simply through this turn inwards, for it is a substantial part - there is no more time for me to explain in detail why that is - it is a substantial part of this syndrome that these authority-bound characters are inaccessible, that they will not let anything get through to them. Nonetheless - and I must ask you to forgive me if I refer to The Authoritarian Personality once again - nonetheless it transpired that, simply by making a socio-psychological problem out of these personalities who behave in this way and not any other, by reflecting on them, and on the connections between their ideology and their psychological, their socio-psychological structures, by making this a problem, a certain naivety in the social climate has been eliminated and a certain detoxification has taken place. And I could imagine that this might be a promising approach in the various German-speaking countries too. Finally, one should identify the tricks I have spoken of, give them very drastic names, describe them precisely, describe their implications and thus attempt to immunize the masses against these tricks, as it were, for nobody wants to be the fool - or, as they would say in Vienna, nobody wants to be the Wurzen. And it can certainly be shown that the entire thing is based on a gigantic psychological Wurztechnik, a gigantic psychological rip-off. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I repeat that I am aware that right-wing extremism is not a psychological and ideological problem but a very real and political one. Yet the factually wrong, untrue nature of its own substance forces it to operate with ideological means, which in this case take the form of propagandist means. And that is why, aside from the political struggle by purely political means, one must confront it on its very own turf. But we must not fight lies with lies, we must not try to be just as clever as it is, but we must counteract it with the full force of reason, with the genuinely unideological truth. Perhaps some of you will ask me, or would like to ask me, what I think about the future of right-wing extremism. I think this is the wrong question, for it is much too contemplative. This way of thinking, which views such things from the outset like natural disasters about which one makes predictions, like whirlwinds or meteorological disasters, this already shows a form

of resignation whereby one essentially eliminates oneself as a political subject; it expresses a harmfully spectator-like relationship with reality. How these things will continue, and the responsibility for how they will continue, that ultimately lies in our hands. Thank you for listening.