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# Adorno on Authoritarianism and Its Transformations in the Current Far-Right Discourse

**Abstract:** This article proposes a reading into the discourse of the current far-right, utilizing and updating Frankfurt School's studies on authoritarianism. In the first part, the Finns Party is focused on and interpreted as a contemporary far-right party with structurally two-fold communication model and an audience that pertains to more radical and conservative followers. In the second part, this reading is given depth by examining it in the light of post-war Critical Theory, especially Theodor Adorno's views on language, capitalism, and the unconscious, and how these become connected in ethnocentric agitation.

**Keywords:** Far-Right, Discourse Theory, Critical Theory, Theodor Adorno, Authoritarianism

## Adorno o avtoritarnosti in njenih preoblikovanjih v sodobnem diskurzu skrajne desnice

**Izvleček:** Članek podaja v branje diskurz trenutne skrajne desnice z uporabo in posodabljanjem študij frankfurtske šole o avtoritarizmu. V prvem delu je osredotočenost na Finski stranki, ki je interpretirana kot sodobna skrajno desna stranka s strukturno dvojnimi komunikacijskim modelom in publiko, ki pripada bolj radikalnim in konservativnim privržencem. V drugem delu je predstavljeno poglobljeno preučevanje v luči povojne kritične teorije,

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zlasti pogledov Theodorja Adorna na jezik, kapitalizem in nezavedno ter kako se ti povezujejo v etnocentrični agitaciji.

**Ključne besede:** skrajna desnica, teorija diskurza, kritična teorija, Theodor Adorno, avtoritarnost

## Introduction

Lately, heated public discussion on political doublespeak has arrived in Finland. With the rise of the Finns Party (FP) into the government, the Finnish public has heightened interest in the ambiguous discourse of their far-right politics. After the 2017 and 2021 leadership elections, where first the current Speaker of the Parliament, Jussi Halla-aho, and then the current Minister of Finance, Riikka Purra, were elected to lead FP, the party has taken a sharp turn toward the far-right. In its current formation FP fits the description of Cas Mudde's contemporary 'fourth wave' far-right party: it incorporates nativist, authoritarian, and populist discourses. Following Mudde's demarcation, this broad outline of today's far-right can be further subdivided into radical and extreme. The core distinction between these categories is the following. While the radical right accepts the essence of democracy, opposing merely its liberal version and relying on populist means, the extreme right rejects wholesale the democratic ideas of popular sovereignty and majority rule. Thus, the extreme right would not be so much populist but precisely extremist, relying on a more or less fixed set of ideas in their quest to demolish what they perceive to be false equality and sham democracy. (Mudde 2019)

Yannick Lahti and Emilia Palonen argue in their report on the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on Finnish populism that FP remains mainly inside the more moderate populist outlook of the far-right (Lahti and Palonen 2023, 234). FP operates matter-of-factly within the democratic system instead of seeking to subvert it

in an extremist fashion, and at the moment, the party is in power with the National Coalition Party. Under their government, classical right-wing policies are being introduced in Finland: tax cuts are implemented for the wealthy, and social security programs are being scaled down. Thus, FP can take part in implementing a solidly straightforward right-wing political program.

However, there are essential ambiguities in the communication of FP that point towards integral continuity between the seemingly separate political identities of ‘radical’ and ‘extreme’ versions of the right (the ‘far-right’ and the ‘far-far-right,’ as it were). Clear examples of xenophobic hate speech on the internet, especially towards the Finnish Muslim community, but also towards other minorities, have convincingly been traced to the leading politicians of FP, to Halla-Aho without a doubt, and to Purra with no reasonable doubt. They have been unapologetic in their public replies and have continued their political lives as if nothing significant would be under discussion.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult not to conclude that an emphatically extremist position has its place within the overall pattern of FP politics.

Instead of gradation of separate positions, it seems that with FP and parties like them, we are dealing with an integral combination of extremist and moderate right-wing positions. The early Frankfurt School would not have hesitated to call such a combination ‘dialectical totality’ because both elements are essential for the functioning of the whole. Viewing contemporary far-right politics as a ‘whole’ does not imply a functionalist explanation. Instead, a holistic viewpoint is crucial not to lose track of the interplay of dif-

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the Finnish racism scandals during the summer of 2023, when high-ranking FP politicians were accused of expressing and disseminating descriptions of racial minorities in hateful manner, among others cf.: Yle 2023; Politico 2023; BBC 2023.

ferent ideological and practical positions. Further, this viewpoint by no means touches merely on the Finnish far-right but more generally describes the movement.

I propose that the first generation of Frankfurt School thinkers provide powerful tools for interpreting contemporary far-right. The Frankfurt School viewpoint is that deception and doublespeak are structural, not coincidental, features of the far-right discourse. This means that instead of differentiating between different grades or *topoi* of the far-right's ideational locations, their discourse should be seen as a structure that utilizes several elements. This is proposed especially by Theodor Adorno's analysis of authoritarianism under the superficial democratic values of late capitalism. Adorno's theory is connected with the critical observation that the far-right openly expresses and insidiously hides its affective investment in the psychological mechanisms of denial and projection.

## **Rhetorical Techniques of the Contemporary Far-Right in Theory and Practice**

Language as a field of political signification is central to the far-right, as it buttresses its claim to represent white/majority identity. The polar opposite of this can be constructed in various ways that reflect the political situation, e.g., in Islamophobic or anti-Black terms. What is essential is the binary and quasi-logical nature of this operation. The identity categories must not be fluid or overlap for the operation to be functional. (Haider 2018, 42-64)

Like their current European counterparts, FP is preoccupied with immigration. Andreas Malm and the Zetkin Group stress that for the current far-right, immigration functions as a 'funnel issue' through which even incredibly vast, systemic questions, such as climate change, must be passed (Malm et al. 2021, 41). The term 'funnel issue' was coined by Michelle Hale Williams, who first

claimed that immigration was introduced as an ‘omnibus issue’ by the far-right in the mid-1990s. Other metaphors she uses to illustrate this process are those of bridging and translating. Thus, many social concerns can be translated into a single problem and, in the process, narrowed down, as if through a funnel, whereby they become homogenized and can be connected with a tangible object. Here, the figure of an immigrant serves as a scapegoat (Williams 2006, 57–60).

Just as translation bridges different languages, in the narrative of the far-right, the fear of immigration bridges the (real) experience of social change toward multicultural society and the (fantasmatic-dystopian) imaginary of the threatening apocalypse caused by this demographic/cultural change. This bridge between experience and imagination can be crossed in both directions. Thus, the fear of immigration can start to color the everyday perception of actual immigrants. By introducing theoretical ideas, such as that of ‘the great replacement,’ vague experiences of personal anguish can be amplified with the narrative that the irrational culture of Islam is threatening Western civilization. ‘Replacement’ in this narrative is ambiguous, expressing hidden vulnerability and a call to action. As Mikko Salmela and Tereza Capelos underline, in the emotional framework of the far-right, the complex emotion of *ressentiment* is central, and it can take on different hues: on the one hand, victimhood, on the other hand, superiority (Salmela and Capelos 2021, 191).

Closely connected are the feelings of failed entitlement and privilege, which can easily lead to the narrativization of self as having been unfairly outpaced. As Teemu Tammikko (2019, 76) points out, there is a close connection between acceptance of such racist narratives as the ‘great replacement’ (according to which white Europeans are being replaced with Muslim immigrants) and the outbreak of anti-minority violence. However, an outbreak of anti-social

acting out is only one possible effect. Psychological coping mechanisms can also be applied. Probably the most common one is the silent resentment, connected to a feeling of discrepancy between the values of liberal democracy, where every individual is supposed to be valued, and private feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness. These emotions do not necessarily lead to violence. However, precisely when they become widespread, the liberal world of party politics can start to be appreciated in a different light.

Emotions such as anxiety and anger can be translated into public speech when their 'hot' underpinnings in rage and disappointment, ubiquitous in online communities, are filtered and adapted into the environment of 'cool' political discussion. This happens through discursive practices, paramount among them being irony. Tuija Saresma and Urho Tulonen show in their study of Jussi Halla-aho's Scripta blog that his use of irony is connected with constructing a 'double audience.' This implies that two meanings are at work: one is effective and primarily directed at the core supporters; the other, seemingly detached and rational, is meant for the general public (Saresma and Tulonen 2020, 155). Here, irony acts as a literary device that permits one to present a general and, in principle, perfectly valid claim, e.g., about immigration, while coloring it with hints, allusions and neologisms. These latter can slip unnoticed in the public discussion, acting as a Trojan horse for negatively loaded descriptions of immigration.

Two recent examples by key FP politicians suffice here. They, however, point to a larger discourse context, where the suspicion of relying on the construction of double audience and 'dog whistle' communication is present because the politicians have a past of hostility towards minorities and remain unapologetic. The first concern concerns FP Finance Minister Riikka Purra's blog post in the summer of 2023. In her blog text, she defends herself against

the indisputable accusation that the posting habits of her alias ‘riikka’ on social media before her political career have been racist. In her reply, Purra writes: ‘I have never denied the human dignity of everyone’ (Purra 2023).<sup>3</sup> Does this clumsily formulated phrase mean that Purra intends to say that she has not denied the dignity of ‘anyone’? This would be a false statement, yet given the style of her post, the one that comes to mind. Another way of reading would be to insist on literal interpretation, which adds a sinister undertone: she would agree that she has denied the dignity of some groups of people while not everyone’s.

The second example pertains to Halla-aho’s newspaper interview from the same time. He comments on his denial of the role of Parliament Speaker to break the summer vacation of the MPs and call them in to vote on the government confidence, demanded by the opposition. At the time, the government was facing a torrent of controversies connected with racism, one of which is the case of Purra, referred to above. In the interview Halla-aho says: ‘Overall, in the Parliament, we go by the rules of the majority and not by the Left’ (Helsingin Sanomat 2023).<sup>4</sup> The surprising statement is a mere mistake, Halla-aho later said. Mixed up in his words, instead of ‘the Left’, he meant to say ‘the minority’ (‘Vähemmistö,’ a word for the minority in Finnish, sounds similar to ‘vasemmisto,’ which means the Left). Is this refutation credible? Or, is this a ‘Freudian slip,’ revealing that semantically, the Left and minority are strongly connected in Halla-aho’s mind?

Purra’s and Halla-aho’s political careers have been, to this date, success stories, which underlines the power of their Huntingtonian ‘clash of civilizations’ framework (already evoked by the subtitle of

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<sup>3</sup> In Finnish, ‘En ole koskaan kieltänyt jokaisen ihmisarvoa.’

<sup>4</sup> In Finnish, ‘Eduskunnan toimintaperiaate ylipäätään on se, että siellä mennään enemmistön eikä vasemmiston pillin mukaan.’

Halla-aho's Scripta blog, 'writings from the sinking West'<sup>5</sup>). While altering the fate of civilization with the tools of national policies of a relatively minor country seems an unlikely project, there might be other reasons for them to get into politics.

Punishing immigrants with the means of border surveillance, targeting them with police control, and shutting them outside the social benefits system might be a politically ineffective strategy if one were to change the course of civilization. However, these means might produce substitute satisfaction in the core supporters and normalize their negative emotions, such as resentment. Social sadism is proposed by China Mieville (2015) to be connected with the decadent stage of the failing neoliberalism. The psychic hunger for collective punishment and spectacles of injustice in large part of the populace might need to be brought into the equation if the popularity of the far right parties with radical imaginary, but political will only for quite conservative right-wing political programs is to be explained.

The legacy of the Frankfurt School holds an essential place of precedent in theorizing this constellation. From such works as *Punishment and Social Structure* by Georg Rusche and Otto Kirchheimer to *Eros and Civilization* by Herbert Marcuse, this tradition of heterodox Freudian-Marxist interpretation of society seems more pertinent today than any time after the counterculture of the sixties and more acute than any time during the heyday of the Third Wayism, in the 1990s and early 2000s.

In Adorno's post-war writings on social psychology of authoritarianism, the Western political system is understood to be structured around the barring of communist and fascist ideologies from

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<sup>5</sup> 'Kirjoituksia uppoavasta lännestä' is also the name of Halla-aho's book of selected blog entries, published in 2009.



representations within the system. This opens up an interpretative horizon for Adorno (2020, 20), mainly the hermeneutics of the forbidden and the transgressive in the political imagination and how, among these lines, something like an alternative political identity for the far-right could be assembled. Nonetheless, after the collapse of the socialist bloc and the bipolar world order, the structuring logic of politics has changed, and Adorno's idea of the 'forbidden' far-right identity needs to be updated. Lately, Adorno's ideas of identity have been unpacked by Oberle (2018).

Here, the advances discussed above by the far-right are significant. In comparison to liberals, who balk at utopianism, the far-right of today has no problem in imagining the utopia of white ethnostate or some other project of racial segregation and absolute hierarchy. However, the convoluted intellectual history of such ideas makes it difficult for them to embrace such ideas openly. Proclaimed by the German National Socialists and Italian Fascists in the 1920s and 1930s, these ideas have become taboo in Western politics since the defeat of these states (Jackson and Feldman 2014, 7). Further, in practical terms, a far-right party of the FP variety does not seem ready to cross many political lines of business-as-usual, at least not immediately after achieving power.

Tensions between saying and not saying, showing and not showing emotion, being abstractly against politics and concretely pro-political institutions; these tensions mark the contemporary far-right as a whole, unified by the drive towards authoritarianism and with little actual authority. Alberto Toscano claims in *Late Fascism* that the current far-right is defined by a social situation where no mass party dares to promise to 'fix' the broken capitalist system. Instead, phantasmagoric depictions of the racial other and horror stories of the atrocities of the liberal left fill the vacuum of any coherent ideology (Toscano 2023). Sabine Volk's research on the German PEGIDA

shows that the main enemy of at least this far-right movement is ‘left dictatorship,’ a notion which has been so unmoored from reality that even the original Nazis, the National *Socialists*, can be depicted as belonging to this left trajectory (Volk 2023, 544).

While acknowledging these changes in political-institutional, as well as technological and media landscape, the theories of Frankfurt School in general, and Adorno in particular, show that the post-war far-right psychic economy has a deep-seated confluence with ambiguous linguistic and thinking patterns.

### **Adorno’s Analysis of the Authoritarian Personality**

The first generation of the Frankfurt School, contemporary to the far-right’s classical era, sought to analyze their communication mechanisms by studying forms and shapes that ethnocentrism took in anti-Semitism. The question of whether anti-Semitism is a *sui generis* form of ethnocentrism is beyond the scope of this article. Nonetheless, there are limits to Frankfurt School’s analysis of racism, especially from their insufficient attention to the many-sided and complex consequences of colonialism, the slave trade, and racial capital (Baum 2015).

Adorno believes that in anti-minority agitation, what is essential is not the ‘what’ but the method or ‘how’ (Adorno 1997, 38). The Christian far-right agitators that Adorno studied in the post-war United States made an effort to distance themselves from German Nazism and Italian Fascism. Subsequently, Adorno’s studies on extremism deal with anti-democratic agitation and propaganda where the relationship to the Nazis or Fascists is never wholly disclosed. According to Adorno, ethnocentric agitation is based on manipulative linguistic techniques, described by him as ‘tricks.’ In *The Authoritarian Personality*, Adorno presents a typology of the range of the far-right followers. According to it, both the ‘ma-

nipulative type,' bureaucrat to whom no personal contact with the victims of his persecution is needed, as well as the 'crank,' socially failed isolated individual and compulsive fanatic, have their place on the spectrum of the far-right (Adorno et al. 1969, 765-767).

According to Adorno, instead of 'concrete and tangible political issues,' anti-minority sentiment purposely promotes an 'irrational emotional aggressiveness' (Adorno 1991, 132). Irrationality becomes a form through which perfectly ordinary conservative content can be passed. Nonetheless, the anti-minority agitation is recognized to be such by its recipients. Adorno's viewpoint is connected with the psychoanalytic theory that differentiates between unconscious and conscious layers of the mind.

The conscious layer of rationality under late capitalism remains for Adorno an abstract and bureaucratically cleansed entity, while unconscious libidinal drives are shunned from the rational mind. For Adorno, even the libidinal current is not in any unproblematic sense 'primary' but receives its form through social rationality, and thus libidinal impulses reflect their repression. Through technological rationalization and manipulation, the instinctual forces come to be viewed as alien and threatening to the consciousness. Their lack of mediation leads to one-sided relationality and tabooing of dreams and fantasies. (Adorno 1991, 137)

In his analysis of Christian radio evangelist Martin Luther Thomas's broadcasts, Adorno elaborates on this distinction with a view to the apparatus of commercial media. According to him (Adorno 1997a, 50-51), the emphasis on the term 'leader' (*Führer*) galvanizes the follower:

*The idolatry of the term leader itself is not simply a relapse into barbarian habits of thought, though it doubtlessly implies retrogressive elements. It is in itself the outcome of late industrial society in a way*

*which at least may be hinted at. The intermediary between industrial rationality and magical idolatry is advertising. The technique of competition has developed a certain tendency to turn the slogans under which the commodities are sold into magical ones.*

Adorno does not claim that the dissemination of far-right slogans would be caused by advertising. However, after the advertising techniques have been made familiar to people, they can be taken over by political agents. Adorno maintains that consumerism introduces new pathways into the unconscious mind. Amid technological modernity, 'magical idols' are no longer sincerely believed to have supernatural powers. However, the supposition that *they might have* can be cynically hinted at in socializing and screening out like-minded people.

The insincerity concerning ethnocentrism emphasized by Adorno seems very much attuned to the 2020s. According to him, in modern anti-Semitism, it does not matter that the Jews are not believed to be the poisoners of wells. However, this and similar outrageous suggestions are not unimportant as they validate the bond between anti-Semites and function as their secret handshake. Adorno notes that Thomas presents the drift toward dictatorship as a historical necessity to which only subjective disposition can help to adapt (Adorno 1997a, 61). Not much updating is needed to bring this analysis to the current far-right rhetoric.

Adorno differentiates between the modern context of rationality and its influence on the manifestation of the instinctual drives. Similarly to his in-depth psychological approach, he proposes that ethnocentric agitation uses techniques and technologies of modernity that complement but never explain the older strata of superstitions. Expressions of the instinctual drives are formed, but not caused, by modern technology and the quest for rationality.

According to Adorno, the mechanisms of modern life have been ‘automatized throughout the buying processes,’ and they can be transferred to the political field. He (Adorno 1997a, 50–51) writes: ‘The mode of ‘selling an idea’ is not essentially different from the mode of selling a soap or a soft drink. Sociopsychologically, the magical character of the word leader and therewith the charisma of the *Führer* is nothing but the spell of commercial slogans taken over by the agencies of immediate political power.’

Focus on how language functions in mediating the contradictory spheres of commercialized/bureaucratic ratio and the ‘primal’ underline of libido are specific to the Frankfurt School’s analysis of ethnocentric agitation. The underpinning Marxist aspect here concerns the necessarily incomplete nature of this linguistic mediation under late capitalism, where language remains partial and ambiguous. In *Prophets of Deceit*, Leo Löwenthal and Norbert Guterman conclude that racial agitator’s hints and ‘suggestions manage to slip through the nets of rational meaning, those nets that seem unable to contain so many contemporary utterances’ (Löwenthal and Guterman 1949, 141).

This tight formulation condenses the Frankfurt School idea of modern ethnocentrist agitation under late capitalist relations. In an inverse image, even hate speech mirrors the actual reification of language in the ‘administered world’ and the hope to escape it. While the turn to innuendo might help in ‘venting spleen,’ psychologically and politically this remains an inefficient trick. Nonetheless, these complexes can be cynically utilized to cause concrete harm and destruction.

## **Authoritarianism and the Lack of Imagination -argument**

According to the first generation of critical theorists, the rise of consumerism affects all social structures, including mass culture

and art. Also politics is transformed. In ethnocentrist agitation, political programs are secondary, if even existent. The primary goal, political power, becomes an end, and the play on atomized individuals' psychological and instinctual needs is a means to such an end. Material suffering under capitalism cannot be alleviated with *Ersatz* politics, and similarly, mental suffering cannot be changed by the substitute satisfaction promised by sadistic politics.

Max Horkheimer formulates this combined crisis tendency in *Eclipse of Reason* (1947): 'The theme of this time is self-preservation, while there is no self to preserve' (Horkheimer 2004, 87). While beautiful, the claim is problematic, reducing the subject to a non-entity. However, Horkheimer and Adorno are concerned with the *chiasmatic structure* and not the self-evident claim: the individual is threatened by individuality. The case is not that self would be completely engulfed in self-preservation. In a discussion after his lecture, 'The Meaning of Working Through the Past,' Adorno admits that he uses exaggeration, as it seems to him 'a necessary medium for social-theoretical and philosophical presentation' (Adorno 1997b, 306). Further, he mentions that 'we must educate people toward the idea that they are more than what simply exists' (Adorno 1997b, 303). The connection between exaggeration and thinking of 'more than what simply exists' touches on imagination.

In *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), a research on the pathologies of the post-war American psyche, Adorno speculates on the role of imagination and the use of fantasy in authoritarian thinking. According to him, anti-Semitic propaganda is partly self-defeating because it involves an irreflexive attitude towards its effectual base that restricts its power. This seems puzzling, as Adorno also holds that an authoritarian mindset is expansive and boundless. For example, he writes that 'totalitarianism means knowing no limits, not allowing for any breathing space, conquest

with absolute domination, complete extermination of the chosen foe' (Adorno 1994, 164).

It seems evident that under post-war democratic Western societies, open agitation for the 'complete extermination' of a minority is not acceptable, as such attempts face severe opposition. This situation may have somewhat changed, but when empirical psychological research for *The Authoritarian Personality* was conducted, expressing anti-Semitic ideas was taboo in the US, with the war against Nazi Germany and the atrocities of the concentration camps firmly established in the American psyche. The interpretation proposed in the study of a potentially Fascist personality type emphasizes the psychological triggers and the malleability of political views as they need to remain partly hidden.<sup>6</sup>

While admitting the difficulty of researching hidden ideological investments, Adorno points out that studying 'secret' and non-expressed thoughts is significant: 'Here may lie the individual's potential for democratic or anti-democratic thought and action in crucial situations' (Adorno et al. 1969, 4). Adorno is thinking of the Nazis' rise to power. Connected with the question of imagination, he makes the following point: 'An important feature of the Nazi program, it will be recalled, was the defamation of everything that tended to make the individual aware of himself and his problems' (ibid., 235).

According to Adorno, the psychic economy of the authoritarian personality revolves around the deep structure of the self that is

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<sup>6</sup> The question of whether at least some critical fraction of Trump, Bolsonaro, or Netanyahu followers are willing to affirm genocide, slavery, and racial hierarchy as part of their way of life should be asked. However, as these leaders are still *de jure* bound by the representational political system, laws and elections, they and their followers need, at least to some extent, control this affirmation of domination, even if it has become louder and more brutal. Interest in *The Authoritarian Personality* has unsurprisingly surged since 2016 (Gordon 2018).

simultaneously hidden and indirectly expressed. The inhibition of imagination connects the relationship between these two aspects, as it is necessary to 'put the brakes' on fantasy so it is not revealed. On the other hand, the unconscious fantasy fuels the psyche with visions of domination.

Adorno searches for personality traits that might reveal a potentially authoritarian mentality and proposes these common features:

- submission towards the in-group (or uncritical attitude toward the authorities),
- conventionalism (or inhering to middle-class values),
- aggressiveness towards the out-group (or rejection of and readiness to condemn and punish people who violate conventional values),
- anti-intracception (or general opposition to the use of imagination and rejection of 'tender-mindedness'),
- tendency towards superstition and stereotypy (disposition to think in rigid categories),
- investment in perceived features of power and 'toughness' (preoccupation with the dichotomic categories of dominance/submission and identification with powerful figures),
- cynicism (or generalized misanthropy),
- projectivity (or projecting one's feelings of threat outwards), and
- exaggerated concern with sex (as what is 'going on' between other people). (Adorno et al. 1969, 228)

Adorno elaborates on anti-intracception and stereotypy in the following manner: 'An important aspect of many high responses is *constriction of fantasy*. [...] It is as if they cannot allow themselves a completely uninhibited fantasy, as if they cannot get away from the 'reality' even for a moment' (Adorno et al. 1969, 573).

Adorno's solution to bring these character traits together happens through narcissism of the authoritarian personality type, which



prevents the subject from becoming aware of these fantasies. However, as argued above, at least the current far-right makes use of an uninhibited fantasy world. Frankfurt School's general line of argument is that the self has become 'flat' (without longing, memory, and others) and merely functional, which seems to be out of step with the current social situation and belittles the far-right's capacities.

This claim is reductive, and ultimately, its argument somewhat typologizes itself, so essential criticisms have been brought forward. In his history of the psychological concept of authoritarianism, Markus Kimmelmeier points out that while Adorno et al. propose authoritarianism to be one coherent construct, it has, in research, been broken into subcategories. Most persistent further differentiates between RWA (Right-Wing Authoritarianism) and SDO (Social Dominance Orientation). The main difference between the two is that while RWAs seek to uphold social hierarchies and are often conservative, SDOs identify more readily with domination and risk-taking in general and are prone to support leaders who stand out and propose bold solutions (Kimmelmeier 2015, 264-265).

With the help of this criticism, Adorno's concern for the lack of imagination and the different ways that this constellation flares up in the contemporary far-right can be appreciated in a new way. One possible way of seeing the contemporary far-right as a dialectical totality would point out that its ambiguous communication needs to rest on two feet, as it were, or two different pools of supporters. Firstly, there is the more conservative group (RWA), beholden to nostalgia and appreciating national insignia and culture. Their tendency to divide people into 'us' and 'them' can be interpellated with gestures towards nationalistic myths and ideology. Restrictions of fantasy draws them close to ideas of law and order and adherence to bourgeois principles of duty, trustworthiness, and others.

On the other hand, the dominance-seeking pool (SWO), more adventurous and prone to revel in utopian visions of racialized future society, can have their need for images of dominance satisfied by the messages towards the other half of the 'double audience.' The sinister underground of meaning, e.g., that some groups of people should be subjected to corporal punishment or have their fundamental human rights stripped, can be positively enjoyed by this group. Having both of these pools addressed requires meticulous work, and at times, the proverbial fig leaf falls off, allowing those who do not share the essential anti-democratic views of the far-right to challenge them.

While inconclusive, this article could help recognize the multifaceted identity of the current far-right and its continuum with the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Western patterns of authoritarian agitation. In the current situation of late capitalism, it has become self-limiting for the far-right to restrict its political signaling to the primarily 'rational' or the primarily libidinous register. Both are utilized, and new strategies to address both are searched for. While more identities should probably be recognized and analyzed, at least this proposed focus on dual structures of communication, envisioned by Frankfurt School thinkers, might help decipher and point out weaknesses in the far-right's discourse. Its cohesion is never solid, and points of weakness are visible to anyone interested in looking at it closely. These critical points need to be made more prominent, and the tools for debunking these harmful and defamatory narratives made more widely known. As Adorno points out in his 1967 lecture on the new right-wing extremism, we are to be held accountable, and one cannot assume a 'spectator-like relationship'. Responsibility lies in our hands. (Adorno 2020, 22)

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