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Autor: Adorno Theodor

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These four essays, originally written between the late 1930s and mid-1950s, examine significant instances of what Adorno calls "irrational" systems of thought in contemporary culture. He analyzes such phenomena as occultism, anti-Semitism, and the relationship between anti-Semitism and fascist thinking. His analysis illustrates common elements in all the systems examined. The lead article, "The Stars Down to Earth," is a content analysis of the astrology column of the Los Angeles Times during a visit Adorno made to the United States in 1953; it sets the tone for the other essays. What is particularly clear from Adorno's examination is the subtle and manipulative nature of such beliefs. The resurgence of extreme religious and political organizations, and the difficulty with which certain patterns of thought seem to die, illustrates the extent to which those ideas have penetrated our culture and the dangers they still hold. Editor Crook's lead-ins to the essays are useful.