

ON PREJUDICE¹

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The following essay by the founding editor appeared in the first issue of the Jewish Journal of Sociology. We reprint it here in part as a tribute to Ginsberg's contribution, and in part because it is an essay that deserves revisiting. While it is very much of its time – 1959, less than a decade and a half after the holocaust, before the success of the American civil rights movement and while commonwealth immigration to the UK was still in process – it remains an exemplary piece of clear yet profound thinking. It also demonstrates how 'Jewish' issues can and should be at the heart of an engagement with wider issues in the social sciences.

The word prejudice is derived from the Latin Prae-judicium signifying a legal decision based on previous judgements or precedents. The etymology, however, is not very helpful in defining the present meaning. The term now has a derogatory implication, which obviously the legal term did not have, suggesting that there is something wrong or false about the judgement, and in any case, prejudgement is not sufficient to define prejudice. Many prejudices are not based on previous judgements and not all judgements so based are prejudices.

An examination of the ways in which the term prejudice is now commonly employed suggests that it may be provisionally defined to include (a) prejudgements (Vorurteile) or opinions and beliefs formed without examination or consideration and accepted uncritically when doubt or criticism might reasonably be expected; (b) beliefs or opinions influenced by logically irrelevant impulses, feelings, emotions, sentiments or complexes; (c) attitudes favourable or unfavourable towards persons or things formed prior to or not based on experience or knowledge of their qualities. Generally prejudice has a negative implication, being employed more frequently to describe unfavourable than favourable attitudes. 'Prepossession', on the other hand, which has a somewhat similar meaning, is used more positively to describe a favourable impression. It remains to be added that prejudice covers not only beliefs and attitudes but also the behaviour influenced by beliefs and attitudes.

In order to understand the nature of prejudice it is helpful to consider first the psychology of 'certitude', that is, the state of feeling certain. This is a psychological term indicating a state of mind and is to be distinguished from 'certainty' which is best used as a logical term

indicating that the grounds for a belief or judgement are logically adequate. We may feel certain of something which logically is false or at any rate without sufficient grounds. In current language we use several words to indicate degrees of certitude. We distinguish, for example, between knowledge, belief and opinion. I should not say that I believe, but that I know that I had porridge this morning or that two and two make four. 'Opinion', again, is used in reference to assertions which fall short of the assurance we have in knowledge or belief. 'It is my opinion that so and so is the case' means that I have some but not very full grounds for thinking that so and so is the case. The assent we give to opinions is milder, more open to doubt than that which we give to our beliefs. Opinion thus seems to be intermediate between knowing and doubting.

What then is this state of feeling certain and what are its conditions? The older psychologists, dominated by associationist theories, tended to explain certitude as the result of indissoluble associations. We believe two ideas to be necessarily linked if in the past they have occurred in contiguity or in immediate succession. Modern psychologists, though agreeing that invariable association is one ground of certitude, argue that it will account neither for the certitude of simple perceptions nor for the confidence we feel about axioms.

If dazzled by the sun I say 'It is light' the psychological necessity accompanying this assertion, though it is confined to a single instance is more absolute and immediate than that which is present when I say 'Unsupported bodies fall', a proposition which I and my ancestors before me have verified innumerable times and never known to fail.²

Similarly the degree of conviction with which I believe that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other is far greater than that which accompanies my belief that unsupported bodies will fall, despite the fact that the number of times in which I have actually experienced the connexion is far greater in the latter than in the former case. In both simple perception and the apprehension of objects or relations of a higher order, the conviction of certainty is immediate or intuitive and, as it would seem, psychologically irreducible.

Perhaps the most general thing we can say about the state of certitude is that in some sense our mental processes are constrained or restricted. When we are convinced we are, so to say, overcome, compelled. I am convinced means I am forced to assent. This is most obvious in direct perception. If in broad daylight I open my eyes it is not in my power to decide whether I shall see or not. I am bound to see. Similarly we have only limited command over our organic sensations. I cannot get rid of a toothache by not attending to it. The certitude thus arising is of a primitive kind. We hardly ever think of questioning it.

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Apart from direct perception, I may be equally certain about recent memory. I have no doubt at all about what I had for breakfast this morning; though if asked to give proof of the accuracy of my recollection I might be involved in difficulties because memory is notoriously fallible. Nevertheless, psychologically, immediate or recent memory has the directness of perception. In both cases the flow of my activity is restricted, my mental processes are determined for me. Wherever there is a similar restriction there is belief. In imaginative work, in writing a novel for example, you might think that you can shape what happens as you choose. But in so far as you do this you have no belief in the reality of the characters. If you believe in their reality you cannot make them do things which are not in keeping with their nature.

Following this line of thought, we may draw up a scale beginning with free fantasy such as you have in day dreaming, when the flow of your ideas is unrestricted and anything may come into your head, to imaginative construction where you have a good deal of freedom, but are still limited by the nature of your characters as you have conceived them, to the definite constraint which you experience in direct perception, in recent memory, in logical thought or in practical activity when the means chosen must be such as are in fact likely to achieve the ends desired. We can in this way classify mental processes according to the degree or kind of restrictions imposed on the mind. It will be noticed that dreaming differs from free fantasy in this respect. In the latter objects can be moulded by your desires. In dreaming, on the other hand, the objects will resist your efforts and you may even struggle against them. This is why you believe in the reality of the objects while you are dreaming.

We must distinguish between implicit and explicit certitude. Normally when we take the trouble to say 'we are certain' we refer to statements which we might have doubted or which we had previously to ascertain or verify. In such cases the certainty is explicit. A great many of our beliefs are implicitly certain. We had no reason for doubting them. In fact what we call common sense or common knowledge consists of such implicit beliefs and they mostly remain unchallenged. Doubt arises when the conditions leave us freedom of choice, and we make some effort to find something which will help us to decide in favour of one of the alternatives. There is no virtue in doubting for doubting sake. 'The ignorant man', Renouvier tells us, 'doubts little and the fool does not doubt at all.'

The opposite to the tendency to doubt is credulity, that is readiness to believe without sufficient reasons. Of this, as we all know, there is any amount. For suspension of judgement a good deal of self control is needed and active doubt requires sustained effort. It is easier to escape from the

discomfort of uncertainty by stifling doubt and turning attention away from anything that might encourage it. Credulity is obviously an important factor in prejudice, as it is also of superstition. Superstition is a word difficult to define. In common use it means false beliefs concerning supernatural powers. There is often an implication that these beliefs are not only false but socially injurious, encouraging obscurantism and leading to cruelty. But this is disputed and what is injurious in certain circumstances may not be so in others⁴.

Another concept which has here to be considered is faith⁵. This is also difficult to define. It is commonly distinguished alike from knowledge and belief. In knowledge and belief we are constrained in varying degree by what is directly before us in perception or memory or the force of logical proof. In faith we venture beyond what is thus known to what is ideally possible. The stimulus to faith is often dissatisfaction with the world as we know it. But it is not mere dissatisfaction. At its best it is an adventure into the unknown and, though not knowledge, it is often a forerunner of knowledge and sometimes of knowledge otherwise unattainable. The relation between reasoned knowledge and faith is a well worn theme and this is not the place for a detailed discussion. The rationalist will not close his mind to the suggestions of faith. He will realize that in the sense of anticipation of and experimentation with what is ideally possible faith is an element not only in religion and morality, but also in theoretical and practical knowledge. But he will be on his guard against giving assent to conclusions to which we are prompted by feeling or desire alone, and against the dogmatic spirit which, not satisfied with believing, cannot rest until others believe as well.

Closely linked with the dogmatic spirit is fanaticism. Considering the havoc worked by fanaticism it is odd that psychologists have paid so little attention to it. It has generally been treated in connexion with the psychology of religion but, of course, fanaticism is by no means confined to religion. From the point of view of our present discussion it may be defined as an intensified form of the feeling of certitude. We can, I think, distinguish various types of fanatics. There is first the assertive or aggressive type. He is the sort of person who, filled with the sense of his mission, broods ascetically over his ideas and so establishes habits which make it impossible for him to consider or tolerate any beliefs that would tend to shake them. Such a person is often paranoid and feeling himself to be persecuted, persecutes others. He is the persecuted persecutor. Obsessed by his ideas normal standards of conduct fail, and in support of his intense convictions he can indulge in the most terrible cruelties.

There is a second type into which the first passes by gradations. This is the type of person who is at bottom weak and unstable and not at all

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really certain. He has doubts which he dare not face. He will not admit that he is doubtful and to see others doubting infuriates him. He thus hunts his own doubts in others. He cannot believe so long as others doubt. Fearful and over-anxious he seeks reassurance in exaggerated self-assertion. His weakness issues in destructive and cruel acts as terrible as those of the first type.

There is a third type which originates in excessive loyalty. Fanatics of this sort are people in whom loyalty is carried to an extreme. They tend to glorify their hero and their cause and to idealize their own devotion. They show their sensitiveness by intense jealousy for the honour of the object of their devotion. They will go to any length to avenge any doubt, slight or affront to their god, hero or cause. 'Crusades have been preached and massacres instigated for no other reason than a fancied slight upon the God.⁶⁷

The fanatic generally is jealous of his own importance, the dupe of his excited vanity, though often the intensity of his certitude is an exaggerated defence against his own doubt and anxiety. I have distinguished different types, but they have much in common and in their outward behaviour they may be very similar.

We must now try to define a little more precisely what is to be included under prejudice. In so far as the word relates to opinions and beliefs, it will be seen that not all wrong opinions and beliefs are prejudices. Errors arising through ignorance of relevant facts or through fallacious methods of reasoning are not necessarily due to prejudice. In so far as the term is applied to attitudes again, it is easily seen that liking or disliking by itself does not amount to prejudice. If I like sugar and you do not I should not think of describing the fact by saying that I have a prejudice for, and you a prejudice against, sugar.

It would seem that what distinguishes prejudice is either the influence on our thinking of preformed judgements and the readiness to apply them to new cases without examination, when such examination might reasonably be expected; or else the influence on our thinking of logically irrelevant impulses, sentiments and complexes. The two modes of influence are closely connected. For feelings or desires may lead us to accept preformed judgements which in a cool hour we might be ready to doubt or at any rate hesitate to act upon. On the other hand, preformed judgements may induce feelings in us which otherwise we should not have experienced, as for example when we are unfavourably disposed towards individuals in advance of any experience of them merely because we know they are Negroes, Jews, Turks.

In analysing the conditions of certitude, it will be recalled, I have adopted the view that certitude involves the restriction or control of our thinking by conditions *which* are, so to say, forced upon us. This is most easily seen in the case of direct perception or in logical thought when we are carried away by the force of the evidence. Control of this sort may be called objective. But there is also control or restriction by subjective factors, as when our thinking is affected by our desires, passions or complexes. In the theoretical analysis of prejudice, we are concerned mainly with the way in which these subjective factors operate in generating prejudices and in making them readily acceptable once formed.

We may consider first the influence of preformed judgements. It is clear that prejudgement is normal and inevitable. We cannot be expected to start *de novo* every time we form a judgement. Indeed we could not do so, for we cannot proceed at all without the stock of ideas, categories, classifications, which we inherit in the very language we use. In what way then do preformed judgements encourage prejudice? I think the answer is to be found in two directions. In the first place, accepted beliefs and attitudes harden into habits and ingrained predilections and offer strong and often bitter resistance to change or the challenge of new experiences. This resistance is due partly to sheer inertia, partly to fear of the new, partly to vested interests and partly to group loyalty. It is only too easy to give examples. Some of the greatest discoveries, of the utmost importance to mankind, were denounced and opposed by contemporary authorities. Examples from the history of biology and medicine are Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, the germ theory of disease, and more recently the teaching of psycho-analysis. Theological predilections have often hindered men otherwise open-minded and impartial from appreciating new advances in science. Legal reforms have rarely been initiated by lawyers and generally have had to overcome their apathy or active opposition.

In the second place, accepted beliefs contain not only the truths of experience systematized in common sense and science, but also the errors of misinterpreted experience, untested generalizations, and corrupted testimony and traditions. In so far as these erroneous beliefs were originally due to prejudgements and the influence of emotions they may be considered as causes of present prejudices. A great many prejudices are rooted in past prejudices. This is especially marked in the case of race prejudice, in which traditionally transmitted antipathies often provide the central core round which there gather other supporting antipathies constituting together an emotional system difficult to eradicate.

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I come next to the influence of desires, feelings, and the systems formed of them. It is often said that we believe what we want to believe. This is true only in a certain sense. We cannot believe anything just by willing it. What happens is that when we want anything with a certain intensity our attention tends to be concentrated on those things which fit in with our desires and away from anything that does not: In this way every desire gathers around it beliefs favourable to it and diverts attention from conflicting beliefs. The strength of desires may easily blind us to the fact that they cannot all be realized, or that they are incompatible with each other. The range of knowledge at our command is here of great importance. A wide knowledge of the possibilities that are open and of the probable consequences of action may awaken conflicting desires and so make for hesitation or deliberation. In estimating consequences the strength of our regard for others may play a part. The weaker our interest in them the less is desire likely to be inhibited by its consequences to them and the less check on our beliefs tending to strengthen our desire.

Perhaps a more important factor in the formation of prejudices than specific desires are the more general dispositions described as 'interests'. Desires change with changes in the situation, but behind them are larger and more enduring needs seeking satisfaction in comprehensive ends such as health, home, family life, profession, etc., and forming the basis of the temporary purposes in the pursuit of which we are engaged from day to day. These 'interests' gather around them systems of beliefs congruent with them and repel beliefs not favouring them. As a source of prejudice group interests are specially important. For groups have common interests which may be opposed, or appear to be opposed, to the interests of other groups. These interests affect the beliefs and opinions of the members of the group and colour their general outlook. Irrational factors here come into play. When group interests clash there is a strong tendency for beliefs to arise in each group attributing qualities to the other justifying the conflict. This is most obvious in war, but is easily discerned everywhere when groups of any size come into contact. Prejudices thus arising may be slight, fluid and transferable. But if they are sanctioned by social usages they may strike deep roots and issue in discriminatory treatment or even segregation, which then in turn strengthen the prejudices. Racial and ethnic prejudices afford numerous examples.

Passing now from the emotional background of prejudice to the cognitive structure of prejudiced beliefs, we may without any pretence to completeness enumerate the following features. These can be seen most easily perhaps in the case of racial or ethnic prejudice. Firstly, there is uncritical *generalization*. This results in the attribution to all members of a group qualities in fact only observed in a few. Secondly, there is

specification, or selective emphasis, that is the tendency to consider certain qualities as specially characteristic of a group which are in fact to be found equally commonly in other groups, e.g. when Jews are said to be ostentatious or pushful. Thirdly, there is *omission* that is the tendency to overlook desirable qualities in the group which is disliked or when they are too obvious to be denied to dismiss them as 'untypical'. Fourthly, there is *discrimination*, that is the tendency to condemn acts of one group which would be condoned or not noticed or even praised when committed by others, for example, when similar acts are considered as sharp practice in one case but regarded as showing business acumen in the other; or when Jews are condemned as 'money-minded' in a country where competition and the striving for money are considered proper and normal for everybody.

Other factors of importance are reliance on hear-say, suggestibility, self-deception, conscious and unconscious, sophistication and rationalization. Once the prejudiced beliefs are built up they tend to arouse emotions or passions similar to those which originally gave rise to them and thus to sustain or intensify them. They then impose themselves on the individual and become coercive and intolerant. The mass of beliefs thus engendered tends to be supported by other beliefs; for people like to think they have reasons for what they believe. In this way systems of belief are built up which are highly resistant and blind to doubt or criticism. The strength of prejudices like that of dogmas lies not in the reasoning on which they are based but in the mass of feelings behind them. Hence they do not yield easily to reasoning or even to persuasion.

To test this general analysis I propose to consider the case of racial or ethnic prejudice. This has been extensively studied by sociologists and psychologists and some general conclusions are beginning to emerge.

Prejudice, as we have seen, is ultimately to be traced to the influence on our beliefs of impulses or feelings. In the case of inter-group prejudices the central element seems to be the very deeply rooted and probably very ancient fear or dislike of the stranger. This fear normally leads to avoidance tempered by curiosity, but when groups of any size are thrown together the dislike does not disappear but tends to generate beliefs in justification and to be embodied in customs or modes of behaviour keeping the groups at a distance. Comparative study shows that the intensity of intergroup prejudice varies with the strength and persistence of this feeling of strangeness. Hence the importance of 'visible' criteria demarcating the groups and making them readily identifiable. The distinguishing marks may be physical, as in the case of the Negro in American society, or mainly cultural, for example, persistent patterns of behaviour or outward appearance, as in the case of the Jews in eastern

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Europe. The fundamental problem is to find out under what conditions the feeling of 'strangeness' or 'alienage' persists and under what conditions it yields to the forces making for social assimilation.

Given the element of alienage other sources of rivalry or conflict tend to take a group alignment. Thus, for example, economic rivalry between Jews and non-Jews would cause no more bitterness than normal business competition between individuals, if the Jew were not regarded as a stranger. The study of antisemitism thus centres largely round the problem why the Jew has in the eyes of many remained a stranger even in countries where he has been settled for a thousand years. In the case of the American Negro the question is why it is that despite the adoption of typically American behaviour patterns and the fact that they have been longer resident in America than most white groups the barriers that perpetuate the minority status of Negroes persist. It would seem that the answer to such questions has to be sought in the history of the relations between the groups involved. Closely associated with economic interests is the sense of social status and prestige. In many cases it becomes difficult to distinguish between race prejudice and class prejudice. The distinction between class and caste is of great importance in this connexion. Where caste-like distinctions prevail improvement in social standing or differentiation based on skill or training does not take an individual out of his group. On the other hand, in class societies vertical mobility is possible and individuals can rise in the social scale. This distinction has important consequences. In 'caste' societies group consciousness may be normally passive or quiescent, but in certain circumstances it may be intensified as, for example, when improvement in general standing can only be achieved through raising the status of the group as a whole. In class societies, on the other hand, there may be no need for united group action and consequently no intense group consciousness. This may account to some extent for the difference in the intensity of race consciousness as such in the United States of America, where caste distinctions survive, and, for example, Brazil which has a class society. In Brazil class distinctions are closely associated with colour, but do not completely determine them. Wealth and education count. There is a Brazilian proverb, we are told, which says that a rich Negro is a white man and a poor white a Negro. No one would say this in the United States.' The influence of changing class relations on antisemitism has not, as far as I know, been studied adequately. The rise of Jews in the social scale, especially when they move from country to country, tends to disturb class alignments. Hence the frequent charges of vulgarity, social climbing and the like, and the tendency in some countries to exclude Jews from the social amenities of the 'upper middle class', e.g.

clubs or residential areas, and to set obstacles to the admission of Jews to occupations in which social status is a dominating factor. That there is a connexion between ethnic prejudice and class prejudice is strongly suggested by various studies of antisemitism in America and elsewhere⁸.

In an earlier discussion of antisemitism⁹ I suggested that it was necessary to distinguish different degrees of intensity in the feeling of antagonism or hostility and that the difference of degree may almost amount to a difference of kind. Studies of other ethnic antagonisms show, I think, that this distinction is of more general applicability. Group prejudices may be relatively mild, not founded in personal experience, but reflecting rather the attitude widely prevalent in a particular circle or group against other groups. The more intense kind of prejudice, on the other hand, depends more on the character structure of the individual. In this connexion psychoanalytic theories have made important contributions to the study of prejudice. They have shown that group prejudice may provide an outlet for inner tensions and anxieties and an object for displaced aggression, and they have accordingly given us various pictures of the types of person likely to be prejudiced. Theories of this sort may help to account for the peculiar intensity of group prejudice in particular individuals, but are of lesser importance in dealing with group prejudice in general or with the various forms in which it occurs among different peoples or at different periods¹⁰.

There can be no doubt that ethnic prejudices differ greatly in range and intensity. The relations between White, Negro and Indian in the United States differ from those prevailing in Brazil. Inside the United States students of race relations distinguish various lines of demarcation. There is, first, the caste line proper which relegates all 'coloured' peoples including Negroes, Chinese, Hindus, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, American Indians, Mexicans and some other Latin Americans to a lower caste. There is, next, what is described as a deep fissure line separating the Jews from the rest of the people. There are, thirdly, minor fissure lines detaching various other foreign born, e.g. Poles, Czechs, Greeks, various Slavs, Italians and some others. In respect of all these there are variations in the intensity of discrimination and presumably in the underlying attitudes for different parts of the country and no doubt for different periods of time. From the sociological point of view the important problem is to disentangle the conditions with which these variations are associated. A number of factors suggest themselves as *prima fade* likely to play a part. There is, firstly, the size of the groups in contact. 'Lest they multiply' is the cry already raised against the Israelites in ancient Egypt¹¹. Where the dominant group is in a minority, as are now the Whites in

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South Africa, they are likely to fear submergence. Next, the sex ratio, especially in the early stages of settlement, may seriously affect subsequent attitudes. For example, in Brazil the Portuguese colonists did not at first bring their women with them (unlike the Anglo-Saxon migrants who emigrated with their families), and this favoured miscegenation. Thirdly, differences of attitude are affected by the extent of local concentration. Where migrants are concentrated in particular areas they tend to maintain their traditional patterns of living and thus to keep alive the sense of their difference from others. Where migrants are widely dispersed they are likely to come to terms more easily with the native population. This may act in different ways. When they are a conquering or in other ways a dominant group conscious of their superiority dispersal will incline them to seek for a certain solidarity, even though it may be of the condescending or paternalistic type. On the other hand, if the incoming groups feel weak they will tend, if widely dispersed, to abandon the struggle to survive as a distinct entity and to succumb to the forces of assimilation. Fourthly, occupational differentiation and the skill shown by the incoming groups to adapt themselves to new economic conditions strongly affect the attitude of the population to the minorities in their midst. Group prejudice seems to vary directly with the extent of competition for economic advantage or advance in social status. The operation of all these and other factors depends largely on the initial difference in cultural level, patterns of living and other factors giving rise to a sense of difference or strangeness. Given this strangeness, the forces making for conflict come to be associated with groups as such and to generate group prejudices, needed to rationalize discrimination and perhaps, on the other side, to provide energy in the fight against discrimination.

It remains to be added that the factors making for group prejudice often operate in a circular manner. Thus in the case of the Jews the inner tendency towards isolation encouraged a policy of discrimination and discrimination in turn made for further isolation. Similarly, as has been argued at length by Myrdal in the U.S.A. White prejudice causes discrimination against Negroes and keeps down their standard of living, and the low standards in turn stimulate antipathy and further discrimination¹². Professor Maclver has described in more detail how the conditions produced by discrimination tend to sustain it. The group with greater power deprives the other group of the opportunities to social and economic advance. The upper group is thus strengthened in the sense of its own superiority. This in turn is reinforced by the factual evidence of inferiority that accompanies the lack of opportunity and the habits of subservience resulting from a policy of discrimination. In this way self-

perpetuating complexes of conditions making for prejudice are created and sustained¹².

Comparative study strongly confirms the view indicated above that although inter-group prejudice is found in one form or another in all societies of any size it is highly changeable in intensity and direction. This has been brought out very clearly by the highly detailed and elaborate studies that American investigators have devoted to the problem of the status of the Negro in American society. The results are strongly confirmed by studies of race consciousness in areas where it is less intense and where the changes which it has undergone have followed a different course, as, for example, in Brazil. Historians have traced in detail the social and economic conditions which shaped Negro-White relations in the South and in the North after the emancipation from slavery. Equally detailed studies have been made of the impact of the two world wars on the status of the Negro. Urbanization and northward migration have produced profound changes in the occupational structure of the Negroes, have brought into being a differentiated Negro middle class and enormously strengthened the power of Negro organizations to exert legal and political pressure against continuing discrimination. The social and economic changes due to the Second World War and perhaps also, the increasing use made in communist propaganda of the theme of racial tensions, have deepened the awareness of Americans of what has been called the American dilemma—the conflict between the persistent attitude to Negroes and the professed democratic ideals of American society. A new climate of opinion is thus being generated, greatly helped by the scientific work of sociologists and psychologists, more favourable to changes in the status of minorities and to a lessening of the intensity of prejudice against them.

There are differences of opinion about the extent and the depth of the changes that are occurring. Writing in 1948 Professor Maclver thought it quite possible that discrimination might be decreasing in some directions and growing stronger in others. It is sad to relate that in his opinion what he calls the deep fissure line dividing Jews from others was at that time holding firm, the more so in view of the more encouraging evidence of better relations in other areas¹⁴. In all cases the problem is to account for the sense of difference, strangeness or distance which is felt in varying degrees towards minorities and which prevents them from participating fully and on equal terms in the life of the communities in which they live. I have dwelt at some length on the problem of ethnic prejudices because of its great importance at the present time and because it throws some light on the relation between psychological and socio-logical modes of explanation. Whilst the analysis of its cognitive and emotional structure

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is essential to an understanding of prejudice, such analysis will not of itself account for the collective aspects of prejudiced behaviour or for the changes which it undergoes under different social and economic conditions. The tendencies towards uncritical generalization and the emotional sources of irrationality are always with us. What has to be explained is the form which they take when embodied in particular beliefs and directed to certain objects and not others. We need to discover the conditions which make for the wide prevalence of certain beliefs and give them a coercive character and which, on the other hand, bring about a general change in the climate of opinion in which even long established prejudices tend to wither away. Problems of this sort cannot be fruitfully explored without considering the demographic, economic and cultural conditions. It is thus clear that both the psychological and sociological modes of approach are legitimate and necessary. From the practical or tactical point of view, however, it may well be that the analysis of social conditions may have prior or stronger claims. It is easier to change conditions than to alter feelings and attitudes, especially if these have deep roots in the unconscious mind. This is not to minimize the importance of psychological inquiry or of education. Obviously everything should be done that can be done to reveal the irrationality of prejudices and to dissipate the myths that justify them. But such efforts are more likely to succeed if accompanied by outward changes in the conditions conducive to prejudice. Thus, for example, in the case of group prejudice, it is better tactics to attack discrimination directly, e.g. by efforts to raise the standard of living and to remove inequalities, than to try to change the feelings or attitudes associated with discrimination. No doubt, however, different types of prejudice have to be attacked in different ways. Dr. Edward Glover in a study of War Sadism and Pacifism gave it as his view that the first effective step towards abolishing war must be a complete investigation of the nature of the sadistic impulses and of the defence mechanisms tending to keep us unaware of their strength: It seems that the researches required would have to be very prolonged and be planned on 100 to 1000 years' basis. A psychoanalyst writing in 1100 or 1200 might have been equally pessimistic of the possibility of abolishing private wars and establishing a unified system of public justice in Britain. But arguments of priority in these matters are unreal. Social changes are, as we have seen, frequently circular in their operation. When the circles are vicious it is sensible to try to break them by a simultaneous and concerted attack at different points.

Notes

¹ The third Jacques Cohen Memorial Lecture, delivered under the auspices of the Central Jewish Lecture Committee (Board of Deputies of British Jews) on June 12, 1958, at Friends' House, London.

² James Ward, *Psychological Principles*, p. 349.

³ James Ward, *Psychological Principles*, p.357.

⁴ Carveth Read, *Origin of Superstition*.

⁵ cf. F. R. Tennant, *The Nature of Belief*.

⁶ William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 342.

⁷ cf. 'Race Relations in Brazil', by Roger Bastide, *International Social Science Bulletin*, vol. ix, No. 4, 1957, p. 496.

⁸ cf. R. M. Maclver, *The More Perfect Union*, p. 33.

⁹ *Reason and Unreason in Society*, chap. X.

¹⁰ For a balanced account see Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, chap. 31.

¹¹ *Exodus* i. 10.

¹² C. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, chap. III.

¹³ cf. *The More Perfect Union*, chap. IV.

¹⁴ cf. *The More Perfect Union*, p.46