

**12<sup>th</sup> Alfred and Winifred Hoernlé Memorial Lecture**

# **Prejudice in modern perspective**

**Gordon Allport**

THE HOERNLE MEMORIAL LECTURE 1956

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# PREJUDICE

## in MODERN PERSPECTIVE

*by*

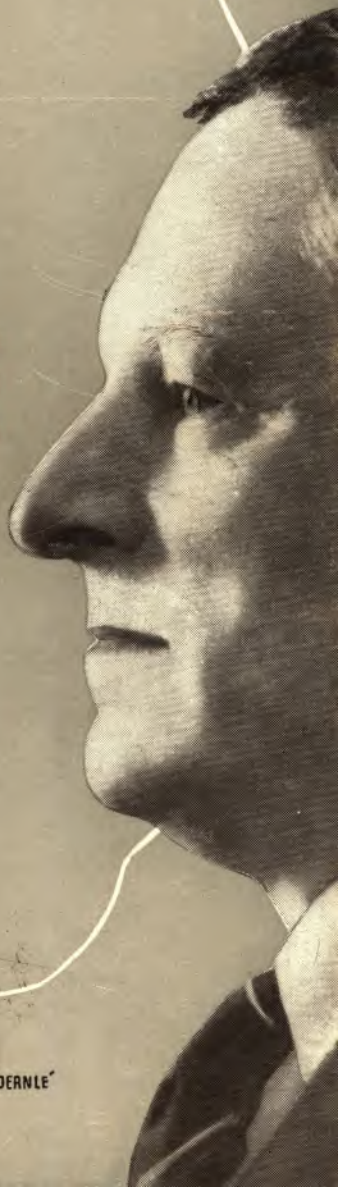
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PROF. R.F. ALFRED HOERNLE

THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS





The Twelfth Hoernlé Memorial Lecture

# PREJUDICE IN MODERN PERSPECTIVE

*Delivered under the auspices of the  
South African Institute of Race Relations*

by

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Consultant to the Institute of Social Research, University  
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"The Nature of Prejudice"*

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*"For it is the truth that I seek after, by which I am sure that never any man was hurt; and as sure that he is hurt that continueth in any error, or ignorance whatsoever" — Marcus Aurelius*



## THE HOERNLÉ MEMORIAL LECTURE

A lecture, entitled the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture (in memory of the late Professor R. F. Alfred Hoernlé, President of the Institute from 1934 to 1943), will be delivered once a year under the auspices of the South Africa Institute of Race Relations. An invitation to deliver the lecture will be extended each year to some person having special knowledge and experience of racial problems in Africa or elsewhere.

It is hoped that the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture will provide a platform for constructive and helpful contributions to thought and action. While the lecturers will be entirely free to express their own views, which may not be those of the Institute as expressed in its formal decisions, it is hoped that lectures will be guided by the Institute's declaration of policy that "scientific study and research must be allied with the fullest recognition of the human reactions to changing racial situations; that respectful regard must be paid to the traditions and usages of various national, racial and tribal groups which comprise the population; and that due account must be taken of opposing views earnestly held."

Previous lecturers have been the Rt. Hon. J. H. Hofmeyr (Christian Principles and Race Problems), Dr. E. G. Malherbe (Race Attitudes and Education), Prof. W. M. Macmillan (Africa beyond the Union), Sn. Dr. the Hon. E. H. Brookes (We Come of Age), Prof. I. D. MacCrone (Group Conflicts and Race Prejudices), Mrs. A. W. Hoernlé (Penal Reform and Race Relations), Dr. H. J. van Eck (Some Aspects of the South African Industrial Revolution), Prof. S. Herbert Frankel (Some Reflections on Civilization in Africa), Prof. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (Outlook for Africa), Dr. Emory Ross (Colour and Christian Community), Vice-Chancellor T. B. Davie (Education and Race Relations in South Africa).



## PREJUDICE IN MODERN PERSPECTIVE

**B**ETWEEN the years 1913 and 1920 Professor R. F. Alfred Hoernlé lectured in philosophy at Harvard University, adding strength and lustre to a Department already famous for its scholars and teachers. It was during this period of time that I had the privilege of studying with him the thought of Descartes and Spinoza and the philosophic mood of the Enlightenment. As is the case with all great teachers he influenced his students not only by what he said but even more by what he was. We at Harvard, as well as you in South Africa, knew him to be a truly international personage. Our student gossip mistakenly identified his birthplace as England, as Germany, France, Belgium, as South Africa. One of our number suggested that he might have come from Tristan da Cunha. But to our minds he was also an authentic Bostonian, so well did he fit into into our special corner of New England.

For many decades I have admired him as a cosmopolitan scholar who offered to us a compassionate conception of man and an idealism with firm terrestrial roots. Therefore I know that you will understand my sense of pride and gratitude in being invited on this occasion to pay my personal tribute to his memory in the land of his adoption.

It is in his own broad synoptic spirit that I venture upon my assignment. My desire is to bring the perspective of social philosophy and of social science to bear upon man's age-long struggle with the disorder of bigotry that lies deeply embedded in his own nature. You will forgive me if as a visitor to South Africa I make few direct references to present problems in the Union. This omission is perhaps more excusable since my immediate predecessor in this series of lectures, Vice-Chancellor Davie, whose untimely death we all lament, concerned himself directly with some of this country's problems.<sup>1</sup> And I think you will agree with me that by dealing with issues that transcend national boundaries we can on this occasion more fittingly honour Alfred Hoernlé as a figure of world significance.

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<sup>1</sup>T. B. Davie. *Education and Race Relations in South Africa*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1955. Eleventh Hoernlé Memorial Lecture.



One sometimes hears people of unquestionable sincerity ask: "Isn't prejudice after all a good thing?" I have met the query in both the United States and in the Union of South Africa. In reality, I suspect, the questioner is asking, "Isn't loyalty to one's own group and to one's cherished values a good thing?" To this question the answer, of course, is emphatically *Yes*. In a world where the cement of positive values is badly loosened we welcome any evidence of loyalty, for loyalty, as Josiah Royce taught us, is intrinsically a virtue. From this point of view even the spectacular rise of nationalism today is not necessarily evil; it becomes so only when it arbitrarily circumscribes the domain of loyalty. Alfred Hoernlé himself examined the sentiment of patriotism and found it altogether good provided only that it is neither aggressive nor exclusive.<sup>2</sup> Like Royce he would require of our personal attachments only one thing, namely that they give due respect to our neighbour's loyalties. Only one virtue stands higher than our separate and special devotions and that is loyalty to the concept of loyalty itself.

When a man asks, "Isn't prejudice a good thing?" he is, as I say, probably confusing prejudice with particular loyalties. The very ease of this confusion places upon us an obligation to define *prejudice* carefully.<sup>3</sup> Prejudice, I hold, is an almost universal psychological syndrome marked by two, and only two, essential features. First is the affective disposition that makes us lean toward or away from an object. Spinoza rightly speaks of both "love prejudice" and "hate prejudice." We can be prejudiced for or against an object. This ingredient by itself does not distinguish prejudice from any liking or disliking.

The second ingredient is more crucial: it is the basing of love or hate on beliefs that are wholly or partially erroneous. To take an example: belief in witchcraft, today as in the past, rests upon a wrong diagnosis of our distress. Our cows do go dry, disease does torment us, a vague *ufufunyane* affects our nerves — but the cause is not witches. In the world at large many such myth-bound hatreds and fears lead us to accuse whole nations,

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<sup>2</sup>R. F. A. Hoernlé, *Race and Reason*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1945, pp. xxii, xxxii.

<sup>3</sup>Elsewhere I have considered the problem of definition in greater detail. See Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge: Addison-Wesley, 1954, Chapter 1. Here I summarize briefly the conclusion reached.

racess, or cultures of evil intentions and of witchlike attributes they do not in fact possess.

Now the commonest form of erroneous belief is the over-generalization which holds that *all* members of a group possess some alleged characteristic. We say that Jews as a group are dishonest; Americans as a group are materialistic; or Africans as a group are like children. These assertions, and others like them, are either demonstrable exaggerations or else total falsehoods. Hence any negative attitude based on such errors entails prejudice.

I am not, of course, implying that human antagonisms may not on occasion be based on a true opposition of values in which prejudice plays no part. One is not prejudiced against a gangster who invades one's premises and threatens one's life. Here is a realistic conflict based on a correct appraisal of facts. It is still too early to attempt an estimate of the amount of human conflict that is realistic and the amount that is imaginary. We now know, however, that if we can lead men to correct their erroneous appraisals of human groups they tend then to abandon long-standing antagonisms, ceasing to fear what is not fearful and to hate what is not hateful. No longer do they tilt at windmills. Rather they reserve their animus for real problems and for real enemies.

A crisp but satisfactory definition of prejudice is one derived from the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas — *Prejudice is thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant*. Our examples of witch-hunting, anti-Semitism, anti-Americanism fit the definition well. If you happen to prefer slang to the discourse of the angelic Thomas, I recommend as an equivalent definition: *Prejudice is being down on something you are not up on*.

So much for the term itself. The question still remains how we know prejudice to be an evil thing in human relationships. Might it not be argued that partisanship, even if based on error, is necessary to the achievement of desirable goals? And may it not be said that prejudice against prejudice is merely the currently fashionable bigotry of the liberal? I am, as you can see, committed to answer the charge that we are all creatures of prejudice, that nothing can be done about it, and that prejudice is sometimes a good thing.



There are, I think, two modes of reasoning that lead us to the conviction that while prejudice is a common enough pattern of mental existence, it is not inevitable, and it is invariably a thing of evil. The first mode of reasoning is employed by deductive theories of value; the second is more pragmatic in character and is closely meshed with the operation of social science itself.

Philosophers ordinarily employ the deductive mode. They ask in effect what ethical goal, if consistently followed, would prove most viable for mankind — that is to say, would lead to the maximum fulfilment of men's interests; or would result in the greatest possible happiness for the greatest possible numbers of human beings. All ethical inquiry seeks rules which if followed would be fecund for the maximization of human values. The search led Kant to the conclusion that man may *never* treat another human being as a means to an end. It led Royce to affirm loyalty to loyalty as the supreme imperative. It led Hoernlé to conclude that what he called "the liberal spirit" is most conducive to safeguarding and promoting *quality* in human life. "It follows," writes Hoernlé, that any social order is evil "in which, from the nature of its internal arrangements, any group of its members is, in principle, condemned to stunted bodies and to stunted minds."<sup>4</sup>

Philosophic reasoning of this type leads to the conclusion that prejudice is indefensible since it can never make for an increase in value over a wide range of human concerns. By its very nature it hinders loyalties, constricts man's reason, and sows disvalue.

The deductive approach is manifested also in the ethical imperatives of religion. Starting with a universalistic outlook, all the great religions of the world establish rules that would make life maximally livable for mankind. To Christians "Love thy neighbour as thyself" is perhaps the most familiar rendering of this Golden Rule, but every great religion has a precise equivalent. Mahatma Gandhi sought long and hard for a term in English that would represent the exact opposite of prejudice. The term he chose was *equimindedness*, a condition of spiritual generosity wherein one's own firmly held beliefs allow for the right of others to hold equally firm beliefs of a different order. For a Christian

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<sup>4</sup>*South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1945, p. 112.

equivalent I cite the moving injunction of Jesus to His disciples: "Let both grow together until the harvest."<sup>5</sup> We do not know our ultimate worth to the harvester, but we can, if we will, grow together peaceably until the day of reckoning arrives.

Unfortunately we may not assume that all religious reasoning is of this equiminded order. While every major religion endorses the Golden Rule and extols the values of brotherhood, at the same time each has generated contradictory, if minor, principles whose consequences are divisive and ethnocentric. Forgetting the universalistic implications of their monotheism, certain Moslems believe that destruction of the infidel is a high duty. Christianity, through its doctrines of election, revelation and theocracy opened the door for a special and self-serving interpretation of God's plan for His creation. The special dogmas of election and revelation invited men to set themselves at the summit of God's supposed heirarchical arrangement for the human race. Theocracy made it possible to enforce this arrangement. Until the seventeenth century it was never doubted that the State should implement the reasoning of its theologians. In certain lands today the tie between theology and politics is still close.

Bigotry is thus a paradoxical product of Christianity. To justify bigotry theologians are often forced back upon certain obscurities in the Book of Genesis. The story of the Tower of Babel, for example, they interpret to mean that equimindedness is not only impossible but clearly opposed to God's will. Especially interesting to psychologists is the manner in which adherence to the bigotry-inspiring portions of the Old Testament is reconciled with the flatfooted imperatives of equimindedness in the New.

An historical example is the serpentine reasoning of Menno Simons, the Anabaptist theologian of the sixteenth century, who wrestled with St. Paul's injunction, "Therefore judge nothing before the time the Lord shall come"—a precept identical with Christ's command: "Let both grow together until the harvest." Menno Simons interpreted the Pauline text to mean, "None may judge unless he have the judging word on his side."<sup>6</sup>

Here is the trap into which every religious bigot falls. Claiming to have the "judging word" on his side he finds that he can

<sup>5</sup> St. Matthew, 13: 30.

<sup>6</sup> Menno Simons. *A Foundation and Plain Instruction of the Saving Doctrine of Christ. On the Ban: Questions and Answers*, 1550 Translated by I. D. Rupp, Lancaster: Elias Baar, 1863.



conveniently violate the universalistic imperatives of his religion. Accordingly he reverses the humility of Job, and says in effect to the Lord, "Thy ways are after all only the same as my ways."

No need to dwell longer on deductive answers to the question: "Is prejudice an evil?" I have tried to indicate that all of the synoptic philosophies of man and all of the great religions conclude that only a condition of mind that is prejudice-free can consistently augment human values. I have also sounded the warning that it is all too easy to argue from selected and partial premises to a conclusion that justifies particularistic prejudices.

Bigotry, one may say, is the result of ethical reasoning wherein an ontological premise is secretly abandoned in favour of a hidden premise of self-interest.

How does social science stand in relation to this matter? First, of course, some social scientists are philosophically or religiously inclined. They accept the universalistic view and lead their scientific lives in accordance with this commitment. A few are not so universalistic; they proceed from partisan premises. One thinks of the meretricious scientists under Hitler or Communism who have contrived to prove what their leaders desired them to prove.

But for the most part, I suspect, social scientists are *inductive* by temperament. They ask: "Cannot science shed light on man's quest for an adequate ethics, and help build sound standards for moral conduct?" They say in effect, "Let's look at man's social behaviour and see why so much of his conduct is self-defeating and unproductive of what he himself considers to be good."

Inductive studies show, for one thing, that many of our thought-models become set early in life and that they prove maladaptive to our adult needs. Scientific concepts such as *stereotype*, *rationalization*, *defense mechanism*, *cognitive rigidity*, *semantic therapy*, and many more, are testimony to the new type of insight we have gained. As contributors to this enlightenment we think of such writers as Walter Lippman, Stuart Chase, Korzybski, Freud, Moreno, Wittgenstein, Richard Thouless, Trigant Burrow, Cantril, and many more. The exposure of our own prejudices to ourselves, though only the first step toward cure, is a significant achievement.

But the work of social science does not stop with a mere challenge. It offers means for clarifying our values and for



implementing them in a rational way. To take one example: Until relatively recent years it was thought that the only way to conduct an industry or business was on an essentially punitive basis. Workers toiled long hours; fines were imposed for lateness. Harshness and hierarchy dominated the practices of management. Workers were nameless; they were hired or fired on whim; placements in jobs were haphazard; praise an unused incentive; the worker did not participate in the many decisions affecting his destiny. This Dark Age of industry is, of course, far from ended; but in many shops and offices we see wholesome results that come from applying social science. When workers are no longer nameless, nor punished, nor patronized, nor overlooked; when it is realized that the whole man goes to work carrying with him his deep need for affection, his hopes, fears, and troubles; when industry meshes into his life so that he feels that he is participant in his own destiny; and when his purposes are making use of his abilities; when his aspirations are socially understood and approved—then the whole productive process improves.<sup>7</sup>

Social science has played a significant part in bringing about this new stage in the industrial revolution. It is by no means a matter of teaching management superficial tricks for manipulating workers. On the contrary social science demonstrates to the employer that he cannot achieve his own purposes unless he ceases to use his workers as targets for his own private anxieties and hostilities. It teaches him self-knowledge and therewith knowledge of others. It teaches him a new conception of human relations. In so doing it reveals prejudices for what they are—a prime source of suffering and disvalue.

Moving closer to the field of race relations, think what would happen to our prejudices if we were to admit to our minds the following fairly certain scientific discoveries:

(1) Racial membership accounts for only a negligible fraction of human attributes: for complexion, hair form and shape of shinbone—yes; for intelligence, temper, talent, outlook, virtue, and worth—not at all.

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<sup>7</sup>The story of this modern chapter in the industrial revolution has been told many times. A significant publication is F. J. Roethlisberger & W. J. Dickson, *Management and the Worker*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939. One may also consult S. Chase, *The Proper Study of Mankind*. New York: Harper & Bros., rev. ed., 1956. Likewise G. W. Allport, "Basic Principles in Improving Human Relations", Chapter 2 in K. W. Bigelow (ed) *Cultural Groups and Human Relations*. New York: Teachers' College, 1951.

(2) There are no instinctive aversions of human races one toward another; all such aversions are built into children, and only with considerable difficulty.

(3) Economic studies prove that in almost every case where segregation is practised the financial loss is enormous, thus lowering the standards of nourishment, shelter, health, recreation, and freedom for all groups concerned. Prejudice sows only economic disvalue.

(4) Most hostility arises not from unacceptable characteristics in other people, but from our private emotional disorders for which the hated group is not responsible.

(5) When people live in such a way as to have equal-status contact with one another in the pursuit of common objectives, they ordinarily cease to perceive one another as threats, and are likely to develop a tolerance and liking for one another.

These are but a few of the "almost certain" scientific laws that bear on our racial relationships. A prejudiced person who can be brought to admit these laws to his mental store will find his previous creed of exclusiveness untenable.

To restate my point: the net effect of modern science is to show that prejudice can never maximize value. While it may make for short-run emotional gains for the individual, in the long run it is uneconomic, fecund for violence and for war, trivializing to human reason, stultifying alike to its possessor and victim. Thus it is impossible to see how value — define it as you will — can be enhanced through prejudice. At this juncture social science joins its answer to that of philosophy and religion. Prejudice is not, never has been, and never will be a good thing in human society.

This being the case we next ask what social science has to contribute to the conquest of prejudice in modern life.

### Group differences

The most logical place to start is with the factual study of group differences. We have already agreed that the distinction between realistic conflict and prejudice lies chiefly in the erroneous over-generalizations to which prejudice is prone. Hence in order to distinguish fact from falsity we need an accurate perception of



peoples and their institutions, and an understanding of their purposes and capacities. In other words, the first duty of the social scientist is to discover what *truth* lies behind such concepts as "mind of the nation" or "ethnic character". Like the medical diagnostician he may start by asking embarrassing questions: "Are Armenians a bad credit risk?" "Are Jews clannish and exclusive?" "Are Africans inherently stupid and unteachable?"

We have a perfect right to ask such questions, for it is important to know to what extent our perceptions and beliefs are founded on reality, and to what extent they are mythical.

It so happens that the answer to the questions I have just posed is almost certainly *No*: these groups are not as they are said to be. Even though our methods of research are imperfect yet such scientific evidence as we have regarding these and similar allegations is far sounder than the guesswork and anecdotalism customarily employed to support prejudiced accusations.

The social scientist who insists upon discovering the objective facts concerning group differences runs the risk of opprobrium. Some sentimentalists prefer on *a priori* grounds to deny the existence of racial or national differences; whereas bigots are certain that they know all the differences in advance. But the social scientist wards off these attacks as best he can and affirms that his first logical duty is to *find out the facts*.

We cannot here survey all of the results that are coming to light.<sup>8</sup> Research has yet far to go. But as I read the preliminary results there seems to be little justification for most of our racial accusations. Differences that are expected to appear fail to do so; or else they are of a trivial order.

Let us take one sample finding of a positive difference. It concerns the incidence of alcoholism among ethnic groups in the United States. After making a comprehensive survey one sociologist concludes: "In statistics of admissions for alcoholic disorders to various hospitals in this country the Irish have consistently had rates two to three times as high as any other ethnic

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<sup>8</sup>For discussions of methods, findings and theory in this area of research see G. W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Chapters 6, 7, 13; also A. Inkeles and D. J. Levinson, "National Character: a Study of Modal Personality and Sociocultural Systems", Chapter 26 in G. Lindzey (ed.) *Handbook of Social Psychology* Volume 2. Cambridge: Addison-Wesley, 1954.



group.”<sup>9</sup> In one institution, for example, the rate of admission for the Irish is 50 times that of the Jews.<sup>10</sup>

Here then is a factual ethnic difference. Yet it is pure prejudice for one to say, “I don’t like the Irish because they drink too heavily.” For even among the Irish the rate of alcoholic psychosis is approximately 25 in any group of 100,000 Irishmen. Therefore to condemn the Irish group as a whole is “to think ill” of them “without sufficient warrant.” The only realistic statement that could be made in this connection is somewhat as follows: “Since I don’t like heavy drinkers I probably would not like approximately one per cent of the Irish.”

What a world of difference it would make in our human relationships if we could learn to say *one per cent* instead of *all*, *this Irishman* instead of *the Irish*, and *he* or *she* instead of *they*.

Techniques for the study of national and ethnic differences are rapidly developing. Vital statistics of the sort just cited are one source of information; international public opinion polls another. Cross-national studies using scaling techniques are entering the scene. This topic is too specialized for further discussion here, but before dropping it I wish to sound two warnings.

First, in uncovering differences in the character of peoples we must not forget to look also for similarities — for what Kluckhohn calls “cultural universals.”<sup>11</sup> While differences readily strike the eye, yet the existence of a common ground in all cultures and in all branches of the human family is a more pervasive fact. It is true that each group has some defining attribute that makes it a group. Polish people speak Polish; most Africans have dark complexions; most Moslems hold the Koran in high regard. But these valid *defining* attributes (technically called J-curve attributes) are few in number.<sup>12</sup> Our error is to assume that all other alleged attributes are also of this order, as when we say Poles as a group are stupid; Africans are childlike; Moslems are bloodthirsty.

My second warning concerns the degree to which validly discovered differences justify hostility. People can differ from us

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<sup>9</sup>R. F. Bales, “Cultural Differences in Rates of Alcoholism”, *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 1946, 6, p. 484.

<sup>10</sup>H. W. Haggard and E. M. Jellinek, *Alcohol Explored*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1942, p. 252.

<sup>11</sup>C. Kluckhohn, “Universal Categories of Culture”, in A. L. Kroeber (ed.) *Anthropology Today*. Chicago University Press, 1953.

<sup>12</sup>See G. W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Chapter 6.

without menacing us. Suppose, for example, that one group turns out to be shorter than we in stature, less educated, less humorous, more irascible, more suspicious, even less trustworthy. Are we justified therefore in hating members of this group or in regarding them as a threat? Do not the same differences exist within our family? Some brothers and sisters are ill-favored compared with others; but they are often loved in spite of, or even because of, their oddity.

While the study of group differences is rapidly expanding we still stumble at thresholds. Unless I am mistaken, there are but few studies in South Africa of the beliefs, capacities, aspirations and hopes of the several ethnic groups composing the Union. Assertions are rife, data are few.

### Phenomenological studies

Besides the factual appraisal of group differences what has social science to offer? Well, for one thing it teaches us the manner in which we *perceive* other groups of people. This area of investigation is *phenomenological*. Some years ago Dr. Malherbe reported an early study of this type. In a Public Service examination candidates were instructed to "underline the percentage that you think Jews constitute of the whole population of South Africa: 1 per cent, 5 . . . 10 . . . 20 . . . 25 . . . 30 . . . per cent." When tabulated the modal estimate turned out to be 20 per cent. The true answer is just a little over one per cent.<sup>13</sup>

This neat little experiment shows how our fears and hostility tend to inflate our perceptions out of all proportion to the facts. The American public, we know, and probably also the public of South Africa, tends to over-estimate the size of the Communist party in the land.<sup>14</sup>

A particularly important line of phenomenological investigation concerns the effect of equal status contact upon our perceptions. Several studies have demonstrated that equal status contact between groups leads to mutual regard and respect. This favourable effect is greater if members are working together for

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<sup>13</sup>E. G. Malherbe, *Race Attitudes and Education*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1946. Second Annual Hoernlé Memorial Lecture.

<sup>14</sup>S. A. Stouffer, *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties*. New York: Doubleday & Co., 1955.



common objectives (e.g., at school, in the armed services, in industry, or in the neighbourhood), and if law and custom sanction this type of contact.<sup>15</sup>

Examples of this research, neat in design and convincing in result, are the two large scale studies of public housing projects conducted respectively by Deutsch and Collins and by Wilner, Walkey and Cook.<sup>16</sup> In both studies integrated and segregated occupancy patterns were investigated. In the former Negroes comprised approximately 50 per cent of the integrated housing units; in the latter they comprised 10 per cent. From both investigations the same basic findings emerged. White people living closer to Negroes felt more friendly to them. Proximity brought favourable attitudes. And what for our present purpose is most important, proximity tended to change perceptions. People living in segregated units tended to see the Negroes as a dirty people, aggressive, hostile, dangerous, and not to be trusted. People living in integrated units more often reported that the Negro inhabitants of the projects were much the same as white people. Unfavourable stereotyped attributes vanished on closer acquaintance. Segregation, we may now reasonably conclude, makes for mystery, stereotypy, and unfriendliness.

The phenomenological approach is broader than I have yet indicated. For example, there is the well-known tendency in man to perceive a living human agent as the cause of his miseries. Belief in witchcraft, still widespread, locates the cause of one's sufferings in a malign human agency.

But it is not only among primitive people that the anthropomorphizing tendency exists. We find the same disposition in our own society, although the witches we accuse are more likely to be collective than single. Is my business shaky? *They* are to blame. Is my job insecure? *They* want to take it from me. Am I worried about my immoral impulses? Well, just look at *them*. *They* of course are the Jews or Natives, Catholics or men from Mars, according to the fixation of our fantasy.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. G. W. Allport, *op cit.*, Chapter 16.

<sup>16</sup> M. Deutsch and Mary E. Collins. *Interracial Housing*, 1950; D. M. Wilner, Rosabelle P. Walkley, S. W. Cook. *Human Relations in Interracial Housing*, 1955. Both are published by the University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.



## Psychodynamic research

At this point we come to psychodynamics, an area of investigation where marked advances have been made. Psychodynamics focuses attention upon the type of person who, because of his own needs and structure of character, is prone to develop strong prejudices. Bigotry stands revealed as one of the psychological crutches adopted by people who are crippled in their encounters with life. The crippling may have occurred in childhood, or it may come from feelings of insecurity and wounded pride in adult years. In any case prejudice exists in many lives because it fulfills a protective and even sedative function for its bearer. The first major series of researches establishing this fact was published as recently as 1950 under the title *The Authoritarian Personality*. This pioneer production has since been followed by many additional studies dealing with character-conditioned prejudice.<sup>17</sup>

To my mind the crux of this extensive work is its demonstration that bigotry is an easy and natural style of life to adopt. Most people are buffeted by the anxieties of existence, by the normal fears of death and disaster, augmented by economic insecurity, by affectional deprivation, by feelings of guilt. This total "existential anxiety" fuses with the irritations of daily life. The resulting complex leads one, as we have seen, to seek human agents to explain one's distress. It is *they* who are to blame.

A punitive and exclusive style of life gradually evolves. One feels secure only in the bosom of one's own group. There his pride is fed by myths of superiority. There his two fiercely possessive needs — property and sex — are focused. There he finds social support for his prejudice: religion, literature, humour, tradition and the usages of language, help sustain his exclusionist mode of life.

We owe to Professor I. D. MacCrone some of our understanding of this life-style. He demonstrates the interlocking of suspiciousness, exclusiveness, and ethnic hostility in human lives, and their blending with rigid religious ideology. He also offers

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<sup>17</sup>T. W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, D. J. Levinson, R. N. Sanford. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper & Bros., 1950. More recent summaries of the topic may be found in H. J. Eysenck, *The Psychology of Politics*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954. Also in G. W. Allport, *op. cit.*, Chapters 25-27.

us a theory of "ethno-erotism" which relates this disorder to a fixation of man's capacity-for-love exclusively upon his immediate in-group.<sup>18</sup>

It is wise to note the erotic complications in prejudice. To a surprising extent sex-conflict and guilt seem to enter the process. It is comforting to think that the demon of impulse resides not in our own breasts so much as in the lascivious black man. As Goethe says, we never feel so free from sin as when we expatiate upon the sinful deeds of others.

Since the clamorous needs of the body and of the ego, and the goads of fear and anxiety, dispose us to develop a prejudiced pattern of life, we need no longer wonder at the ubiquity of our problem. We marvel rather at the frequency with which we encounter equiminded mortals. We should be asking how it is that so many people develop self-insight, self-criticism, and a universalistic ethic to counteract the bent toward bigotry. Up to now psychology has given less attention to the tolerant personality than to the intolerant.

### Genetic studies

Basic to the study of both types is the process of child-development, including teaching at home, in school, and in the culture at large. In this area too there is progress to report.

Children, we know, manifest no prejudice whatever in the early years of life. Such awareness of race difference as exists is for the most part neutral or friendly, though sometimes marked by puzzlement. A little boy of four was playing for the first time with a little black girl. He said to her, "You are very nice". Then screwing up his eyes with intense effort, he added, "but I can't quite see you." There was a perceptual adjustment to be made, but the simple fact of skin colour was not for him cause for dislike. The early years of life are singularly free from prejudice.

Certain styles of child training we now know lead more surely than others to the production of prejudice. Broadly speaking, children who feel a warmth and security in their parents — children who know that however badly they misbehave they are still loved — are less prone to prejudice in later years than are children who

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<sup>18</sup>I. D. MacCrone, "Ethnocentric Ideology and Ethnocentrism". *Proceedings, South African Psychological Association*, 1953, 4, 21-24.



encounter a rejective situation at home where discipline is both harsh and capricious. It is ominous for the future of a child when the discipline he receives is based on the emotional needs of the disciplinarian rather than on any consideration of the child's own needs.<sup>19</sup>

### Sociocultural studies

Hastily I move on to the perspectives of sociology, anthropology and economics.

We are familiar with the Marxist theory which holds all prejudice to be rooted in an exploitation. The theory holds that ruling groups devise an ideology to justify and maintain the 'surplus value' accruing to dominant groups from the ill-paid labor of subordinate groups. This theory seeks the roots of prejudice in one and only one human passion — greed. Herein lies its one-sidedness, for we know that prejudice draws nourishment likewise from fear and insecurity, from feelings of inferiority and pride, from frustration and irritability, from deprivation of love, as well as from the sheer need to conform. Yet greed surely is to be reckoned with as are all the economic trappings of prejudice that it brings in its train.

Economics teaches many other things: to look to the ecological structure of a region in order to understand the immediate nature of group conflicts; to look to the cycles of depression and prosperity for upswings and downswings in prejudice. Most of all economics confronts us with supreme paradox of prejudice. Through greed men seek to reap economic profit from their prejudices, but are betrayed by these same prejudices into behaving in most uneconomic ways. Segregation and discrimination — fruits of prejudice — turn out to be economically destructive.<sup>20</sup>

From sociology and anthropology we learn additional facts to correct and supplement our psychological analysis. These social sciences warn us that prejudice is not always a crutch employed by immature or crippled personalities. It may be a phenomenon of sheer conformity, barely skin deep. But whether it is skin-deep or bone-deep we cannot understand prejudice unless we know its social context.

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<sup>19</sup>G. W. Allport, *op. cit.* Chapter 18.

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, E. de S. Brunner, "Problems and Tensions in South Africa", *Political Science Quarterly*, 1955, 70, 368-386.

What strata exist in a given society, and which are traditionally regarded as high in status and which low? Does the culture offer a ritualized target for aggression, such as formally sanctioned anti-Semitism, a dogma of white supremacy, or a belief in witchcraft? Answers to these and to similar questions are needed if we are to achieve adequate perspective.

Research in sociology and in anthropology has resulted in several important laws. Let me cite three:

In a heterogeneous society there is more group prejudice than in homogeneous societies. For instance, South Africa, which has several "perceptual points for alarm," harbours more prejudice than, say, St. Helena or Sweden, both remarkably homogeneous societies.

Prejudice is greater whenever there are severe barriers to communication between groups. This law has as its reciprocal the 'law of contact': Prejudice lessens whenever there is equal-status contact between members of groups in the pursuit of common objectives.

I believe the following principle has special relevance to the situation in South Africa:

Assuming that there is germinal prejudice against a certain group, this prejudice will become stronger in proportion to the size of the group in the total population.

Only about 1,000 people from India live in the United States, but about 13 million Negroes. The former group is overlooked, the latter is a target for much prejudice and discrimination. No doubt if the number of Indians were to rise to the proportion obtaining in Natal, fear, suspicion and dislike would rise accordingly.

Yet it would be an error to assume that the mere density of a group in the total population brings about prejudice against it. In South Africa, for example, I find myself quite overwhelmed by South Africans. I am not for this reason prejudiced against them. Populational density, I suggest, is never a causal factor, but rather a multiplier of whatever prior prejudices exist.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The factor of density, and other socio-cultural principles here mentioned are discussed in greater detail in G. W. Allport, *op. cit.*, Chapter 14.



## Historical horizons

We have not yet spoken of the perspective of history. The truth of the matter is that without the lens of history we fumble along in short-sighted confusion. Take for example that stubborn prejudice bequeathed to us from antiquity — anti-Semitism. Only history can show us how throughout the ages Jews have been forced to occupy a position at the “fringe of stable values” as money-lenders, entertainers, entrepreneurs; and how such marginal people are regarded by conservatives in every era as agents of threat.

Again, without a knowledge of the Civil War in the United States and of the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa, and of the heartbreaks and bitterness engendered by each, it would be impossible to understand the present family quarrels in the two lands. Only with the aid of this perspective can we come to see that in both countries the black man is to a certain extent an innocent bystander. He is caught, through no fault of his own, between two bitter trains of memory.

Besides adding to our knowledge of specific prejudices in specific eras, history teaches us that the official morality of a nation, what we may call its stateways, has always exerted an influence of major importance. While one can point to countless violations of the spirit of the Magna Charta, of the XIVth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, of the Charter of the United Nations, still it is impossible to deny that these statements of policy do have a continuing and meliorative effect upon human relationships.

Speaking for myself I cannot yet decide which is a more important factor in the creation of bigotry — stateways or folkways; folkways being defined here to include child-training and the individual's style of life. If we are dedicated to the reduction of prejudice is it better to fight the battle on the political front or in the home, classroom and church? Fortunately this question need not be answered in terms of either-or. Each of us may work according to his lights and his talent. There is plenty to be done at both ends.

One final lesson of history I consider the most important of all. History helps us to determine whether we are in fact waging a losing battle. The prejudiced style of life is so easy to

develop, so natural, so ubiquitous, and in many places so solidly supported by the social and political structure, that one could easily despair. We are tempted to say that there is no solution to our dilemma — in Sartre's words "No exit." Among white South Africans I have encountered this pessimism. Black South Africans, too, sense the impasse. One tribe has an imaginative explanation for the situation. This tribe, it seems, holds that God Himself is good, wishing the whole human race well, but unfortunately He has a half-witted brother who constantly interferes with His plans. It is this half-witted brother who has taken charge of relationships within the human family.

But to despair is to misread the long lesson of history. Relationships within the human family have always been strained and often fratricidal. No story is more depressing than the history of the Christian Church which for the most part has disregarded its Founder's injunction "Let both grow together until the harvest." Yet during the sixteenth century, and even earlier, golden words were spoken in defense of religious liberty and toleration; and in the nineteenth century many of these words were realized in practice; and in the twentieth century we begin to descry a genuine purging of the religious conscience from much of its bigotry.

Similarly, stateways, if viewed in historical perspective, reveal slow but true advance. The progress is signaled in recent years by the United Nations' *Declaration of Human Rights*. Especially striking is the banding of private citizens for the extension of racial sanity and the reduction of prejudice. The South African Institute of Race Relations is an example. Comparable organizations exist in the United States for the same purpose. Many are international in scope.

I have drawn special attention to one recent historical thread: to the perspective on the causes and cures of prejudice disclosed by modern social science. Its discoveries have no magical power, but they do bring a cleansing spirit and new hope into the oppressive caves of human ignorance and hate. The current outpouring of research and books, the training of younger people who in increasing numbers are dedicating themselves to the betterment of human relationships — these are signs of progress. At long last in every land enlightened men and women are determined that man's intelligence shall be brought to serve the cause of man's



redemption. They see more clearly than ever before that living together as a single human family is the only future mankind can have.

Thus, viewing the matter in historical perspective, we detect a new spirit in the land. Whether it will spread rapidly enough to avert disastrous clashes of nation and race we cannot yet predict. We can say only that the age-old disorder of prejudice is beginning to yield to diagnosis and treatment much as other endemic diseases have yielded. The more we learn of its nature, the more we discover about modes of possible cure.

Even though the road ahead looks discouraging it is marked with these beacons of hope. We have therefore abundant reason to keep faith with all humane prophets of equimindedness in the past. They laboured — and so must we — to bring rationality and compassion to bear upon our common problem. Among these prophets the man we honour tonight — who made South Africa his home and universal liberty his theme — remains our special inspiration and guide.





## Prejudice in modern perspective

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# The Hoernlé Memorial Lectures

The IRR is republishing the text of the Hoernlé Memorial Lectures, a series of talks which started in 1945. The original introductory note to the lecture series reads as follows:

*A lecture, entitled the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture (in memory of the late Professor R. F. Alfred Hoernle), President of the Institute from 1934—1943), will be delivered once a year under the auspices of the South African Institute of Race Relations. An invitation to deliver the lecture will be extended each year to some person having special knowledge and experience of racial problems in Africa or elsewhere.*

*It is hoped that the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture will provide a platform for constructive and helpful contributions to thought and action. While the lecturers will be entirely free to express their own views, which may not be those of the Institute as expressed in its formal decisions, it is hoped that lecturers will be guided by the Institute's declaration of policy that "scientific study and research must be allied with the fullest recognition of the human reactions to changing racial situations; that respectful regard must be paid to the traditions and usages of the various national, racial and tribal groups which comprise the population; and that due account must be taken of opposing views earnestly held."*

## About the IRR

Since 1929, the Institute of Race Relations has advocated for a free, fair, and prospering South Africa. At the heart of this vision lie the fundamental principles of liberty of the individual and equality before the law guaranteeing the freedom of all citizens. The IRR stands for the right of all people to make decisions about their lives without undue political or bureaucratic interference.