

prejudice" is harmless enough—being confined to idle chatter. But unfortunately, the fateful progression is, in this century, growing in frequency. And as the peoples of the earth grow ever more interdependent, they can tolerate less well the mounting friction.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Cf. *A New English Dictionary*. (SIR JAMES A. H. MURRAY, ED.) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909, Vol. VII, Pt. II, 1275.
3. This definition is derived from the Thomistic moralists who regard prejudice as "rash judgment." The author is indebted to the Rev. J. H. Fichter, S.J., for calling this treatment to his attention. The definition is more fully discussed by the Rev. JOHN LAFARGE, S.J., in *The Race Question and the Negro*, New York: Longmans, Green, 1945, 174 ff.
4. Cf. R. M. WILLIAMS, JR. The reduction of intergroup tensions. New York: *Social Science Research Council*, 1947, Bulletin 57, 37.
5. H. S. DYER. The usability of the concept of "Prejudice." *Psychometrika*, 1945, 10, 219-224.
6. The following definition is written from this relativistic point of view: "A prejudice is a generalized anti-attitude, and/or an anti-action toward any distinct category or group of people, when either the attitude or the action or both are judged by the community in which they are found to be less favorable to the given people than the normally accepted standard of that community." P. BLACK AND R. D. ATKINS. Conformity versus prejudice as exemplified in white Negro relations in the South: some methodological considerations. *Journal of Psychology*, 1950, 30, 109-121.
7. N. W. ACKERMAN AND MARIE JAHODA. *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder*. New York: Harper, 1950, 4.
8. Not all scales for measuring prejudice include items that reflect both attitudes and beliefs. Those that do so report correlations between the two types of items of the order of .80. Cf. BABETTE SAMELSON. *The patterning of attitudes and beliefs regarding the American Negro*. (Unpublished.) Radcliffe College Library, 1945. Also, A. ROSE, *Studies in reduction of prejudice*. (Mimeograph.) Chicago: American Council on Race Relations, 1947, 11-14.
9. Aware of the world-wide problem of discrimination, the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations has prepared a thorough analysis of *The main types and causes of discrimination*. United Nations Publications, 1949, XIV, 3.

CHAPTER 2

THE NORMALITY OF PREJUDGMENT

*Separation of Human Groups—Process of Categorization
—When Categories Conflict with Evidence—Personal
Values as Categories—Personal Values and Prejudice—
Summary*

Why do human beings slip so easily into ethnic prejudice? They do so because the two essential ingredients that we have discussed—*erroneous generalization* and *hostility*—are natural and common capacities of the human mind. For the time being we shall leave hostility and its related problems out of account. Let us consider only those basic conditions of human living and thinking that lead naturally to the formation of erroneous and categorical prejudgment—and which therefore deposit us on the very threshold of ethnic and group antagonism. The reader is warned that the full story of prejudice cannot be told in this—or in any other—single chapter of this book. Each chapter, taken by itself, is one-sided. This is the inevitable defect of any *analytical* treatment of the subject.

The Separation of Human Groups

Everywhere on earth we find a condition of separateness among groups. People mate with their own kind. They eat, play, reside in homogeneous clusters. They visit with their own kind, and prefer to worship together. Much of this automatic cohesion is due to nothing more than convenience. There is no need to turn to out-groups for companionship. With plenty of people at hand to choose from, why create for ourselves the

trouble of adjusting to new languages, new foods, new cultures, or to people of a different educational level?

Thus most of the business of life can go on with less effort if we stick together with our own kind. Foreigners are a strain. So too are people of a higher or lower social and economic class than our own. We don't play bridge with the janitor. Why? Perhaps he prefers poker; almost certainly he would not grasp the type of jests and chatter that we and our friends enjoy; there would be a certain awkwardness in blending our differing manners. It is not that we have class prejudice, but only that we find comfort and ease in our own class. And normally there are plenty of people of our own class, or race, or religion to play, live, and eat with, and to marry.

It is not always the dominant majority that forces minority groups to remain separate. They often prefer to keep their identity, so that they need not strain to speak a foreign language or to watch their manners. Like the old grads at a college reunion, they can "let down" with those who share their traditions and presuppositions.

One enlightening study shows that high school students representing American minorities display even greater ethnocentrism than do native white Americans. Negro, Chinese, and Japanese young people, for example, are much more insistent upon choosing their friends, their work companions, and their "dates" from their own group than are white students. It is true that they do not select "leaders" from their own group, but prefer the non-Jewish white majority. But while agreeing that class leaders should come from the dominant group, they then seek the greater comfort of confining their intimate relations to their own kind.¹

The initial fact, therefore, is that human groups tend to stay apart. We need not ascribe this tendency to a gregarious instinct, to a "consciousness of kind," or to prejudice. The fact is adequately explained by the principles of ease, least effort, congeniality, and pride in one's own culture.

Once this separatism exists, however, the ground is laid for all sorts of psychological elaboration. People who stay separate have few channels of communication. They easily exaggerate the degree of difference between groups, and readily misun-

derstand the grounds for it. And, perhaps most important of all, the separateness may lead to genuine conflicts of interests, as well as to many imaginary conflicts.

The Process of Categorization

The human mind must think with the aid of categories (the term is equivalent here to *generalizations*). Once formed, categories are the basis for normal prejudgment. We cannot possibly avoid this process. Orderly living depends upon it.

We may say that the process of categorization has five important characteristics.

(1) *It forms large classes and clusters for guiding our daily adjustments.* We spend most of our waking life calling upon preformed categories for this purpose. When the sky darkens and the barometer falls we prejudge that rain will fall. We adjust to this cluster of happenings by taking along an umbrella. When an angry looking dog charges down the street, we categorize him as a "mad dog" and avoid him. When we go to a physician with an ailment we expect him to behave in a certain way toward us. On these, and countless other occasions, we "type" a single event, place it within a familiar rubric, and act accordingly. Sometimes we are mistaken: the event does not fit the category. It does not rain; the dog is not mad; the physician behaves unprofessionally. Yet our behavior was rational. It was based on high probability. Though we used the wrong category, we did the best we could.

What all this means is that our experience in life tends to form itself into clusters (concepts, categories), and while we may call on the right cluster at the wrong time, or the wrong cluster at the right time, still the process in question dominates our entire mental life. A million events befall us every day. We cannot handle so many events. If we think of them at all, we type them.

Open-mindedness is considered to be a virtue. But, strictly speaking, it cannot occur. A new experience *must* be redacted into old categories. We cannot handle each event freshly in its own right. If we did so, of what use would past experience be? Bertrand Russell, the philosopher, has summed up the

matter in a phrase, "a mind perpetually open will be a mind perpetually vacant."

(2) *Categorization assimilates as much as it can to the cluster.* There is a curious inertia in our thinking. We like to solve problems easily. We can do so best if we can fit them rapidly into a satisfactory category and use this category as a means of prejudging the solution. The story is told of the pharmacist's mate in the Navy who had only two categories into which he fitted every ailment that came to his attention on sick call: if you can *see* it put iodine on it; if you *can't*, give the patient a dose of salts. Life was simple for this pharmacist's mate; he ran his whole professional life with the aid of only two categories.

The point may be stated in this way: the mind tends to categorize environmental events in the "grossest" manner compatible with the need for action. If the pharmacist's mate in our story were called to task for his overcrude practice of medicine, he might then mend his ways and learn to employ more discriminated categories. But so long as we can "get away" with coarse overgeneralizations we tend to do so. (Why? Well, it takes less effort, and effort, except in the area of our most intense interests, is disagreeable.)

The bearing of this tendency on our problem is clear. It costs the Anglo employer less effort to guide his daily behavior by the generalization "Mexicans are lazy," than to individualize his workmen and learn the real reasons for their conduct. If I can lump thirteen million of my fellow citizens under a simple formula, "Negroes are stupid, dirty, and inferior," I simplify my life enormously. I simply avoid them one and all. What could be easier?

(3) *The category enables us quickly to identify a related object.* Every event has certain marks that serve as a cue to bring the category of prejudgment into action. When we see a red-breasted bird, we say to ourselves "robin." When we see a crazily swaying automobile, we think, "drunken driver," and act accordingly. A person with dark brown skin will activate whatever concept of Negro is dominant in our mind. If the dominant category is one composed of negative attitudes and beliefs we will automatically avoid him, or adopt whichever habit of rejection (Chapter 1) is most available to us.

Thus categories have a close and immediate tie with what we see, how we judge, and what we do. In fact, their whole purpose seems to be to facilitate perception and conduct—in other words, to make our adjustment to life speedy, smooth, and consistent. This principle holds even though we often make mistakes in fitting events to categories and thus get ourselves into trouble.

(4) *The category saturates all that it contains with the same ideational and emotional flavor.* Some categories are almost purely intellectual. Such categories we call concepts. *Tree* is a concept made up of our experience with hundreds of kinds of trees and with thousands of individual trees, and yet it has essentially one ideational meaning. But many of our concepts (even *tree*) have in addition to a "meaning" also a characteristic "feeling." We not only know what *tree* is but we *like* trees. And so it is with ethnic categories. Not only do we know what Chinese, Mexican, Londoner mean, but we may have a feeling tone of favor or disfavor accompanying the concept.

(5) *Categories may be more or less rational.* We have said that generally a category starts to grow up from a "kernel of truth." A rational category does so, and enlarges and solidifies itself through the increment of relevant experience. Scientific laws are examples of rational categories. They are backed up by experience. Every event to which they pertain turns out in a certain way. Even if the laws are not 100 percent perfect, we consider them rational if they have a high probability of predicting a happening.

Some of our ethnic categories are quite rational. It is probable a Negro will have dark skin (though this is not always true). It is probable that a Frenchman will speak French better than German (though here, too, are exceptions). But is it true that the Negro will be superstitious, or that the Frenchman will be morally lax?

To make a rational prejudgment of members of a group requires considerable knowledge of the characteristics of the group. It is unlikely that anyone has sound evidence that Scots are more penurious than Norwegians, or that Orientals are more wily than Caucasians, yet these beliefs grow as readily as do more rational beliefs.

In a certain Guatemalan community there is fierce hatred of the Jews. No resident has ever seen a Jew. How did the Jew-is-to-be-hated category grow up? In the first place, the community was strongly Catholic. Teachers had told the residents that the Jews were Christ-killers. It also so happened that in the local culture was an old pagan myth about a devil who killed a god. Thus two powerfully emotional ideas converged and created a hostile prejudgment of Jews.

We have said that irrational categories are formed as easily as rational categories. Probably they are formed *more* easily, for intense emotional feelings have a property of acting like sponges. Ideas, engulfed by an overpowering emotion, are more likely to conform to the emotion than to objective evidence.

There is a story of an Oxford student who once remarked, "I despise all Americans, but have never met one I didn't like." In this case the categorization went against even his first-hand experience. Holding to a prejudgment when we know better is one of the strangest features of prejudice. Theologians tell us that in prejudgments based on ignorance there is no question of sin; but that in prejudgments held in deliberate disregard of evidence, sin is involved.

When Categories Conflict with Evidence

For our purposes it is important to understand what happens when categories conflict with evidence. It is a striking fact that in most instances categories are stubborn and resist change. After all, we have fashioned our generalizations as we have because they have worked fairly well. Why change them to accommodate every new bit of evidence? If we are accustomed to one make of automobile and are satisfied, why admit the merits of another make? To do so would only disturb our satisfactory set of habits.

We selectively admit new evidence to a category if it confirms us in our previous belief. A Scotsman who is penurious delights us because he vindicates our prejudgment. It is pleasant to say, "I told you so." But if we find evidence that is contradictory to our preconception, we are likely to grow resistant.

There is a common mental device that permits people to hold to prejudgments even in the face of much contradictory evidence. It is the device of admitting exceptions. "There are nice Negroes but . . ." or "Some of my best friends are Jews but . . ." This is a disarming device. By excluding a few favored cases, the negative rubric is kept intact for all other cases. In short, contrary evidence is not admitted and allowed to modify the generalization; rather it is perfunctorily acknowledged but excluded.

Let us call this the "re-fencing" device. When a fact cannot fit into a mental field, the exception is acknowledged, but the field is hastily fenced in again and not allowed to remain dangerously open.

A curious instance of re-fencing takes place in many discussions concerning the Negro. When a person with a strong anti-Negro bias is confronted with evidence favorable to the Negro he frequently pops up with the well-known matrimonial question: "Would you want your sister to marry a Negro?" This re-fencing is adroit. As soon as the interlocutor says, "No," or hesitates in his reply, the biased person can say in effect, "See, there just is something different and impossible about the Negro," or, "I was right all along—for the Negro has an objectionable essence in his nature."

There are two conditions under which a person will not strive to re-fence his mental field in such a way as to maintain the generalization. The first of these is the somewhat rare condition of *habitual open-mindedness*. There are people who seem to go through life with relatively little of the rubricizing tendency. They are suspicious of all labels, of categories, of sweeping statements. They habitually insist on knowing the evidence for each and every broad generalization. Realizing the complexity and variety in human nature, they are especially chary of ethnic generalizations. If they hold to any at all it is in a highly tentative way, and every contrary experience is allowed to modify the pre-existing ethnic concept.

The other occasion that makes for modification of concepts is plain *self-interest*. A person may learn from bitter failure that his categories are erroneous and must be revised. For example, he may not have known the right classification for edible mushrooms and thus find himself poisoned by toadstools.

He will not make the same mistake again: his category will be corrected. Or he may think that Italians are primitive, ignorant, and loud until he falls in love with an Italian girl of a cultured family. Then he finds it greatly to his self-interest to modify his previous generalization and act thereafter on the more correct assumption that there are many, many kinds of Italians.

Personal Values as Categories

We have been arguing that rubrics are essential to mental life, and that their operation results inevitably in prejudgments which in turn may shade into prejudice.

The most important categories a man has are his own personal set of values. He lives by and for his values. Seldom does he think about them or weigh them; rather he feels, affirms, and defends them. So important are the value categories that evidence and reason are ordinarily forced to conform to them. A farmer in a dusty area of the country listened to a visitor complain against the dust-bowl character of the region. The farmer evaded this attack on the place he loved by saying, "You know I like the dust; it sort of purifies the air." His reasoning was poor, but it served to defend his values.

As partisans of our own way of life we cannot help thinking in a partisan manner. Only a small portion of our reasoning is what psychologists have called "directed thinking," that is, controlled exclusively by outer evidence and focused upon the solution of objective problems. Whenever feeling, sentiment, values enter we are prone to engage in "free," "wishful," or "fantasy" thinking.² Such partisan thinking is entirely natural, for our job in this world is to live in an integrated way as value-seekers. Prejudgments stemming from these values enable us to do so.

Personal Values and Prejudice

It is obvious, then, that the very act of affirming our way of life often leads us to the brink of prejudice. The philosopher Spinoza has defined what he calls "love-prejudice." It consists, he says, "in feeling about anyone through love more

than is right." The lover overgeneralizes the virtues of his beloved. Her every act is seen as perfect. The partisan of a church, a club, a nation may also feel about these objects "through love more than is right."

Now there is a good reason to believe that this love-prejudice is far more basic to human life than is its opposite, hate-prejudice (which Spinoza says "consists in feeling about anyone through hate less than is right"). One must first overestimate the things one loves before one can underestimate their contraries. Fences are built primarily for the protection of what we cherish.

Positive attachments are essential to life. The young child could not exist without his dependent relationship on a nurturant person. He must love and identify himself with someone or something before he can learn what to hate. Young children must have family and friendship circles before they can define the "out-groups" which are a menace to them.³

Why is it that we hear so little about love-prejudice—the tendency to overgeneralize our categories of attachment and affection? One reason is that prejudices of this sort create no social problem. If I am grossly partisan toward my own children, no one will object—unless at the same time it leads me, as it sometimes does, to manifest antagonism toward the neighbor's children. When a person is defending a categorical value of his own, he may do so at the expense of other people's interests or safety. If so, then we note his hate-prejudice, not realizing that it springs from a reciprocal love-prejudice underneath.

A student in Massachusetts, an avowed apostle of tolerance—so he thought—wrote, "The Negro question will never be solved until those dumb white Southerners get something through their ivory skulls." The student's positive values were idealistic. But ironically enough, his militant "tolerance" brought about a prejudiced condemnation of a portion of the population which he perceived as a threat to his tolerance-value.

Somewhat similar is the case of the lady who said, "Of course I have no prejudice. I had a dear old colored mammy for a nurse. Having grown up in the South and having lived here all my life I understand the problem. The Negroes are

much happier if they are just allowed to stay in their place. Northern troublemakers just don't understand the Negro." This lady in her little speech was (psychologically speaking) defending her own privileges, her position, and her cosy way of life. It was not so much that she disliked Negroes or northerners, but she loved the status quo.

It is convenient to believe, if one can, that all of one category is good, all of the other evil. A popular workman in a factory was offered a job in the office by the management of the company. A union official said to him, "Don't take a management job or you'll become a bastard like all the rest of them." Only two classes existed in this official's mind: the workmen and the "bastards."

These instances argue that negative prejudice is a reflex of one's own system of values. We prize our own mode of existence and correspondingly underprize (or actively attack) what seems to us to threaten it. The thought has been expressed by Sigmund Freud: "In the undisguised antipathies and aversion which people feel towards strangers with whom they have to do, we recognize the expression of self-love, of narcissism."

The process is especially clear in time of war. When an enemy threatens all or nearly all of our positive values we stiffen our resistance and exaggerate the merits of our cause. We feel—and this is an instance of overgeneralization—that we are wholly right. (If we did not believe this we could not marshal all our energies for our defense.) And if we are wholly right then the enemy must be wholly wrong. Since he is wholly wrong, we should not hesitate to exterminate him. But even in this wartime example it is clear that our basic love-prejudice is primary and that the hate-prejudice is a derivative phenomenon.

Summary

This chapter has argued that man has a propensity to prejudice. This propensity lies in his normal and natural tendency to form generalizations, concepts, categories, whose content represents an oversimplification of his world of experience. His rational categories keep close to first-hand experience, but he is able to form irrational categories just as readily. In these

even a kernel of truth may be lacking, for they can be composed wholly of hearsay evidence, emotional projections, and fantasy.

One type of categorization that predisposes us especially to make unwarranted prejudgments is our personal values. These values, the basis of all human existence, lead easily to love-prejudices. Hate-prejudices are secondary developments, but they may, and often do, arise as a reflex of positive values.

In order to understand better the nature of love-prejudice, which at bottom is responsible for hate-prejudice, we turn our attention next to the formation of in-group loyalties.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A. LUNDBERG AND LEONORE DICKSON. Selective association among ethnic groups in a high school population. *American Sociological Review*, 1952, 17, 23-34.
2. In the science of psychology the processes of "directed thinking" and "free thinking" have in the past been kept quite separate. The "experimentalists," traditionally so-called, have studied the former, and the "dynamic psychologists" (e.g., the Freudians) the latter. A readable book in the former tradition is GEORGE HUMPHREY, *Directed Thinking*, New York: Dodd, Mead, 1948; in the latter tradition, SIGMUND FREUD, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, New York: Macmillan, transl. 1914.
3. In recent years there is a tendency for "experimentalists" and "dynamicists" to draw together in their research and in their theory. (See Chapter 10 of this volume.) It is a good sign, for prejudiced thinking is not, after all, something abnormal and disordered. Directed thinking and wishful thinking fuse.
3. See G. W. ALLPORT, A psychological approach to love and hate. Chapter 5 in P. A. SOROKIN (Ed.), *Explorations in Altruistic Love and Behavior*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1950. Also, M. F. ASHLEY-MONTAGU, *On Being Human*. New York: Henry Schumann, 1950.