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### XI: Prejudice

If it is true that the future of empirical social research depends upon the tasks it undertakes to serve, on its resistance to demands which are hostile to the spirit and manipulative, on its relatedness to a critical social consciousness, then one can require some answer as to how such a meaningful application of empirical methods would look. This answer might base itself on investigations which were carried out in America by the Institute for Social Research in collaboration with other research institutes such as the Berkeley Public Opinion Study Group. <sup>1</sup> The aim was to gain a reliable and at the same time meaningful picture of the human forces and counterforces which are mobilized wherever totalitarian movements and their propaganda assume a sizable scope. In its empirical approach, it focused on a problem of the very greatest seriousness: race hatred, especially anti-Semitism. What had to be overcome was the revulsion against research seeking to gain insight as so-called objective and impartial observer-researchers into the horror which had cost many millions of innocent victims their lives. If one was ready to undertake such an investigation in spite of that, he had to be borne up by the hope that it might be precisely such differentiated social-scientific knowledge which offered a possibility of effectively counteracting the repetition of this disaster, wherever such a threat might arise. Anyone who wishes to be of help in contemporary society must frequently employ methods which are remote from the immediately humane, which involve large numbers, statistical laws,

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questionnaires, and tests--all of which is itself evidence of dehumanization. This paradox cannot be circumvented; it has to be explicitly stated and dealt with.

The results of that investigation were to a certain degree independent of specific economic, political, and also, it was assumed, geographic conditions. They related to the sociopsychological preconditions of the modern totalitarian delusion and beyond that to the preconditions of ethnic and national prejudice in general. Central was the interconnection between political ideologies and the psychological character structure of those who hold such views. This connection, till then known only in a somewhat vague and hypothetical manner, was now extensively documented and concretized. Decisive factors were brought to light concerning the psychological forces which make men susceptible to the propaganda of National Socialism and other totalitarian ideologies. From now on one had a basis for speaking of the "authoritarian" character and its opposite: the free human being not blindly bound to authority.

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Of course it is understood that the appearance of totalitarian systems cannot be explained solely psychologically. Behind the mass movements so hostile to the masses stand not only powerful political and economic interests; and the adherents of these movements--it is not for nothing that these call themselves "followers," "*Gefolgschaft*" [National Socialist term for staff of a business firm]--are by no means the ones who actually have such interests.

Still, in modern mass society those who benefit from these movements need the masses. Thanks to the studies carried out, insights are now available about the unconscious psychic conditions under which the masses can be won over to a politics which conflicts with their own rational interests. These psychological conditions are themselves products of modern developments, such as the disintegration of medium property, the growing impossibility of an economically independent existence, the change in the structure of the family, the false goals of the economy. <sup>3</sup> The great social laws of movement do not operate solely above the heads of the individuals, but always at the same time take place also within these individuals and

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through them. <sup>4</sup> The investigation of prejudice was directed toward the part which psychology plays in the interaction of forces between society and the individual. What was involved methodologically was a further elaboration of what is called in a broad sense "opinion and attitude research," by means of the concepts and procedures of depth psychology.

For this purpose the "stimuli" were specified and investigated, with which agitators, especially the clearly totalitarian ones, operate in order to ensnare human beings. In so doing, it was assumed that these stimuli correspond quite precisely to the inclinations and modes of behavior of those types which, due to their psychology, are especially accessible for the role of followers. Parallel to this a large number of persons were examined to see whether there was a relationship between their general political views and their attitudes toward ethnic, social, and religious minorities on the one hand, and on the other, their private character traits, and to consider how this relationship, once it was ascertained, could be understood.

As far as the agitators are concerned, a large number of detailed investigations (especially of radio speeches and pamphlets) were undertaken, which investigations then led to a systematic treatment of the techniques of the so-called "rabblers," the small group of American anti-Semitic apostles of hate, often openly sympathizing with Hitler in the period between 1933 and 1941. The results are in the book *Prophets of Deceit* by Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman. The similarity of the material displayed in it with Hitler's propaganda is extraordinary. However, this is to be attributed only in part to a direct influence of the propaganda techniques practiced in the Third Reich. In the selection of the psychological means of attraction obviously, here as there, the agitators speculate on the same emotions in their audience: that is the reason why the rhetorical tricks correspond so completely. The uniformity of the material is so great, that all that was to be analyzed could actually be developed in terms of a single speech, and only the demands of scientific reliability and the precaution against generalizations too quickly arrived at made it necessary to draw on hundreds of leaflets, pamphlets, and

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recorded speeches. Rigid thinking in terms of clichés and unceasing repetition are everywhere the means of propaganda in the Hitlerian style. They sharpen the modes of reaction, endow the platitudes with a kind of self-evidence, and disengage the resistance of critical consciousness. Thus from all these speeches and tracts of hate a remarkable small number of standardized tricks, which are continually employed, can be distilled.

There is for instance the cliché of the orator himself. He presents himself as the great "little man," who is just like all the others and yet a genius, powerless and yet transfigured by the reflected glow of power, average and yet a demi-god; in the same manner as Hitler calling himself the "soldier of the First World War" or the "Drummer." Part of this cliché is the assertion that the agitator always stands completely alone, proscribed, threatened, and supported by nothing but his own strength, though actually he always wants to belong to a powerful clique and seeks to recommend himself to it as a reliable bailiff. In this same manner Hitler spoke of the seven lonely comrades who came together in Munich to save Germany, trusting only in themselves.

One trick, recommended by Hitler himself, is to divide the world into sheep and goats, into the good people, to which one belongs oneself, and the evil ones, the enemy invented specifically for demagogic purposes. The former are to be saved, the latter damned, without any gradations, limitations, reservations, just as Hitler advises in a famous passage in *Mein Kampf*, that in order to assert oneself against an opponent or competitor, one must depict him in the blackest colors. <sup>5</sup> In *Prophets of Deceit* the psychological significance of such tricks is revealed. One can identify oneself with the great "little man" and still look up to him: he satisfies the requirement for closeness and warmth, and after affirming what one is already, he also satisfies the need for an ideal figure to which one will gladly subject oneself. Pointing to the isolation and loneliness of the leader does not only contribute toward endowing him with heroic qualities--the traditional hero is always lonely--

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but this also stills the generally widespread suspicion of propaganda and publicity, which causes people, quite rightly, to suspect the orator of being merely an agent of interests who remain in the background. The division of the world into sheep and goats finally aims, to begin with, at the listener's vanity. The good people are described in such a way that one is like them oneself, and can, without question, count oneself as one of their number; the schema makes it unnecessary to first prove oneself as one of the good people. And that there are

supposed to be those who are simply evil furnishes the semblance of a justification for letting loose one's own sadistic impulses on whoever has been designated as the victim.

The main thing for the orator is always to provide for his audience surrogate satisfactions in the oratory itself: the meeting itself takes the place, as it were, of the goals of voluntary action such as might be discussed at a democratic meeting. The masses are lured away from reality and are habituated to prefer the Roman circuses, which, to be sure, soon take on more disturbing forms than those merely of a political rally.

The investigations into the role and nature of totalitarian character structures within the population itself were presented in the volume *The Authoritarian Personality*. In order to attain an optimum of certainty and objectivity, the same central questions were treated in the study from the very beginning in terms of a series of methods that were independent of each other, and which actually did lead to converging results. The depth-psychological investigations, largely oriented in a Freudian direction, were confirmed to a high degree by the investigations of the agitators: the correspondence of the two studies—which otherwise were quite different in their approach is shown by the fact that a series of fundamental categories, such as those of stereotypic thinking, disguised sadism, the veneration of power, the blind recognition accorded to anything that appeared forceful, could be applied just as well in the one as in the other—or rather the material and subject matter themselves required the application of these categories in both cases and virtually imposed them on the investigations:

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an indication that the correspondence, initially only hypothetically assumed, between the false leaders and their following was actually present.

The material for the research on totalitarian character structure was drawn directly from the population.<sup>6</sup> Over 2,000 questionnaires were distributed. The assertions, toward which a positive or negative response was to be made, were divided into three categories, corresponding to the fundamental concept of the study: attitudes of the participants toward ethnic and religious minorities; views on general political and economic questions; private opinions and attitudes of the subjects. Several statements in the latter category were, for example:

What youth needs most is strict discipline, rugged determination and the will to work and fight for family and country.-- People can be divided into two distinct classes: the weak and the strong.--No sane, normal, decent person could even think of hurting a close friend or relative.

From the sum of the positive and negative reactions to these statements, conclusions with respect to the total character structure of the particular subject were drawn.<sup>7</sup> In so doing certain structural types were hypothetically presupposed on the basis of prior theoretical considerations, in which psychoanalytic concepts played a decisive role. The question to be clarified by experimental means was first, to what extent the indirectly and provisionally established character structure of a subject was in consonance with his statements about minorities, on the one hand, and about politics in general on the other. Surprisingly enough, the correspondence was greater in the former case than in the latter. In other words, the attitudes toward quite private questions proved to be a better test for how far a person was inclined toward ethnic, racial, or religious prejudice than for his reaction to general political questions. Certain fundamentals of character rooted in the private domain seem to be much more decisive for whether a person will respond to hate propaganda, than for a political image of the world that is reactionary in the usual sense.<sup>8</sup> The

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statistical correspondence of the responses to private questions with those about minorities gradually made it possible not to mention the latter at all, or hardly, in the questionnaires; prejudices could be deduced indirectly with great reliability.

One of the main tasks consisted in verifying whether the hypothetically presupposed structural types actually were to be found in reality. For this purpose approximately one-tenth of the experimental subjects were questioned personally, specifically those especially free from prejudice and those with especially "totalitarian" characters. The interviews, which often extended over several sessions, were designed in such a manner that they could shed light on areas of special interest, especially on childhood history and relationship to the family, without these points being emphasized in too obvious a fashion. At the same time these interviews were designed in such a way that they could also be analyzed statistically and the "qualitative" results of the questionnaires directly utilized for verifying the "quantitative" results.

Furthermore a series of pictures were presented to the experimental subjects, the contents of which permitted diverse interpretation; the interpretations chosen by the individuals then offered an insight into the world of their conceptions, desires, and fantasies ("thematic apperception test").

Finally the investigation, which initially had embraced primarily students, members of the middle class, and technicians was extended to deviant groups, such as prison inmates or patients in a psychiatric clinic. The reactions furnished by these groups and the "clinical" data were initially evaluated separately and only then related to the results of the main investigation: a procedure, which had proven itself a long time ago in psychology, studying "deviants" in order to learn something relevant to the understanding of the "normal," was transferred to socio-psychological contexts.

Here the totalitarian character type, as a whole, was revealed to be relatively rigid, of an unchanging structure, no matter how diverse the political ideologies were. In contrast, the nontotalitarian type was much more differentiated. Essential for the rigidity of the totalitarian character<sup>9</sup> is its bond to

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authority—the blind, sullen, secretly resentful recognition of all that is, all that holds power. Accepted traditional values receive emphasis, as well as externally correct behavior, success, industry, competence, physical cleanliness, health, and uncritical conformist attitudes. Throughout such people think and feel hierarchically. They submit to the idealized moral authority of the group to which they consider themselves to belong—the "in-group," according to the term of W. G. Sumner<sup>10</sup>—and are always ready to condemn those who do not belong to it, or who they believe do not, under all sorts of pretexts. The popular German saying concerning "Radfahrmatur"—the "nature of the cyclist"—is quite descriptive of this sort of attitude [i. e. the cyclist's posture, back bent toward those above, kicking down at those below]. The feeling of life of these people is alienated: in order to have the feeling that they are something, they require the identification with the prevailing order and with this they identify all the more readily, the more strictly and forcefully it asserts itself.<sup>11</sup> Underlying this is a profound weakness of their own ego<sup>12</sup> which no longer feels itself capable of dealing with the demands of self-determination in the face of overpowering social forces and institutions. Such types will not permit themselves any reflection which could threaten their false security and feel contempt for the essential subjective forces, for spiritual impulses and imagination. In their eyes the world is actually constructed in accordance with a black and white cliché, and for all evil an alleged "nature" or even occult forces are held responsible, just so long as one can hold onto something all powerful and escape one's own responsibility. Unconsciously such persons carry within them the desire for destruction, in spite of all their optimistic and affirmative talk—even the destruction of their own person. They incline toward cynicism and contempt for human beings. However, as the totalitarian character cannot admit to itself this wish for destruction, it projects the wish onto others, above all, the enemy which it has chosen, invented, or which has been invented for it by others, an enemy that is always imagined as inferior, just as he is dangerous. Fables of conspiracies and other evil things are spread about, which

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allegedly are taking place in the world; at the same time, the "decadence" of the designated victims is always an argument employed by totalitarian hangmen of all shadings to justify the extermination of these victims.

Specific psychological investigations of individuals have added essential information to this analysis. Frequently the totalitarian characters are broken in their childhood, either by a strict father or by a general lack of love, and then repeat, for their part, that which once had been done to them, in order to be able to survive psychically.<sup>13</sup> From this comes their lack of relationship to others, the flatness of their emotions even toward those who are allegedly closest to them. No matter how normally they appear to behave—and actually are, in the sense of carrying out practical functions—still at the same time they prove to be profoundly damaged, prisoners of their own weakened ego, incapable of anything that exceeds their own limited interests or those of their group. The capacity for actually making living experiences they have lost to a great degree. In order to change them in a significant manner, it would not therefore be sufficient to educate them, to seek to inculcate other convictions, but first, through a long-term process, the capacity to establish a living relationship with human beings and things would have to be formed or restored in them.

In the course of the investigation it was possible to develop research tools, above all a "scale" which permitted the valid distinction between persons who were bound by authority and those who were inwardly free, without thereby setting up a superficial, mechanical division. It was pointed out that one of the most profound difficulties of modern sociology is presented by the break between statistical findings of general validity and the specific methods which yield access to the essence of the individual and the dynamics of his behavior. The study on authoritarian character sought to make a contribution to overcoming these difficulties. The statistical questions were directed throughout toward that interplay of forces which takes place within the deeper layers of man; the treatment of the individual cases was subjected to strong controls, designed to shield these as far as possible from the accidental character of

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the individual subject as well as of the researcher carrying on the investigation.

The distinction between prejudiced and unprejudiced characters--the central theme of the investigation--involved the danger that the researcher would himself fall prey to the vice of schematizing, and thus share in the guilt of the universal evil of dividing mankind simplistically into the saved and the damned. The study sought to meet this danger by means of self-critical vigilance. One could not evade the insight that to a great extent forms of consciousness were active in political and economic thought, in the "objective spirit," which correspond to the dispositions of the prejudiced characters. Here it was above all formal properties which were involved. Thus the stereotypes of judgment are by no means confined to the prejudiced characters, rather these assert themselves often enough also in those who are considered to be free of prejudice --among these also a "rigid" type clearly emerged. And just as widespread is a certain lack of concern for social issues, which manifests itself in the ignorance of the simplest political and economic facts. Closely related to this is the inclination to "personalize" such facts; that means, wherever it is necessary to inform oneself about impersonal conditions and to think these through, these are instead equated with some famous individual or "leader." These and many other traits which both the basic types have in common were explained in the study as due to the "cultural climate." Such a climate does not by any means prevail today in *one* country only, but rather can be assumed throughout the world and expresses social changes which are taking place independently of national frontiers.

What is involved in the common traits, which have been specifically mentioned here, is what has been called, in another context, "Ticket thinking."<sup>14</sup> The process of mechanization and bureaucratization demands of those who are subjected to it a new kind of adaptation: in order to meet the demands which life makes on them in all its domains, they have to mechanize and standardize themselves to a certain extent. The more tenuous the dependency of their fate on their own independent judgment becomes, the more they are obliged to enter into omnipotent

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nipotent organizations and institutions, and they will do all the better, the more they surrender their own judgment and their own experience and begin to see the world from the viewpoint of the organizations which decide their advancement. The assertion of individually formed judgment now is only considered a disturbing factor: it is not only that by applying readymade clichés and valuations that people render their own lives more comfortable and ingratiate themselves with their superiors as reliable--but they also find their way much more quickly and are freed from the endless effort of having to see through the complexities of modern society. In the totalitarian states, of whatever political complexion, this norm character of consciousness has increased to the point of the absurd, but it must also be taken into account to a large degree in the other states. Before having reached a decision in favor of one of a number of readymade ideologies, such a way of thinking approaches that of the prejudiced characters. Accordingly, truly free human beings can only be those who from the outset resist the processes and influences which predispose to prejudice. But such a resistance requires so much strength that it is actually the absence of prejudice which requires an explanation, rather than its presence. For the "cultural climate" is produced by overwhelming objective conditions, which to a large extent are independent of the volition of the individual.

Little can be done by giving prescriptions. But whoever will seek a clear awareness of the intended effects of the agitators may no longer naïvely fall prey to them, and whoever is conscious of the underlying causes of prejudice will no longer be willing to play the fool, who in order to free himself from the pressures that bear down upon him, turns against those who are weaker than he is. Objective educational pamphlets, the collaboration of broadcasting and film, the utilization of scientific results in the schools can work to counteract the danger of totalitarian mass delusion in a practical manner. The effective struggle against totalitarian movements is certainly not possible without knowledge of their causes, above all when this struggle is to be directed against the roots of totalitarianism, its social preconditions. A comprehension of the

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decisive structures, that is at the same time reliable and significant, and that is what science is called upon to provide, can certainly not achieve by itself all that needs to be done; but it would represent an irreplaceable contribution toward a solution.

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## XI: Prejudice

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Note: 1. The reports on this investigation and its results were published in the five-volume collective work *Studies in Prejudice*. Max Horkheimer and Samuel H. Flowerman, eds. New York, 1949-1950. The presentation here draws primarily on the volumes by Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman, *Prophets of Deceit I A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator*. New York, 1949; and Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, R. Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York, 1950.

Note: 2. "It seems clear that an adequate approach to the problem before us must take into account both fixity and flexibility; it must regard the two not as mutually exclusive categories but as the extremes of a single continuum along which human characteristics may be placed; and it must provide a basis for understanding the conditions which favor the one extreme or the other" (Adorno *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 7).

Note: 3. See *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Note: 4. See *op. cit.*, as well as Erich Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*.

Note: 5. See ch. 5, "Masses," above.

Note: 6. The investigation was conducted under the Research Project on Social Discrimination, a joint project of the Institute for Social Research and the Berkeley Public Opinion Study Group.

Note: 7. "The research ... was guided by the following major hypothesis: that the political, economic, and social convictions of an individual often form a broad and coherent pattern, as if bound together by a 'mentality' or 'spirit,' and that this pattern is an expression of deep-lying trends in his personality" (Adorno *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 1).

Note: 8. See *op. cit.*, p. 204.

Note: 9. See *Studien ueber Autoritaet und Familie*. Max Horkheimer, ed. Paris, 1936, p. 110 ff. (*Theoretische Entwuerfe ueber Autoritaet und Familie, Sozialpsychologischer Teil von Erich Fromm*) and Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*.

Note: 10. William Graham Sumner, *Folkways*. Boston, 1940, p. 12 ff.

Note: 11. See Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. James Strachey, trans. London.

Note: 12. See Hermann Nunberg, "Ichstaerke und Ichschwaechе," in *Internationale Zeitschrift fuer Psychoanalyse*, vol. XXIV, 1939.

Note: 13. See Adorno *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 337 ff. Also Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, as well as *Studien ueber Autoritaet und Familie*, *op. cit.*, 77 ff.

Note: 14. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectik der Aufklaerung*. Amsterdam, 1947, p. 236.

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