

a function too, insofar as it is derived from the main sources of cultural power, and serves to regulate the evil, not to replace it. Hence artists and visionaries—those who see beyond culture—have always led the way; but their advice is taken only when it is in the interests of culture to use it. Culture, then, adapts only to maintain its potency; otherwise, it will not change.

As subtle as some of these relationships are in the abstract, the ambiguity of racial reform is glaring in its practice. From colonial times until the present, what has begun as a manifest effort to secure justice for the black race has ended in only another variant of racism: black oppression and white solidarity and power.

The prominent abolitionist Theodore Parker attacked slavery with the utmost fervor, wallowing all the while in a sense of grandiose guilt. This is how he presented the story of enslavement to his congregation: "America, where is your brother? . . . He was weak and I seized him; naked and I bound him; ignorant, poor and savage, and I overmastered him. I laid on his feebler shoulders my grievous yoke. . . . Askest thou for the African? I have made him a beast. Lo, there Thou hast what is thine." Here is a mixture of historical truth and moral flagellation which both appeases the guilt of the white and patronizes the black. In effect, it exhorts the white to purify himself for higher conquest. For, as Parker made clear on another occasion, "Of all races, the Caucasian has hitherto shown the most . . . instinct of progress." And how shall progress be made manifest? God has spoken: "Then by peaceful purchase, the Anglo-Saxon may acquire the rest of the North American continent . . . extending the area of freedom at every step. . . . America, the mother of a thousand Anglo-Saxon states, tropical and temperate, on both sides of the equator . . . ; may count her children at last by the

hundreds of millions—and among them all behold no tyrant and no slave."⁵

Parker's words have a familiar ring. From Manifest Destiny in the 1840's to Vietnam in the 1960's, we have heard a similar call: clean house, purify and expunge the evil (slavery, racism), and get on to virtuous (ergo, white) conquests. The action should be peaceful if possible; but if not—if others, usually of darker color, should resist—then the "terrible swift sword" of American armed justice would clear the way. Moralism became, with the antislavery movement and its later absorption into the Union cause in the Civil War, the necessary accoutrement of American power. Lincoln's genius was to some extent in letting this equation take full hold in the national culture. As he put it: "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it."

But duty and right and faith all converged on one sure means to might: capitalism, driven by the mystique of property. And so abolitionism, which began with the courage of Transcendentalist visionaries, came into full cultural being under the aegis of the Republican Party, the party that was later to abandon the black objects of its reformism when it had consolidated itself and wearied of fruitless radicalism. From its inception, the ambiguity of the Republican party's assumptions about its fundamental activity was glossed over by classic American ideology: "Republicans," said Lincoln, "are both for the *man* and the *dollar*; but in cases of conflict, the *man before* the *dollar*." Indeed. This proposition had a certain truth only if the *meaning* of man were qualified with the adjectives *white bourgeois*. But meanings are the province

⁵ Quoted in Elkins, *Slavery*, p. 175, and in Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York, Schocken Books, 1965), p. 181.

of culture, and for American culture this formula has always worked. Not for the black man, however, for he was not considered a man, neither in Lincoln's formulation nor by the culture of the West. And so racial reform has always foundered in its goal of helping the black person, by and large ignoring him in his actuality and concentrating instead on the evils to which he has been exposed. In this way American culture has managed to expose the black to a succession of different evils by a succession of different reforms.

At times the attitude of reformers underwent a reversion to an extreme of race sadism, which opens onto a fathomless abyss in the American character. At other times the race reformer simply acted with remote and destructive coldness toward the alleged beneficiaries of his efforts.

One example of the first type, the throwback, is Tom Watson. Leader of the Southern Populists, and energetic supporter of the union of poor whites and blacks into a common class against their economic exploiters, Watson underwent a radical change in sentiment when the realignment of national forces at the turn of the century brought Jim Crow segregation to the South. He, who had been the black man's friend, could later say that the Negro simply had "no comprehension of virtue, honesty, truth, gratitude and principle." The South had to "lynch him occasionally, and flog him, now and then, to keep him from blaspheming the Almighty, by his conduct, on account of his smell and his color."⁶

Perhaps the most telling example of the other, remote, variant of reformer *cum* racist was Woodrow Wilson. The most morally pure of American leaders, certainly a far-

seeing advocate of principled reform, Wilson stated in 1912 that he wished to see "justice done to the colored people in every matter; and not mere grudging justice, but justice executed with liberality and cordial good feeling." Yet Wilson was in the American mainstream that equated white virtue with power. He did not hesitate to apply that power to America's black neighbors in this hemisphere; and at home, despite fine ideals, Wilson put the *coup de grâce* to the misfortunes of black Americans by issuing an executive order which racially segregated the eating and toilet facilities of federal civil service workers. His final blow was to give Southern federal officials the right to discharge or downgrade without due process any black employee on any ground they saw fit. Needless to add, it was an opportunity well seized. And when a group of black leaders protested to the President, he, offended, sent them summarily from his office.

These extremes offer examples of what we all should know: that racism springs from the most widespread and impenetrable level of American experience. But there is another point to be made. Although the conjunction of racism with reformism is in some ways remarkable and deserves special study, we must recall that by and large most racists have been uninterested in reform. Yet whatever the specific situation, most Americans seem to behave in a rough way like either Watson or Wilson. That is, although there is a broad overlap, and enormous individual variations exist, racists have been either of the type who wished to oppress the black directly—as did Tom Watson—or indirectly, through avoidance—as did Wilson. We may generalize here—for reasons that will become clear later—and define two broad types of racism in America, types in close relationship, indeed in a state of

⁶ Quoted in Gossett, *Race*, p. 271.

continuous transition. Let us call them the *dominative* and *aversive* types of racism. I shall return to their description in the chapter on race fantasies; and for now will simply point out a few basic relationships between them.

In general, the dominative type has been marked by heat and the aversive type by coldness. The former is clearly associated with the American South, where, of course, domination of blacks became the cornerstone of society; and the latter with the North, where blacks have so consistently come and found themselves out of place. The dominative racist, when threatened by the black, resorts to direct violence; the aversive racist, in the same situation, turns away and walls himself off.

A trace of each type is of course in every racist. But the dominative type is prior, and emerges under extreme threats, or in states of regression (as with Watson); whereas the aversive response belongs to those of higher principle and a more advanced stage of intellectual development, like Wilson. Consequently the passage of time has favored the appearance of the aversive type in America, while threats to the existing racist order favor a regression to domination. Thus in the South, segregation succeeded the intimacy of slavery (whereas in the "advanced" North, segregation appeared much earlier). Again in the South, disturbances in the formal social structure of white-black relations would in classic times bring out the lynch mob; while today, racial turmoil brings out a latent "white backlash" of domination in both regions, more "advanced" perhaps, than lynching, but part of the same pattern.

The dominative type usually has a personal tie (albeit destructive) with his black object—the extreme having been slavery, when the slaver allowed his black woman to suckle his child; the aversive type avoids this and treats

the black person as though he were a thing. There is thus a kind of reciprocal relationship between domination and aversion, neatly summed up by an observation of a squeamish English lady who was visiting the antebellum South. She noted that in a stagecoach or railroad car, "A lady makes no objection to ride next to a fat Negro woman, even when the thermometer is at ninety degrees; provided always that her fellow travelers understand she is her property." On the other hand, in Massachusetts, where the view of black by white had supposedly changed from that of dominated property to that of moralistic concern, the fugitive slave Frederick Douglass noted that he was "introduced as a 'chattel'—a 'thing'—a piece of Southern property—the chairman assuring the audience that *it could speak*."

This phenomenon is of the greatest significance, and its explanation will occupy the major part of this work. It underlies the difference between regions of America, and defines the historical development of racism and much else in our culture. Moreover, the relationship between the dominative and aversive forms of racism becomes even more intriguing when one considers that whites in the North developed a reaction of aversion, and even of horror, toward blacks without any personal experience with them. Racism, in other words, has come automatically to Americans: it is generated by their culture. And even more peculiar is the quantitative aspect. American aversive racists have been, if anything, more intense in their reaction than their dominative brethren. That most perspicacious of observers, Alexis de Tocqueville, put the matter clearly: "the prejudice of race," he wrote, "appears to be stronger in the states that have

⁷ Quoted in Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 506.

abolished slavery than in those where it still exists; and nowhere is it so intolerant as in those states where servitude has never been known. . . .”⁸

We have come a long way from slavery, and still racism persists. People “know better” now: the social sciences have demolished the twaddle of racist ideology; education has created a large, informed elite capable of seeing through the old fables of racism; and the decent impulses of millions of people strive to get us beyond the racist nightmare. Yet other millions hold frankly to the officially discredited race prejudices; while the pressure for social change being mounted by militant, no longer docile blacks forces awareness upon even the enlightened that generous feelings and rational knowledge are in profound conflict with an irrational, obscure and yet immensely powerful current of underlying racist sentiment.

The racist sentiment which pervades the life of virtually all white Americans is, though real and potent, not the only obstacle to the achievement of racial justice. Equally important as a general psychological factor is the general apathy and remoteness, the nonspecific coldness that prevails in our time. By and large we do not care for one another; we can be momentarily aroused to compassion, fear, or even rage, but as a rule we soon slip back into the comfortable torpor that typifies our life.

Psychology alone does not nearly account for the scope of the racial problem. Even if white Americans really cared, and even if we could at last overcome the underground stream of race hatred and aversion that runs through our lives, it is doubtful whether racism could be eliminated in a period brief enough to satisfy the demands of simple justice. The problems of modern racism have to a great extent passed beyond the wills—destructive or

constructive—of individuals. It is a general direction of history for institutions to grow in power by absorbing human activity. And so in racism, as in much else that vexes us, corrective action proceeds against the inertia of the massed resistance of a set of impersonal factors that have become precipitates of all that is antihuman in the culture of the West. And the victims of these forces continue to include, among many, those who have always suffered most deeply from the West’s crimes against humanity: the black people.

Therefore the story of racism in America today is the story of poverty and bureaucratic inhumanity. It is the story of the fate of millions of chronically oppressed sharecroppers who left their rural misery in the South for a promise of something better in the North and West, a promise of social progress and work made possible by the superabundant productivity of advanced industrial society, to find instead the wasteland of advanced society. For the machine age had “advanced” society to such a level of abstraction and technocratic skill that it had no use for the labor of the great majority of blacks; and in the wake of this profitable advance it had heaped up the stony shacks we call urban ghettos, which have become, through aversive racism, almost the exclusive territory of black people. Here oppression and aversion pass into invisibility and create a new revolutionary class.

The revolutionary situation of black Americans is a reaction to numerous related institutions of our national society. Some—such as the pervasive police brutality and inferior educational opportunities that follow from black poverty and white bigotry—operate directly against the black people. Other aspects act indirectly but no less tellingly, the most powerful of these being our need—one may with reason call it a religious mystique—to protect and enlarge material productivity at all costs. One cost

⁸ *Democracy in America* (New York, Vintage Books, 1945), Vol. I, p. 373.

is the well-being of the poor and the black. Our militarism is derived to a great extent from this need, for it serves our religion of productivity as a near-perfect means, though it also drains away the resources desperately needed for social amelioration. However, this draining away, and the human neglect it produces, is also a congruent part of our national culture.

All of these oppressive forces, which have together forced black Americans into their despair, rage and rebellion, have a common denominator. It has been hinted at from time to time in earlier pages and must receive our utmost attention in the rest of this work.

I am referring again to the advanced and general state of *dehumanization* which pervades so much of our culture, but which seems to have been focused in our racial situation. Dehumanization is a twofold process, involving first, the formation of an idea of another living person as less than a person, as a living or even inanimate *thing*; and second, an *action* upon that person so as to sustain one's dehumanized conception of him. Obviously these two aspects—the idea and the action—are utterly necessary to each other. We shall dissect this relationship in some detail later, but here let us note that slavery was at the first an extreme, yet focal, dehumanization, whereas industrial capitalism has created a slightly less extreme but more diffuse dehumanization. Both race prejudice and chronic poverty have followed from slavery and industrial capitalism, and to that degree have black people been more grossly dehumanized in the eyes of their white fellow citizens.

Today a new style of dehumanization has been added, more rationalized and vastly more diffused than previous forms. I refer to the omnipresent manipulation of taste, thought, style, and wants in the interests of stimulating demand and rationalizing activity—in short, with the aim

of controlling and maintaining the material productivity of our society. Carried out by the communications media and the advertising industry (although they are effectively one and the same), this activity is part of the steady fusion of business and government into the Industrial State. People experience it, although often unconsciously, as a kind of general falseness, a bogus and synthetic quality that seems to permeate every aspect of life. It is crushing, squeezing and suffocating, a dry, cold force dressed in the guise of good cheer and objectivity; it is the concern for image over substance and for technique over truth, and it exists everywhere—in supermarkets, among politicians, on television shows. Certainly, lying is a given factor of the human situation, undoubtedly present throughout historical time. I would suspect that present-day *individuals*, more controlled, educated and sublimated than their counterparts in the past, are on the whole at least as truthful now as then. What we contend with today is *cultural* falsification: systematized, reasonable, pervasive mendacity, dished up with all the resources of electronic technology and used as a regulator of social activity. It is presented as an objective necessity and seems to be accepted with bland acquiescence. But it represents the cutting edge of all the antihuman forces in Western culture.

We cannot discuss what this development in culture has meant to black people to any substantial extent, until we have explored the fuller meaning of the changing styles of dehumanization. Aside from the usefulness of the technique of falsification in the interests of productivity, its role is in creating alienation, increasing remoteness, further distancing people from each other, and replacing their human ties—even the hostile ones—with a screen of cultural manipulation. In a broad sense, mass cultural falsification succeeded in pushing the black urban masses

out of sight, and therefore completed (perhaps unwittingly) what early forms of racism began: the making of a person into a thing. But these non-persons are massed in the hearts of our cities; their presence now poses a threat to the order of industrial society. When blacks lived on the farm, scattered and demoralized, it was easy to control them; in the ghettos, living together in large numbers, exposed to the tantalizations of America's material bounty, they are a threat to the power system. The threat lies in rising expectations, rising alienation, and diminished control. The emptiness and sterile materialism that our culture offers to all becomes incendiary to these black poor, who experience only the manipulations without the possibility of the material rewards that pacify most other Americans.

Consequently, America is attempting once more to reform a racial attitude. The setting is in some respects vastly different from that of earlier reform movements, but certain basics remain the same: what had been invisible becomes visible when it threatens the order of things, and that order attempts to adapt to the threat so as to maintain its underlying assumptions about the world. The pattern of reform is also reminiscent of the past, including the antislavery movement: visionaries—people of courage, passion and good will—lead the way; the powers lurk behind, warily size up the force of the threat, begin to promise jobs, officially expel racism—*after* ghetto people begin to burn the cities and the factories where the power physically resides. And, just as the North and the Republicans eventually capitalized mightily on what had begun as antislavery reform, so today do corporations expect to expand as a result of racist reform; an antiracist-industrial complex to stand alongside of and fuse with—for such is the tendency—the military-industrial complex.

And all tend to fuse with the State, which has by now

erased a great deal of racist legislation from its books and regularly congratulates itself, for example, on the non-discriminatory policies of its Armed Forces. Here again is an ambiguous and conflicting pattern, for the work of eliminating racist institutions is so enormous that only the federal government can mobilize enough expertise, and combine it with enough economic power, to make reform effective. But the State also makes war and hires the talent that enforces our dehumanization. How is the State to resolve this final contradiction?

Consider the Moynihan Report of 1965, which was in some respects the apogee of America's recent efforts against racism. It proposed to restore the potency of the allegedly emasculated black male by using the State's full resources to strengthen his family life. "A new kind of national goal—the establishment of a stable Negro family structure," was postulated. Many of those who attacked the report saw in it the same patronization of the black that has characterized our culture for hundreds of years. But the Report also set a trend for federal intrusion into the very matrix of personality, the family—an idea that, freed of liberal rhetoric, seems totalitarian to a prudent mind. Beyond this, and perhaps more revealing, the Report exhorted the black man to use his State-granted virility for the greater glory of all in the service of our military. "Military service is disruptive in some respects," [but it is the only place in America a Negro can be equal, and is] "an utterly masculine world. Given the strains of the disorganized and matrifocal family life in which so many Negro youths come of age, the armed forces are a dramatic and desperately needed change: a world away from woman, a world run by strong men of unquestioned authority."

This enlightened document is a vivid prefigurement of one possible outcome of the current race crisis, and we

must allow for its possibility. There are other grim potentials, the most troubling being the always-present threat of a reversion to the overt racism that has been layered over by the sublimations of recent history. Vaguely perceived in the so-called white backlash, this fascist trend was clearly and unequivocally articulated in the most recent Presidential election, and there is no way to forecast its future potential for growth.

Set against these ominous possibilities is the hope presented by the very disruptions of our times, and most evident in the degrees of liberation and organization which black people have so far achieved. The burst of black assertion in our times is an expression of cultural creativity of the first magnitude. The United States, increasingly strangled by technocratic banality and manipulation, badly needs such creativity—though whether it wants or is able to use it in a positive way is a doubtful matter, to be decided by an unpredictable future.

I am not calling upon the black people to “save” the white, just as we should never have imagined that the white could be called upon to “save” the black. Rather we must find a way to let growth occur, to let the forces of life inherent in all humans mold the forms of their activity. This is a profound and difficult task. Given the immense spread of forces opposing life and humanity in our culture, I have no blueprints to offer. But we can at least try to understand the plague-like pathology in some depth.

To this end, let us turn to psychological description, and to a theory of personality capable of understanding the phenomena of racism in all their bewildering complexity. Although, as I noted above, psychology is by no means a sufficient tool, it is a necessary one. For race prejudice—which is, whatever its roots, clearly a causal agent in racism—entails a certain kind of person in a

certain kind of setting, holding onto some peculiar beliefs about another person who is designated as belonging to something called a different race. And so we will have to look into why. Indeed, psychology can carry us further yet. If we agree that dehumanization, the desire for property, and the need to dominate have all somehow contributed to the institutional forces that bind us in the chains of racism, it is clear that each of these pursuits requires a certain mental attitude toward the world, and therefore is to a certain extent a function of psychology. Indeed, it may turn out that the underlying attitudes necessary to build racist institutions are congruent with those involved in race prejudice.

Let us rest the matter at this point, then, and make a somewhat drastic shift into a study of the recesses of personality.

CHAPTER 4

THE FANTASIES OF RACE

All I have to say now is that the woman was white and that she gave our odor as an excuse for fleeing me, because she didn't dare chase me away. Ah, the great days when they used to hunt the Negro and the antelope. . . .

Jean Genet, *The Blacks*

Both authorized and anecdotal literature have created too many stories about Negroes to be suppressed. But putting them all together does not help us in our real task, which is to disclose their mechanics. What matters for us is not to collect facts and behavior, but to find their meaning. Here we can refer to Jaspers, when he wrote: "Comprehension in depth of a single instance will often enable us, phenomenologically, to apply this understanding in general to innumerable cases. Often what one has once grasped is soon met again. What is important in phenomenology is less the study of a large number of instances than the intuitive and deep understanding of a few individual cases." The question that arises is this: Can the white man behave healthily toward the black man and can the black man behave healthily toward the white man?

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

I PROPOSE in this chapter to isolate and study some of the fantasies with which white men have clothed black men. The problem shall be to analyze within a historical framework the elementary notions which characterize racial

thinking. Hopefully the discussion in the preceding chapter will have prepared the way for the comprehension of racial prejudice in its psychohistorical role.

A large body of recent scholarship has laid bare that aspect of racism called *prejudice*. This was of primary importance both conceptually and realistically, for race prejudice—against Negroes, Jews, or any other group—is the most gross and immediately destructive of the guises of racism.

After all, the bigot is the man who applies the blow that society prepares for the racially oppressed. Emboldened by his belief, it is the bigot who burns a cross or plants a bomb in a Negro church; who strikes, jeers, excludes, or merely offers the cutting slight that, when multiplied by the similar acts of his millions of cohorts, brings racial prejudice into direct expression.

Who are these bigots; what do they share? How can one equate the paranoid ravings of an American Nazi, the murderous plotting of a Ku Klux Klanner, the rantings of a Senator Bilbo (or the more genteel equivalents of his congressional heirs), the insensate rage of a lynch mob, with the polite distaste and coldness of a Northern suburbanite? As we know, at the less prejudiced end of the spectrum, there is a fine grading, a shading off into the most imperceptible of twinges; at the far end of normality the bigot may present himself as tolerant and rational, and may hold his racist belief in a remote attic-room of his consciousness; may have, under the impetus of moral censure, driven it from consciousness into a latent zone that is not activated until a black attempts to move in next door or pays attention to his daughter. It may even take a riot to activate the racial stereotype—"You see, *they* can't be trusted; *we'd* better arm ourselves." It may even be that, in sharp distinction to his frontier ancestors, who could never have tolerated any

such insurrectionary behavior without violent reprisals, the white clings to his liberal conscience and refuses to yield to the facile certainties of bigotry even in the face of "civil disturbance." Yet this same man (who could be any of us who take pride in having at least moved from the Dark Ages of racial intolerance to the Enlightenment of democratic liberalism) might in his dream life dredge forth fantasies markedly similar to those that, in conscious form, propel the most blatant and murderous of racists. Indeed, since we all live in one culture, whose fantasies we at least partly share, and since this culture is obsessed with white-black racism, it would be hard to conceive of any American, no matter what his conviction or social role, who lived free from racial fantasy. And yet there are patterns: where does one draw the line?

Two practical guidelines emerge from the above spectrum. The first would divide people according to whether or not they actually believed such fantasies; the second, according to whether they acted upon those beliefs, or held them in check by restraints of conscience. Obviously these are matters of definition, and so they lead to the imposition of a simple schema upon an endlessly varying reality. There are in fact many gradations of overt racist action, from lynching to very subtle types of job discrimination. And racists hold all degrees of intensity of racist beliefs: some never move into action; others may, when provoked, reject the voice of conscience and pass entirely into the arena of open racial hostility. Finally, individuals themselves are alterable, like the man described by the analyst Terry Rodgers.⁹ He wrote of a white Southerner who, under the emotional pressure of the self-realization of psychoanalysis, moved from a stance of nonracist, liberal support for the Negro cause, to membership in the

⁹"The Evolution of an Active Anti-Negro Racist," *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society*, Vol. I (1960), pp. 237-43.

local White Citizen's Council. We are all scarred by the same society, and most of us at least feel impulses, in varying combinations and at varying times, toward some part of racist behavior. The varieties of racist experience are mixed in the real individual. No one behaves simply; he is the amalgamated product of a host of historical, cultural and personal influences.

Nonetheless, Ideal Types (in Weber's sense) can be discerned, and their consideration will prove fruitful. For these ideal types represent the nodal fusion of history in the individual. Their combination and progression will reveal the inner workings of historical change, and will enable us to see more clearly the traces of the past on the present and their possibilities for the future. We have already noted their historical occurrence. Let us reintroduce them.

1. The type who acts out bigoted beliefs. Whether a Night Rider in the South or a member of a mob protesting open housing in Chicago, he represents the open flame of race hatred. The true white bigot expresses a definitive ambition through all his activity: he openly seeks to keep the black man down, and he is willing to use force to further his ends; let us call him the *dominative racist*.

2. The type who believes in white race superiority and is more or less aware of it, but does nothing overt about it. An intrapsychic battle goes on between these sentiments and a conscience which seeks to repudiate them, or at least to prevent the person from acting wrongly upon them. This often means not to act at all, and such inaction serves as the only resolution of the inner conflict. Because of this, the person tends to behave in ways that avoid the issue: he tries to ignore the existence of black people, tries to avoid contact with them, and at most to be polite, correct and cold in whatever dealings are necessary between the races. We call this complex type the

aversive racist, in accord with his most characteristic style of handling the race problem. Within this type we find at one extreme those individuals who, upon threat—such as when a black gets “too close”—lapse into dominative racism; and at the other, those who, impelled by a strong social conscience, consider themselves liberals and, despite their sense of aversion (which may not even be admitted inwardly), do their best within the given structure of society to ameliorate the conditions of the Negro. Aversion in these variants is revealed in a pronounced willingness to undertake social reform via remote, impersonal means, and by a corresponding reluctance to engage in any kind of intimacy with black people. The range of aversive racism reveals it to be a transitional type between dominative racism and our third type.

3. He who does not reveal racist tendencies at all—except as the unconscious persistence of what may be considered mass fantasies. He belongs to the advancing edge of history and is considerably less defined than the first two.

The three types of racism represent different formal organization, different styles of expression. They all float on the same pool of fantasies, but organize them in different combinations, differing relative intensities, and different modes of realization.

Only the first type, dominative racism, includes what we ordinarily think of as the racially prejudiced person. What is outstanding about this type is not that it is composed of persons who have racist fantasies, but that, out of their personality structure, they transform their racist fantasies into a personal reality that can lead to action.

The time when racist belief and action were morally sanctioned and formed the intimate fabric of American society is passing, although prejudiced people still cling to it. Anachronisms all, their persistence in holding on

derives from a peculiar rigidity of personality which forces them to find objects of intolerance in their lives.

The bigots of this country have been systematically described by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, *et al.*, in their study of the authoritarian personality. Almost invariably in a subordinate position in society, the bigot worships power. He generally comes from the lower middle class; he is the "little man" who lives off the scraps of bourgeois culture. His life revolves about an ideal of external power. A level below the worship of his masters, however, lies the hatred that derives from his terror of submission. This mixed love and hate fix him in his social orbit at a respectful distance from authority: if he is too far, he loses his security; if too close, he risks penetration, destruction. He is safe only if he keeps his place. His hatred of the masters is kept out of consciousness by his projecting it onto someone he can see as lower than himself. His rigidity of character forces him to see things as unalterably true; he perceives the external world as if he were forced to peer through a sequence of lenses made to focus on one section of a slide. The exquisite tension between his need for and fear of submission reduces him to extreme dependence upon external stability; hence his worship of the past—the more remote the better—when everything had its place, and authority was secure. Hence his frantic rage at disturbances or the slightest changes in the social order. When his son grows up and seeks to move into a higher class; when mass changes, induced, say, by war or a depression, alter the social climate; and, most of all, when the object of his prejudice begins to reject his de-based role—whenever the fabric of stable authority tears, the bigot rises up, casts off his veneer of conformism, and takes to the streets.

Every study of authoritarian prejudice reveals a common truth: the dominative racist is irrationally and pro-

foundly dependent upon the object of his prejudice. He cannot leave him alone. Hate implies a kind of love, or at least an inability to rid the mind of obsessions with the hated other. And these obsessions are invariably tinged with sexuality: a preoccupation with, a deadly curiosity about, the sexual excesses of the hated group, etched in the imagination by the acid of a harsh moralism. The dominative racist must not only keep the needed object of his hatred oppressed; he must also ensure that this other person enact those very traits that the bigot needs to see in him, needs to enjoy vicariously and needs to punish. The anti-Semite must create his Jew; the white bigot, his nigger. As Archibald says in Genet's *The Blacks*: "Bear one thing in mind: we must deserve their reprobation and get them to deliver the judgment that will condemn us. I repeat, they know about our crime. . . ."

There is no fruit like forbidden fruit; there is nothing more delicious to enjoy and punish freely than the crimes of sex and aggression which authoritarian repression has forbidden. Nor are there lives more dull, more deprived of erotic joy than those of the people who exist in the gray recesses of a dominative culture. The acting out of racist fantasies can be the only stimulation to enliven such existences.

The essence of the bigot's world is to forbid and punish in the interests of exteriorizing an inner guilt. A good psychoanalytic discussion of the personality structure which leads to prejudiced behavior may be found in Brian Bird's essay "A Consideration of the Etiology of Prejudice."¹⁰ Bird emphasizes the positioning of the prejudiced person between a higher class he envies, and a lower one he must despise as he fears the higher class will despise him for his envious strivings. The situation is

¹⁰ *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, Vol. V (1957), pp. 490-513.

analogous to the attack on a younger sibling in place of an attack upon a more desired and feared parent. Thus prejudice controls aggression by discharging it on a safe object—one who must be kept safe. Bird also emphasized the role of guilt: not all dissatisfied people are prejudiced, only those who are guilty as well and who cannot tolerate self-criticism—i.e., those with a harsh and maladaptive superego. The superego is harsh: it contains an unneutralized aggression affixed to a parental image in whose life one cannot share for fear of sexual mutilation. The distance from power is also characteristic. The bigot is generally something of a failure, unable to adapt his superego smoothly to institutional sources of power, and therefore unable to sublimate enough aggression to do well in the world. He is frequently the most faithful of employees, but the attachment is brittle; it is based on an overcompliance that prevents true identification. The dominative racist of today is thus “maladjusted”—a defect that applies as much to the inner workings of his personality as to his relationship to society. There are, so to speak, gaps in his superego: instead of smoothly regulating all aspects of ego function, it permits an overly close awareness of sadistic impulses. Harsh moralism can hold these in check only if external reality is rigidly structured: when disturbances of that reality occur, the fantasies of race become actualities.

Beset with sadistic impulses he cannot acknowledge, except through their fantasied presence in the object of his prejudice, and hobbled by an equally sadistic conscience which keeps his life pinned to a dreary and joyless mold, the bigot would be a pathetic figure if his menace were not so real. It is real because today, the dominative racist's fantasies take the form of a need to use direct force to keep the other inferior. In general, he fails at effecting

this, because modern culture has replaced direct domination with an indirect, rationalized version of it. In earlier forms of social organization—slave society being the nuclear example—direct domination of one race over another was the elementary relationship. Thus dominative racists in these systems—i.e., those who had the basic conviction that the Negro had to know his place and stay there, or else—did not have the rigid and maladaptive personality structure of today's bigot. Their superegos worked smoothly to adapt social norms to infantile wishes; they were spared the guilt that threatens the bigot unless he keeps up his bigotry; and, most significantly, they were free to act intimately with black people and to sexually enjoy the bodies of black women. Being satisfied on so many counts, the culture of dominative racism in the antebellum South retained that spontaneous and graceful quality that has endeared it to American mythology. It is toward this mythic past of unquestioned authority that today's bigots look for the stabilization of their inner life; and it is the disparity between these halcyon days of dominative racism and the real situation of modern bourgeois society that parallels the maladjustment, the failure and the joylessness of the little men who today represent the historical type of dominative racism.

What had been directly acted upon in those simpler days of domination becomes the fantasy of today. The actual behavior of the dominative racists who enslaved the bodies of black people, who raped black women and emasculated black men, now returns in the projected fantasies of contemporary bigots. The sins of the father are punished by the sons—but the punishment is not directed against the fathers, for they must be venerated and their fantasied power retained. Rather, their sins become ascribed, in one of those amazing twists the human mind

inclusion and the real need for keeping some men both down and out of the social structure of the rest has, from the first days of white Christian encounter with black men, been the single greatest inconsistency between the ideals and the reality of Western civilization. The Negro has always been both out and down, because, in the last analysis, he represents a form of symbolic guilt that cannot be assimilated, neither in the superego of the individual nor in the myth of Christianity. He represents instead the object upon whom white men have projected their guilt; and the figure who, so designated by the fantasies of culture, has been so treated by the historical realities of culture. He represents, in short, for we round the circle, that other parricidal myth, the myth of Ham, the son who looked on his father's shame and who was thereby excluded by a less charitable, but more realistic, variety of Godhead. And *Light in August* presents the impossible tension between these two mythic solutions of the same theme: the Christ myth of inclusion, the Ham myth of expulsion; and in so presenting, it does what all good novels do: it reveals the underlying impossible truth of the culture in which the novel is grounded, the truth realized in the manifold sufferings of the South and in the larger dilemma of Western culture.

Now we have surveyed the history and presented some of the psychology of racism, but have not clarified or even grasped their deep relationship. By tracing the most ancient sexual and power conflicts in the unfolding of American race relations, we have only shown again, as all history shows, the persistence of the past in the present. But what has been shown is principally the *recurrence* of themes. Nothing has been said of why and how they have progressed; nothing has been shown of their specific importance to the particular historical development of the

West and of the intimate relationship between historical and regional shifts in racial attitudes on the one hand, and the course of American history on the other; nothing has been learned about why the fantasies about black people became elaborated into the mythic structure of Race, or of how this myth differs from others, such as that of Ham, which contain the same elements. And nothing has been grasped of why this ancient fantasy about blackness should have assumed the fantastic proportions it did and still does in our culture. And finally, nothing has been learned of aversion, of why and how dominative racism passed into aversive racism—and beyond this, of the problem of passing beyond racism altogether.

The key issues in all these questions may be found in the development of aversive racism. For what is psychohistorically crucial emerges from what is historically crucial; and though the full-blown racial situation surged to life in the South, the same situation became historically powerful only when it appeared in muted form in the North. The Civil War settled that question, showed that the South's racial structure was a tissue of destructive fantasies, while the North's contained within it the germ of whatever it is that has kept the West alive as the dominant world culture.

All these problems amount, then, to the understanding of one puzzling historical fact: how do we account for the fact confirmed at numerous stages of our history, that the avoidance of black people was *greatest* in those areas that were the most materially successful and the least tainted with slavery or the kind of direct domination that became the hallmark of the Deep South? How can we understand this irony, so painful to black people who fled the South for the imagined justice and prosperity of the North and found, standing between them and those goals, coldness and disgust? This is indeed the central problem

of our racism. It reveals an aspect of our culture that not only contributed to the original enslavement of blacks and to the elaboration of the system of dominative racism itself, but also has today, when dominative racism is the province of maladapted bigots, become of central importance in the misery of the urban black masses within advanced industrial society.

Now, the fantasies so far elaborated do not account in themselves for aversive behavior. The oedipal fantasies of whites, in fact, seem to be associated with the need for intimate, if grossly unequal, relations with black people. Only direct domination can ensure this. But there is another set of fantasies, touched upon in the previous chapter, which enters directly into aversive behavior and directly into the overriding fantasy of blackness. These are the fantasies pertaining to that peculiar abstraction called dirt—and they belong to a deeper level of our experience than that ordinarily thought of as sexual, and to a deeper aspect of historical power than that studied to this point.

Every group which has been the object of prejudice has at some time been designated by the prejudiced group as dirty or smelly or both: thus have the Irish been regarded by the English, the Jews by the Poles, the Poles by Anglo-Saxon Americans (consider the rash of "Polish jokes" popular in Chicago and elsewhere). The sentiment extends far beyond the ethnic: Communists and capitalists are to one another "filthy Capitalists" and "dirty Commies"; the English upper classes regarded the English middle and lower classes as dirty; the middle classes felt the same way about the lower classes; and if the lower classes had "Untouchables," as in India, they would have doubtless exercised the same privilege over their lowliest as did the various castes within Indian culture. Indeed, lowest in social scale connotes the idea of dirtiest and smelliest, and untouchability sums up all these concepts in the frame-

work of aversion. Once again, as with the fancies concerning the penises of Negro men, the reality of the situation does not directly affect the underlying belief. No matter how a prejudiced-against person scrubs himself, he will always smell dirty to the true bigot.

Although the reality of the situation does not directly affect the prejudiced belief, *aspects* of this reality are indeed of great importance, especially those which might form the basis for fixed perceptual cues. Such cues, which have little to do with the belief, can nonetheless supply the mind of the believer with symbolic nutrient. They may provide that one link with reality which, if it be enduring and clear enough, will enable the entire complex of prejudiced fantasies to attain the certification of belief. When it is held by an isolated individual, such a false belief is called delusion; but when it is shared in a meaningful way by great numbers of people, the delusion becomes a part of culture.

Of all prejudiced-against people, none have suffered the appellation of filthiness so much as Negroes, and this peculiar fate has had something to do with the natural melanotic pigmentation of their skin. The random clustering of assortments of genes that are the human evolutionary heritage has led to certain easily perceived differences among groups of men. Science has convincingly shown that, whatever the unsolved biological problems of race, these external differences have little or nothing to do with the kinds of inner constitutional variations that may in fact be of significance in determining innate endowment. Although there are differing innate capacities, these have had nothing to do with the fantasies of race which have determined the history of racism. What counts to men is what their symbolic apparatus can seize upon; and nothing is more evident than the blackness of black

skin (even if it is really brown). Just as the natural prognathism of Negroes, combined with their dark skin and tropical habitat, fixed for many generations the delusion that they were half ape and half men,²⁵ so has the skin color itself, that all-important yet trivial biological accident, contributed to their being fixed in the minds of whites as an *essentially* dirty and smelly people.

The idea of the allegedly distinct smell of black people has fused with their unmistakable skin color into this potent white fantasy. No matter that empirical study fails to show that any conclusive difference between the races exists. Each of us has a unique and distinct, biologically determined smell pattern, which dogs and police laboratories can sort out quite well. Perhaps there is even a racial assortment of such smells. The question of immense importance is this: why should whites blow up what is at all odds one of the most objectively insignificant qualities of a human being into a massive and axiomatically justified fantasy, the very condition of human disgust?

Aversion is the cardinal manifestation of modern American racism. (By contrast, it is relatively lacking in more primitive forms of race prejudice.) A sample of quotes from a *Newsweek* magazine survey of racial attitudes will illustrate some familiar responses:

In cafeterias here you go around and collect your food, then niggers paw over it and then you have to give them a tip to carry your tray. Big, old, dirty black paws pawing over your food and then you've got to eat it.

It's the idea of rubbing up against them. It won't rub off but it doesn't feel right either.

I don't like to touch them. It just makes me squeamish. I know I shouldn't be that way but it still bothers me.²⁶

²⁵ Cf. Jordan, *Black over White*, for a discussion of these fantasies as they blossomed in the early years of European contact with black people.

²⁶ *Newsweek*, October 21, 1963. Pp. 48-50.

We observe here some of the basic aspects of aversive racism. There is the sense of conflict, both against better knowledge and against moral judgment: "It won't rub off." . . . "I shouldn't be that way." And there is the sense of something so urgent and immediate and existentially valid that it overrides these scruples and forces the white person away. This something is the fantasy of dirt.

Recall that dirt is at symbolic root anything that can pass *out* of the body, and that hence should not pass back *into* the body, nor even touch it. Thus the common theme of the three quotes: contact with black hands contaminates food and makes it unfit to enter the body; contact with a black body will result in the blackness rubbing off on one's own precious body and thereby befouling it.

Yet these people are, by their very frankness, not pure aversive racist types. Their willingness to experience and express this fantasy sets them halfway between aversive and dominative racists; in the normal course of affairs, they would very likely practice overt discrimination. A more typical aversive racist would be too scrupulous to admit these beliefs openly; while the purest kind of aversive racist would hold these beliefs but not admit it even to himself. He would practice a double aversion: aversion from the black body, followed by a mental aversion from his own experience. The nuclear experience of the aversive racist is a sense of disgust about the body of the black person based upon a very primitive fantasy: that it contains an essence—dirt—that smells and may rub off onto the body of the racist. Hence the need for distance and the prohibition against touching.

Millions of whites have used this prohibition to buttress defenses against sexual contact with blacks. These defenses become necessary whenever the system of direct domination breaks down: with this breakdown, which is, of course, the supposed goal of a democratic society, the

sexual threat which had been held in check becomes real and forces the mobilization of the sense of aversion. And the sense of aversion now operates as a potent inner barrier to the experiencing of forbidden feeling.

We see that the two main forms of racism, dominative and aversive, merge in the issue of sexual contact. Within this problem, the historically more advanced fantasies of aversion serve to protect the racist against acting upon his dominative urges. After all, one is not supposed to directly dominate another to this degree in an advanced democratic society. It should also be observed, however, that, in contrast to their historical order of progression, the fantasies of aversion belong to a more *primitive* level of mental organization than those of dominative racism. Modern aversion stems from anal sadism, while domination is phallic and oedipal in origin.

Although the fantasy of dirt, and its projection onto the black man, attained its full force at a late stage in our history, it was present from the beginning as an element of the white man's reaction to the black. As Jordan comments when he introduces the theme of anal fantasies in his study of early American racial attitudes: "One sort of stress arose from emotional turmoil within individuals, and here it is possible to gain an occasional glimpse into the deepest, least rational *meaning* [italics his] of human blackness for white men . . . the Negro's appearance, his blackness, seems to have served certain deep-seated unconscious needs of at least some white men. There are sufficient indications of this fact in colonial America to make ignoring it difficult. Sexual intermixture was frequently referred to as 'staining' the white population. . . ."²⁷

Gross elements of these aversive fantasies still persist in our culture and wherever racism is found. The idea of

²⁷ Jordan, *Black over White*, p. 255.

“staining” the blood lives on in the “mongrelization” fantasies cherished by all racists, and especially in America where, as Jordan points out, the belief emerged that the Negro’s blood shared in the general filthiness illustrated by his skin, and that this same “blood” would be directly transmitted through the generations should intermarriage occur. Then there is the coarse racist epithet “boogie,” a word applied both to the black human being and to specimens of mucus that, because they come from the body, automatically become a symbol of dirt. The list of dirt fantasies which whites apply to the Negro could be extended indefinitely.

Just as the basic dirt fantasy emerges early in human development, so does its application to black people. This point has been subjected to empirical proof in an outstanding example of social anthropological work by Mary Ellen Goodman. As reported in her book,²⁸ a sample of 104 small children, both Negro and Caucasian, revealed the uniform fantasy that a), Negroes differed from whites in being dirty and that b), this implied a sense of basic inferiority. These beliefs set in during the pre-school years and had become quite well developed by the age of four. The author writes perceptively of how the sense of inferiority so engendered enters into the minds of the black children to produce the nuclei of a lifelong low self-image; and of how the reverse conviction settles into the personalities of the whites. In this study, we can sense the depth of the irrationality inherent in the problems of race. As Goodman comments, “the fact is that mere intellectual awareness of the physical signs of race is not all of the story. There is another part which is not merely startling but quite shocking to liberal-humanitarian sensibilities. It is shocking to find that four-year-olds, particularly white

²⁸ Mary Ellen Goodman, *Race Awareness in Young Children* (New York, Collier Books, 1964).

ones, show unmistakable signs of the onset of racial bigotry.”²⁹

We have been talking of dirt, which represents a set of peculiar fantasies based upon bodily experience. The central aspect of bodily experience upon which this tissue of daydreams rests is, of course, the act of defecation, and the central symbol of dirt throughout the world is feces, known by that profane word with which the emotion of disgust is expressed: shit. Furthermore, when contrasted with the light color of the body of the Caucasian person, the dark color of feces reinforces, from the infancy of the individual in the culture of the West, the connotation of blackness with badness. And since this dark brown color is derived from blood pigments, since in fact blood is the only internal bodily substance which is dark, the absurd beliefs about “staining” the blood through intermarriage with “inferior” races gain an ironic verification—one which, however, the proponents of these beliefs would be loath to accept.

Thus the root symbol between the idea of dirt and the blackness of certain people is that highly colored, strongly odored, dispensable and despised substance which the human body produces so regularly. How strange that this substance—which, after all, knows the body on the most intimate terms, and which is, aside from the pathogenic bacteria occasionally associated with it (another piece of reality immaterial to the life of fantasy), certainly innocuous enough—should have received the brunt of such contempt and rage! Almost as peculiar is the general reluctance to come to realistic grips with those distortions of the world which so clearly derive in part from their symbolic association with feces. This reluctance is evident even in those who study racism, as shown by the fact that only two articles were found in a survey of the psychiatric

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 245.