The Social Roots of Discrimination

The Case of the Jews

Peretz F. Bernstein

With a new introduction by Bernard M.S. van Praag

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Translated by David Saraph

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Introduction to the Transaction Edition

Bernard M.S. van Praag

The classical serendipity dream is that you find unexpectedly along the road a gold treasure. For scientific researchers, the analogue is that you find a totally forgotten and overlooked publication that is of the highest quality. *The Social Roots of Discrimination* is just such a work. Written by the late Peretz Bernstein, it was first published as *Der Antisemitismus als eine Gruppenerscheinung* (1926) by Fritz Bernstein. The first English translation was titled *Jew-Hate as a Sociological Problem* (1951).

I will start with a few biographical facts. Then I will consider the experiences of the book from 1926 up to now. In the second section I will describe the contents of the book and in the third section I will try to place it in the world of today.

The Author

Fritz Bernstein was born in 1890 in the provincial German town of Meiningen. His family was a conservative but non-orthodox Jewish family. Although his parents planned for Bernstein to go to university like their older children, due to financial difficulties, Bernstein received only intermediate education in trade and commerce. Before his military service, he went to Rotterdam for an apprenticeship. After his military service, he returned to Holland in 1909 and got a job at

a coffee trade firm in Rotterdam and, soon after, he became the son-in-law of the Jewish owner. Some years later he started a firm of his own in Rotterdam and became a friendly competitor of his father-in-law. Apparently, the market was sufficiently profitable for both of them to make a comfortable living. Bernstein then became quite active in the Dutch Zionist movement and was president of the Dutch Zionist Federation (DZF) for the period 1930-34. He was especially active in providing Zionist schooling to the youth and he was chief editor of the DZF's weekly. The DZF at that time had a membership of about 3000 members all over Holland. By 1936 Bernstein had become a wealthy man and could stop working. He went on *alyah* (emigration to Palestine). Soon he became chief editor of the Jewish daily *Ha-Boker* in Tel-Aviv and he became politically active in the non-socialist non-religious General Zionist party. In 1948 he was one of the 36 signatories to the Israeli Declaration of Independence and became a member of the first Israeli Parliament, the Knesset. He was minister of economic affairs in two cabinets and member of Parliament from 1949 until 1965. He died in Jerusalem in 1971 at the age of 81.

Fritz Bernstein must have been a remarkable person. Apart from his organizational activities, he wrote a large number of articles, the book we have before us, and several other tracts, partly in Dutch and in Hebrew, about aspects of the "Jewish problem."

His most important book was certainly *Der Antisemitismus als eine Gruppenerscheinung,* with the sub-title *Versuch einer Soziologie des Judenhasses.* The English translation (1951) of the title read: *Antisemitism as a Group Phenomenon, Attempt of a Sociology of Jew-Hate.*

The book was completed in 1923, but Bernstein found it very difficult to find a publisher. He submitted the manuscript to the Jüdischer Verlag in Berlin, which was at that time the prominent publisher for modern Zionist authors like Buber, Bialik, Gordon, Chaim Weizmann, and numerous other celebrities. After much delay, Bernstein's book was accepted and published in 1926. The book got about twenty reviews in Jewish and non-Jewish dailies and weeklies in Germany and Holland, which were generally favorable. However, the problem was that the book was not reviewed in scientific journals to my knowledge, and that it consequently received no attention at all in academic circles. The only exception was Prof. Dr. Theodor Lessing, a famous German/Jewish philosopher and Nazi-fighter, who was killed by the Nazis in 1933 in Marienbad, Czechoslovakia. The reasons why the book received hardly any attention in German academic circles are not hard to guess. First, the author had no university education and consequently he had no academic title. He had lived outside Germany for about 16 years and consequently had no German academic network whatsoever. The discipline of sociology was young and scarcely represented at German universities. The title suggested that the main subject was anti-Semitism and since most German university professors at that time were not very Jew-friendly, to put it mildly, they were not interested in what a non-doctored Jewish businessman from Holland, publishing at an outspoken Jewish publishing house, could have to say about a subject that could only be interesting to those in Jewish/Zionist circles. Finally, the book itself was not written in the usual German academic style of the day. It did not contain the typically German half-page long sentences, it did not

quote other authors, it did not contain the usual irrelevant footnotes and finally there were no references at all. In short, in our eyes it was an ideally readable and transparent book, both for academics and intellectuals at large, but in the 1920s it was far ahead of its time stylistically. The most important reason for the meager interest was perhaps the title of the book, which suggested a book on anti-Semitism. The main subject of the book is definitely not anti-Semitism, but a new theory on social groups, a great deal of which was developed by Bernstein himself. This newly developed theory is applied in the last chapter on the explanation of anti-Semitism as a special instance of the theory developed. From a marketing point of view the choice of the title was definitely a misnomer. Therefore, the present edition has been given a new and more appropriate title—*The Social Roots of Discrimination: The Case of the Jews*.

With hindsight and knowledge of the events to come in Germany (Hitler wrote his *Mein Kampf* at about the same time), it does not come as a surprise that the book was a complete failure in terms of sales. Of the 2000 copies printed, at most 500 were sold in the usual way. The only place where the book was read, known, and admired was in Dutch Zionist circles. In 1934 Bernstein bought the remaining copies and shipped them to Amsterdam, where a local bookseller kept them in stock. Even after World War II, the Jewish bookseller in Amsterdam was selling out a fair number of copies of the book. According to some autobiographical notes, Bernstein realized in about 1930 that his ambition for a sociological academic career had to be abandoned.

After World War II, Bernstein had become a very prominent member of the Zionist world movement and he became

close[1] with Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, one of the American
Zionist leaders in the 1940s and 1950s. Silver convinced
Bernstein that his book deserved an American translation.
The book was excellently translated by David Saraph, a son
of Bernstein, and accepted by the Philosophical Library Inc.
at New York in 1951. The original 1926 text was translated
unchanged and a short prologue by Bernstein was added to
the book. The prologue commemorated the events between
1926 and 1951, but did not add anything substantially new.
Bernstein, who was a prominent Israeli politician at that time,
apologized that he had had no time for revising the book. This
text is now reprinted unabridged.

The Philosophical Library Inc., nowadays virtually un-
known, was in the fifties a rather small and highly distin-
guished publishing house, which vanished somewhere in the
seventies. The main editor was Dagobert D. Runes, a prolific
and influential author on philosophy himself. Other authors,
who were published in that time by The Philosophical Library,
were, e.g., Karl Jaspers, Maeterlinck, Jacques Maritain, Sartre
(probably the first American edition of *Existentialism*), Karl
Barth, Albert Einstein, and Max Planck. We may say that
most of the authors belonged to the *fine fleur* of European
philosophy and literature, but whatever their prestige, were
not real bestsellers in America in the fifties.

The book was sent for reviewing to various scientific jour-
nals, but it was not reviewed to my knowledge, except in 1956,
after five years of delay, in an anonymous eight-line review in
The Western Political Quarterly. The review said: "Although
the psychology is schematic and incomplete, this is the most

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1. This and other information I received from Mr. Moshe Imbar, Jerusalem, who is one of
the sons of Peretz Bernstein.

useful work in group theory for political scientists; it is an enormously significant book."[2]

We may conclude that again the book failed. Although it was published by a very prestigious publisher, its marketing was not targeted at the relevant readership, consisting of social scientists and Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals in general. Bernstein might have found a bit of consolation in a letter in German that Runes received from a colleague. The letter (dated 28/1/1951) read in part: "[A]ccording to my conviction the book must be considered as a classical masterwork.... I can only congratulate you that you have acknowledged the value of this book...." Runes' colleague was Bernstein's fellow author at The Philosophical Library: Albert Einstein!

Still, the tale does not end here. After Bernstein's death in 1971, the book was translated into Hebrew in 1980. It was again reprinted in German in 1980 by the post-war successor of Jüdischer Verlag. This new printing contained a new short epilogue by the British scholar Henri Tajfel, who was one of the most prominent European social psychologists of the time. According to his epilogue, Tajfel was generally very fond of the book. He failed to notice, however, that the ideas of Bernstein were certainly relevant for his research and that of his contemporaries. From private correspondence, in which the German editor invites Tajfel to write an epilogue, it emerges that the initiative for the reprint came from the editor, but that Tajfel did know the original German book before and immediately accepted the invitation. Although the book is certainly relevant for modern social psychological research, it is striking that neither Tajfel nor anybody else from his school ever refers to Bernstein's book before or after 1980.

2. The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 9, p. 1014.

At the risk of becoming monotonous, I note that the book's reception in 1980 was again poor—I cannot find any reviews. Even a notable contemporary connoisseur of literature on anti-Semitism during the Weimar period confessed to me that he had never heard of the book.

The reader will agree that this story is highly unusual and that it can only imply that this must be a book that raises a reader's curiosity. Could it be a hidden pearl that should be brought into the open, or would it be best to leave it in the dark as one of the many scientific mediocrities? In the following pages I will try to summarize the book (of about 300 pages). I must warn the reader that this actually implies a mutilation, as the book is so full of content that it cannot be summarized without dropping much of its richness.

I will end by giving an evaluation of the book related to the time of its conception. Moreover, I will have to ask the question whether, if the book had become known, it would have had any impact on the development of social sciences. Finally, the question arises whether the book still has value in the twenty-first century.

An Introduction to the Content

Bernstein's stated objective was to explain the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. He therefore starts out looking for "objective" *reasons*, why anti-Semitism could flourish in Germany and other European countries in the 1920s, the time of the writing of his book. Although one cannot deny that anti-Semitism still exists in many parts of the world, there is a marked difference in dealing with anti-Semitism in continental Europe in 1920 and the anti-Semitism in, for instance, the United States in 2000. In the twenties there was no moral ban

in Germany on being anti-Semitic and to speaking in such a manner. Many people today would consider it as uncivilized, but the existence of *superior* and *inferior* human races was accepted as a fact of life and as a scientific truth long before the Nazis came to power.

For German Jews, although legally emancipated since about 1860, many civil offices remained inaccessible in the 1920s. This held, for instance, for academia, for becoming a judge, and for getting jobs in private industry. There was no legal obstacle, but it was the result of a silent understanding between "true" Germans: Jews had to be excluded, just because they were Jews. Actually, Bernstein himself fell victim to this habit in about 1909, when he was refused an appointment as a *Feldwebel* (a very low officer rank) in the reserve army, after that he completed his military service. The officer said that he could only get the higher rank if he converted to the Christian faith. This was the immediate cause for his immigration to the Netherlands at the age of twenty. The result of this de facto exclusion from the German workforce was, as we know, that Jews overwhelmingly earned their incomes as independents, e.g., as lawyers, doctors, musicians, shopkeepers, by setting up their own firms or by working in firms owned by other Jews. In addition to that, the Jewish proletariat was massive. This does not deny that there have been exceptions to this rule. Since Moses Mendelssohn, Heinrich Heine, and much earlier the "Court Jew" Jud Süss, there were rare Jews who succeeded in finding a place in German Gentile society. These Jews, however, almost always paid the price by assimilation, personal isolation, and mostly conversion—at least of their offspring.[3]

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3. See, e.g., W. Michael Blumenthal (1998), *The Invisible Wall between Germans and Jews: A Personal Exploration*. New York: Counterpoint.

Apart from this widespread but informal anti-Semitism, there was a religious and a "scientific" anti-Semitism. The scientific branch tried to argue why Jews as a group were inferior, or at least that a good Gentile society should not have a Jewish minority in its midst. It was this current that made anti-Semitism respectable and paved the way for Nazi anti-Jewish philosophies. In other European countries anti-Semitism existed as well, but with gradual differences.

In chapter 2 Bernstein begins to look for the reasons behind the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. The first reason, which was the main driving force until the emancipation, was the *religious* one. Jews had killed Christ. However, as no Jew living almost 2000 years later could have had anything to do with that, and the fact that many Jews were non-believers or even baptized, the force of this argument was already weak in the time of Bernstein. For many devoted Catholics and Protestant farmers in Bavaria and elsewhere, however, it was still a popular notion. The second reason is "cultural parasitism." Jews would not be creative but only imitate and reproduce Gentile culture. That reason is also untenable, unless (in Bernstein's words)

> one helps oneself by the fiction that not the Jewish but the Dutch flowerbed has produced Spinoza; Mahler becomes an Austrian composer, Heine a German poet, Bergson a French philosopher, Disraeli an English statesman, and so on, and so forth (p. 54).

As Bernstein states, the majority "of the non-Jewish population cares nothing for sophisticated distinctions between creative and derivative cultural capacities; they are incapable of perceiving the difference and therefore unable to react to it. The man in the street, who hears about Jewish inferiority, takes it to mean that Jews are 'bad'..." (p. 56).

Another type of anti-Semitism is "economic anti-Semitism." However, enmity against capitalists and capitalism cannot give a real clue either, because there are many more Jewish proletarians and paupers than Jewish capitalists. Moreover, among Gentile capitalists one may find the most active representatives of anti-Semitism (e.g., Henry Ford). After having looked for the main reasons, which are proposed for the existence of anti-Semitism, Bernstein discovers that there are always individual Jews, who are guilty of some of the allegations, which are to justify anti-Semitism, but that they are no reason to hate the group of Jews as a whole. This implies a gross and unwarranted generalization. Moreover, he argues: "Anyone who looks with open eyes at his fellow-Jews and fellow-Gentiles, will find himself face to face with a never expected reality: numberless Gentiles behave in the way expected from Jews, and numberless Jews act as if they were anything but that" (p. 62).

This recognition brings Bernstein to the conclusion that there may be motives for hating some individuals, who happen to be Jewish, but that there is no convincing motive to hate every individual who is Jewish, that is, to hate the whole group—the great majority of which the individual does not know and will never meet. If Bernstein's analysis ended here, it would have been an eloquent and rather objective (as far as possible) analysis of the anti-Semitic phenomenon. In its time (1920), when the habit of assigning general characteristics to races and discrimination on the basis of race was completely normal, this analysis was a courageous and convincing treatise. Unfortunately, however, it was only convincing for those individuals who were not anti-Semites and thus did not need to be convinced. As Bernstein recognized, real anti-Semites cannot be convinced by reasonable observations, evidence,

and reasoning. Anti-Semitism is a "gut feeling" and has nothing to do with reason.

Mostly, people assume that such a hate must have reasonable causes that justify the feelings of hate. Here Bernstein presents his first rather revolutionary insight: he inverts the direction of causation. He suggests that hate against the Jews, as a group, is the primary phenomenon. As hate has to be justified, the anti-Semite looks for justifications for that hate. These are the so-called causes for anti-Semitism. Bernstein states it is "not the bad qualities [that] arouse hatred, but it is hate which causes the qualities of those who are hated to be regarded as bad" (p. 63). He concludes his chapter 2 by saying: "it is immaterial how the Jews really are; and that it is not even important how we really act; in the first place there exists an aversion to us, and that this in its turn has created the belief in our inferiority" (p. 71).

However, having excluded all reasons for hatred of Jews as a collective group, the problem remains that such a hate exists. Hence, Bernstein makes an attempt to explain the hatred by the working of a more general mechanism. General in the sense, that it has nothing to do neither with specific characteristics of Jews as a collective nor as individuals. In doing so, Bernstein is probably the first who attempts to sketch a general theory of social groups and conflicts between groups.

At this point in his book, Bernstein makes an unexpected and rather revolutionary turnabout. He embeds the problem in a more general theoretical setting. Just as in algebra the fact that $(5+3)^2 = 5^2+3^2 +2 \times 3 \times 5 = 64$ leads to the general theorem that $(a+b)^2 = a^2+b^2 +2 (ab)$ for all values of a and b, Bernstein surmises that there are general mechanisms in society that explain why human beings cluster into groups A and

B and why such groups are bound to have mutual conflicts; groups are hating each other, where "hating" may vary from very intense feelings of hate to a slumbering situation of slight uneasiness towards another group. He sees then anti-Semitism as a specific example of a group conflict in terms of a socio-logical group theory, which he elaborates later on. He replaces Jews and Gentiles, so to say, with the anonymous groups A and B. Firstly, by this generalization to a more abstract level it is possible to find evidence from everywhere for a theory of groups and group conflicts that is applicable to all groups, say, American whites and African Americans, workers and capital-ists, Christians and Muslims, Northerners and Southerners, French and Germans, or members of two rival football clubs A and B. By embedding the problem of anti-Semitism in this general context, it becomes possible to construct a general theory based on general evidence. Secondly anti-Semitism loses its unique particularity and becomes one instance of many other group conflicts. Finally, one may nurture the hope that by unraveling the underlying mechanisms, it may be possible to solve conflicts between groups or even to prevent them from becoming manifest.

For a good evaluation of this endeavor it should be noted that at present there is a well-established body of research, known as social psychology and group sociology, but that at the time of Bernstein's writing social psychology did not exist at all. The only influential ideas were those by Freud, mainly dealing with individuals.

The Origin of Enmity

Although Jews sometimes have the impression that they are the only ones who are hated as a collective, this is by no

means true. We have as examples the hate between nations (e.g., between Americans and Russians not so long ago), the hate between ethnic groups (like the Hutus and the Tutsis in Africa), and the hate between religions (like Roman Catholics and Protestants). We even have as an example the hate between fans of different European football clubs. All these examples have in common that individual members of two collective groups hate each other to some degree, although the individuals do not know each other personally. These feelings are based on prejudices in their purest form.

If we think rationally about it, hostility between individuals without a cause looks rather irrational and consequently should be rare. However, in the real world such feelings of hostility appear to be a mass phenomenon.

In order to explain this observation, Bernstein starts to ask himself why individuals would hate individuals they do not know. Bernstein formulates an answer by postulating a psychological theory that resembles the ideas of his contemporary, Freud, whom he also mentions as a source of inspiration. Bernstein's theory, however, may be seen as an independent extension of the Freudian way of thinking.

Bernstein starts by observing that each individual, say A, has to accept some suffering in life. This may be caused by another individual, B, one happens to know, and in that case it may be that the other individual B caused the suffering on purpose and is in some sense guilty. In that case there is aggression, which may elicit a reaction by the suffering individual A, who defends himself. However, in many cases the other individual B had no intention to inflict damage to A, but he was just making use of his rights. Apart from specific individuals who cause individual suffering, there are numer-

ous other sources that cause suffering. We may think of the hardships in the labor market, restrictions put in one's way by law, recognized deficiencies in one's own character, innate handicaps, and other hardships caused by nature. Hence, the individual accumulates a stock of sufferings, part of which can be linked to a human cause, but most of the sufferings have to be assigned to anonymous causes or to no cause at all. Some of those sufferings evaporate over time. Some sufferings, which are caused by specific individuals by purpose, can be revenged, but most sufferings cannot be revenged in any way. Either because the initiator of the suffering is unknown or because its guilt cannot be proven, or because the suffering individual is afraid to perform acts of revenge, as the other person is too strong and would credibly threaten to inflict more suffering as a reaction to the act of revenge. Bernstein gives the example of the family, where one person is held in a kind of blackmail situation by his/her partner, as he or she feels unable to react in the natural way towards the partner who causes his/her suffering, lest more suffering might be provoked.

Now Bernstein postulates that individuals cannot infinitely accumulate sufferings without any reaction. One may occasionally batter his table or the wall of the house to force an outlet for the accumulated damage of the psyche, but in general such "hostile feelings are continually directed and discharged against persons who cannot possibly be responsible for their formation" (p. 83). Bernstein illustrates it with an example where a businessman has private difficulties with his wife, but discharges the psychological burden on his person-

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4. Allport, G.W., *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1954.

nel. Mostly, such actions need some justification, but if there is no justification, pretexts are fast found. The same holds if the businessman has lost an order because a competitor took it away by a better offer. Bernstein continues by assuming

> that every instance of suffering, every feeling of displeasure, by whomsoever and in whatsoever way it may have been caused, whether it arises from the guilt or from the lawful activity of another person, or through the sufferer's own fault, or without any fault, or even without any human influence, tends to transform itself into a feeling of enmity, to direct itself against fellow-humans and if possible to express itself against them… (p. 86). Enmity is suffering projected upon other men.

Referring to common parlance, according to Bernstein, a man is said to have had to "swallow" more than he can "stomach," so that he is "fed up" and must "air" his anger, hate or rage: a simple description of the process that must actually be presumed to occur. "Within the human mind there always exists a reserve of accumulated hostile feeling…" (p. 88). Actually, the so-called "steam-boiler theory," much later formulated by G.W. Allport[4] (1954), is just the same idea.

Obviously, this theory should be and has been qualified by Bernstein himself. The way in which the transmutation takes place depends on the original amount of suffering, or rather the intensity and the frequency of sufferings received, and on the character of the individual involved. Hence, the theoretical model, which Bernstein had in mind, is less mechanical than described in the few words we spend on it here. However, most of us will recognize that we ourselves are also subject to this mechanism. It is also clear, that if somebody inflicts suffering on somebody else without sufficient reason, it will invite reactions of the same type, leading to a propagation and repetition of the process.

If enmity towards other has mostly no real cause, how is it that causes come in? Bernstein's answer is that most individu-

als feel the need to justify their acts for their neighbors, for the law, and last but not least, for themselves. If there is no valid reason, a reason is just invented. Hence, frequently the observed enmity is not caused by any guilt of the victim. However, the need for justification in the form of assigning a legitimate guilt "is so irresistible, that every expression, and even every feeling of enmity, is accompanied by the compulsive demand for justification by some recognized, assumed, invented, or at least feared guilt on the part of its object" (p. 100).

It is explicitly said that this whole mechanism also holds for "normal" hate reactions where the object of hate has really inflicted suffering on the individual. However, in the case of "group enmity" where one feels enmity towards all (or nearly all) the members of a specific group, of which only a few are personally known, the "normal" hate reaction is irrelevant.

If we accept the idea that individuals have to get an outlet for their feelings of hate, the basic question is: Who can be the target of our feelings of hate? Two precepts seem to be wise. First, do not vent your hate on your family and friends and people upon whom you are dependent. In general, according to Bernstein, "then it becomes imperative to keep the reserve of hate remote from contact with this circle and its intimacy, even to the extent in which it arises from relations within the circle" (p. 107). This again increases, of course, the sum total of hate that cannot be expressed.

Concerning the second precept, Bernstein writes: "Failing a possibility of expression it finds at least its direction where there is some imagined chance of expressing it without punishment, and therefore without danger: it must be diverted from the closer circle and directed outwards" (p. 107). Bernstein continues:

In this way we automatically arrive at the conception of a circle of human beings, which has an inside and an outside: the group as an immediate consequence of the desire to enjoy the advantages of human society—love, sympathy, friendship, consolation, protection, assistance, succour—and at the same time the possibility of directing (and where possible expressing) accumulated and ever present feeling of hate outwards.

We do not consider the groups as a collection of human beings with similar characteristics, established for scientific or other purposes, but as a functional unit within human society, charged with the distribution of feelings of affection and disaffection according to certain principles (p. 107).

Bernstein then observes:

The group appears to be a curious form of extension of the individual. It seems as if under the influence of the necessities of human communal life, human beings who need love and produce hate combine into new collective and collectively selfish individualities of a higher order; directing their love inwards, their hate outward, their social instincts towards the insider, their anti-social tendencies towards the outsider. The group becomes apparent as a functional unit and as the organization, which cannot be foregone, if the enjoyment of all advantages which human society can provide is to be combined with the possibility of expressing the hostile feelings, which always clamour for discharge (pp. 109-110).

Bernstein continues:

[T]he described distribution of functions, namely the outward direction of hostile and the inward expression of friendly feelings, is an exhaustive definition of the cause and purpose of group formation (p. 113).

By this analysis Bernstein describes and explains the reasons for the mechanism of how social groups are formed and maintained. Indeed, from his many examples of groups, ranging from states to local neighborhoods, football clubs, student unions, etc., it is seen that mostly the differences between competing groups are small or even fictitious, but that they serve the job of directing and distributing friendly and hostile feelings excellently.

Obviously there are many ways in which groups may be formed. The main tendency is that members should have

similarity according to some characteristics, which have to be easily recognized. Frequently, however, the driving force behind group formation is that individuals have a common enemy or fear. For existing groups, it may quite well be that such an enemy does not exist anymore, but that the group sticks together for historical and traditional reasons. In that case, the group will vanish over time, unless it finds new objectives and new enemies.

Bernstein (p. 129) outlines the main categories according to which group formation takes place are:

a) Biological categories: Family, clan, tribe, nation, race; occasionally also sex and age-group.
b) Local categories: House, street, suburb, village or town, district, country, continent.
c) Cultural categories: Language, religion, philosophy of life, similarity of conception and aim in science or art
d) Social-economic categories: Social circle (clique), club, trade or profession, class, also party.
e) Purposive groups: All groups where an expressly stated material purpose or aim appears as the reason for group formation.…

Two conclusions may be drawn immediately. First, one individual is simultaneously a member of various groups according to the different group characteristics. This may lead to group-loyalty problems. However, Bernstein solves this problem, somewhat superficially, by defining invariant and variable group characteristics. The invariant group characteristics are individual characteristics that cannot be changed at will by the individual like his skin color, his race, or less so, his language or social class. On the contrary, the hallmarks of the football club, again, are not only variable, but artificial (p. 131). At this point I fall for the temptation to include a quota-

tion, which is perhaps not functional to summarize Bernstein's group theory, but which is very illustrative for the vivid and at times witty style of Bernstein:

> Artificial characteristics have a great attraction for groups, particularly for those whose natural marks cannot readily be recognized at sight, but whose members wish to display their group solidarity in a way that strikes the eye. For the group characteristic is the distinguishing element: it is the banner and uniform of the group struggle: and where the individual has not received any visible mark from his group, a distinctive badge must be found instead. Intended as marks of recognition in battle, the artificial group characteristics become objects of ostentatious adoration; ... the group takes pride in its emblem and its flag. The symbol becomes the embodiment of the principal means of intimidation, the group's authority: the flag is the incarnation of group honour. An insult of the flag is therefore no mere incident, but wounds the whole of collective group sensitivity in the most sensitive spot... (p. 132).

A better description of Germany in his time, but also of the significance of group symbols everywhere, is hard to find. Of course, the whole Nazi-symbolism offers a supreme example.

The second point that emerges is the simplicity by which a group enemy may be defined. Enemies are those who do not conform to the own-group definition. Because they are different with respect to the own-group characteristics, they are easily recognized as members of the enemy. "[E]ven as the own characteristics are objects of pride, so do those of the foreign group evoke contempt; they are regarded not only as symbols but as actual evidence of the foreign group's inferiority" (p. 135).

It is not only symbols that are important for the group's cohesion. The group has to have an ideology, a mission, which is based on something, which has to be improved or maintained. It yields "an idea of justification which supplies the group with the psychological prerequisites for the expres-

sion of enmity to any desired extent.... The importance of a well-developed group ideology is so great that no movement of any considerable extent can deploy itself without it, and that even biological groups must frequently be inoculated from outside with a vigorous group ideology."

Hence, Bernstein also sees the ideology not as the cause for the existence of the group, but rather the other way round, the ideology as a necessary means for the continuation and extension of the group. The ideology describes a purpose "which must naturally derive from the category; the social group will find a social purpose, the religious group a religious purpose, and so on. A group always fights another group of the same category" (p. 142).

Following the order of the book, we now return to the question of group loyalties. Bernstein gives an example, which brings the problem to light (pp. 168-169).

> Let us consider the comparatively simple case of an American worker of Anglo-Saxon descent. As a worker he is anti-capitalist (social category); as Anglo-Saxon he is in opposition to ... "Latins" ... the descendants of Mediterranean nations (ethnical category), who ... usually are American ... workers also like himself.... [A]s a white man he detests Negroes (racial category) and as an American he hates the Japanese (national-political category). ... In addition, our American worker probably belongs to some Christian religious community; and even if his loyalties in this respect are not of the strongest, they are sufficient to cause some dislike against other religions....

Bernstein continues:

> In a dispersed people, like the Jews, the interrelation of group allegiances is still far more complicated; we are an ethnical-historical group, but belong individually to the most diverse state, language, social-economic, cultural and philosophical groups; officially, we are regarded as a religious community, while the specifically Jewish religious ideology does not, to say the least, dominate the larger part of the ethnical group. In this case, at any rate, the conflict of claims between the various groups to which the individual belongs has reached such a degree that it cannot but express itself always and everywhere as an

internal conflict of the mind; daily and almost hourly the individual is pressed
into different ranks and forced to regard the same person now as friend and
then again as enemy in an alternation too rapid for sanity....
    [W]e should consider that all the groups to which the individual belongs
compete for the dominations of his soul: for the group, being organized for
struggle, must make sure that it can always rely on its members, lest, for in-
stance, the worker whom his state has called to the wars lower his arms when
he faces his fellow-worker on the other side; even as, on the other hand, the
proletariat does not want its solidarity to collapse before the barricades between
nation and nation (pp. 171-172).

Bernstein argues (p. 172) that the category that becomes
predominant with split loyalties is "that group category which
through its ideology most completely saturates the individual
mind." Therefore the leaders of the group ... "continuously
strive to convince the individual of the outstanding importance
of the ideology concerned."

This is the reason for the continuous internal propaganda
in groups, be it states, parties, churches, student unions, or
football clubs. However, the most important point is whether
the group feels threatened or not. Groups living in intensified
antagonism will present the predominant category of alle-
giance. And it is also therefore that the leadership of the group
tries to convince group members that the group is in danger
and even frequently tries (with brinkmanship) to maneuver the
group into a situation of antagonism. This is because, thanks
to that situation, the specific group is clearly an operational
and efficient instrument to defend its members. We see this
phenomenon in the behavior of many different types of actors,
e.g., Nazi Germany, Bush administration vs. Iraq, Iran, trade
unions, Hamas, and, for instance, in the refusal of Orthodox
Jews to endorse the State of Israel in its secular form.

Having come at this point Bernstein has explained the gen-
esis of groups. They are formed to vent off feelings of enmity

and to foster solidarity between the group members. In order to get the group-feeling some generalizations are needed. First, the conception of the existence of collective characteristics is necessary for group struggle (p. 186). The group may in reality consist of a large variation of characters. However, the group is assumed to be homogeneous: each member has the same collective properties. This holds as well for the own group as for the other "foreign" groups. But the own group is also considered as superior to the other groups.

> The belief in the collective inferiority of the foreign group finds its comple-
> ment in the positive part of the [own] group ideology, the missionary idea.
> The inferiority, then, does not merely appear as an accumulation of faults of
> all kinds, but its manifestation is particularly seen in the resistance offered
> by the foreign group to the group mission and the acceptance of its contents
> (pp. 186-187).
>   The conception of the existence of collective qualities, therefore, provides
> the possibility for a general diffusion of feelings of love and hate.
>   Within the own group, every member becomes, as a bearer of the valuable
> group characteristics, indiscriminately the subject of friendly feelings; every
> member of the foreign group, as the carrier of the collective inferiority, be-
> comes as indiscriminately the subject of the enmity feelings directed against
> his group. Individual activities and inactivities remain in either case without
> influence upon the group feeling bestowed (pp. 187-188).

We notice that both or multiple groups behave similarly and that the conception of what is right or wrong depends heavily on the standpoint of the group. This holds also for official law, which represents the interests of the ruling classes. As both groups feel the same, mutatis mutandis, it follows that the ground is prepared for tensions and frictions.

> This mode of equalization of all members of the foreign group is well-known.
> We discern only the typical group characteristics, e.g. with Chinese or Negroes,
> and we are nearly unable (without training) to distinguish between individuals.
> The foreign group appears as an agglomeration of similar beings, the foreign
> individual as an accumulation of average group characteristics. Therefore the
> stranger appears representative (for his group). His group is judged by his

appearance and behavior. And the group, accordingly demands exemplary behavior from its members abroad, for there they are regarded as representative for the group. As the group is disliked, evil behavior of an individual is seen as typical for the group and confirms the expectations, while good behavior is seen as just an exception on the rule. Hence, any member of the foreign group is made responsible for the behavior of its collectivity. For evil members of your own group there holds a different rule. He is just an exception to the rule of high quality in his group.

Apart from open struggle between groups mostly there will be some tension, which may be high or low. Tension will be promoted by contacts or the possibility of contacts. So tension is border tension. If groups do not live near each other, it is easy to have no tension. It follows that tension will increase with increasing contacts. This is also, for instance, the reasoning of Samuel P. Huntington[5] in his famous book, *The Clash of Civilizations*, where he locates many tensions between Islam and other groups at the borderline of the two civilizations. This clarifies why the tensions in a country are so high when two ethnic populations live among each other. In that case the border area is so large that it may even cover the whole country.

In the previous pages we have mostly tacitly assumed that struggling groups have about the same power. However, the case of a minority group shows that this is not true in many cases. Numbers are not always decisive. A ruling class is by definition a minority group. However, in the Jewish case, the minority group is frequently not the most powerful. If it is also fragmented geographically and socially, the whole group becomes a group border, "an army exclusively consisting of vanguards, and therefore lives over its whole extent in a continuous state of highly increased tension" (p. 220).

5. S.P. Huntington (1996), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Finally, Bernstein looks for the possibility of absorption
(assimilation) of the minority group into the majority group.
He concludes that this is only possible for individuals in
small numbers. Formally, they may be absorbed as are, for
example, the baptized Jews in Spain and Portugal, but then
they will not be seen as "belonging to us," but will constitute
their own sub-group.

Bernstein returns at the end of his book to the subject
proper: anti-Semitism, which may appear under the headings
of "religious," "economic," "political" (by governments us-
ing scapegoats or directed against political activity by Jews),
"social," "cultural," and "racial" anti-Semitism. On top of that,
he distinguishes Jewish anti-Semitism, where Jews hate their
fellow-Jews (jüdischer Selbsthass).

Indeed, Bernstein shows that the phenomenon of anti-Semi-
tism is nothing special, but fits neatly into his general theory
on group conflicts. He shows that there are no real solutions
to the problem of anti-Semitism. But it has also no special
and unique significance. Anti-Semitism must be regarded as a
special case of a general phenomenon. The only way in which
group conflicts can be mitigated is by reducing the contact
frequency between the two groups. That means, by trying to
shorten their common borders. Therefore he recommends
for the Jewish problem the Zionist solution, i.e., a Jewish
homeland.

Appreciation and Place in the Literature

The book by Bernstein is one of the most remarkable books
I ever read. Although there is no doubt that Bernstein was
familiar with the main current thoughts of the day, he was not
"academically inhibited," like most of us are in some way. As

he stood outside any academic network, he did not feel urged to cast his book in such a way that it would be accepted by the academic (German pedantic) world of his time. He felt completely free to develop his own line of thought. We may see him as an ambitious dilettante. This is not intended to detract the value of his work. Actually, the pioneers in the social sciences, like Freud, all have been dilettantes in some sense. They did not tread on trodden paths, but discovered their own path and developed their own theories, almost always without much empirical evidence except in the form of anecdotal observations and introspection. The problem that Bernstein tried to master is extremely complex, as it needs components from individual psychology, the psychology of groups, and sociology. Moreover, it deals with philosophy and political sciences.

We should not forget that in Bernstein's time, psychology was Freudian psychology. Freudian theory deals with the individual and with the relationship between specific individuals, but hardly addresses the relationship between the individual and the group or between groups. Actually, Freud acknowledged in his *Massenpsychologie und Ich-analyse* (1921) that the individual-group relationship should be considered as a part of psychology, but that book does not offer much of a theory and leans heavily on the famous book by Lebon[6] (1896), which does not attempt an explanatory theory either. The basic question why individuals try to belong to groups and to form groups and as a group are hostile to other groups is not really touched in psychology in the twenties and much later. Hence, Bernstein felt a logical need to formulate a

6. A. Lebon, *La psychologie des foules* (1895; English translation *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, 1896).

theory himself. It is the theory of the accumulated frustration, which is neutralized by enmity towards well recognizable or constructed outside groups.

This theory was not part of the established body of psychological literature as far as I know. We have to see it as an invention of Bernstein himself. Is it therefore of less quality or less credible than, e.g., the theory of Freud with respect to the individual? In order to answer this question, we have to ask what a theory in the behavioral sciences is. Actually, a theory is a hypothesis or a set of hypotheses formulated in terms of a metaphor. The theory of Freud turns around the metaphorical concepts of the ego, the superego and the id. Nobody has ever seen those concepts in reality, but the concepts are handy in describing a possible theory on (aspects of) human behavior. When the theory explains and even predicts real-life behavior the theory is accepted as a useful theory, otherwise, it is rejected, refined, or replaced by a better one. In this light, Bernstein's theory is on a par with Freud's basic hypothesis. Obviously, Freud has elaborated his basic theme in many works, especially by providing indirect empirical evidence in the form of patient cases. By this prolonged life-long research and by the work of his followers, an impressive body of evidence has been accumulated for the usefulness of Freud's original paradigm, but it is still a metaphor of which the general validity cannot be proven in a way that would satisfy the modern empirical researcher. This does not reduce the value of Freud's theory by a bit. Rather we should realize that theories do not derive their value of the fact that they can be proven or not. They have to be seen as primary concepts, which may be useful according to whether they explain and predict reality or fail to do so.