ON PREJUDICE

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ABSTRACT: According to typical accounts of prejudice, somebody holding a prejudiced belief is epistemically culpable for doing so (Fricker 2007, 36). However, a prejudice is usually also understood as being more than just a prejudgement. A prejudgement only becomes a prejudice if it is retained in the face of "new knowledge… that would unseat it" (Allport 1954, 9; see also Fricker 2007, 33-4). In his recent book, *Prejudice*, Endre Begby has argued that the standard view of prejudice just outlined is *false* (Begby 2023a, 5). According to Bebgy the ordinary way of thinking about prejudice equivocates between an extensional characterisation of prejudice (defining it through prototypical exemplars) and an intensional one (defining prejudice in terms of characteristic errors of reasoning) (Begby 2021, 61-2) and these two ways of characterising prejudice are in tension with one another. If we characterise prejudice in extensional terms then we find that somebody can be perfectly justified in holding a prejudiced belief (Begby 2021, 76). Moreover, they might be justified in retaining their prejudiced belief when presented with contrary evidence after they have acquired their belief (Begby 2021, 77-94). In this paper, I will argue that although it is true that classic accounts of prejudice sometimes illuminate the notion by presenting examples of beliefs without saying anything about how they were acquired or maintained, the standard account is nonetheless not committed to any inconsistency and is the correct account of prejudice.

KEYWORDS: prejudice, Begby, Fricker, Allport, generics, generalisations

1. Empirical and Grammatical Investigation

Investigations into the nature of things take at least two forms. In *empirical* investigations we might investigate the properties of things, their relationships with other things, and the laws or norms governing their behaviour and make discoveries about how things are. In *grammatical* investigations we might try to lay out the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to count as the thing that it is or we might explain a term by specifying criteria for its application. We might also enumerate examples of the things falling under a certain concept (as Wittgenstein famously does with the concept 'game' in §66 of the *Philosophical Investigations*) or we might give a surveyable representation of the conceptual terrain we are concerned with, clarifying connections with related concepts.

The investigation of prejudice here will focus on the second kind of investigation. It will primarily be an investigation into what *counts* as a prejudiced belief or a prejudiced person, rather than upon how prejudices are manifested in the

world around us and how we might overcome them. However, it will also include some comments on the nature of prejudice in the first sense. The reason for this is that the investigation is a preliminary to engaging critically with Endre Begby's recent book, *Prejudice: a study in non-ideal epistemology* and Begby's central claims concern how we are to define 'prejudice', although he does make some empirical claims in his book and illustrates its usefulness by reference to current political issues.

A reasonable way in which to start an examination of the grammar of the term 'prejudice' is to consult a dictionary.[1] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'prejudice' as "1. An opinion that is not based on reason or experience… 2. dislike or unfair behaviour based on such opinions". It defines the related term 'prejudge' in terms of making "a judgement about someone or something before having all the necessary information" and something is *prejudicial*, if it is "harmful to someone or something" (Waite 2012, 566). We sometimes speak about *people* being prejudiced against other people (either groups or individuals) but we also speak about *beliefs* being prejudiced and we also sometimes speak about prejudice in abstraction from any particular people or beliefs (for example, anti-traveller prejudice, accent prejudice, prejudice based on religion, ageism, anti-redhaired prejudice, anti-Irish prejudice, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, classism and racial prejudice[2]). So, 'prejudice' is sometimes used as a catch-all term to cover various forms of irrational fear, unwarranted hatred, and discrimination against a variety of different groups.

It is widely agreed that somebody making a prejudgement is not necessarily thereby prejudiced. In his widely-cited book on prejudice, the social psychologist Gordon Allport suggests a test to distinguish between erroneous prejudgement and prejudice: "If a person is capable of rectifying his erroneous judgements in the light

[1] In examining excuses in 'A Plea for Excuses' J.L. Austin suggests two ways of using a dictionary that might be rewarding: "One is to read the book through, listing all the words that seem relevant; this does not take as long as many suppose. The other is to start with a widish selection of obviously relevant terms, and to consult the dictionary under each: it will be found that, in the explanations of the various meanings of each, a surprising number of other terms occur, which are germane though of course not often synonymous" (1979, 186-7). This may seem like an obvious place to start, but Austin's advice is rarely heeded.

[2] By listing all of these various forms of prejudice in the way that I have, I do not mean to suggest anything about how they are all related to one another. One might think that 'race', gender, and class all 'intersect' to produce different forms of discrimination and different forms of social experience for the groups discriminated against (see, for example, Crenshaw 1989) or one might argue, as Himani Bannerji does (influenced by Marx and by Dorothy E. Smith), that 'race', class, and sex/gender cannot be considered as "segregated, though 'intersecting'" because "'race', gender, and patriarchy are inseparable from class" (2021, 12-15).

of new evidence he is not prejudiced. *Prejudgements become prejudices only if they are not reversible when exposed to new knowledge*." (1979, 9) In her classic treatment of epistemic injustice, where she defines epistemic injustice in terms of identity prejudice, Miranda Fricker distinguishes between a non-culpable mistake and a prejudice using Nomy Arpaly's *Solomon* case to illustrate the distinction (Arpaly 2003, 103). Solomon is a boy who lives in an isolated farming community and who holds the belief that women are not half as competent as men when it comes to abstract thinking. He forms his belief on the basis of his experience and on the basis of the testimony of those around him. As Miranda Fricker describes it, "He has never met a woman who went in for abstract thinking; his local library contains only such books by men, and he has met many men who were abstract thinkers and among these men there seemed to be a consensus that women are not really up to it" (2007, 33-4). However, Solomon then leaves his small community to study at university and studies alongside women. At this point, Solomon should reassess his belief that women are not half as competent as men when it comes to abstract thinking in light of the new experiential evidence that he has. If he does not do this, then his belief is revealed as a prejudice; irrational as well as ethically flawed.[3]

Given all of this, it seems that prejudice is something that is irrational by definition as well as being harmful to members of the groups suffering from the fear, hatred, and unwarranted negative beliefs directed towards them. Moreover, we might very well think that prejudiced beliefs are necessarily false or erroneous. This means that prejudice is something objectionable, both epistemically and ethically, and something we should want to get rid of, as far as possible. In giving an account of prejudice, we want to understand it in order to *overcome* it. An understanding of

[3] In her paper 'Prejudice in Testimonial Justification, A Hinge Account', Anna Boncompagni accounts for this resistance to evidence by arguing that prejudices are a kind of hinge, in Wittgenstein's sense, (prejudices are "de facto local hinges", according to Boncompagni (2024, 299)). She also makes the point that, like hinges, prejudices often are implicit or unspoken and that they play a normative role with respect to evidence (2024, 291). While I accept that token examples given of beliefs might play the role of hinges (after all, as Boncompagni observes, it is the role played rather than the content that tells us whether a particular proposition counts as a hinge (2024, 293)) it seems we should not call such beliefs prejudices if they are entirely immune to evidence because one of the defining elements of prejudice is making a judgement before all the evidence is in (presupposing that the person has dealt irresponsibly with the evidence available to them). Robert Fogelin, in his famous account of deep disagreements, inspired by Wittgenstein, suggests that claims that someone is biased only make sense against an appeal to common ground (2005, 7), and something similar might be said about prejudice. That said, it is certainly true that identity prejudices are often very deep-seated and difficult to unseat by rational means.

prejudice that goes beyond just defining it should take on board evidence that we have about how it comes about and how it is maintained so that we might shift it.[4]

2. Endre Begby on Prejudice

In his new book *Prejudice: a study in non-ideal epistemology* Endre Begby offers an account of prejudice that differs quite sharply from the standard one, according to which prejudice is essentially irrational or epistemically objectionable in some other way. He defines a prejudice as a "negatively charged stereotype, targeting some group of people, and derivatively, the individuals who comprise this group" (2021, 8-9), and he is clear that this is *his* definition as opposed to the way that it is standardly defined in the literature on prejudice.[5] The standard definition, Begby wants to argue, is *false* (2023a, 5).[6] Why should we be interested in Begby's idiosyncratic definition? After all, if we want to understand prejudice we must surely start with the standard definition of the term, not some alternative neighbouring concept.

One reason to accept Begby's definition of the term is that he detects a tension in the way that prejudice is ordinarily defined between an extensional characterisation of prejudice (defining it through prototypical exemplars) and an intensional one (defining prejudice in terms of characteristic errors of reasoning) (2021, 61-2). In explaining what prejudice is psychologists and philosophers have very often done so through presenting examples of beliefs independently of saying anything about the reasoning that led people to them. Gordon Allport's book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, widely regarded as a classic in the field of social psychology, begins with a series of examples: "In Rhodesia a white truck driver passed a group of idle natives and muttered, 'They're lazy brutes'. A few hours later he saw natives

[4] There is not space here to go into detail about what the conclusions of an empirical investigation into prejudice might look like. However, a satisfactory account of prejudice is going to be one that recognises that prejudices change over time, that they are embedded in structures of unequal power in our society, and that they can have an effect regardless of whether particular individuals hold to negative stereotypes, hostile views, or irrational beliefs. A good place to start is *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*, by Kwame Ture (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton, which was the first work to give an account of *institutional racism*. Ture and Hamilton coined the term 'institutional racism' (1992 [1967], 4).

[5] Discussing the definition, in response to critics of his work he describes the definition as "my working definition" (2023b, 17).

[6] Begby uses Miranda Fricker's account of prejudice as a prominent example of the kind of view that he wants to target. He quotes Fricker as saying "[t]he idea of a prejudice is […] most naturally interpreted […] as a judgement made or maintained without proper regard to the evidence" (Begby, 2023a, 5)—the quote comes from Fricker, 2007, 32-3.

heaving two-hundred pound sacks of grain onto a truck, singing in rhythm to their work. 'Savages' he grumbled" (1979, 3). The entirety of the first page of Allport's book is filled with similar examples: Polish people calling Ukrainian's 'reptiles', Germans calling Poles 'Polish cattle', Poles calling Germans 'Prussian swine', Hungarians being antisemitic. Moreover, it is plausible that it is correct to say that "black people are lazy brutes" is a racist belief, no matter how that belief was formed and that "women are less intelligent than men" is a sexist belief regardless of how somebody arrived at that belief. Racism and sexism are forms of prejudice and so it seems that we can give examples of prejudiced belief without saying anything about how those beliefs were formed. However, once we grant that prejudice might be defined in these two ways—in terms of examples of beliefs and behaviours (extensional) and in terms of unwarranted generalisations or faulty reasoning (intensional)—then we might wonder whether the two ways of defining prejudice might come apart.

Begby's contention is that the two *do* come apart and that this gives us reason to reject the idea of prejudice as a judgment made without proper regard to the evidence or as essentially irrational. He uses the example of Solomon, the young man who believes that women are not half as competent as men when it comes to abstract thinking, to demonstrate that a person can be justified in both acquiring and maintaining a prejudiced belief (defined in terms of a negatively charged stereotype) in the face of contrary evidence. Begby first of all notes that it is relatively uncontroversial that Solomon is not epistemically culpable for acquiring the belief that women are not half as competent as men when it comes to abstract thinking. Miranda Fricker, who Begby takes to be representative of the standard account of prejudice, is happy to use the Solomon case to illustrate the difference between an honest mistake and a prejudice (which is stubbornly maintained in the face of counter-evidence). Solomon "could not be accused of any marked irrationality" (2007, 34) in believing that women are not half as competent as men when it comes to abstract thinking, given that in his small community, all of the testimonial and experiential evidence supports that view. However, it is when Solomon goes to university and studies alongside women who are clearly competent abstract thinkers that he might be called prejudiced if he goes on believing that women are not half as competent as men. Fricker says that "[i]f this counter-evidence…does not shift the belief… then it is revealed as irrational, and moreover a prejudice" (2007, 34).

Begby thinks that Fricker is mistaken about this because it is implausible to think of prejudices as being universal generalizations (i.e., as generalizations that ascribe a negative quality to *every* member of a group). If a prejudice were a universal generalization, then a single counterinstance (e.g., one woman who is a

capable abstract thinker) would decisively undermine it. However, it is plausible that somebody who accepts a negatively charged stereotype about a group adheres to a generic judgement rather than to a universal generalization, and generics are more resilient in the face of counter-evidence than universal generalizations are. Generics are a kind of generalisation, but they do not specify how many members of the group in question have the property in question (unlike *quantified* generalisations that include words like 'some', 'many', 'most', or 'all'). Examples of generic judgements include 'ducks lay eggs' and 'mosquitos spread the West Nile virus', and we continue to accept these judgements even after being shown examples of ducks that do not lay eggs and mosquitos that do not carry the West Nile virus (the majority of them) (Leslie 2008; Begby 2021, 81). Similarly, people who hold negative stereotypes about a group do not necessarily think that every member of the group displays the negative property in question or that they hold it to the same degree. What this means, if we are thinking about the example of Solomon going to university, is that Solomon may well continue to adhere to his belief that women are not half as competent as men when it comes to abstract thinking without being at fault, epistemically. After all, he acquired his (prejudiced) belief without being epistemically at fault and given that his prejudiced belief is a generic it is at least somewhat resistant to counterevidence (Begby grants that there is a limit to this: "reflection suggests that there must be some (finite) number of such encounters that Solomon could have after which he could no longer rationally sustain his belief that women are less intelligent than men" (2021, 90-91)).

A strength of Begby's account of prejudice is that it directs our attention to the tricky circumstances in which people form their beliefs and to the limits of human beings' abilities when it comes to forming beliefs and gaining knowledge. Human beings inevitably use heuristics due to their limited abilities in taking information on board and limited memories, and they sometimes find themselves in circumstances that do not lend themselves to forming true beliefs. We are limited creatures and we rely on other people to inform us about what is going on in the world beyond our own limited circumstances, but those people are sometimes misinformed, and they sometimes also have motives to supply us with false or skewed information. What this means is that we sometimes form a skewed picture of the world without being epistemically at fault.

Another strength of Begby's account is that although he focuses, in the first half of his book, on the beliefs of individuals, he also recognises that stereotypes "have a certain social currency" and that they give "shape and structure to our social interactions" (2021, 115). Interactions might be structured by stereotypes even if the individuals involved do not believe in those stereotypes. Let's first of all examine

how stereotypes might structure our interactions before looking to see how they might structure our interactions despite us not believing in them. We use stereotypes to form expectations of other people and how they are likely to behave in certain situations. Begby uses examples from the social psychologists Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald, of 'social scripts', based on stereotypes, that structure our interactions:

> In a department store to make a purchase, you readily surrender your credit card to a total stranger whom you recognise as a *salesclerk*…Entering a medical clinic, you assume the obedient role of *patient*…you unquestioningly follow the instructions of people who are dressed in ways that lead you to categorize them as *doctor* or *nurse*. (Banaji and Greenwald 2013, 79; Begby 2021, 116)

Although we would not normally give total strangers our credit cards and allow them to scan them through machines, and although we would not normally unquestioningly follow the instructions of strangers, we do quite naturally engage with certain strangers in these ways because we know how these *types* of people are likely to interact with us. That is, we have formed simplifying generalisations (i.e., stereotypes) about salesclerks and doctors and nurses that lead us to behave in certain ways around them that we wouldn't normally with other people we do not know.

Now we have seen how stereotypes might structure people's interactions, we can go on to look at how they might structure interactions even if the participants do not believe the relevant stereotypes. People might play a certain social role despite not believing in the norms structuring the activity because there are certain rewards or punishments associated with playing the role or deviating from it. For example, at school, I wore a uniform and called my teachers 'Sir' and 'Ma'am' despite not believing in the ethos of hierarchy and obedience that such practices embodied. I did so because others did and because the costs of not going along with what they did were fairly extreme (I could be deemed a troublemaker, expelled from the school, and so on). It is surely the case that practices like these go on, at least sometimes, despite very few of the participants actually believing in the way in which roles are assigned or played. So, prejudices might be maintained through structuring social interactions despite the fact that many of the participants in those interactions do not actually believe in them.

In responding to Endre Begby's book Renée Jorgensen has stressed that 'vestigial social practices' (behaviours persisting despite people not believing in the original rationale for the practice), as she calls them, are "most tightly linked not to others' beliefs or expectations, but to the ways that material infrastructure constrains options shapes social outcomes" (2023, 1). For example, heterosexual couples, despite not believing in adhering to a stereotypical gendered division of labour, might

nonetheless do so because "there are still material differences in the affordances for men and women—asymmetries in parental leaves available, work hours expectations, or even gendered pay gaps" (2023, 8-9).[7] People might also get married, despite not believing in the institution of marriage, because being married makes sense practically. Begby himself acknowledges Jorgensen is "clearly right that material conditions…play a significant role in structuring our social interactions, and that they may in many cases play a *more* significant role than pluralistic ignorance" (2023b, 10), and so it is clear that Begby recognises that overcoming the problems of prejudice, of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and so on, is going to involve more than changing people's attitudes and beliefs. To overcome prejudice, we have to change material and social structures.

Begby's *Prejudice*, a critical analysis

So, it is clear that Begby's account of prejudice has quite a lot in its favour. Begby draws our attention to something that is not often commented on: a (perhaps apparent) tension between extensional and intensional accounts of prejudice. He also draws our attention to human limitations and to the non-ideal circumstances in which people form their beliefs and so invites us to focus upon concrete individuals and to take note of the contingencies of their situations. The recent flourishing of the field of non-ideal epistemology is something to be welcomed.[8] We should be careful not to take people to be irrational or stupid for cleaving to beliefs that we recognise to be mistaken. Begby is surely correct in arguing that somebody might be rational and hold a negatively charged stereotype, and moreover that they might be

[7] Of course, there are many instances of institutional racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, and antisemitism where the material constraints on the ways people act are more than *vestiges* of something past. Looking, for example, at the way Conservative Ministers in the U. K. have created a 'hostile environment' for migrants and how they try to focus attention on boats of asylum seekers coming to the UK, it seems clear that the people ruling us very often actively maintain and create structures that feed prejudice in order to scapegoat others, distract attention, and to divide people that might oppose them. As Marx and Engels said, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it" (Marx and Engels, 2004 [1845-6], 64).

[8] See, for example, Staffel, J. *Unsettled Thoughts: A Theory of Degrees of Rationality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019; Nguyen, C. T. 'Hostile Epistemology', in *Social Philosophy Today*, Vol. 39, 2023, pp. 9-32: McKenna, R. *non-ideal epistemology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023 (Chapter 7 of which contains a discussion of prejudice that is sympathetic to the standard account of prejudice).

rational *in holding* a negatively charged stereotype. That is not to say that the person might not be blameworthy in other respects—in moral terms as opposed to epistemological ones. Begby is right that "no epistemological aspersions can be cast on prejudiced belief just in virtue of its instantiating a certain form of cognition" (2021, 47), there is nothing inherently wrong with people employing heuristics in getting to grips with social matters. Furthermore, as discussed above, Begby does not fall into the trap of seeing prejudice as just a psychological problem. Stereotypes and prejudices insinuate themselves into practices and 'social scripts', and Begby is clear that, for example, there has been a long history of institutional racism in the United States, in the justice system, the education system, housing, and employment (2021, 146).

However, there are problems with Begby's account. One problem, that has been pointed out by M. Giulia Napolitano is that there are different types of generic statement and once we get clearer about which types of generic statement express prejudiced beliefs the standard account becomes more plausible. Some generic statements "express the existence of a suitable causal explanatory mechanism": an example Napolitano gives is 'sea turtles are long-lived' (2023, 5). Now, it is clear that, like the examples Begby gives, 'sea turtles are long-lived' is not plausibly understood as a universal generalisation. We take it to be true despite the fact that many sea turtles do not live long lives. We take it to be true because some sea turtles are long-lived, and the ones that are long-lived are so *because* they are sea turtles. The many sea turtles that die young often die as a result of predation or human activity (building jetties, throwing plastic into the ocean, accidentally driving over turtles, eating turtles), but it is in the *nature* of sea turtles that they can potentially live for a very long time. A second major type of generic statement is a generic statement that concerns the statistical prevalence of a property amongst members of a kind: 'American barns are red' is an example of this type of generic statement. We take 'American barns are red' to be true because many of them are. Although 'American barns are red' is not a universal generalisation and so it isn't made false by a single barn of a different colour, it *is* undermined by examples of non-red barns in the United States.

So, there are at least two different kinds of generic statement: (i) generic statements which express the existence of a causal explanatory mechanism (e.g. biological mechanisms which mean that sea turtles can live for a long time, and so 'sea turtles are long-lived' is true) and (ii) generic statements which concern the statistical prevalence of a property amongst members of a kind (e.g. 'American barns are red' which is true because many of them are red). With this distinction between types of generic statements in mind, we should think about expressions of prejudiced

belief and where they fit into this picture. It seems that prejudiced beliefs, according to Begby's definition, cannot be merely statements about the prevalence of some property amongst a group. According to Begby's definition, prejudices are stereotypes "…targeting some group of people, and derivatively, the individuals who comprise this group," but generic statements about the prevalence of a property amongst a group do not target the individuals comprising the group *derivatively* (Napolitano 2023, 7). We do not think that claims like 'women earn less than men', taken as generic statements about the prevalence of some property amongst a group, are statements of *prejudice*. Indeed, given that racial prejudice, sexist prejudice, homophobic prejudice, and so on, have negative consequences for the group targeted, we should expect that there will be many true statements about the targeted groups that attribute to them a position that is worse off than the group targeting them. As Napolitano says, "given that holding these beliefs is crucial for instilling positive social change, we probably shouldn't consider them as prejudices" (2023, 8). For a generic claim to be a prejudiced one, it seems it must involve an expression of the existence of a causal-explanatory mechanism. A sexist belief is one that says or suggests that it is in the *nature* of women to have some particular (negative) property or quality; a racist belief is one that says or suggests that it is in the *nature* of some racialised minority to have some particular (negative) property or quality, and so on. Note that this does not mean that expressions of prejudice are not *also* statements about the statistical prevalence of the negative property in question (or ambiguous between the two). This might also be the case.

What this means is that the types of evidence that can be brought to bear in opposition to a prejudiced belief are wider than just producing examples of individuals from the group in question that do not have the negative property ascribed to the group. What is also going to be relevant to disconfirming statements expressing prejudices is evidence concerning the absence of a causal-explanatory relation between the group and the negative property in question. However, when Begby looks at the case of Solomon, and Solomon's belief that 'women are not half as competent as men when it comes to abstract thinking', he thinks about it as being about the prevalence of a certain quality (being less competent at abstract thinking than men) amongst a certain group (women). We have seen that when he talks about the evidence required to undermine Solomon's belief he talks about the "number of… encounters" (2021, 90-91) with women competent at abstract thinking required to undermine it. When illustrating what Solomon might have in mind in believing that women are not half as competent as men when it comes to abstract thinking he puts a "quasi statistical" spin on it (2021, 82) and uses a graph of the distribution of

male and female intelligence to represent what Solomon might believe (2021, 83).[9] Napolitano notes, in opposition to Begby's understanding of the evidential situation facing Solomon, that Solomon will in fact have more evidence available to him than Begby suggests:

> Solomon will learn about women's history, systematic oppression, and traditional exclusion from many academic disciplines. As he moves around his environment, he will likely act in ways that betray his sexist prejudice and encounter at least some social sanctioning for the belief that women are by nature different in intelligence, and, plausibly, some testimonial evidence that they are not. And, he will encounter at least some intelligent women for which he is unable to identify an intervening condition that would explain why they do not display the property of being not inclined towards abstract thinking (2023, 9-10).

Given that this evidence bears on the supposed causal-explanatory mechanism that Solomon thinks exists between being a woman and being competent at abstract thinking, Solomon would be obliged to give up his belief. Not doing so would indicate some degree of irrationality. This lends credibility to the standard picture, although, as Napolitano notes, it "does not provide definitive reasons against Begby's claim that prejudice *could* be rational" (2023, 11).

Another thing worth noting here is that although it is true that prejudices might sometimes be expressed in the form of generic statements it is clear that on other occasions they are not expressed in this form. Fricker uses the example of Solomon's belief that 'women are not half as competent as men when it comes to abstract thinking', which is plausibly construed as a generic claim but she also uses the example of the white jury in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* condemning Tom Robinson for a crime that he did not commit because they have a racially prejudiced perception of him which Harper Lee describes as the "assumption—the evil assumption—that *all* Negroes lie, that *all* Negroes are basically immoral beings, that *all* Negro men are not to be trusted around our women" (1960, 208; quoted in Fricker 2007, 25). Here we have a series of prejudiced assumptions which clearly take the form of a quantified generalisation (using the word 'all') – a universal generalisation – and not the form of a generic.[10]

To put Begby's case under further strain, we can come back to the worry that was raised at the beginning of the discussion of Begby's work, namely, the worry

[9] Note that Begby is clear that he in no way endorses the content of the graph himself. The graph shows a bell curve for women's intelligence and one for men's intelligence, with the female curve lagging behind the male one.

[10] Elsewhere in her book Fricker discusses other examples of stereotypes that take the form of quantified generalisations which involve the words 'many' or 'most' (p. 31 of *Epistemic Injustice*).

that Begby's use of the term 'prejudice' differs from the ordinary or standard use of the term. Simply pointing this out is not going to worry Begby, of course. He acknowledges that his use of the term is not the standard one and makes an argument that the standard use of the term is false. However, there is more to be said here. In the first place, we might question whether 'false' is an appropriate evaluative term to use in relation to a definition. Empirical claims using the expression 'prejudice', e.g., 'Gary said something that revealed his prejudice at the meeting earlier today', might be true or false, but a definition or a grammatical claim using the term is more appropriately called *correct* or *incorrect*. The use of the term 'false' in relation to a definition is revealing of how empirical and grammatical matters are muddied together in Begby's book. On the one hand, he sometimes presents what he is doing as presenting an alternative *definition* to the standard one. For example, he presents his own definition of prejudice, as a negatively charged stereotype early on in the book (Begby 2021, 8-9) and then later notes that "'thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant' is the central element of Allport's definition of prejudice" (Begby 2021, 64). But on the other hand he says that he takes himself to be challenging an account of prejudice which presents the irrationality of prejudice "as a discovery, a substantive insight gained by reflection and argument, and not simply as a matter of terminological unpacking" (2023b, 16) and doesn't take his disagreement with his opponents to be a merely 'verbal' one (Begby 2023b, 16).

Begby says that he doesn't think of his 'working definition' "as providing any sort of deep, metaphysical insight into what prejudice is" (Begby 2023b, 15) but apparently thinks that this is something someone *might* provide, as if a definition could bring us into harmony with *de re* necessities. However, Begby's methodology, of using 'thought experiments', imaginary cases that we contemplate from our armchair, is not a means to making empirical or metaphysical discoveries about the world. Thought experiments can only give us an understanding of the *concept* of prejudice—of grammar. If we want to gain an appreciation of what *counts* as a prejudice, we need to reflect upon how we use the term 'prejudice' and related terms, such as 'warrant', 'justification', 'stereotype', and perhaps expressions like 'bias'. That is, we need what Wittgenstein called "*an overview* of the use of our words" in this area, a "surveyable representation" of the relevant region of grammar (*PI*, §122). The *essential* nature of prejudice might be something we don't have a firm grasp of, although as competent, adult, language users what we need then is not *discoveries* about the way the world is but reminders of how the expression (and related expressions) are used (Wittgenstein *PI*, §§126-7, 371, 373).

Regardless of whether we say a definition is 'true/false', 'correct/incorrect', we can turn the tables on Begby here. The standard definition of prejudice comes out as

'false' (or incorrect) *if we accept Begby's definition* (i.e. if we understand prejudices as being negative stereotypes targeting a group and derivately the individuals comprising the group and accept that there is an extensional use of the term 'prejudice' in the way that Begby understands it) but given that even Begby himself accepts that his definition does not capture the ordinary or standard use of the term presumably there will be cases that defenders of the standard account and ordinary language users would like to call cases of prejudice which Begby's definition doesn't capture and which they might then say 'falsifies' Begby's account. There are, indeed, such cases. In arguing that Begby is mistaken in claiming that prejudiced beliefs can be rational (and leaning on a standard understanding of the term 'prejudice') Tom Kelly points out that according to the familiar notion of prejudice "someone might be prejudiced not only against groups of people (and against individuals derivatively, qua members of a group) but also against individuals qua individuals" so I might say, for example, that if somebody believes that 'Smith is a bad person', and has formed that belief without any kind of respectable evidence, and then acts on that belief, then that person is *prejudiced* against Smith (2023, 3). Here we have an example of a prejudice that Begby's definition does not account for (which is not a negative stereotype targeting a group[11]), and so we might say, on this basis, that Begby's definition is 'false' or 'incorrect'. Indeed, prejudice against groups, identity prejudice, is usually taken to be a subset of the prejudices that people might hold. Peter Hacker says in his recent *Beginner's Guide to the Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein* that it is aimed at those willing "to entertain the thought that maybe their preconceptions and prejudices on language and meaning, on human nature, and the nature of thinking… need comprehensive revision" (2024, x) and it is clear that the prejudices that he has in mind are not prejudices like racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, or antisemitism.[12] So, it seems that we are at something like a stalemate here: with some cases of prejudice in conflict with the standard definition

[11] Note that this provides another example of a prejudiced belief that is not in the form of a generic statement.

[12] It is worth noting here that although Miranda Fricker focuses on cases where identity prejudices are implicated in epistemic injustice she does not restrict herself to just cases of identity prejudice. For example, she discusses a case where referees of a science journal are prejudiced against a certain research method (2007, 27), and this results in a testimonial injustice. More recently, in papers discussing Jennifer Lackey's work on agential testimonial injustice, she has defended the view that interrogation techniques, like the Reid technique, which lead interrogators to seek to secure a conviction regardless of counterevidence and make a presumption of guilt, involve prejudice (i.e. resistance to evidence caused by some affective investment) even if they do not necessarily involve specifically *identity* prejudice (although, of course, identity prejudice often does play a role) (Fricker 2023a; 2023b, 740; Lackey 2023, 65).

(cases like Solomon maintaining his prejudiced belief while not being at fault epistemically) and other cases being in conflict with Begby's definition.

Perhaps we could just say that the two different definitions are used in different circumstances and highlight different aspects of the relevant phenomena but that neither capture prejudice in its entirety. After all, contested political terms might be defined in different ways according to our interests and to the circumstances. The fact that Begby's unusual use of the term conflicts with the ordinary use does not mean that it might not show us something interesting about the phenomenon or help us to deal with it in some way. Begby's book certainly does highlight distinctions and intricacies that can help us to get to grips with the relationships between negative stereotypes and prejudices as well as with the peculiarities of different types of generic claim. However, I think we can move beyond the 'stalemate' because I think the defenders of the standard account can account for the unusual cases that Begby highlights whereas Begby's account is *so* idiosyncratic that it obscures the phenomena unnecessarily.

The idiosyncratic nature of Begby's definition can also be brought out by seeing the kinds of cases that count as prejudices by his definition and those that do not count as a prejudices. Miranda Fricker, in explaining why "philosophically it seems quite wrong to sever the link between prejudice and misjudgement" notes that according to Rupert Brown's definition, where prejudice is "a negative attitude, emotion or behaviour towards members of a group on account of their membership of that group" (Brown, 1995, 14), someone would count as prejudiced if they had a negative attitude towards someone because they were a member of a neo-Nazi group: "something most people would not call a prejudice" (Fricker, 2007, 33n5). But Begby's definition also appears to produce this result. Believing that a member of a neo-Nazi party is unpleasant in virtue of belonging to a neo-Nazi party seems to be a case where a negatively charged stereotype (a simplifying heuristic) is employed targeting a group (a neo-Nazi party) and derivatively members of that group. Jessie Munton remarks that according to Begby's definition "we might worry that a doctor working with a population who typically die young, and who consequently ascribes that undoubtedly noteworthy and negatively charged property to the relevant group is prejudiced" (2022, 1058). We have already seen that Thomas Kelly raises the problem that Begby would not count an individual who believed that somebody was a bad person in advance of having any evidence that they were a bad person as being prejudiced. Kelly also looks at the example of different people taking up varying attitudes towards the claim that 'men are more violent than women', with one believing it based on solid evidence, another believing it due to anti-male bias despite not having examined the evidence, and another refusing to believe it, despite

the evidence, because they have a desire to believe that there are no significant differences between men and women as far as negative characteristics go. According to Begby's definition the person who believes the (true) claim that 'men are more violent than women' on the basis of solid evidence is prejudiced,[13] whereas the person who refuses to believe it and dismisses compelling evidence that it is true is not prejudiced – but if we adhere to the ordinary understanding of prejudice then this gets things the wrong way round.[14]

All of this suggests that there are serious divergences between Begby's account of prejudice and our ordinary understanding of it. Begby could perhaps respond that although his own account fails to fit with all of the cases we would ordinarily understand as prejudiced that it is no worse off than the standard account that fails to address to tension between intensional and extensional uses of the term. However, it is doubtful whether there is the extensional use of the term as Begby describes it. I mentioned earlier that Gordon Allport's classic study of prejudice begins with a series of examples (calling Rhodesians 'lazy brutes' or 'savages', Poles calling Germans 'Prussian swine', etc.), but Allport does not commit himself to these being defining examples of prejudice. He labels them as examples of 'group scorn' and a few pages later he specifies in his definition that prejudice is *unwarranted* group scorn (it "entails an unwarranted idea concerning a group as a whole" (1979, 8)). Just as Miranda Fricker does, he illustrates that group scorn might be warranted by using the example of Nazis: "Take the hostile view of Nazi leaders held by most Americans during World War II. Was it prejudiced? The answer is No, because there was abundant available evidence regarding the evil policies and practices accepted as the official code of the party" (1979, 8). We can explain why it is that people operating with the ordinary understanding of prejudice sometimes give examples of prejudiced beliefs independently of saying anything about how they are formed by the fact that, as illustrated earlier, the kind of circumstances in which such beliefs might be justifiably held or held without (epistemic) blame are limited—not often encountered by the kind of people likely to be reading a book about prejudice. That background of them being unwarranted is just assumed, in some instances, although both Allport and Fricker (the principal targets of Begby's critique) are quite explicit in their definitions of prejudice that prejudice involves a lack of proper regard to the

[13] Note: If we consider Napolitano's remarks about generics here, we might say that the person who believes that men are *by nature* more violent than women is prejudiced. It seems we have to read this claim as a statistical generalisation in order to say that the person making the claim is not prejudiced.

[14] Kelly's way of making this point is to say "the worry is that this way of carving things up fails to carve the phenomena of interest at the joints" (Kelly 2023, 6-7).

evidence or misjudgement (and so that they are committed to what Begby calls the 'intensional' account of prejudice and *not* to an extensional one). What Begby's account of prejudice demonstrates is that the distinction between an honest mistake or a prejudgement on the one hand and a prejudice on the other is perhaps a bit more tricky than Allport and Fricker allow. Allport says that "prejudgements become prejudices only if they are not reversible when exposed to new knowledge" (1979, 9) and I think he is right to emphasise this element of stubborn resistance to 'new knowledge' but more needs to be said about what kind of 'new knowledge' is relevant to undermining a prejudgement and what can be taken on board while maintaining the belief without thereby being prejudiced.

A final worry that we might raise in connection with Begby's account of prejudice is that he has little to say about the historical contingency of some of the major kinds of prejudice. Racism has only been with us for a small portion of human history and it arose in particular economic, political, and social circumstances, where it was useful to powerful people in Europe as a justification for the horrific things being done to people in Africa, the Americas, and Asia, as well as being a useful tool for dividing people so that they did not challenge those with power[15]. It is worth becoming acquainted with the specificities of how this kind of prejudice arose, both in order to combat it and in order to understand it better (pointing out the historical contingency of racism is a good way of showing that there is nothing innate about it, for example). Of course, Begby's focus is upon a particular set of epistemological problems in philosophy, and so he cannot be expected to dedicate his book to such issues. However, he does not limit himself to purely philosophical considerations. He takes it to be important to look beyond philosophy to social and cognitive psychology and he also takes some of the significance of his work to consist in its ability to help us get to grips with current, concrete, real-world problems ('fake news', concrete examples of 'evidential preemption', conspiracy theories, algorithmic bias, and so on[16]). Although he is opposed to the idea that racism, sexism, or homophobia are innate, he does lean towards an account of prejudice as being a product of human minds (the limitations of human cognitive abilities and the fact that they sometimes have to make quick decisions leading to them making hasty generalisations) rather than of the economic and political circumstances people create and find themselves in. For example, in his introduction he says that, "We can speculate that its origins may lay deep in the recesses of the human mind, maybe in some primitive urge to mark a distinction between self and others" (2021, 1) and when he discusses the psychology of stereotypes in the second chapter he says that

[15] On this see, for example, James (1973, 124), Olende (2013).

[16] See, for example, pp. 96 and 135-54 of *Prejudice*.

we use stereotyping "because we must" (2021, 29) and soon afterwards says that "our basic socio-cognitive processes tend to overplay intra-group homogeneity and exaggerate inter-group contrast" (2021, 31) all of which suggests that for limited creatures like ourselves some form of prejudice is inevitable. The particular, contingent, forms that it takes might not be innate but the mechanisms that produce them are.[17] However, the fact that we inevitably use heuristics does not demonstrate that we will inevitably make unwarranted negative generalisations about groups of people, and it certainly doesn't imply that prejudices have to be widespread and embedded in the institutions of society.

We might also raise questions about whether it makes sense to say of socio-cognitive processes that they overplay intra-group homogeneity and exaggerate inter-group contrast. It is human beings, and not processes in their minds or brains, that overplay and exaggerate,[18] and human beings can be encouraged to see things aright. As Wittgenstein says, "only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious" (*PI*, §281). There is more hope of overcoming prejudice than Begby suggests but formulating the means of overcoming it will require looking at the economic, political, and social circumstances in which it came about and in which it is manifested rather than into the depths of the human mind.[19]

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[17] This tendency to psychologise the phenomena of racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia is common among those who prefer to talk in terms of prejudice than in terms of structure, system, and institution.

[18] As Wittgenstein says, "only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious" (Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations: 4th edition*, P. M. S. Hacker and J. Schulte (eds.), G.E.M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and J. Schulte (trans.), Oxford: Blackwell, 2009, §281). More generally, I think there are problems with conceiving of the mind as being like a computer or information processor, as Begby does, but there is not space here to go into this objection in any depth. For a detailed examination and critique of the idea that the mind is a computer, developed along Wittgensteinian lines, see Peter Hacker and Maxwell Bennett's *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience: 2nd edition*, 2022, pages 76, 93, 328, 381-4, 481, 488 (and pages 154-8 on perception being understood as information processing).

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