

# The Psychological Origins of Racial Prejudice

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a talk by Laurens van der Post  
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Laurens van der Post's book, *The Dark Eye in Africa*, was published in 1955 and contains elements of what is articulated here. The book from which the following excerpt is taken was published 6 years after this talk and is included as an introduction to what follows.

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I had not said more to Ruud because I had a hunch that the less I told the rest of the crew about my exchanges with 'Mlangeni the easier it would be for him to confide in me. Also how explain to a man like Nils Ruud what had just passed between the two of us? How make a regular church-goer like Nils understand that 'Mlangeni, ostensibly one of the benighted [Zulu] heathen, was more aware of the world of the spirit and its claims than most of us? To 'Mlangeni everything from a grain of sand to the fire underneath his boiler, from the movement of an ant to the lowing of cattle at night, even the sneeze of a boy, were all significant manifestations of meaning. What would Nils Ruud have said had I told him that 'Mlangeni was such a dedicated, accepting servant of the spirit that we, by comparison, became brutal materialists rejecting it?

Besides it was even more complicated than that. For one thing there was the fact that 'Mlangeni was black. I am not suggesting that the crew of the Kurt Hansen suffered from the kind of highly organized colour prejudice from which so many of my countrymen suffered. They were remarkably free of it and happily shared their quarters, ate at the same mess table with 'Mlangeni and shook hands with him as they did with one another. Yet his blackness did make a difference to them. Had he been white he would not, I am certain, have excited the constant curiosity that he did. Yet I had already learnt that there are many Europeans who are curious about primitive peoples not in order to understand them better, but just to laugh them out of the way. There had become something frightening to me about the European laughter over Africans and African practices. It was significant how, once the crew knew I spoke 'Mlangeni's language, they could never see the two of us in conversation without being drawn to us, like iron filings towards a magnet, to demand what we were discussing.

I suppose black is the natural colour of what is strange and secret in the human spirit. It is the uniform of the unknown. Somehow 'Mlangeni through his blackness and his nearness to nature, was a personification of those aspects of the Kurt Hansen's blond crew which were hidden, or estranged from them; a living mirror wherein they saw the dark face of all that was rejected and out of reach in them themselves.

Unfortunately therefore since the process of acquiring self-knowledge is by no means painless or without humiliation their natural curiosity had an undertow of suspicion and apprehension. It seems an *a priori* condition of our so-called success in civilizing ourselves that what is to be rejected must in itself be proved to be something discreditable. Consequently the crew were both attracted and repulsed by 'Mlangeni. Not, I stress, because of anything in his character but because unknowingly they associated him with their own.

-- Laurens van der Post, *The Hunter and the Whale*, pp.88-89

Ladies and gentlemen, can you hear me if I speak like this, at the back? If not, make a noise like an elephant at me. I'm only an African and I'm not quite certain about these things. But I always ask this question wherever I go now because my father-in-law said to me once that he'd known me for thirty years and never heard a word I'd said yet. And I would hate for that to happen tonight.

I'm very grateful for the welcome your chairman has given me because I've been trying to come here for a long time. In fact, I feel a little bit like a peer at the House of Lords, of whom it was said, he dreamt he was addressing the House of Lords and woke up and found he was.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, what I hope to do tonight with your approval is not to talk to you at too great a length but I want to talk *with* you. And I would like if I can, to establish a basis of discussion and then thru question-and-answer to orchestrate and elaborate our theme. We have always done that at Zurich. We've tried other ways, and we've always found that this is the best. So I hope this will be okay with you tonight as well.

Our subject is, "The Psychological Origins of Racial Prejudice". I find it a little difficult to speak about the subject tonight without emotion. Because the problem has never been more urgent. I have just come back from my native country, South Africa, where I've never known it more acute. In fact, it has all the hallmarks of a major mental epidemic. One finds that you can no longer establish contact with people on the subject in an ordinary way.

I know there are people in the world who have argued that the clash between black and white in Africa is only part of the general clash of cultures and races all over the world. These people pretend that it's just another aspect of this profound unrest of our time. They may be right but I don't think "right" in the way in which they mean it. There are the dialectical materialists, the Marxists, who pretend that it's just another extension of the struggle between the proletariat and the capitalists. In Africa, the proletariat being black and the capitalists being white.

But all these things fall to the ground. Because, although they apply to a certain extent on what is obviously a race conflict, it's obviously a labor conflict, it's a social problem. But there is something, something extra that enters into *all* these things, when color is present. And this is the thing that we have to try and account for.

What makes it so difficult is that, as far as I can find out, this is a comparatively recent thing. I can find no evidence, in European history, that it existed before the Reformation. In fact, one of the early church fathers, I think it was Tertullian [160-230 A.D.], said quite proudly that the Virgin Mary was black. He had no conflict at all in saying that; no desire to white-wash her. He was quite happy for her to have been black. Whether that's right or not I don't know, but it's a psychological fact that he didn't mind -- in fact he was quite happy about it.

Again there are many, many, many paintings in existence of the arrival of the Three Kings at the stable of Christ. And in those paintings one of the three kings has always been black. As if that somehow, made the event more complete, more representative. In fact, as if it was a symbolic rendering of the ancient Christian belief that all men were equal in dignity before God.

Up to the time of the Reformation, obviously, there were wars against people of dark skins, but they were wars in the same sense as there were wars between white and white. The element of color didn't enter into it at all. The element of color, this particularly sharp-sided emotion, which color evoked, came *after* the Reformation. I've often asked myself, now *Why?*

Let's consider what happened to European man after the Reformation. Perhaps the

clue lies there. European man just before the Reformation, broke out, or re-awoke rather, into that most creative, that most dazzling, magnetic, marvellous phenomenon we call the Renaissance. He had never never been more impressive or more creative. And it was because at that moment, through the rediscovery of the ancient writings, the ancient culture of Greece, that he managed to join a Christian to a Pagan end in his nature. And that produced this incredible flowering we call the Renaissance.

Then the Reformation came. The Reformation came for many reasons. But it came because men started to re-examine their lives, to analyse life, and society, and religion, rationally. Men suddenly went cerebral; they started looking at things from *above*. And this wasn't an immediate process. This was a gradual process. Like all these things they take time but it increased over the centuries and it became more and more so.

The interesting thing is, in connection with what I've been saying, that Europe of course, before the Renaissance, was entirely a Catholic world. The fact which is very significant today is, that the countries in which this color prejudice is *least* present is in the Roman Catholic countries. Countries, which if I may say so, still tend to lead a symbolic life. I'm not trying to convert anybody -- I'm not a Catholic myself. But it's just a fact, it's an objective fact.

For instance if you go to a country like Italy, it is utterly utterly impossible to get an Italian, to this day, to have any except an ordinary human emotion about a person of color. If he's a nice person of color, he'll like him. If he's not, he'll dislike him. But he will have an ordinary straight-forward human reaction. And the countries in which this prejudice is strongest of all is in the Protestant countries. The more puritanical, the more Calvinist the Protestant country, the more sharp this prejudice is. Hence the sharpness of the prejudice in my native South Africa. Because there you get Protestantism of the extreme right.

Of course Protestantism was merely the religious aspect of this rational re-examination of life that went on in Europe. I don't want us to under-rate this development because it was of extreme importance to Europe. We owe an enormous amount to it. But this development was not secured without sacrifice. And *what* was sacrificed? The natural, instinctive person: the Pagan in man which had helped to make the Renaissance such a remarkable period.

As the world, Europe, became more rational, more objective, more calculating, more scientific, this gulf between the rational and the instinctive person widened. It perhaps reached one of its great heights at the time of the French Revolution. And you remember at one supreme moment in the Revolution, in Paris, God was un-throned, and the Goddess of Reason was installed in his place. To me it's very significant that almost immediately when that happened, there emerged in the mind of a man, Jean Jacques Rousseau, the image of the noble savage; of the noble dark man.

Now I've stressed this very much, because I think the way European civilization has developed, which has been a one-sided way, and which has been the sacrifice of something. I think and I believe it is a law of the human spirit that we are not just a child of pure reason, we are not just a child of pure light. We are also, we have within us, that which is rejected, which is a child of darkness. This child of darkness we can either make a friend of it or we can make an enemy of it. If we make an enemy of it, there is another law of nature, that one day it will return knife-in-hand and demand a sacrifice of that which sacrificed it.

Also, it's another law that if we don't recognize this dark, rejected person we have *in* side ourselves, that we are bound to hate him when we meet him in real life. It's extraordinarily interesting how this post- French Revolution period, the artist who is always the first to feel -- the one who is the sort of antennae of society -- how this figure haunted his

imagination. There's a wonderful painting by the great Romantic painter Delacroix of the devil over Paris. And the devil is a black man, the most beautifully drawn, and the most impressive figure as if saying, 'This which you have sacrificed in the name of reason is hovering over you.'

There's another very interesting indicator. There is a French poet called Gerard de Nerval who was a little bit mad. I mean so mad he walked about the streets of Paris leading a lobster on a blue ribbon. People asked him, Why do you do this? And he said, "Because it doesn't bark and knows the secrets of the sea." One secret of the sea, which this man, this poet in his madness knew, was the secret of this dark, rejected self of this 19th century objective, reasoning, calculating man. He wrote a poem about it, 'Prince d'Aquitaine a la tour abolie' in which the phrase, translated by Edward Lang comes "that dark, that dishonored, that disinherited son of Aquitaine."

This is the aspect of the European man that we have to consider: the dark, dishonored, disinherited aspect in ourselves. Now I'm going to leave it there for the moment, and I'm going to go back to Africa. Will you please just bear this in mind? Because I'm only qualified to consider this problem of color prejudice in terms of Africa. I want to tell you what Africa was like, and still to a large extent was like when the first European man appeared on its shores.

I'm talking now about Africa south of the Sahara. Africa north of the Sahara I think is only technically part of Africa. It belongs more to the Mediterranean and to the Middle East complex of things. In fact even the flora and fauna of northern Africa are not African but are Mediterranean.

Africa is the largest reservoir of natural life the world has ever seen. It's the continent in which natural life has had the most sustained, the oldest, and the most continuous flow and succession of natural life. Even to this day, it's quite astonishing what there is of natural life. I stress "natural life" because between the earth of a country, the plants, the flowers, the animals, and the people, there's a constant coming-and-going, a participating of one another's being in the forming of one another, which one cannot measure -- which a scientist might even deny -- but which is nonetheless true.

There's never been a continent, for instance, with so many varieties of animals in it. There are more than 130 different kinds of Antelope alone. The place was bursting at the seams with animals when the European man arrived there. On top of that, it was full of the most colorful human beings. An *infinite* variety of them. From people, and I've seen them still, who are found at the foot of the Italian Abyssinian escarpment dancing and playing the double pipes of Pan, right down to South Africa where you had the little Bushman, the Hottentot, with a skin like a newly strung telephone wire and slanted eyes, and the wonderful people like the Amacausa (sp?), and the Zulu, and the other Bantu tribes; *all* who had lived life in a sense, more according to life's idea of life than according to man's idea of life. In fact here we had natural man at his most vivid, and his most striking aspect.

What would have happened if among these natural men of Africa there had also been white people of equal and natural caliber I don't know. That is a purely hypothetical question, I cannot answer it. But the fact is that *all* these people were colored. Among the 650-odd different tribes, most of them were black, some were copper-colored, and one little fellow, the Bushman, was yellow. But they were all colored.

Then into this vast natural continent walked my ancestors. At first it didn't go badly because this was in 1652. This rational process that we've been talking about hadn't gone too far yet. The Europeans at the Cape, who landed there first of all, seemed to have had very little color prejudice as yet. And to prove that, we have our wonderful Cape-colored

population of today, which comes obviously of the union of colored people and white people. One of the most gifted, the gayest, most lovable people on earth. There are more than a million of them. There, quite a lot of us, didn't have any color prejudice in the beginning.

Then, this European man started invading Africa. He pushed into it, deeper into it, and wherever he went, he shot. He shot out the game, and he shot out the Bushman, pushed away the Hottentot, and very soon clashed with the black. There are a lot of people who say that the prejudice today which he has against those people is purely a guilt-complex. I don't think it's that at all. I think what happened was that this dark rejected person inside himself, which he wouldn't recognize, he saw and identified with the black man outside.

You remember I said to you the thing that we sacrifice in ourselves comes back one day knife-in-hand and demands to sacrifice what sacrificed it. I think this fear that he had of this dark rejected, this dark dishonored aspect of himself coming back knife-in-hand one day, he projected onto the black people around him. Also, in a secret way, he was extremely attracted by the natural life. And he felt that if he gave way to that, everything that he stood for, all this rational approach to life, would vanish.

After all what would happen if he sat all day in the sun, occasionally, and didn't go about his business of shooting, or harrowing, or marketing, or doing something? He was already living an unnatural kind of time, just as we are today. He was living against a natural sense of time. He was living a kind of abstract time. He was using time for his own purposes. A natural man would never do that. A natural man is seasonal, and he goes with the sun and with the moon. This man didn't at all.

And he felt *all* these lovely naturally instinctive things which he had rejected, and therefore, because he rejected them hated in himself, he likewise hated among the people he saw outside. The interesting thing is that in my country, as man has become more and more rational, as he has become more unnatural, as he has become more divorced from his instinctive self, the *stronger* color prejudice has become.

My mother, my grandfather, *always* worshiped in the same place with all the people who worked for him. Most of them were Basuto. They were as black as you could make them. In fact they not only worshiped with him, but he would have been very annoyed if they hadn't. My own mother went to church for communion, and knelt down, and as the cup was passed down the line, she received it from a colored man, raised it to her lips, and passed it on to a black man. You can't do that anymore in my country.

As the people in power have become more and more against color, it's been very significant that the religious sect with which they are identified is of the more and more puritanical, anti-symbolic kind. In fact, most of the churches I've described for you, are most ardent defenders of this terrible prejudice which is going on in South Africa today.

I think human beings, and the whole of the external world, is a mirror in which we see the aspects of ourselves which are hidden. And I am convinced in my own mind, that this is the psychological origin of color prejudice. It is blaming on the dark skin the thing that we have done to the dark person within ourselves.

There is an image which always comes back to me from childhood. As a child we had a lot of baboons about the place. I put, we often put, a mirror in front of the baboons. The baboons would look in the mirror. Then they would look behind the mirror to see if there was another baboon and there wasn't. Then they looked again into the mirror. And in the end they could not accept that it was their face looking back at them and they would get so angry they picked up the mirror and smashed it.

I think this is what the person who will not admit this rejected self of himself, this is what he does to the black or the dark person of the world. This, I submit to you, is color

prejudice.

## Discussion

Mr. van der Post wants now to open the evening to discussion and Dr. Joseph Henderson is going to act as moderator.

**Listener:** Would you like to comment on why Shakespeare, at that time, chose Othello?

**Laurens van der Post:** Well, there you are, you see. Certainly, he had no prejudice against Othello and he chose Othello as the hero of one of his greatest tragedies. Of course I think he chose Othello because he recognized in Othello the innocence, the essential innocence of natural man who became the prey of this calculating, rationalist Iago, who had a good reason for doing every bad thing that you could think of. And you have a very symbolic situation there of what's happened to the world since.

**L:** The black man too, must have a shadow side. What form does it take with him?

**LvdP:** The interesting thing is when one talks about the black man now is that he doesn't feel black. He feels just as white inside as you or I. He himself, uses black in that sense. For instance there's the great Zulu tyrant, Chaka. And he says, "Ah, he had a black heart." So he has exactly the same association of black that we have. He hasn't got it with his skin. But he doesn't confuse having a black skin, he doesn't confuse psychological blackness with physical blackness. But this is what people in my country do. They confuse physical darkness and psychological darkness.

In fact what is very interesting about primitive man is that there is an acute awareness of what Dr. Henderson called the shadow side. Symbolically, he has a sort of ritual for respecting it. He will never walk on another man's shadow without his permission. If he wants to pay you a pretty compliment (and they've often said it to me), they've said, "Master, you throw a pretty shadow." They have said to me -- it's so aware you see, instinctively that is what natural man is like -- one of them has said to me, "You see that man there?," pointing to his shadow. "When I die, I go into the earth. But that man, he goes up into the sky."

Other nations who *are* whole, who *are* aware of these dark forces, do the same things. The Chinese, who experienced a period of great wisdom, would greet one another and say, "May your shadow never grow less." The Japanese, to this day, when they greet you will say, "How is your honorable shadow?" All these are immensely important psychological weapons against getting confused, mixing up psychological blackness and physical blackness.

**L:** I would like to repeat that question once more, after what you have said. What would be the psychological shadow qualities of the pure native? --Not the projected ones, those ones that are rejected by the black man.

**LvdP:** It would depend. It would depend on the black man. He's not mixed up on this

matter. Now, we've come to the point where we no longer throw an individual shadow. We throw a rational shadow. But he's not like that yet. It depends on the person. I would hate to generalize and say what, that they all have this sort of shadow.

**L:** When you spoke of Italy, for instance that there's so little prejudice, do you think that this means that the Roman Catholic is not as afraid of his darker side? Can you give any --

**LvdP:** I can tell you what I *think* it is. I won't say it's particularly true of Italy. Because Italy, is I think, still, a most striking *example* of a Roman Catholic country in almost the pre-Reformation way (if you know what I mean). I think it is because they live a truly symbolic life. If you *do* live a symbolic life, I think you do not tend to get your symbols mixed up with other human beings so much. But one of the things that has happened to rational man is, that he has thrown out the symbols. He thinks it's superstition, it's idolatry, and he gets into very serious trouble in that way. Because if you won't have your symbol by fair means you're going to get it by foul. If you won't let it in at the front door it comes in at the back door. This is the trouble with color prejudice: people don't see the people of color for what they are *in themselves*. They see them as a symbol of what they have rejected in themselves. That I am certain in myself is where the trouble starts.

**L:** But by the same token how does the black man see the white man? What is it that he projects upon the white man in your experience?

**LvdP:** He thinks he's got a black heart. He sees him as a despot, as a tyrant. I can tell you a lot of what they *think* about us. They think that the white man is very very cruel. In *all* sorts of ways. They can't understand how we can treat our children so unnaturally. In a black society, a child, whatever happens, is in on it. I've seen very few black children ever cry, except when they're ill. They think that we even treat our calves unkindly. I had a black chief on my farm in Africa not long ago and he said to me, "How can you be so cruel to the calves as never to let them near the mother and feed them out of a bucket instead?" He said, "That's very cruel." And he said, "Why have you all got these funny eyes? You're always looking for something. What are you after? You're never content. You're always wanting something. What is it?"

Please --

**L:** In *Venture to the Interior* and some of your other books you spoke I think of the black man originally looking to the white man as bringing a *light* to him. I wonder if you would care to speak on what you think what light the white man might be able to bring to Africa at this point in time is possible or out of the question?

**LvdP:** Did you hear that question? The question was that in one of my books, *Venture to the Interior*, I spoke of the fact that there was a moment when the black man thought the white man might bring some light to him. What possibility did I think there was still of the white man bringing light to the black man and how might he go about it?

I think the thing to do, first of all, is to see the black man for what he is. Quite apart from the primitive natural black people I've talked about now there are *thousands* of black people who are more civilized than I am. But to see the person for what he is in himself. Some of the black people I know in Africa have got a wonderful greeting. When they see you, they raise their hands and they say, "I see you" and you answer back, "Aye, I see you." I

never realized what a wonderful greeting it was until I was a prisoner of the Japanese because they looked at us but they never saw us. An inherent and instinctive fact in the saying, "I see you", I see you in other words as a human being. And you look back and you see him as a human being.

But there is a curious black-out in the mind, in people who have color prejudice. I use the words deliberately, "black-out". They cannot see the person with whom they are dealing for what he is. I was talking not long ago to a judge in South Africa who was a very remarkable, a very upright, a very honorable, and a most highly rational man. And I'm saying this to him. I said, "The trouble is that we see the black people, we see them with our eyes, but we don't see them psychologically. There's a black-out."

He's a very honest man and he thought for a minute and he said, "Yes, isn't that funny." He said, "Every afternoon" -- he was a judge of the supreme court -- "when I leave my chambers, I walk home", he said, "and, to relieve myself from this extremely exacting day I've been at, listening to evidence, sifting doubt, I play a game. If I see a girl in front of me I'll think, What sort of a girl is she? Is she a typist? secretary? school teacher? What can she be? If I see a man coming up, I wonder Now is he a solicitor's clerk? Or does he work in a bank? And I go on like that." And he said, "Do you know, I suddenly realize now I've never yet played that game with any of the black people I've seen in the streets."

Now, I haven't quite finished answering this question if you'll forgive me. This is the beginning, first is the act of recognition. Because everything starts with the act of recognition. In other words, with awareness. There's a very old legend of the Round Table, of the black and the white knight who met in the forest and immediately fought. And when they were both lying side-by-side dying, their helmets fell off. They saw they were brothers. This is the sort of thing that happens when you've got color prejudice about, you see. The act of recognition comes too late.

Once that's done, I think there are all sorts of other things that must happen. I think there is no doubt, politically, that the African *must*, absolutely must come in on the basis of complete equality of opportunity in any society in Africa where he is today. And as he is in the majority, he must be prepared and trained in such a way so that he can rule as soon as possible. But those who are already -- and there are *thousands* of them, here I'm talking now about South Africa -- should *immediately*, immediately be given full citizenship in the country. I think it's *only in that sort of way* that now that we can bring any light at all. We must. Because the most important thing I think for us to do is to discover this rejected person in ourselves. I think unless we do that first, we shall not be able to help at all in Africa.

**L:** You seem, and I think quite rightly, to feel that there is some kind of an equivalence between being natural and having a rich symbolic life. And yet somehow it seems we also, that to be rational, is to be symbolic. In other words is to live in a world of words and numbers, a world of symbolic experience, rather than to occupy a natural kind of world. I do know there is a distinction between the kinds of symbols that comes in here --

**LvdP:** Yes I don't say that the rational man is completely without symbols. But I wouldn't call numbers symbols... at all. A symbol is something which comes from up inside you. A number is a convention, it's a visual convention in order to convey a certain type of meaning. But I wouldn't call it a symbol. You see this is one of the things that we're up against in the modern world. I think meaning comes to us in symbols and images. And the symbols and images are always far more than we can say or we can do with them. But if we get cut off from them, our lives are completely without meaning. But we, you see, in the

modern age, have fallen into the delusion of people whom the gods wish to destroy. We not only, we don't feel that the symbol comes up instinctively, but we think we've actually invented it.

**L:** What do you think will happen now?

**LvdP:** You mean you want me to tell what I think is going to happen in the country? You think that is part of this discussion of the psychological origins of color prejudice, do you? I don't mind telling you, but I'm not a prophet. But I think the situation is extremely serious. I think the chances of us getting out of it now without a very serious disaster are very slim. Very slim indeed. I wouldn't like to go into more detail than that.

**L:** Do you have any opportunity to have a discussion like this in South Africa?

**LvdP:** Well, nobody would know what I'm talking about. I live partly in South Africa. One of the tragedies is, now, the invasion is so great, the shadow has risen so high, that you haven't got contact with people on the subject anymore. This is now, has become an absolute, it's beyond discussion. You can't get through to people anymore. The people who behave in the most perfectly normal, sweet, loveable way, in *every other* respect, are just absolutely adamant on this point. You can't touch them, you can't move them, and you can't talk to them. I think that's the last stage of the symptom. You can't get through to them. At the same time they themselves talk about nothing else. They have no other subject of conversation.

**L:** In this dichotomy of man, my impression is that our rational western man *does* live by symbols, status symbols, etc. Are you then suggesting our problem isn't that we do not have symbols, but rather we've separated symbols from our natural reality?

**LvdP:** No, of course we haven't, we can't, we'd die if we had no symbols at all. But we suffer, shall I put it this way, from an extreme impoverishment of the symbolic life. A status symbol is a pretty attenuated one.

**L:** I think the feeling of the fundamentalist religion who has a symbol, let's say the cross or the symbol of Jesus Christ the Savior, etc. -- so that they have the symbol but somehow it doesn't filter down into the fact that they can take the cup of communion from a black brother, for instance. So is this the dichotomy you're speaking to?

**LvdP:** It covers a vast, vast range of images and symbols and things. If you go to a country where people still live a symbolic life you will find that they have, for instance, far more ritual than we have in the world. Primitive society, natural society is *extraordinarily* full of ritual and I wish that we had some of that ritual.

I'll give you some examples. If people have been out in the north frontier of Kenya, the Africans there -- if they had a war with another tribe and the men come back. They're not allowed to come back straight to the tribe. They're kept apart and they're made to go through purifying ritual so that the spirit of killing is taken out of them first. None of us went through a ritual like that after the last war.

Young people grow up, a young boy becomes adolescent. He's helped through this extremely painful period. I, as strange as it may seem, was adolescent once too, and I don't

want to be again. But they have a ritual. The whole of society rallies round and they have initiation ceremonies and so on to help them over. That's the kind of thing I mean. For a young girl it is exactly the same. They have ritual to help them through.

If somebody gets possessed by a spirit, they are not rushed off to a lunatic asylum. The whole tribe rallies round, and they dance with this person, and I've seen them do it, you see them rubbing against this person to push the true spirit in and push the other one out. And by heaven I've seen them dance the possession out of them.

These symbols, these images have *immense* energies if one is in touch with them, and they come through. Also they give you a sense of meaning and a sense of purpose. But there you'll find *everyday*, you will find a little ritual or something of the kind which is performed or used to be performed. It's only when one has seen that that one realizes how poor *our* life has become in that respect.

But if you would go -- please don't think that this is an attack on any particular church -- it's just a fact. If you go into one of these churches that support color prejudice in South Africa (they don't say they support it, but they support what they call apartheid, which is keeping people apart, which is just a nice name for color prejudice -- and they won't allow any black people in their church), if you go in there you will feel almost as if you've walked into a coffin. So bleak, bare, they are. There's no ritual of any kind. There's just an egotistical man standing in the pulpit, extemporizing. Screaming at the people.

Please --

**L:** From what you say, the problem of race prejudice is one of meeting our own dark, injured self. It seems that for each of us it's an individual process and very long and involved. Therefore the race problem seems in some strange way now to be resting in the hands of the dark man and what will the dark man do if he sees us as cruel? To solve this problem, will he be cruel and will the disaster be necessary?

**LvdP:** I think that these things are going to happen. Unfortunately there's such a thing as the revenge of history. I think we've done alarming things and I think that very unpleasant things will happen. But I think they're not going to be *nearly* so unpleasant if we start by admitting the dark man in society, it will be a great step forward to admitting the dark man in ourselves. I think that's inevitable now. I think there is no reason why both processes should not go on simultaneously.

Please --

**L:** Is the general feeling optimistic would you say amongst the people close to you? Or is it desperate?

**LvdP:** I think it's desperate myself. I've just been there. If you go there people don't laugh anymore. And they don't talk about anything else. And yet you can't talk to them about it.

**L:** And they go out at night, and the white population go out at night or do they --

**LvdP:** They do in the country. But in a big city like Johannesburg most people sleep with pistols under their bed. They don't walk down the street at night. Even if it's only to a house a block down they take a motor car to go down. It feels so unsafe.

**L:** Do you know of any natural white people in Africa? And how are they treated by the

unnatural white people?

**LvdP:** Yes I know, thank heaven, I know quite a lot. I know, there are some thousands of them, thank heaven, and they are treated pretty badly. In fact when I was there last, most of my friends were in hiding because there was a blitz on, against what is called a "liberal" South African. A lot of my friends were not sleeping in their own homes at night because they thought they were going to be arrested at any moment. The arrests usually take place at two o'clock in the morning, and they can be arrested and held for quite a period without a charge being laid against them. So they went and slept with some orthodox friends so that if they were arrested there would be some evidence of what had happened to them.

And so on. But there are a lot of very remarkable people. I don't want you to think that there aren't people who don't hold out. But I'm talking about the broad thing now. This thing has spread and spread and become sharper and I was horrified when I was there a few weeks ago.

Please --

**L:** We have in our own country interracial fellowship. I heard a person comment that in a particular interracial fellowship (it was possible that this may be true in more than one such group), that there are individual Caucasian and individual Negro members who honored the interracial fellowship developed psychological disturbances in their own person. Would you like to comment on what is involved psychologically in such relationship?

**LvdP:** I can't say. I don't know the people involved, you know. I don't know what, I would like to see the persons involved. But in general, I can only say that some of my friends have founded three places in London now, where people from Africa, it doesn't matter what color, all live together. It's fantastic how successful it has been and how much more free everybody feels. One of the most extraordinary things that happens is, that once you break through, you come out of the shadow, once you break through this barrier, and you see the person on the other side, it's extraordinary how much happier you are. So that I think that psychologically, it's a very healthy thing. And the more these people are together -- they go to the same schools, they live in the same houses -- they get an extraordinary kind of freedom out of it. So I should think that there must be something peculiar about the people you have mentioned.

**L:** I'm fascinated your view puts more responsibility with the white man. I wonder if the native there does a mental projection on the white man instead of developing it in himself. For example, might he be willing to let the white man have his consciousness, his rational thinking, his cerebral part instead of developing this potential in himself? I wonder if there is any way in which this is keeping him from developing this kind of perception?

**LvdP:** I think there was a very very long period in Africa, when the black man thought that he was going to get the light that he needed from the white man. And he waited patiently for it and he was very ready for it. I don't think there was any projection of that kind. But I think now, he is terribly frustrated and I think now he's got real, solid, objective ground for feeling what he does feel. If he get's half a chance now, if he gets away from Africa, it's astonishing how well he does.

**L:** Do you care to comment on the situation in the Congo?

**LvdP:** Am I allowed to? I will if you like. It's only I feel I'm being rather a fraud and not getting on with my job of talking about -- you feel you know all about the psychological origins of racial prejudice now do you? Anyway, here goes about the Congo.

I think the interesting thing about the Congo was (I was there just before it blew up) the people who ran the Congo, the Belgians, always laughed at the French and the English for the troubles they were having in their part of Africa. I always said to them (and I thought that the troubles we had in our part of Africa -- I'm not talking about South Africa now I'm talking about British Africa and French Africa) showed a great deal of credit to the British and the French because it showed that they conveyed a sense of self-respect to the people they were governing (and therefore did them a lot of credit).

The Belgians said that was all nonsense. That all these people needed was good wages and good employment. And the whole of the Congo was organized on the basis that if you give to these people any commercial responsibility that they wanted, give them good pay, give them good housing, and they would be alright. And no question ever, they didn't think it would ever arise, that these people would want any political rights. It never occurred to them that there *could be* a question of honor involved for these people as well. Honor is an instinctive thing -- it's just as important to any natural man as it is to any civilized man.

The result was that you had a technically, commercially, very highly developed African population in the Congo. But when I was there, not long before this explosion took place, there was only one black Congolese who had ever been to a university. Only one. Only one in millions. Now at any given moment, there are something like forty thousand Africans at universities and colleges and high schools in Great Britain. And when the question came, for instance, of giving Ghana its independence, the white governor of Ghana, worked with Anakruma (sp?) for seven years preparing the country for the switch-over. And then when the switch-over took place all the British civil servants and people stayed at their posts and they were gradually replaced. And the transition took place in that way.

In Nigeria which was even I think a far more successful experiment in liberation, emancipation, because it's a far more complex country, the process took even longer and the standard of education was even higher. Hundreds of Nigerians had been to universities in Britain and there's a very fine Nigerian university functioning already with a very largely British staff. There were hundreds of Nigerians in the civil services already being trained.

But what happened in the Belgian Congo with this one university graduate? *Overnight* the Belgians walked out and then in a moment of panic, everybody fled from their posts. Now what do you expect? What happened in the Congo is one of the *most* irresponsible and terrible things that happened and you have now a Congo which is not unlike the story that Joseph Conrad wrote about it called *The Heart of Darkness*. I could tell you a great deal more about the Congo but I hope that's enough.

If the Belgians had stayed at their posts, just to help them even if they'd withdrawn, I think this tragedy wouldn't have happened. A friend of mine was the first person into Elizabethville after the original debacle, found the place looted, everywhere. He was walking through the residential quarter and there was one house that hadn't been looted, and there was a curl of smoke in the chimney. As he walked by he heard a voice calling out, in French, "But isn't that a blond, a white walking down in the street?" And a man said, "Yes it is." And the woman said, "Well ask him in, he might like a cup of coffee."

He walked in and there was an old man with a rifle in his hand, and there was an old lady sitting knitting by the fire with a shotgun by her side. He looked at her in amazement and said, "Do you realize you're the only Europeans in Elizabethville? Weren't you afraid?" They said, "Well look, we built this place with our own hands. We've been here forty-five

years and God help them when they try to take it away from us." And nothing had happened to them. There's something of that spirit in the rest of the [??]. Well I could tell you a lot more but I'd like to get to this business of the shadow side.

**L:** What rituals and symbols do you live by that enables you to be free of the prejudice, of the racial prejudice that --

**LvdP:** I don't know. I don't want to exaggerate my freedom from color prejudice. But I just happen to know I don't believe it's natural. You see I grew up with black people, I had a black nurse. The first language I spoke was a black language. All the sort of fairy tale characters of my imagination, the people who really influenced me when I was a child, who made me laugh, who amused me, who kept me company, were black people. I could just never see what this was about because I loved those people. I can't blame any virtue for it, it just happened that way. I just could never see what it was about.

And then I went and started looking into it. And of course I was helped a great deal by the fact that I'm told I'm not rational at all, and that I've not got a very good brain, and I'm not very cerebral, and I just lived a natural sort of way and it's never bothered me. In fact I enjoy it. There is nothing I enjoy more in life than the difference of colors because it makes life so much richer. I think there's nothing more exciting than to find in another color, and in another race, a new kind of beauty that one hasn't got in one's own people. I mean it's so natural, all that, I don't see what the difficulty is at all.

**L:** The African situation seems to be one aspect of western man's dilemma in not being able to relate symbolically to his natural side. Do you see any indication in western man that there is an increasing awareness of this and a tendency towards the development of a more symbolic life?

**LvdP:** I think myself, we're going to get on very controversial ground now, you see, I think this is one of the reasons of the great breakdown of religion. Let's face it. There is this great breakdown of religion. And this is one of the reasons, although I know nothing about psychology, why I believe that Jungian psychology was a great turning point in the history of the world. Because Jung's greatest achievement of all, I think, is his immense sense of healing in the Old/New Testament way of the world, that is in restoring man to his soul.

I think it's a great turning point in the history of the world because our religions, our churches, are completely separated from contemporary experience. Our churches don't know what contemporary man is about. To a certain extent, Roman Catholics do because they have the confessional; people confess, and through confession they have some inkling into what goes on in the soul of modern man. Dr. Jung wrote a very wonderful book called *Modern Man in Search of His Soul* and if we ever find this soul we shall owe a great deal of that to him.

**L:** Can you give us the important, any favorable communications between black man and white man in Africa in understanding the problems of the spirit seen [??] as a child?

**LvdP:** One of the difficulties, first of all about South Africa, is that there's *nobody* in South Africa -- even the good South Africans we were talking about, the natural ones -- who see the problem in this way. They see it as a political fight in South Africa. But they're doing an immense thing by example, by insisting on treating the black people as equals in their own

lives. So that I think is a tremendous amount.

Quite a lot of us, not myself, my friends and so on, have gone to prison with black people in the same cause. I may myself have travelled all around British Africa speaking on the same platform with black people and have with them in places helped to get the hotels opened to them on equal terms and so on. Certainly in one part of Africa already, in Tanganyika, this is no problem anymore at all. There's no tension of any kind between white, Asian, and black. There's a very remarkable chief called Jules Nellanee (sp?), he's got two of my friends, white ones, in his cabinet, he's got some Asians in his cabinet and the majority, black people. And they regard it as a community completely free of any color discrimination of any kind. And they have got out of it the natural way.

**L:** I'd like to pursue my previous question a little further if I may.

**LvdP:** Please.

**L:** Having had some experience with Dutch Calvinists I know how easy it is for them to dichotomize things into good and evil, and how easy it would be for them to project the evil onto the dark people that they conquer, the shadow side of themselves or whatever. But I'm still puzzled by the fact that apparently this didn't bother them greatly for quite a few generations until very recently and I'm wondering if what might have happened is that as long as they felt themselves to be, so to speak, a few notches up on these people, they didn't have to be so frightened of, they already have the typical Calvinist idea of conquering it in the end, evangelizing, or whatever. Would you say that as long as they felt that way they were alright, but when they felt themselves being overwhelmed they panicked? Would you --

**LvdP:** No but to start at the end, it's a strange way of evangelizing them by shutting them out of their churches. But you mustn't take things out of their time context. You come back to this point when you say a couple of generations ago things were alright. They weren't at *all* alright. All that happened was that the white people were absolutely the top dogs. But they didn't feel there was anything particularly wrong in those days. They were Old Testament people and they thought that the black people were just made to be hewers of wood and drawers of water.

But that's not in a modern time context at all. But they already had this absolutely rigid thing that these were untouchables in every respect except this Calvin religion, that they were still allowed. But even that has gone now, I was merely emphasizing. But don't think that two generations ago things were alright. The prejudice was already there, very very strong and although in the beginning the real test was right in the beginning, they'd intermarried. Then, *no* such thing was *conceivable* and they were absolutely determined that these people were to be kept separate and apart. But they did still, there was *one* exception, and that was the church. But now even that exception is gone. And I quoted merely to show how much works the problem has come out and I do hope that answers what I was trying to say and thank you for your question.

**L:** I'm struggling to understand more deeply what you mean by natural man. I felt when you described your childhood being nursed by a Negro nurse and having this contact, that this as you said, was so natural. My reaction was, No, this is not natural because *I* did not have this being raised in an all-white family with all-white relatives and in a mostly all-white community in the midwest. Therefore you must be talking about another kind or a deeper

kind of naturalness than, in a sense what the black man himself grew up with when he was surrounded by his black father, mother, brothers, sisters, etc., and no white man was present on the scene. This was natural to him and the white person who was raised in a white community and this is natural to them. Then comes the different, the strange, the unknown, and the fear that we sometimes feel in this and we have to drop then to a deeper level of naturalness. And that you must be talking about something deeper than, and this is why it's symbolical.

**LvdP**: I don't know about that because don't forget that the black man had no color prejudice. It was perfectly natural for a black woman to suckle *any* child, to nurse any child. I think it may seem unnatural in your experience but it wasn't unnatural in those days either in their experience or mine. There was no problem there at all.

What I mean by being natural, I mean the person in which the flow between the intuition and the feeling and the instinct and the mind is not interrupted. Where they are all valid and continuous. This is I think for instance what happened in the Renaissance in Europe. I think suddenly, two things that had been kept widely apart clicked again like that.

I think this is what the African today, who really gets half a chance, becomes a very remarkable intelligence and very remarkable human being. Because these two things haven't been separated. And as I say, he's got this tremendous respect for his shadow. He's not inhibited, he lives out, he's not afraid, he's not afraid of making a fool of himself or being laughed at. Which is one of our great difficulties. Europeans and western man is so afraid of being made a fool of. Of course unless we allow life to make fools of us life just can't move on.

**L**: It seems to me that there is a tendency to decide to become more natural rather than to become more natural.

**LvdP**: You can't decide to be more natural, I don't think so, no. This again is where it's got to be done on a much deeper level than by an effort of will. That's why I think the work that people, for instance here, with the Jungian psychology does, is so important. You can't just say I am going to be more natural. It doesn't work that way anymore. You're very blessed if you're born that way. But you can't do it by an act of will. That is the dilemma of modern man. We use the phrase being more natural but it's really only a very roughshod phrase. The phrase really that one is after is to be more whole. That's why I said the natural, and if you like, the unnatural, or the natural, the instinctive and the rational, all these must meet in greater whole. That really is the thing, it's wholeness that one is after. It's not either-or.

Please --

**L**: These African races who are now free and moving into civilization and who are losing their symbolistic way of life; they must be running into psychological difficulties.

**LvdP**: Oh immense. It's one of the great tragedies. You see one of the things that we have done in Africa is that we have over a *long* period of years, it's a long story, we've made the African ashamed of his natural self. We've made the things, we've destroyed the containers of his natural spirit, we've made them ashamed of that. And we've produced a lot of Africans who think the important thing to do is to be sort of European. So they behave in the way in which they think a European behaves, where when that happens, of course, it is disastrous. But they're not *all* like that, there are exceptions, thank heaven.

**L:** But we've caught ourselves, we've lost the, we don't know where we're going. How can we help?

**LvdP:** I've not come here really tonight to suggest ways of helping them. But I think the greatest thing that we can do, really, that one of the greatest things that we can do in our age today, is to find out what this rejected side of ourselves is. What is this thing that we've pushed into the dark of ourselves? That is one of the most important tasks in the world today. I think once we've done that then we can think about the next step. But I think this really is the most important thing of all.