



We All Have Prejudices. But. Why?

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Prepared for Outreach by the Committee on Prejudice
(Including Anti-Semitism) of the International
Psychoanalytic Association

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Editor's Introduction:

This pamphlet is one of a series of documents, produced by members of the Committee on Prejudice (Including Anti-Semitism) of the International Psychoanalytic Association, as part of its outreach mandate. Psychoanalysis, first and foremost is a clinically based discipline that has much to offer other sectors of society, beyond its therapeutic clientele and analysts. No problem is more important to society in general than that of hostile and malignant prejudice, which has fueled wars, ethnic, racial and religious hatred, and aggression from time immemorial. As such it has contributed to the displacement, torture and deaths of hundreds of millions of people worldwide. There are professions outside of psychoanalysis, which, in part, face issues of prejudice in their daily work that might well benefit from understanding the dynamics of prejudice, and apply such an understanding to their own fields of concern. We include in these professions the fields of: teaching and education, law and legislation, mediation and arbitration, social work, policing in democratic and multicultural societies, public relations, the media, including social and electronic media, science and research, literature and the arts, and theology, among others.

There are four pamphlets in this particular series. They are entitled: Resistance and Strategies against Prejudice by Tomas Böhm¹ (Sweden), We All have Prejudices. But, Why? by Henri Parens (USA), Us and Them: Shared Prejudice by Vamik Volkan (USA), and Psychoanalysis against Prejudice: The Case of Sexual Orientation by Susann Hennen-Wolff (Belgium). Each of these pamphlets deals with a specific aspect of prejudice from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Tomas Böhm's work examines the mechanisms of splitting and projection, whereby unwanted or intolerable aspects of the self are split off and projected onto a target group which bears the brunt of the hatred directed against those projected aspects of the self, in a process of negative identification with them, as they appear within the Other, the target group. On the basis of this approach, Böhm develops a strategy for the home, school, workplace, media, community and polity to deal with the expressions of this hostile

In addition to family factors that from early on in life, set us up to have prejudices; social conditions, events, and catastrophe play their large part as well. Not only does each of us bring to societal life what we have internalized, but societal life impacts our individual and collective selves powerfully as well. Societal traumas become our traumas; they impinge on us in accordance to their meaning to our society.

But there is yet another path to the development of malignant prejudice that does not arise from our individual experiences of hostility and hate. It is that coerced in each of us by the formal education imposed on us, and by the communities of which we are members. Only too often does culture, race, and religion-specific education foster malignant prejudices.

1 Tomas Böhm passed away in May 2013.

The Role of Education in the Shaping of our Identity

When any of us accumulates and attaches a high load of hostility and hate to our benign prejudice, we transform it into malignant prejudice. But, there is yet another wide path to the formation of malignant prejudice—even in individuals who do not carry a large load of accumulated hostility and hate. As we noted earlier, identification with our parents is a powerful determinant of our identity formation, of who we become. And as Freud observed, parents are the representatives of society to their children. In turn, parents give their children over to society to further their identity formation, by means of formal education. It is well known that education-coerced identification with the group can be a major contributor to forging benign into hostile, and even malignant prejudice. A German friend told me that when he was young, even though he knew no Jews, he had learned to hate them, because he was taught that “the Jews” killed Christ.

The cultural prescription to hate specified “others” is driven in large measure by the teaching of dogma that only too often carries with it *malignant distortions* brought about by the *reality-distorting psychological defense mechanisms* that give reason (rationalization) to hate the selected “others”. In this, education is used to coerce malignant prejudice.

Summary

We all have prejudices. This is because the development of one’s principle relationships and forging one’s self-identity, due to the obligatory experiences of stranger anxiety and of identifications with those who care for us, unavoidably bring with them evolving preferences, or prejudices. This type of prejudice is benign; it is not the type of prejudice that has led humans to deprecate and destroy one another; that prejudice is hostile. We have found that the potential for the hostilefication of benign prejudice in large measure arises from childhood experiences of feeling hostile and hating those who rear us. We love and need them; in fact, such feelings generate in us intense anxiety. As a result we develop psychological defense mechanisms that redirect that hostility and hate—toward others! With this, *benign prejudice* is hostilefied into *hostile* and *malignant prejudice*. We have emphasized the large role trauma at the hands of those we love has in facilitating *the hostilefication of benign prejudice into hostile and malignant prejudice*.

and malignant prejudice. This strategy follows directly from the character of prejudice, developed within the opening pages of Tomas Böhm’s pamphlet. The strategy requires that prejudiced individuals and groups be challenged to “prove” their case, to provide evidence for their charges, and to subject their views to both logical and empirical criteria for determining truth.

Henri Parens has worked for over 40 years with mothers, infants, and toddlers, with regard to the sources of aggression and prejudice. His longitudinal study involved re-interviewing his original subjects at ten-year intervals. Parens grants that we all have our prejudices, and such, prejudices are considered both normal and benign if they do not intensify and generate hostility, anger, and rage, which manifest themselves in verbal or physical abuse directed at the target groups and communities. The source for generating both benign and hostile/malignant prejudice lies in the stages of adaptive development in early childhood. The helplessness of the human newborn requires that she bond with a protective unit, which we call a family. This bond, this first love relationship, is reinforced by a somewhat later developmental stage (adaptation) called stranger anxiety, whereby, the young child distinguishes between familiar faces, such as those, for example, of her mother, father, or sibling, and those of strangers that excite fear and anxiety. The love relationship is thus strengthened by the negative reactions to those who are not members of the family. This is the origin of xenophobia – the fear of strangers – according to Parens. The sense of belonging to a particular family, community, or nation is strengthened through the process of identification with those ‘like others’ during the course of self-formation. But the transformation process from benign to hostile and malignant prejudice is not a necessary or inevitable development for Parens. In order for it to become so, the young child must experience such malevolence toward others within his family, school, religious or local community, or nation. Building upon this, or independently of it, is the impact of trauma, war, or ideological propaganda in education, the mass media, religious institutions, political parties, etc. Parens shows through his work with mothers and their young children, that in dealing with aggression and prejudice early on in life that these children fared much better than their peers in the general community, in terms of desirable outcomes, as measured by educational attainment, lack of violence, involvement with the law, occupational achievement, etc.

The pamphlet by Vamik Volkan, *Us and Them: Shared Prejudice*, can be considered in relation to Parens' work with a focus on large group identity and conflict. In order to understand large group shared prejudice, we must begin with large group shared identity. Just as the young child begins to identify with her family members and experience stranger anxiety, so too do members of large groups (from tens of thousands to millions) develop a large group identity and large group 'strangeness' in relation to one or more other large groups. Unlike the development of an individual identity that is part of the adaptive development of the nascent self from the beginning, large group identity develops only later, after the period of stranger anxiety upon which it builds. Yet the formation of large group identity occurs in and through the development of individual identity, by means of what Volkan calls depositing and finding suitable reservoirs of externalization. In depositing an important adult, on account of trauma, psychological conflict or pathological development, attempts to put something into the child that the child then adapts as part of its own development of identity. As an example, Volkan cites the parent who's lost a child by treating another child as a replacement for it, clothing it with the dead child's clothes, giving it the dead child's name, etc. With regard to the formation of large group identity it is the collective trauma of the large group that is then deposited by the parents and other family members into the child. Sometimes this depositing includes the transmission of large group identity markers such as lost battles, religious oppressions, genocidal attempts, etc., some that occurred hundreds or even thousands of years ago. The incorporation of these identity markers helps establish the individual's large group identity, which is thus incorporated into her individual identity. Finding suitable reservoirs of externalization is referenced within Tomas Böhm's examples of splitting off parts of the self, which are unacceptable and projecting them onto others, members of other large groups who are now seen to incorporate those unwanted parts and thus become the shared targets, hated or attacked on these grounds.

Susann Heenen-Wolff's pamphlet, *Psychoanalysis against Prejudice: the Case of Sexual Orientation*, represents a different focus than the other three pamphlets in the series. While the others focused primarily upon prejudice in relation to race, religion, ethnicity, and national origin, her pamphlet focuses upon prejudice in relation to sexual orientation that has become prominent over the course of the last thirty years, and revisited as of late by psychoanalysis. None of the three authors, whose pamphlets have been presented in this

prejudice. This type of trauma may underlie the events of September 2011. All such traumas generate and mobilize more or less high-level hostile destructiveness that in turn, within individuals already burdened with long-existing high levels of hostility, facilitate the activation of malignant prejudice. These extra-familial traumas may afflict individuals, families, and even entire countries.

In the course of History, humans have collectively perpetrated on others, injuries and destructiveness of grievous proportions. These were perpetrated on combatant and non-combatant peoples. Combatants generally contract with one another to inflict massive injury and destruction on their enemy. But in inflicting massive destruction on non-combatant people, no reciprocal killing contracts are drawn up. It is especially the destruction visited on non-combatant populations that most elicits horror and rage. In the US, and sympathetically throughout the world, the sudden, totally surprising attack unleashed on September 2011 triggered much malignant prejudice in those in whom hostile prejudice was already organized. In many who carried within them substantial loads of non-metabolized hostility and hate, the sudden threat to life organized malignant prejudice. For many, the immediate reaction was: "Let's kill'em all!"

Most oppressed and traumatized individuals do not turn to murder in order to right their grievances, nor do many oppressed people turn to "crimes against humanity" or terrorism to change the world they live in. It has long been recognized that those who as a group turn to crimes against humanity are individuals with two types of hostile destructive character. Those individuals who are seriously character-disordered and criminally prone, seek to harvest the hate of others, as a vehicle to discharge their own hate. Those individuals loaded with hate are molded by a group ideology capable of horrendous crime. The first type may succeed in mobilizing others to carry out their criminal intentions. In just this past Century, we have known several such "Leaders", and we have seen ample demonstration of those who would not lead or independently commit crimes, respond with fervor to such a leader and become capable of even the most heinous of crimes. In these latter individuals, as Freud (1921) believed, group psychology alters the functions of their conscience which then permits their overload of hate and malignant prejudice to become organized into acts of communal terrorism and criminality.

Child developmentalists have long held that trauma at the hands of primary caregivers (parents) is especially prevalent in generating psychological pathology. Starting from early in the 20th century into the present, a number of researchers have studied what drives delinquency and criminality. Uniformly, in their studies of delinquents and criminals they have uncovered histories of high degree physical and emotional abuses accompanied by neglect in childhood.

Following this line of thought, the more the child is traumatized, the heavier his burden of hostility and hate, and the harder it is for him to deal with these feelings constructively. The hostility that cannot be resolved accumulates and constantly presses for discharge. The directions of the discharge are limited: toward the self, or toward the outside world. The greater the accumulating hostility, the more defenses needed to contain it, and the more the defenses become patterned and become part of the individual's character. There is a greater chance then, for the re-organization within the psyche of benign prejudice into malignant prejudice.

Of course, not all humans subjected to abusive childhood experiences become delinquents and criminals. Rather many of them become depressed and self-hurtful; others develop more severe psychiatric pathology. In addition, rather than developing malignant prejudice, they may instead become violent, even outright criminals, who tend to act alone and often toward unspecified victims. On the other hand, some traumatized individuals prone to violence may attach this violence to a cause, finding therewith a "justified" way of externalizing their rage. They elect to join such violence-perpetrating groups—the world over, including in America. In fact a spin-off of the dynamics that govern many heavily traumatized individuals' behaviors is the unyielding need for revenge and the 'need to have enemies'.

The Influence of Extra-Familial Trauma on Malignant Prejudice

So far we have considered trauma that is inflicted on children from within their homes; traumas certainly also come from outside the home. These traumas may be accidental or intentional. They may be in the form of isolated events. We have also seen traumas caused by joblessness and famine-threatening food shortages. In addition, we have certainly seen, and still see traumas caused by culture-based, race-based, and religion-based malignant

introduction, felt the need to refute the claims of racists, xenophobes, extremist representations, or portrayals of other large groups, etc. since a large consensus has developed in the West that such claims and portrayals have no scientific or empirical validity. No one feels the need to attack Nazi race theory, for example. The same cannot be said, however, for prejudice in relation to sexual orientation, although increasingly the basis of this prejudice is becoming less acceptable in Western countries, as mores and laws regarding same sex marriage, discrimination against lesbians and gays, and the adoption of children by same sex couples, etc. have become increasingly more liberal.

Heenen-Wolff's pamphlet emphasizes Freud's position that all human sexuality is bi-sexual, that no one is one hundred percent psychologically male or female. Pop psychology some years ago had taken up this idea by urging men "to get in touch with their feminine side." She also takes up this bisexual disposition in relation to the negative Oedipus complex. Freud's Oedipus has become a staple of global culture at least in its positive expression according to which the child seeks to achieve erotic satisfaction with the parent of the opposite sex, while developing hostility and antagonism to the same sex parent. But Freud also gave expression to the negative Oedipus complex, according to which the child seeks the love of the same sex parent while developing an aggressive trend toward the opposite sex parent. As psychoanalysts can attest there is practically no analysis in which the negative Oedipus does not play some role.

Upon this theoretical and clinical background, Hennen-Wolff takes up a number of misprisions concerning homosexuality that have formed the basis of anti-gay and anti-lesbian prejudice. She looks at the research on same sex couples in relation to the impact that they have upon their adopted or half-biological children, and shows how many of the past prejudices are not founded in fact. She looks at the changing understanding of homosexuality itself, moving away from a kind of essentialist notion whereby homosexuals are all seen as being cut from the same cloth, to a more nuanced understanding of differences among homosexuals and 'homosexualities.' She examines the role of fantasy in relation to the primal scene (fantasies which the child develops upon experiencing sexual encounters between the parents) and the 'family romance' (according to which the child fantasizes that he or she has been born of noble parentage and that his or her parents are thus imposters). She presents a complex and nuanced view of homosexualities,

and in this way dispels many of the myths that have undergirded popular prejudices.

Each of these pamphlets brings to the non-psychoanalytic professional elements of the dynamic, unconscious life of human beings that are active in the formation of hostile and malignant prejudices. It is the hope of the Committee on Prejudice (Including Anti-Semitism) that these pamphlets will achieve a wide readership among those within the target professions who deal with problems of prejudice as a matter of course in their daily professional activities.

Cyril Levitt

Chair

Committee on Prejudice (Including Anti-Semitism)

International Psychoanalytic Association

Denial: Reaching for mother's paper cup of coffee, inadvertently spilling it, 20 month-old Johnny, alarmed, exclaims: "I didn't do it!"

Rationalization: While 24 month-old Bernie and 26 month-old Johnny were horsing around like two-year-olds do, and enjoying themselves at it, Bernie lost his balance and accidentally kicked the blockhouse Mary was carefully building! Mary was very upset and verbally complained. Bernie looked at his mother and said, "She shouldn't build that here!" When told to apologize to Mary, Bernie irrationally added, "But that's where we were playing!" Mother held her ground.

Later still, from about 6 years on, we see evidence of a cluster of defenses *specifically intended to distort the other*, including *depreciation* (Spics are cheap and cheat), *vilification* (Blacks are dangerous), *reductionism* (Blacks are lazy; Jews are selfish), *caricaturing* (Jews have hooked noses), and *generalization* (all Muslims are terrorists). All these distortions about others were painfully, redundantly evident in the campaign used by the Nazi propaganda machine in Germany during the mid-1930s. In our project, we were surprised and troubled when one of our Caucasian subject's 6 year-old brother told one of our African-American subjects, "You can't play with us, you're Black!" The blaspheming kid's mother, a gentle woman, was mortified. She jumped to her feet and went to her son, momentarily virtually speechless. She pulled him aside and spoke to him firmly, quietly, but clearly troubled. He was made to sit next to her, "isolated" from the others. At 6 years of age, he denigrated a perfectly nice Black kid!

The Role of Trauma in the Predisposition to Malignant Prejudice

So far we have spoken about levels of accumulating hostility and hate we see in normal, fairly well cared for children. Consider how *the noxious influence, trauma and the hostility and hate it unavoidably generates*, bears on the dilemma of hating one's parents creates for the child. Trauma in early childhood is more common than we would like to think, however, it is foremost experienced within the arena of family life. Bare in mind, experiences of hurt, deprivation, and intense frustration that the child sustains in everyday life, generate equivalent levels of hostility and hate.

than 12 months of age. These specific defenses co-determine the development of hostile and malignant prejudice. The earliest defense mechanisms we see include the *displacement* of hostility onto someone other than the loved parent, its *inhibition*, the *projection* of one's own feelings onto others, and more complex defenses as well.

Displacement: Beginning when Jane was about five months of age, from time-to-time she would become quite angry with her mother, especially so for her mother's setting limits. She and her mother would get into rather hefty (pouting, gesturing, and posing) battles of wills. During one such battle of wills, 12-month-old Jane was visibly angry with her mother. In a heated moment, she picked up a two-inch wood letter block, raised her arm then flung the block, not at her mother *but rather at the woman sitting next to her mother!* Was her aim poor? I did not think so. Angry with the mother to whom she was already very safely and positively attached, Jane shifted her aim, and *displaced* her anger against the next available body!

Inhibition: As nearly thirteen-month-old Mary's strivings to do things as she wants intensified and organized (her sense of autonomy), she at times wanted to go into the hall, extending her explorations to a cleaning cart that was occasionally there during our child-parent group observational sessions. Because of her concern about the contents of that cleaning cart, Mary's mother repeatedly told Mary she was not to explore it, and enforced her limit by quite nicely bringing Mary back into the observational setting. From this emerged a sharp conflict between Mary and her mother. At thirteen months and three days of age, Mary's heretofore moderate objections gave way to loud vocal complaints. Simultaneously, one could see her body tense up, shaking, and her face-reddening then, no longer able to contain (*inhibit*) her rage, she actually let loose and discharged it against her mother. Contorting her body to extricate herself, she cried angrily, waved her left arm in a striking movement against her mother several times, kicked her, both from a distance, but twice actually striking her mother with her arm. She once also struck herself. One often sees a young child raise her/his arm to strike the mother and just stop! Arm mid-air! In this, the *inhibition* succeeds. But given that the anger generated was not discharged, it stays within the child's psyche adding to that already accumulated in her—which, at some future time, will be discharged!

Perhaps 6 months later one sees evidence of *denial* and *rationalization*.

We All Have Prejudices. But, Why?

Henri Parens, MD

Many among us from time to time feel a bias toward someone and feel uncomfortable about it. We may ask ourselves, "Is it because he speaks with a heavy German accent?" "Is it because he's Black?" Some of us have struggled to feel no bias toward anyone! Others take comfort in saying "We're all prejudiced; that's just the way we are." Are we?

What is prejudice? Our best English dictionaries give several definitions of "prejudice". Both propose that prejudice means "suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred of other races, creeds, etc." Both also give a broader definition: "a judgment or opinion formed before the facts are known; preconceived idea, favorable, or, more usually, unfavorable." (The Oxford English Dictionary, 1971.; Webster's New World Dictionary, 1972.)

To be sure, most people just assume a bad meaning to the word. Even though many among us don't like to think we are prejudiced, the fact is, we all are! We find there are not only good reasons for having pre-conceived preferences that is, prejudices, but these reasons are in fact favorable. And, on the other hand, there is the view that prejudice is bad, ugly stuff!

What causes prejudice's widespread reach? Here's an explanation we put forward. First of all, prejudice is not inborn. Some have proposed that we must have some inborn xenophobia (fear of strangers). But there is another, much documented and observable explanation. The fact is that in the course of normal development, every newborn experiences certain obligatory adaptive reactions that predispose him/her to develop prejudices, whereby he/she becomes prejudiced.

Societies have developed by families coming together that are in one way or another interrelated, be it by layering generations of one common stock, inhabiting a common territory, or banding together—there is greater strength in many against a common enemy—many centuries ago to protect their homes, lands, and thereby progressively evolving a group identity. This has organized among us many groups of individuals coalesced into societies that

altogether constitute our civilization. So this magnificent process started with the coalescing of building blocks of which it is constituted: the family.

The family becomes this building block of society and ultimately of civilization, by the natural inborn tendency to form intra-familial relational bonds. Mother Nature mandates it; otherwise, the many species that make up our world would not survive in near-perpetuity. The bird pecking through its shell must attach to its mother—the prototype of its species—in order to eventually reproduce and continue the species. So does the kitten, puppy, or monkey—and so do we. Simply said, attachment is obligatory to preserve the species. It is not surprising then that, according to our best biological studies, infants of all species are postulated to be pre-wired (brain-wise) to attach.

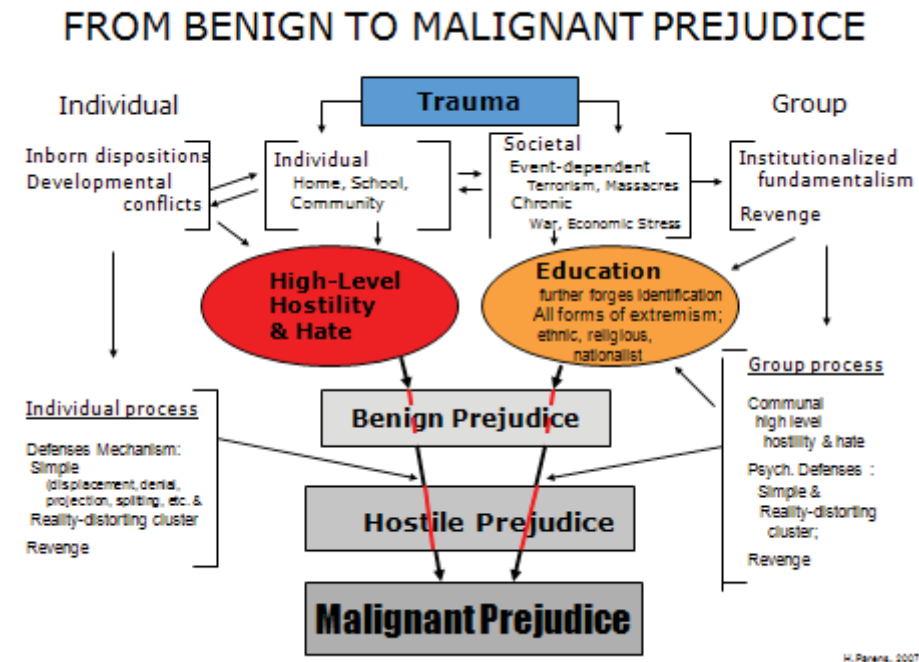
Focusing on the human infant, because humans are among the most immature mammals at birth, the infant’s process of attaching is among the most extended of all mammals. Studies show that it takes about 3 years for the child’s attachments to stabilize. In the course of this formative developmental process, an obligatory factor makes a significant contribution to the development of prejudice: *stranger anxiety*.

Stranger Anxiety, the Roots of Xenophobia

It seems paradoxical that *stranger anxiety*, the earliest visible reaction of rejecting “others”, *plays a crucial role in the formation of our earliest love-relationship*. Here’s where it plays its part in the fundamental civilization-building attachment process. There are 4 well-studied reactions that tell us where a child is in the process of forming its basic, earliest attachments, what we speak of as “love relationships”. These are:

1. The child’s *social smiling response*, which emerges at about 4 to 6 weeks of age. With this magically enticing smile, the infant engages in and invites an emotional interconnection with those who take care of him, those that make part of his immediate environment. This *social smiling response* is not specifically elicited only by the child’s caregivers. Anyone who approaches the child face to face elicits this smile; even if wearing a mask! So this initial *social smiling response is not specific*; any face can elicit it. But as days pass, the infant comes to recognize those faces, voices and care-giving manners that he most commonly

Following is a model illustrating the interplay of forces that lead from *benign prejudice* to *hostile prejudice*, and that may ultimately lead to *malignant prejudice*:



Let’s look at what seems to foremost contribute to our experiencing hostile and malignant prejudice, that most venomous type which leads to “wanting to destroy a selected group of others”; the Nazis spoke of such people as “undesirables”.

The Large Dilemma Created in the Child

When He Feels Hostility and Hate toward His Parents

Researchers have found that in the face of experiencing feelings of hostility and hate toward their mothers, 1 to 4-year-old children show evidence of experiencing intense, even overwhelming anxiety. When a child experiences such anxiety, he is unconsciously compelled to self-protectively bring psychological defenses into play to mitigate it. Child observers have seen a striking cluster of psychological defenses erected by children from even less

To understand the nature of hostile and malignant prejudice we must take hostility, hate, and the wish to destroy, into account. It is hostility and hate that forge out of our developing identity and preference for one's own, prejudice of a quite different kind against those who are different. Without hostility, the distinction of others from the self, does not lead to our making nasty remarks about others. Without hate, prejudice does not lead to the driven pressure to harm or destroy those distinctive others. What hostility? What hate? Inborn hostility and hate toward others? Child development research leads us to propose that the hostility that gets generated in those relationships most important to us, like those with our mother and father, is a powerful contributor to the generation of hostility toward others, and when intense, to the wish to harm or destroy these others.

We have tried to summarize our findings to date as we have searched to understand *the genesis and psychological dynamics of the "hostilification" of benign prejudice into hostile and malignant prejudice* and represented them in Diagram 2 that follows. We take note of interacting individual and group factors that, we propose, lead to its hostilification.

Note: Some colleagues propose that there are gradations of prejudice: from benign to malignant prejudice. Take for instance the person who says, "Well, you know, Jews are greedy!" or "You just don't know; is this Muslim a terrorist?!" It's ugly. This prejudice is the most common hostilified level of prejudice. It has not taken the turn to want to destroy those "others"; it does not fuel ethnic cleansing; it is not malignant. But it certainly is distorting, pejorative, and all in all, hostile. This is *hostile prejudice*; it can of course, range from modest to harsher levels before it transforms into *malignant prejudice*, which can and as we know only too well, has for centuries, if not millennia, led to murder and genocide.

sees and experiences; those most familiar to him. Within weeks, this social smiling response becomes more or less intense when a given person faces him; those most familiar, most reliably get the widest smile; those less familiar, get a lesser smile. Within 3 to 5 months then, the *social smiling response* becomes *specific*, suggesting that the infant's *attachments become specific*; he is forming an attachment, or bond, to his parents, siblings, and other direct caregivers. In humans, the course of attaching to an *other* gradually and progressively stabilizes over a period of many months—from about 5 to 30 months—during which time the infant's attachment is in a state of uncertainty. The instability of his attachment is evident in his experiencing the following informative reactions:

2. *Separation anxiety*, which tells us that the infant is experiencing the threat of losing the caregiver—due to the normal less than 18-month-old's inability to evoke the caregiver's image to whom the infant is attaching when the caregiver is not in the child's visual field. Similarly,
3. *Reunion reactions*, which affirm the recovery of the feared-lost caregiver and family members to whom the child is attaching. And critical to our present concern,
4. *Stranger anxiety*, which indicates and confirms the infant's recognition now that not all the faces he sees are those of his/her caregivers or family.

From these observations we can infer with confidence that in order to secure a healthy attachment to his primary-caregivers and daily-seen family members, a specific set of anxieties are activated in the infant that orient the infant *toward* the primary-caregiving and daily-seen family members. *Separation anxiety* means that the infant is attaching to the specific person(s) he now needs and fears losing. So too, *stranger anxiety*, informs us that the infant is beginning to recognize that not every person around him is his/her mother, father, or sibling, etc.

Furthermore, we might say that *stranger anxiety* serves to contain and direct the infant's inborn other-attachment tendency away from any "*stranger-others*", toward the "*familiar (caregiving and family) others*." Both separation

anxiety and stranger anxiety give evidence that “a *familiar-other* versus *stranger-other*” distinguishing process is at work. We can think of this attachment process as an “*other-specification*” factor.

Also pertinent to the question of prejudice, is the question “Who am I?” While the young infant may not ask that question, the idea of being a “self” with a “self-identity” begins to organize from the earliest days of life as well, even before the infant is able to verbalize a thought. This process of self-development, of developing a “self-identity,” also plays its part in the development of prejudice. Here’s how.

Self-Identity Formation: the Role of Identification with our Primary Caregivers

In humans, the development of oneself as an entity, as a self, is interwoven with the development of our attachments with those who care for us. It is probably genetically programmed that children’s attachments eventually bring about the child’s bearing the stamp “Made in the X, Y, or Z Family”. Two major factors determine this specific self-stamping:

1. (1) Our genes, which make their enormous biological contributions to our looks, having character traits, and even having mannerisms (the way we move or react) like our parents. And,
2. It is especially those identifications with—wanting to be like—our parents that in the context of our experiences with them give us our specific self-identity stamp “Made in the X, Y, or Z Family”.

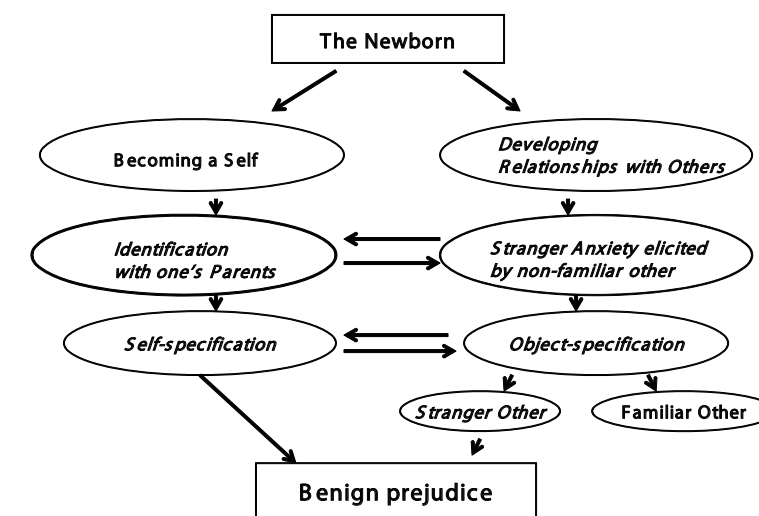
These powerful genetic and experiential factors, and especially the *identifications* we make with our parents complementarily, create our specific, distinctive, and variable *self-identity*. We can in fact think of *identification* as a *self-specification* factor.

With regard to the development of prejudice, this *self-specification* factor, *identification*, plays a powerful role. It does so, because by virtue of these identifications with members of our family, we internalize their views of our environs and therewith their societal-cultural mores. These include familial-cultural prejudices. These prejudices may favor accepting as equally valuable

people different than we are, or they may organize in us a negative bias against people different than we. The communications of parents and later neighbors that convey such biases are compelling, and make these positive (accepting) and negative (rejecting, or hostile) biases toward “others” an unavoidable part of identifying with our parents, the representatives to us of society.

Let us present what we have said so far in a diagram:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BENIGN PREJUDICE



H. Parens, 2012

Here we have proposed the normalcy of those self and relational developments that facilitate the organization in us of prejudice. But is this the kind of prejudice that degrades and even murders? Like the dictionary definition, prejudice is not just one thing. In fact, we propose that prejudice can be *benign*, and *hostile*, and even *malignant*. If that is so, then the factors addressed so far can readily explain the tendency in us to develop benign prejudices, of the fact that we generally prefer, though not always, to be with those who are like us. But we cannot account for, nor explain, hostile or malignant prejudice on the basis of these factors alone—even where identification with familial and cultural mores brings intense negative prejudice against “others”.