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SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF EVIL

John Darley

Professor of Psychology
Princeton University

Working Paper 91-24

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By John M. Darley

I am grateful to Kai Erikson, Dan Gilbert, Genevieve Pere, and Nelson Polsby for their comments on this essay, and more generally, their perceptions on the question of evil. Since I am acquainted with several of the authors of the books under review, I should also make that clear to the reader. Kelman is a much-valued graduate school professor of mine; and Hamilton, a later student of his and therefore a "younger sib" of mine, is a friendly acquaintance. Milgram was a generous slightly older colleague and a friend, Staub a friendly acquaintance within the small circles of experimental social psychology. Lifton, the only one of the authors I have not met, had commanded my admiration for a number of years.

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Books Mentioned in This EssayMonday, April 29, 1991

Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the Banality of Evil (revised and enlarged Edition) Viking Press, New York

Albert Bandura, 1986, Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory

Herbert C. Kelman & V. Lee Hamilton, Crimes of Obedience: Towards a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibility. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989

Robert Jay Lifton, The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide. Basic Books, NY, 1986

Stanley Milgram, Obedience to Authority: An experimental view, New York Harper and Row, 1974

Ervin Staub, The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989

Novels Mentioned in This Essay.

Thomas Harris, Red Dragon

Thomas Harris, The Innocence of the Lambs

Michael Lewis, Liar's Poker

Patricia Cornwell, Postmortem

INTRODUCTION

There doesn't seem to be a sustained tradition within psychology of confronting questions about evil, its origins and effects. Or perhaps this comment should be given a narrower scope; there does not seem to be that confrontation going on in the academic traditions of psychology within which most of us work. In this essay, I am going to attempt to present what might be called a "social psychological perspective on evil," and contrast that perspective with two others: the views of evil that we all hold at an unexamined level of everyday thought, and the view of evil that I think might be drawn from the clinical perspective. Finally, I will suggest some conclusions we might draw about evil from the clash of these different perspectives.

I was born in 1938, into a cohort that was ordained to think about evil--indeed to be haunted by it, given the events of the Nazi era. But that social psychology could come to grips what this evil might mean I did not have the vision, or perhaps the courage, to see. Even now, when under the stimulus of these books I have thought about the topic, I would not want to say that my thinking has gone very far What I put forward in this essay is a reconnaisance, not anything even I would regard as finished work. If I can invite others to the debate, then perhaps our conceptualizations of evil will be advanced.

The authors of the books mentioned above have had the vision and courage to analyze evil. In the past few years, we have seen the publication of Lifton's report of his interviews with physicians who participated in the Nazi death camps, the long-awaited book by Herbert Kelman and Lee Hamilton that contains their observations on the interpretations of their survey data on My Lai and the related trial

of Lt. Calley, and Ervin Staub's comparative study of several genocidal events. Reflecting on these books, I have been led back to Stanley Milgram's book that details his obedience studies and his final interpretations of them, and to Hannah Arendt's seminal and controversial book on "The Banality of Evil." Each author has been willing to consider the events or people we label as "evil." (Milgram does so somewhat implicitly, the others quite explicitly.) Each author deserves considerable credit for this; evil is not a topic easily accessible within those movements psychology which are the inheritors of our earlier operationalist, positivistic traditions. These people are working outside the mainstream of at least the sorts of psychological content customary within our academic enclaves.

They are not, however, always working outside the methodological traditions of modern social science. Milgram, famously and controversially, carried out social psychological experiments on harm doing. Kelman and Hamilton, although their book is by no means confined to it, report survey results about the "Lt. Calley trial,' the military court marshal of a platoon commander who presided over the My Lai massacre. Lifton conducted interviews with doctors who had served in Nazi concentration camps. Only Staub does not present some form of new data, choosing instead to construct an account that ranges across different fields of social science and different sources of social science thinking.

Each book contributes to what becomes, at a general level, a consistent picture of the origins of many of the evil acts in the world. Reading and rereading them, I have come to see that they sharply contradict our ordinary ways of thinking about the origins of

evil, and that this is one of the major messages to be extracted from them. The message they jointly present is a disconcerting one; our everyday understandings of evil, those understandings sketched below, are frequently incorrect or perhaps, more accurately, irrelevant to most acts of evil and therefore deeply misleading. Instead the authors provide the material on which to form an alternate view, one that I have called the "social psychological perspective." Because that view clashes with views all of us hold, their message is an uncomfortable one, one the implications of which most of us do not easily grasp.

Like most ordinary people, we psychologists are in the grip of another view. That other view is the one that exists at the level of our day to day, understood rather than examined, beliefs; the beliefs we hold as "persons" rather than as "psychologists. To understand the social psychological view, it is useful to begin by examining the common-sensical view first, the ways that our culture currently thinks about the related notions of "moral wrongdoing" and "evil."

EVERYDAY THINKING ABOUT "WRONGDOING" AND "EVIL"

Moral wrongdoing has proved to be a troubling concept to define. Uneasily recalling our exposure to philosophy courses, in which we discovered the difficulties in defining and defending our everyday concepts, we "ordinary persons" recognize at some level that we may not be able to clearly define and defend our particular concepts of "good" or "wrongdoing.[1]

" Unlike some other cultures, or our own culture in the past, we do not have an agreed-upon, authoritative list of actions that constitute wrongdoing . We used to have lists of sins, but since we

no longer put much stock, as a culture, in the religious principles that generated these lists, we cannot much rely on them as defining the set of moral wrongs.[2]

Thus, we have to generate such a list from some underlying philosophical principle.

Principle-based definitions of wrongdoing.

When we cast around for that agreed-upon principle that might give us a tenable conceptualization of wrongdoing, we are not greatly helped. One prevailing theory of human motivation, the theory of rational choice, does not easily justify the moral preferencing of certain desires over others, and thus does not give us any easy mechanism for the designation of certain actions as morally wrong. Contributing to the difficulties with the definition of "wrong," is our learned recognition, within our present society, that it is difficult to state our grounds for disagreeing with another individual's personal preference structure. One of us likes the paintings of Titian, another paintings of Elvis on black velvet, to each his own.[3]

As this hints, all of these notions lead us to retreat to the culturally familiar stance of a last resort utilitarianism. Within that system, we can all agree that causing harm or pain to others is the essence of wrong-doing. The definition of immorality that arises from utilitarian considerations centers around a notion of actions that inflict pain on others. As the old characterization went, "my freedom of action, ends just a centimeter away from hitting your nose." We might say that, within a utilitarian perspective, my possibility of doing wrong begins about at your nose. Wrong actions,

more formally, are those which impinge on the other, and cause that other pain or harm.

This definition needs qualification, but the moves to qualify it are well understood. Briefly, we need to rule out certain harmful actions, such as unforeseeable accidents, as necessarily morally wrong. So we add to the definition a qualification; a notion of a wrongdoing actor as somehow intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly harming or causing pain to another individual.

A few more qualifications bring us to a preliminary definition. Because we recognize that in certain times, such as wartime, or in certain places, such as prison death rows, actions that bring harm or even death to other individuals, are regarded by many as not only not evil, but as morally required actions, we add a reference to "unjustified harmdoing" as being the morally wrong sort of harmdoing. We also add qualifications pertaining to excused harm-doing incidents, or mitigated ones. (Austin, 1956) What count as justifications, mitigations, and excuses requires some elucidation, but we have generally agreed on examples that guide our judgments (Darley & Zanna, 1982; Darley & Shultz, 1990). Naturally, some tricky questions remain; we can be made uneasy by certain borderline cases.[4]

Nonetheless, I want to suggest that this is how ordinary Americans resolve questions when they are pressed concerning their definitions of "morally wrong actions"

Staying within a self-conscious level of discourse, having struggled to arrive at this definition of "wrong," we seem to have very little left to say about "evil." Evil is an even more difficult concept to define than "wrong." Uncharacteristically, Webster's

flounders. "Not good morally; causing or tending to cause harm;" The antithesis of good; something that is injurious to moral or physical happiness or welfare." Here evil is simply equated with moral wrongness. One gets the feeling evil is a word falling out of use; it seems redundant with the notion of moral wrongness, and bringing archaic baggage such as the notion of "sin" along with it.

Actually, I think we have difficulties with the notion of evil only when we are in a certain analytic perspective. The perspective, or level of thought at which we have been analyzing wrongdoing thus far is one that we might call considered thought that one is prepared to defend against challenge. The challenge might arise from an acquaintance with different values, a public opinion pollster, or a philosophy professor. We are all capable of functioning on that considered level of thought, and do so when we are facing definitional questions. At this level of thought, that the notion of evil becomes difficult of definition or redundant. However, it is not always at this level of thought that ordinary people think about evil, and that at this more day-to-day level, evil remains a viable notion. In everyday thought, including that of psychologists, evil is alive and well. It may not be easy to define, but none of us have much trouble recognizing it.

Everyday definitions of evil

The level at which we function in our everyday doings is the level of what we call "naive psychology", the level of understandings we all carry around with us to analyze the events and actions of our everyday life. These are the sorts of understandings Heider (1958); most successfully called to our attention; those often unexamined

understandings, frequently built into everyday vocabularies, that categorize our everyday world and enable us to function in it. At this level we have both a conceptualization of evil acts that is generally shared and coherent, and a theory of what causes these evil actions.

First, how do we conceive of evil acts? As follows. Evil actions are a subset of bad actions; all evil actions are bad, but not all bad actions are evil. A sports fan, provoked in a barroom by another who vilifies the losing performance of the fan's much-loved sports team, punches his tormentor. A morally bad action, but not one we would be prone to call evil.

This casting about does not yet give us a definition of evil actions however. To be labeled as evil the wrongdoing act often has to have a quality of egregious excess, such as a murder gratuitously committed in the course of a crime. A bank robber gratuitously shoots some elderly and disarmed bank guard as he exits the bank; the evil lies in the senselessness of the act. However, even if the elderly and disarmed guard was killed to demonstrate to the other victims the seriousness of the robber's threats to kill those who pursue, we would still consider that act evil. The actor is seen to put such a low value on human life as to provide the moral outrage that triggers the label of evil.

At other times, the evil actor shows an equal disregard for humanity, but the evil act is not so much described as egregious excess as it is as depraved excess. Those individuals who derive pleasure from the torture of children display this aspect of evil. One is struck by two things in this case. First, the deviant and

inhuman nature of the perverse impulse: second, and again, the disproportion of the act in terms of the pleasure gained versus the pain inflicted. To inflict vast pain on the innocent to derive a fleeting and perverse pleasure is breathtakingly horrible.

The evil we have been describing contains elements of intention. The criminal intended to kill his hostage; the torturer intentionally chooses his victim. However, there is felt to be something bizarre about the intention. Sometimes the bizarre quality resides in the disparity of the intention with the grounds that give rise to that intention. A parent repeatedly batters an infant child because the child cries. We see from where the impetus to batter arises, but we simply cannot grant any sympathetic validity to the act arising out of the impetus. Again, a wildly disproportionate disregard for the humanity of the harmed individual seems indicated.[5]

At other times, we simply cannot fathom the sort of person who would intend to commit such terrible actions. We posit evil doing when we see that an individual is following our general societal template for the commission of an intentional action, and that the action is not only wrong but horribly wrong. The contrast between the apparent rationality of the sequence of behaviors that lead up to the action and the irrational character of the act is one cue we use to assign evil. To buy the instruments that will be used to torture another, or to dig the grave in which the kidnap victim will be buried alive, are evil acts. To plan to kidnap an individual for the purposes of deriving pleasure from torturing that individual is an act from which, among other things, an inference of evil is likely to arise.[6]

The build up of the impulse in a serial killer to kill again, which I imagine to be experienced by the killer as an outside force, does not fit our usual definition of intentional action. Perhaps the imputation of evil arises because the killer deliberately organizes the acts to fulfill his "irresistible impulse."

Perhaps the essence of the above is this. An evil action occurs when an individual inflicts a highly negative state on another, without this negative state being balanced in any way in the perpetrator. I kill you to avoid being tortured. Terrible, but not evil. I kill you or torture you because it gives me some brief pleasure or avoids a slight annoyance to me. This is evil. Further, the evil doer knowingly violates society's norms. Thus first the actor puts his needs above the needs of those he victimizes, and then, second,the actor puts his own judgments above others. The inbalance here shows a chilling disregard for the humanity of the victim or the community; the other is given so little standing, as compared to my pleasures and needs, as to be denied human existence.

An approach from another direction is possible. What I say above is an attempt to define evil as we use the concept in our everyday life. Now let me suggest a marker reaction that tells us when evil is present. Moral and jurisprudential philosophy identifies four or five reasons for incarcerating or otherwise punishing an individual who has committed a wrong-doing, including providing an opportunity for the correction or rehabilitation of the individual, deterring that individual from future wrong acts, deterring other individuals who witness the punishment, and incapacitating the individual for a period to prevent the commission of other wrong actions, just as one would

cage a dangerous animal. The last reason, which seems to me to exist on a somewhat different plane, is variously called "restitution," "just deserts," or closer to the bone, "retribution." The notion here is one of lex talonis, society must punish justly an individual who commits certain sorts of wrong actions. Evil actions invariably are seen by people as requiring this last sort of punishment; merely wrong-doing actions do not always do so.

These are the ways that I think ordinary people in our culture come to identify acts as evil. I should admit that, armed with the above definitional remarks, I do not think that it is possible to definitely unequivocably categorize certain acts as evil, and certain others as merely "bad". That limitation is not fatal to the kind of psychological enterprise I am attempting. Instead I claim three things. First, a person who identifies an act as evil, when operating at the level of day -to-day understandings, does so with considerable personal certainty. Second, and again at this level, there is a considerable consensus among people about acts they will classify as evil. (Not surprisingly, this consensus contributes to the sense of certainty of classification that each individual feels.) Third, principles ordinary people say lie behind their intuitions about evil are the ones I have spelled out above.[7]

Of these three claims, the first, that people make untroubled judgments of what are evil actions in their day to day lives, is central to my argument.

Evil actors and the kernel of evil

If we have an intuitive sense of an evil act, how do we pass from that to a recognition of the evilness of a person? Obviously, an evil

person is one who has committed an evil action, and we are even more certain of our attribution of evilness if that individual has committed many evil actions, particularly if they all seem to point to some consistent origin of that evil; to locate the evil-doer in some particular corner of the linked set of domains that represents our conceptualization of evil. Saddam Hassian is a current candidate, as was Ted Bundy, the psychopathic serial killer of young women.[8]

Second, what I want to suggest is that we intuitively require that the evil-doer will himself be found to contain an element of evil, something with an almost physical characteristic. Although, as in the suspense thriller, this evil may be hidden from outside scrutiny behind a mask of ordinariness and require unmasking. The evil person is expected to possess a "quality of evilness" that has properties like the ones Allport (1937) attributed to central and cardinal traits. And intuitively, this internal quality of evil is matched in magnitude to the quantity of evil that we assess as having resided in his evil actions. As good crime novelists recognize, we require our evil-doers to be major figures, with something of the demonic about them, rather than pathetic figures in the grip of impulse. Putting this in a related but somewhat different way, it is as if there is a naive assumption of an enduring kernel of evil which, once detected in the act, must be present in the actor. Behind evil actions must lie evil individuals.

What I am suggesting, then, is that, at some day-to--day, "gut" level, we conceptualize evil actions as springing from the depraved minds of evil persons who will be found to contain a core quality of evil. I do not have what psychologists usually count as evidence for

this assertion, but I offer two reasons for you to take it seriously. First, I think it probably accords with your intuitions, and remember that it is these intuitions, shared by members of our culture, that I am attempting to articulate. Second, take seriously the evidence presented by the existence of the suspense novels to which I have just alluded. Consider the enormous popularity of a rapidly growing genre of suspense novel, the "serial killer" novel. In it, a series of serial murders are committed, often in a bizarre and horrible fashion At some point, the reader is led into the mind of the serial killer, and the pattern generating the sequence of killings is made intelligible, although no less horrible to the reader. The detective's task is to imaginatively intuit the patterning in the sequence, predict the next crimes, and confront the evil killer in the act. The suspense is generated by the reader's knowledge of the true patterning, and the reader's necessarily passive watching, as the detective struggles toward understanding the patterning. Watching the killer rationally and logically set about preparations for the next killing act shows the discrepancy between the rationality of the plans and the horror of the contemplated act, and illustrates my earlier remarks about a depraved intention.

For those unacquainted with the terrain of the suspense novel, some examples may be useful. Thomas Harris seems to have an excellent sense of the genre. His first novel introduced a psychopath, a psychiatrist , which created the interesting possibility of the psychopath bringing to bear some very sophisticated interpretations of his own pathology. In two later novels, <u>The Red Dragon</u> and <u>The Silence of the Lambs</u>, he has created other plausible serial killers

and an interesting system of cross-referencing by having his original killer, now in solitary confinement, consulted by the detectives trying to enter the mind of their current quarry.

Harris's books succeed, others fail. One way in which suspense books fail is that they trivialize the evil-doer, and the failure is on terms revealed by our analysis. He is portrayed by the author as pathetic rather than demonic; the killer, once discovered, does not have the chilling quality of evil that his actions signaled and that is required by our everyday conceptualizations of evil.[9]

("His" is appropriate here. Both in suspense novels and real criminal statistics, the serial murderer is almost always a man.) The "quantum of evil" that we require to be preserved between the act and the actor is not present. To give an example of this in an otherwise quite well-conceived serial murder novel, one might read Patricia Cornwell's Postmortem.

The psychological functions of the everyday conceptualization of evil

Sometimes, like the poor suspense novel, the real world fails us. That is, we cannot find the requisite quantum of evil when we examine the perpetrator of some particularly evil set of crimes. When this is so, I suggest, we fall back on some alternate models of explaining evil actions. A fellow named Whitman, who one day went up to the top of the University of Texas bell tower and shot and killed a number of his fellow students, had a rather wholesome, Boy -Scoutish, background. Rather fruitlessly, for several days after the incident, the newspapers scrabbled for "the story"--on my terms scrabbled for some prior evidence that Whitman was evil behind his amiable mask,

and some further story that would account for the origins of that evil. None was found, but rumors of a brain tumor detected on autopsy provided an alternate, physical, source of causality for the acts that otherwise would require an evil individual to produce them. My point is this: these alternate explanations for evil actions have a particular function; they are the "licensed exceptions" to the quantum of evil view and thus protect the application of that view to other unexamined cases. For most of us, cerebral dysfunction whether by tumors, or involuntarily ingested mind-altering drugs, would explain acts we would otherwise ascribe to an evil actor. For some, other more psychological disturbances, such as posttraumatic stress syndrome, or schizophrenia, also provide an alternative explanation for acts that would otherwise be taken as revealing the evil nature of the actor. Notice that these alternate explanations work best when the entities being postulated, such as tumors, are imagined to have a thing like character, much like the quantum of evil I have suggested people imagine. In common-sense psychology, we conceive of the brain as occasionally intruding into the mind, so the more physical and palpable one can imagine the suggested intruder, the more comfortably it fits this model.[10]

Here is where I think that clinical psychology and psychiatry fit in. I want to tread carefullly here. More accurately, here is where I think that ordinary people's conceptualizations of psychology and psychiatry fit it. Although psychologists and psychiatrists sustain complex perspectives on these issues, I think that a frequent cultural use of the everyday equivalents of concepts in those fields is to

provide alternate accounts of evil actions that attribute the act to other than an evil person. For instance, a culturally accepted form of the psychodynamic perspective, popularly thought to trace adult thought disorder to experiences inflicted on the person as child, and inaccessible to current conscious control, removes the onus of evil from the individual who commits evil actions.

Sometimes, as we have noted above, the brain does intrude into the mind, and a tumor or hormonal dysfunction causes deviant and sometimes harmful behavior. As competent defense lawyers have long realized, sometimes a diagnostic label can be made to serve the same apparent explanatory function, although sometimes spuriously so to my mind. Much of the debate around certain diagnostic catagories such as post traumatic stress disorder, stems from the fact when used as legal defenses, lawyers can lead jurors to accept the "medical" metatheory that underlies the particular diagnosis in question.

What are the psychological functions served by the view of evil that these exceptions serve to defend, the notion that behind evil actions lie evil-doers who can be identified as possessing an inherent and inward evilness? At first glance it seems to add an unnecessary component of terror to a world that is not short on other experiences of terror. Why do we imagine a world inhabited by evil-doers who could, for rationally unfathomable reasons, inflict horrors on ourselves and those we love, essentially at random?

Although this will be initially counterintuitive, I want to suggest that it preserves our belief in a just and ordered world. Just as the brain tumor functioned as the licensed exception to the requirement of an evil personality to lie behind the evil action, the

notion of the evil individual is a licensed exception to, and thus protects our notion of, a just and ordered society. The problem is this; in this era, we cannot sustain a belief in a world in which only good things happen to good people. Television and the newspapers all too often remind us that joggers are beaten and raped by "wilding" teenagers, innocent passengers blown up in airplanes or machine gunned in airports, or good Samaritans murdered in the course of their helping activities. So to some degree, it is not a just and ordered world. But we do not want to give up the notion of the just world, it enables us to have the courage to go out into the world, and to send our children out into the world. How can we maintain the notion of the just and ordered world, and yet recognize the undeniable occurrence of unjust actions?[11]

We recognize the unjust action but provide ourselves with a rule that at least partially restores order and justice and gives us some predictive power about when the order and justice rules are not in effect. They are not in effect when evil persons are around. And evil persons are generally recognizable; they contain the quantum or essence of evil that we have described. Of course, we cannot always perfectly identify evil people or are sometimes taken in because their evilness is hidden behind a mask of normality. Thus, terrifyingly, evil actions happen to people because they did not discern the evil character of the perpetrator. However, and here we return to the suspense novels, the evil is recognizable in principle once we learn to "see it".[12]

So, if the world is not a completely just and orderly place, we can know when it is not; when the general rules are in temporary

abeyance. They are in abeyance when evil individuals enter the picture.[13]

This, I submit, is a more tolerable exception to the principle of the just world than would be many other realizations about evil. In specific, it is a more comfortable and containable exception to the principles of order and justice than are the views on the origins of evil jointly contained in a recently published and deeply disturbing set of books by social psychologists. It is to a consideration of those books that we now turn.

THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF EVIL

Consider a hypothetical experiment. By sampling newspaper accounts and other sources, we identify a large number of evil actions, and we set out to interview the actors who committed those actions, looking for this quantum or kernel of evilness. Next consider a possible but disturbing outcome: when one probes behind evil actions, one normally finds, not an evil individual viciously forwarding diabolical schemes, but instead ordinary individuals who have done acts of evil because they were caught up in complex social forces. The quantum of evil that we look for in the individual cannot be found. Instead we encounter again what Hannah Arendt found so striking about the Nazi mass murderer, Adolph Eichmann: the banality and ordinariness of an individual whom we expected to be demonic.

Surely, though, we can discover some such evil individuals and would expect to find them among the group of people Lifton studied. He, you will remember, studied the participation of medical doctors in horrendous acts of torture and murder in Nazi death camps. Surely, it is among Lifton's respondents, the medically trained upper middle

class individuals who apparently chose to participate in horrible activities, that we would most expect to confront evil face to face. It is among them that we would expect to see the evil motives and evil hearts of the evil-doing actors.

Sensing this agenda, this search, Lifton early on warns us that our search will fail. "The disturbing psychological truth [is] that participation in mass murder need not require emotions as extreme or demonic as would seem appropriate for such a malignant project. Or to put the matter another way, ordinary people can commit demonic acts" (p.5). Staub remarks that "I believe that tragically human beings have the capacity to come to experience killing other people as nothing extraordinary" (p.13).

This, I want to assert, is one example of the major message arising from the books. It is also one whose validity is strengthened by the independent convergence of these books on this conclusion. The books examine a variety of evil acts. Lifton, using a close lens, examines the involvement of doctors in the Nazi death camps. Staub, using a longer lens, examines a number of episodes of genocide, mass killings, and torture. Milgram, as is well known, examines the behavior of individuals in a "psychological experiment" in which they are ordered to give what seem to be painful and harmful electric shocks to others, thus giving us what may be argued is as close as is possible to achieve an experimental analogue to evil. Kelman and Hamilton tell us a good deal, indeed sometimes as much as we can bear to read, about the circumstances leading U.S. Army units to the massacre of Vietnamese women and children at My Lai. As we will see, the proposition that arises from all of these books is that many evil

actions are not the volitional products of individual evil-doers. Instead, they are in some sense societal products, in which a complex series of social forces interact to cause individuals to commit multiple acts of stunning evil.[14]

In that process, the individuals committing the evil are themselves changed. They become evil although they still do not show the demonic properties suggested by our conventional views of evil.

The social psychological perspective suggests that generally organizations are required to produce sustained evil actions. The specific social forces that alter individuals are those produced in organizations. One needs a Nazi dictatorship, a Viet Nam war, a Stalinesque gulag, or an Argentinean military dictatorship to train, reinforce, and sustain killing activities. (Although as we will see later, it is not only these sorts of organizations that socialize their members into evil-doing.)This realization leads to several questions. What forces create these organizations and put their evil activities in motion? How do they alter the character of those individuals caught up in their activities? How do these organizations grow and change? Of these three questions, the second, involving the alteration of the individual by organizational and small group processes, is the one most congenial to social psychologists, and we will consider it first. But we will need to consider the other two questions as well.

ORGANIZATIONS SOCIALIZE INDIVIDUALS INTO EVIL-DOING

How does an organization enlist individuals in harm-doing, and how are they altered by their involvement? This question recognizes that the output of these organizations is twofold; first and horribly,

corpses, and second, and less commonly recognized, individuals who have been fundamentally altered by their participation in the harm-doing activities of the organization. Killing organizations produce those who are killed, and those who kill. Lifton, Milgram, Staub, and Kelman and Hamilton tell us how this is so; how organizations produce killers.

The doubled personality

As those of us who have read him over the years are well aware, Lifton's continuing concern has been with the darker issues of human existence: the meanings we attach to life when impersonal forces frequently threaten life, and the meanings we attach to deaths that we inflict on others. He has examined the collective forces that lead to these deaths, and the ways those collective forces act and interact with the perceptions and constructions of the individual to produce the actions that the individuals take. The wars of this century have furnished him with a rich set of materials, and brought out in him a correspondingly richly nuanced and intertwined analysis. In his recent book, Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide, he continues this examination. Drawing on his work, we see how human beings adapted to participate in evil and are altered by it.

Lifton interviewed German doctors stationed in Auschwitz during World War II. He also interviewed prisoners who had been in the concentration camps, particularly those who had been both prisoners and somehow involved in the medical system set up within the camps -- frequently those who were themselves doctors. My reconstruction of Lifton's analysis takes this path. When transferred to duty at Auschwitz, the doctor was confronted with the discovery that the

machinery of state had certain aspects that were, on the face of them, morally terrible. The ideology of Nazism, and the resurgence of the German state, apparently required the incarceration and eventual killing of the "lesser" races. Still, as it always is, it was possible to see these terrible actions as somehow required to achieve generally good actions. The doctors perhaps had a feeling akin to what is called "dramatic inevitability" in the theater. Some entirely unexpected and perhaps violent outcome occurs, and yet the witnesses to it saw why that outcome was inevitably contained within the seeds of what had gone before. At Auschwitz, the Nazi doctors saw the inevitable unfolding of the meaning of the oath they took when they pledged allegiance to the state.

At the moment of confronting the horrible reality of Auschwitz, while the doctor's thinking was likely to be confused, nightmarish, and self-contradictory, certain bedrock truths would be confronted if the doctor reasoned far enough. First, the terrible machine would go on, whether or not the doctor participated in it. Auschwitz was, among other things, a vast complex of buildings and trains and medical wards and persons and schedules and procedures, an enterprise that would continue working regardless of the doctor's degree of participation. Second, although apparently the doctor could have declined to participate, that choice led at a minimum, to the dangers of the Russian Front. Doctors were in the military and were assigned to Auschwitz; that there was a choice about their participation was not necessarily apparent to them. (Of course, it was apparent to some, because they chose not to participate, an act of considerable courage in the circumstances.)

Meanwhile, old hands were available to socialize them; to help them in the process of conversion from outsider to insider. Let us examine that process. Apparently "selection" was one of the most frequent and taxing ordeals faced by the doctors. It was their task to select those who would be allowed to live and those who would immediately be sent to the gas chambers. The determination was supposed to be on the basis of those who remained fit to work, as against those who were exhausted by near starvation, were ill, or simply looked "unfit." Given the Nazi ideology, this killing of the lesser races was conceived of as a public health decision, somehow continuous with their previous program of euthanasia for the mentally inferior; thus, selection was fitted into a version of the medical ethic under the heading of the ruthless extirpation of germs, of loathsome diseases. Selection was a medical decision made by the SS doctors. And night and day they made it. When the prisoners left their boxcars to enter the camp, an SS doctor stationed on the arrival ramp selected those who would live and who would die. When the prisoners went out to work for the day and when they came back at night, they passed a selection doctor--or failed to pass. Selection was incessant. In the medical wards, those too sick were "selected" for death; when new arrivals reached the camp, many of those already in the camp were selected to make room for the new arrivals.

Selection was by no means the most unambiguously morally wrong thing the doctors did. However, Lifton's interviews reveal the doctors found it extremely stressful. They often did it drunk, or got drunk after it. Apparently, it caused them to face the moral implications of what they were doing, and did so in a particularly

pointed way for the new doctors soon after their arrival in the camp.

The task for the new doctor was to fit into this machine. Other doctors provided whatever rationalizations were necessary to promote this "adaptation." This being the task, then it was in some sense better to still one's doubts about what one was doing. To develop a network of beliefs that stilled the moral doubts. "Doctors became preoccupied with adapting themselves to that reality, and moral revulsion could be converted into feelings of discomfort, unhappiness, anxiety, and despair. Subjective struggles could replace moral questions. They became concerned not with the evil of the environment but with how to come to some terms with the place" (Lifton, p. 199).

What Lifton is suggesting is that human beings have the capacity to adapt to moral wrongdoing taking place within organizational settings and, although at some psychic cost, to blank out the implications of those actions and function as a cog within the terrible machine. He quotes one doctor as remarking "after a few weeks in that milieu, one thinks, 'Yes'" (Chapter, p.199).

Lifton's doctors found a number of ways of playing their roles. It is important to realize that the machine can tolerate different levels of commitment and even actions from its participants. An inmate, writing retrospectively, thought that the doctors seemed to fall into three categories: "Zealots who participated eagerly in the extermination process and even did 'extra work' on behalf of killing; those who went about the process more or less methodically and did no more and no less that they felt they had to do, and those who participated in the extermination process only reluctantly " (Langbein, paraphrased in Lifton, p. 194) But, looking at it from an

outside perspective, any level of participation was sufficient to keep the machine in motion. Organizations that kill do not need all individuals to participate in the most direct acts of killing; many individuals are needed to fill subsidiary and support roles.

Initially one suspects, the doctors stumbled through their dreadful activities, largely perceiving themselves as following orders, the implications of which they did not completely understand. Descriptively, however, their participation next began to be more voluntary, less well conceptualized as following orders, now functioning more independently and autonomously, and drawing on their skills and knowledge to increase the effectiveness of what they did within the camp. Famously, Lifton suggests that they adapted by the act of "doubling." Doubling is "the division of the self into two functioning wholes, so that a part-self acts as an entire self" (p. 418.) Doubling created a self that would function within the Auschwitz walls, that still remained in contact with, and drew on the knowledge --and strength--of the pre- Auschwitz self. Doubling takes place largely outside of consciousness, and promotes the avoidance of guilt because the doubled self that commits actions, and the doubled self is the one that renders coherent the entire Auschwitz environment. The Auschwitz self avoids guilt because it is upholding the moral principles of the Auschwitz surroundings, promoting the values of the state, achieving racial purity, staying loyal to one's oath of obedience, and so on.

Lifton is offering us two propositions, or at least I have abstracted two from him. The first one is shocking, but I think in keeping with what many social psychologists would want to say.

Situations can be created in which it is possible to enlist the ordinary participant in the commission of evil, and in the process the participant is transformed into a creature capable of autonomously and knowledgeably committing evil actions. Importantly, this conversion is, as most conversions are, a process. Lifton's second proposition is that this conversion process produces a doubled individual. [Putting this another way, that it is useful to have the concept of "doubling" because all of the processes that work on the inductee to the machine of terror converge to produce a personality that can only be described as "doubled."] Putting this yet another way, those processes work in unison to produce a person who's personality is split in a particular way. A personality is formed that is designed to cope with the exigencies of the killing situation, but one which can and does access the skills, and knowledge of the prior personality.

Milgram's contribution. The agentic state

The problem we are now assessing, is whether we ought to postulate that those who pass through experiences such as the Nazi doctors had, are altered in a way that requires concepts such as "the doubled individual." I waver about the necessity for the concept of doubling. What I find positive about it is that it makes clear that the person in question has been altered in permanent ways. [But I am not sure that the evidence points toward a unified conceptualization of the altered individual, and if it does, that "doubled" is the concept of choice for the resulting product.] Seeking guidance on this, I returned to the Milgram experiments, and looked again at

Milgram's Obedience to Authority: an Experimental View

Recall the Milgram Paradigm. A subject comes to participate in an experiment on "teaching and learning" and is randomly assigned to give electric shocks to the learner when the learner makes a mistake in identifying the correct associate of a stimulus word--this is an experiment about the effects of puhishment. Instructed to do so, and with those instructions reiterated by an experimenter who is present throughout the process, the subject administers increasing levels of shocks to the learner, even when the marking on the shock apparatus reveal that these shock levels are dangerous and the learner calls out protests.

The copyright date, 1974, reminded me that the book had been published more than a decade after Milgram began his series of experiments, published by his own report, after he had spent some years wrestling with what he wanted to say about the meaning of his own work. Since the book came such a long time after what the psychological community regarded as the completion of the experimental program, I think that it has not played the role it should in shaping our interpretations of the Milgram findings. In fact, I suspect that it is not much read. If so, this is a pity because it contains reports of many experimental variations in the research paradigm that are reported nowhere else, and Milgram's own interpretations of his findings. These interpretations I often find deeply insightful, and occasionally, deeply bizarre.

Milgram certainly agrees with Lifton that a concept llike doubling is required. He postulates the existence of an "agentic state" into which his subjects pass to administer shocks to the other individual. The assertion of the agentic state is one that I find

startling and bizarre, but we ought to mark that two social scientists who have spent many years examining individuals involved in the commission of evil have both come to the conclusion that one commits evil in an altered state.

What is the "agentic state" according to Milgram? He characterizes it in a number of ways, from which an image of it gradually emerges. The first characterization concerns its evolutionary nature. Human beings must often function within organizations. Thus, evolutionarily, according to Milgram, they have developed the potential for obedience. That is, the standard workings of evolutionary selection pressures have brought about an inherited propensity to obey. "From an evolutionary standpoint each autonomously functioning element must be regulated against the unrestrained pursuit of appetites, of which the individual element is the chief beneficiary. The superego, conscience, or some similar mechanism that pits moral ideals against the uncontrolled expression of impulses fulfills this function. However, in the organizational mode, it is crucial for the operation of the system that these inhibitory mechanisms do not significantly conflict with directions from higher-level components. Therefore when the individual is working on his own, conscience is brought into play. But when he functions in an organizational mode, directions that come from the higher level component are not assessed against the internal standards of moral judgment. Only impulses generated within the individual, in the autonomous mode, are so checked and regulated" (pp. 128-129). Thus, we see the agentic state is one within which one is not governed by the operations of one's own conscience; instead, the conscience has

been switched off in the individual.

Milgram's views about the physiological substratum of the agentic state, and the events that "trigger" an individual into that state, also require examination. "Where in a human being shall we find the switch that controls the transition from an autonomous to a systemic mode? No less than in the case of automata, there is certainly an alteration in the internal operations of the person, and these, no doubt, reduce to shifts in patterns of neural functioning. Chemical inhibitors and disinhibitors alter the probability of certain neural pathways and sequences being used. But it is totally beyond our technical skill to specify this event at the chemoneurological level." (pp. 132-34).

Milgram also makes clear how seriously he takes his concept. "The agentic state is the master attitude from which the observed behavior flows. The state of agency is more than a terminological burden imposed on the reader; it is the keystone of our analysis...." (p. 133). And further, "Since the agentic state is largely a state of mind, some will say that this shift in attitude is not a real alteration in the state of the person. I would argue, however, that these shifts in individuals are precisely equivalent to those major alterations in the logic system of the automata considered earlier. Of course, we do not have toggle switches emerging from our bodies, and the shifts are synaptically effected, but this makes them no less real" (p. 134).

The first time I read this, I was startled and appalled both by what I took to be the odd and psuedoscientific pseudophysiological concept of the agentic state, and of the notion of the "trigger" that

switches an individual between normal and agentic functioning, and of the dichotomous and all-or-nothing character of being in one state or another. And I continue to be. On rereading Milgram's work, however, I also see that he gives an inherently more social and less dichotomous account of the agentic state . Milgram writes:

"From a subjective standpoint, a person is in a state of agency when he defines himself in a social situation in a manner that renders him open to regulation by a person of higher status. In this condition the individual no longer views himself as responsible for his own actions but defines himself as an instrument for carrying out the wishes of others..."

"An element of free choice determines whether the person defines himself in this way or not, but given the presence of certain critical releasers, the propensity to do so is exceedingly strong, and the shift is not freely reversible" (p.134).

Still I find this construction overly dichotomous, and by its reference to "releasers," a term borrowed from a now somewhat outmoded notion of physiological reflexes, overly pseudobiological. However, this more phenomenological construction of the process, coupled with Milgram's later discussion of the situational events that enable an individual to construe him or herself into obeying authorities, seems to me to contain many insights.[15]

For instance, he points out the importance of the subject's perception that he has willingly entered into a transaction governed by an authority that is legitimate, and which has the scope to command the particular actions in question. Second, once the interaction starts, other forces the subject into the situation. The cues that

somebody is possibly being harmed occur only later, after a "momentum" has been built up around the legitimate definition of the punishing actions, and the shock-giving participant has incurred all of the obligations that Goffman (1961) has so convincingly pointed out, to continue an ongoing social activity and the definition of that activity. From these materials an account could be created of why the modal subject in many of the Milgram conditions gave the maximal level of shock .

Albert Bandura, in his 1986 book, Social Foundations of Thought and Action, has given us an account that addresses what is accomplished within the individual by the conversion process. He suggests that normal socialization processes produce what he calls a "self-regulatory system" that functions to regulate and control the actions of the normally functioning individual.[16]

However, these control mechanisms do operate in invarient ways. "Development of self-regulatory capabilities does not create an invariant control mechanism, as implied by theories of internalization that incorporate entities such as conscience and superego as continuous internal overseers of conduct" (p. 375). He goes on to remark that "self-evaluative influences do not operate unless activated," and it is also the case that they can be selectively disengaged as well. This might work as follows. Normally, people do not indulge in censurable behaviors because these will produce self-devaluative consequences because of the working of the self-regulatory system. However, "what is culpable can be made honorable through cognitive restructuring" (p. 376). One can morally justify harm-doing, find euphemistic labels for the action, minimize

the harmful consequences, and dehemanize and blame the victim. There are also the usual possibilities of displacing responsibility for the detrimental actions elsewhere in the system. These are the family of processes that seem to me to be involved in creating individuals who willingly do evil. That they often occur together, and that many of them are frequently caused by the same circumstances, is undeniable. It is the fact that many of these processes are involved in the conversion process, and that the individual is in some unstable and dynamic state, now relying on one justification, now on another, that seems to me to become obscured when an altered state is postulated.

The conversion process

This returns us to the issue of the conversion process. Psychologists are, understandably, reluctant to write the "production of torturers" handbook, but social psychologists certainly have the knowledge to do so. The insights for it are there in such articles as Zimbardo (1970) on deindividuation, Gibson and Haritos-Fatouros (1986) on the recruitment of the Greek torturers during the reign of the colonels, and others. The essence of the process involves causing individuals, under pressure, to take small steps along a continuum that ends with evil-doing. Each step is so small as to be essentially continuous with previous ones; after each step, the individual is positioned to take the next one. The individual's morality follows rather than leads. Morality is retrospectively fitted to previous acts by rationalizations involving "higher goods," "regrettable necessities," and others of the rationalizations that Bandura and others have mentioned.

Other books under consideration here give alternate accounts of

Lifton's conversion process, but do not contradict it. They draw on Milgram's experimental work illuminating their accounts. I will not pause here to sketch the account each gives although that is a worthy task, but I will comment on what other elements of the process they call to our attention. Staub reminds us of the causal role of the bystander in the process; the interpreted meaning of the actions of those who stood by, not protesting, as harm was done to persecuted minorities. Their apparent indifference was certainly taken as tacit approval by others who also watched, and might have been otherwise moved to protest. In a dynamic that Latane and I (1970) have described, this leads to a "contagion of inaction" among all bystanders. Thus, bystanders who fail to intervene, perhaps because they are stunned into passivity, are read by both perpetrator and victim as condoning the acts of the perpetrator and approving the victimization of the harmed. Kristallnacht was a signal to the Jews of what the Nazi regime would do. The general lack of protest by other Germans, whatever the reasons , was a signal to the Jews that they would not be protected by non-Nazi Germans.

The Kelman and Hamilton book is the one I do the least justice to as I try to construct an account of the processes that socialize individuals toward evil, because their focus is on how persons make moral judgments about crimes of obedience. (They do bring their thinking to bear on explaining how people pressed to commit those crimes choose or decline to participate.) In partial amends, later I will sketch the general line of their thinking, as they develop it in their study of people's reactions to the trial of Lt. Calley. Here we will take up another of their points, which begins with Kelman's

famous distinction between three modes of social influence: compliance, identification, and internalization. Each of those orientations, they suggest, can link individuals to the society in which they find themselves. Compliance considerations produce a rule orientation, in which a person is integrated into society via considerations of the rewards and punishments society delivers to those who follow or break its rules, and the social approval and disapproval that signals those rewards and punishments. Identification implies a commitment to a particular role within society as a part of the individual's self-definition. Generally, through the processes of socialization, a person comes to accept the values of a society, and thus can be said to internalize them. The society's values become his or her own, and naturally the person will act to further those values in the future. Given this, when a person violates some element of what society requires of him or her, he or she feels a mixture of fear of sanctions, distress for role failure, and regret for not living up to espoused values. All of these are powerful enforcers of the person's tendency to do what society asks of him or her. If the society is asking that individuals obey orders that result in evil outcomes, still these enforcing forces move the person toward obedience.

To the degree to which the nation-state, or any other organization, is viewed by the individuals within it as legitimate, it has these powers to induce obedience with its demands. Organizations are perceived by their members as legitimate to the degree to which they engage their sentiments such as loyalties, and fulfill their instrumental needs, desires, and interests (Kelman and Hamilton,

chapter 5, particularly pp. 112-19).

We are analyzing how it is that people are socialized through an organization to commit evil. Two implications flow for this from Kelman and Hamilton's analysis of forces that link an individual to an organization. First, and the conclusion that we need here, within organizations that members perceive as legitimate, the forces that lead to obedience are multiple, mutually reinforcing, and very strong. Obedience rather than disobedience to authority can be understood as the expected outcome. Second, as we will see later, the different conditions that bind an individual to an organization may produce different behavioral outcomes under certain kinds of pressures to obey.

The product of the process. The evil individual

Two intertwined issues are found in discussions of the individual who is the product of the perverse socialization process we have just described. First, how is the individual altered by the process, and second, are those alterations of so great as to require the postulation of an discontinuous, dissociated state, such as an "agentic state" or "doubled personality?" Although we will need to come to our own conclusions about those questions, let us first look at Milgram and Lifton's conclusions.

As we have seen, Milgram, like Lifton, concludes that the evidence requires the postulation of a different and basically discontinuous state created in the harm-doing individual. But the two sharply differ on how that state is created. Lifton makes a comment on Arendt's thesis about the banality of evil, which can also be read as a comment on Milgram's concept of the agentic state. "What I have

noted about the ordinariness of Nazi doctors as men would seem to be further evidence of her thesis. (Recall that the thesis involved the banality of evil--in this context the ordinariness in the present of the individuals who had committed horrible acts of evil in the past.) But not quite. Nazi doctors were banal, but what they did was not. Repeatedly in this study, I describe banal men performing demonic acts. In doing so--or in order to do so--the men changed; and in carrying out their actions, they themselves were no longer banal" (p.5).

What Lifton is doing here is reiterating his first point, that it is the individual's encounter with the killing machine that results in a conversion process that alters that individual, that creates a doubled personality. Although I have indicated my reservations about the concept of the doubled personality, I completely agree with Lifton that the encounter begins a process that morally alters the person who participates in that process. Although I am not sure that Lifton would agree with me, let me draw a line at a point along the continuum of participation in the encounter, and suggest that people who go beyond that point are evil--more precisely, have become evil. The person who is induced into participation, and who goes far enough in the conversion process so that he or she autonomously and intelligently initiates evil actions is an individual who has become evil. Examples may make this clearer. The soldiers who, yelled at by Lt. Calley, with tears in their eyes, fired into crowds of innocents were not evil. Those soldiers who coldly and knowingly killed innocents while operating independently, were evil. Staub reports a case of two young rosy-cheeked young Hitlerjugend whose frequent habit

it was to "hunt" in the Warsaw ghetto. They simply wandered into the ghetto, and shot whoever it captured their fancy to shoot.[17]

As the reader will be aware, many have debated whether humankind is inherently good, inherently evil, or any of a number of other possibilities. Psychologists working within the academic and experimental traditions of modern psychology do not enter this debate willingly. Nonetheless, the above analysis suggests an answer. The possibility of being evil is latent in all of us, and can be made actual and active, among other ways, by the conversion process. The person who goes a certain distance in the process has been fundamentally changed, and is now capable of doing harm in an autonomous way. He has "changed, changed utterly," has become evil.

But that is not at all what Milgram is saying. He is arguing that, as an inevitable condition of life, people come "prewired" as it were, with two possible states of functioning. Any person, therefore, could be put into the agentic state by the right combination of authoritative pressures. Milgram does not suggest that once having been thrown into that state, a person is fundamentally altered or that once a person has been through this process, it will be affected more easily in the future.

Not surprisingly, Milgram does not come to these conclusions. Were Milgram to have accepted Lifton's construction, that it was the obedience to the initial commands of authority that began the conversion-to-evil process, he would find himself wearing a very uncomfortable shoe indeed. It would mean Milgram had begun the process of converting his innocent subjects to "doubled" individuals, capable, if they went further down that path, of independently acting

to inflict harm on other individuals in the name of science, as did the Nazi doctors in the name of the state. To use Milgram's vocabulary, he takes himself as showing that the agentic state already existed in his subjects, and his experimenter could rather easily "flip on" that state. But an uncomfortable alternate reading is possible: that Milgram had set up a terrible machine, and begun to create (to again use the Lifton vocabulary) this doubled state in those unlucky individuals who were fed into the machine.[18]

Why do I suggest this? For both theoretical and empirical reasons. Many of us still find considerable explanatory power in dissonance theory, particularly in the attitude-changing effects produced by the forced compliance paradigm, of which Milgram's is one version. Thus the attitudes of the subjects about what they did can be predicted to have changed in directions favorable to repeating the actions. (Whether or not this is altered by the debriefing is unclear.) Nor is it only dissonance theory that would lead us to this conclusion. Any theory that recognizes that the production of morally ambiguous actions can be rationalized after the fact by the actor would lead to these conclusions. Specifically, I would expect that the Milgram subjects, who were implicitly preselected to put a high value on "science," might have increased the value they placed on science as an important source of discoveries that would help humankind, and second perhaps also derogated the intelligence of the individual who received the shocks. In both of these ways, inflicting of pain on the learner becomes justified.

There is empirical evidence for the occurrence of these sorts of changes following the commission of a morally ambiguous act. In a set

of studies involving a very similar experimental cover story to Milgram's, and in which subjects were led to give electric shocks to others, .i.Brock and Buss (19xx); demonstrated that the subjects' perceptions of the individual to whom they gave shocks altered in ways that justified their morally ambiguous actions, they derogated the victim, implying that the victim somehow deserved the punishment.

I have asserted that being "processed through a killing machine" can create an "evil individual." What exactly do I want to say about how that individual has been changed? And therefore, what do I want to assert that individual will think, and more to the point, do? What is the cash value of calling an individual "evil?" There are, I think, two answers to this. The first one is a partial perspective on the matter, the second a deeper perspective. First, in ways that the sociologist Weber initially conceptualized, the processes of doing evil have become "bureaucraticized" or alternately the person doing evil has become "a bureaucrat." Actions that initially were shocking have become routinized, habitual, and at the end of the day in the concentration camps, the executioner can go home and read his children bedtime stories. This, I think, best fits the case of the individual who has some fragmented role in producing the evil action. When death, like cars or chairs, is produced on assembly lines, each individual eventually concentrates on the microrequirements of his or her part in the process; the eventual outcome is rarely thought of. A group of police in a city round up the Jews and take them to a stadium. Later an army contingent takes them to the boxcars. A railroad worker throws the switches that bring the train to one or another subdestination on the way to the concentration camp. The fact

of the eventual deaths is so remote that no participant finds it salient. Each person doing a subtask does so in a routinized way; it is only the final assembly of those subtasks that is horrible, and no individual "sees" that final solution.

This explanation is good as far as it goes, but to my mind doesn't go far enough. As we described above, many people participated in the direct acts of killing, and many others knew where the boxcars were going. More needs to be said about the mental alterations that took place in those individuals; Weber's "routinization of bureaucratic subroutines" is not enough. They normally have been permanently morally altered in ways that change their thinking and behavior. The continuing mark of their past experiences with the killing machine is mental, and consists of the structures of moral thought that they were led to use to rationalize their actions in the first place. Unless they have had some sort of moral epiphany, they continue to believe what the killing machine taught them: "Regrettable necessities," "for the good of the state," "the alien communist ideology threatened the Argentine way of life." (This was the point of the banal conversations that Arendt had with Eichmann, in which he went on and on about "necessities of state." These statements reflected the moral rationalizations that he had formed to justify his conduct.)

Two consequences flow from these mental adjustments. Both of these consequences go some way toward answering the question of "in what ways should we conceptualize the alterations in the evil-doing individual?" First, contained within these adjustments is a definition of the target groups toward whom harm-doing is appropriate.

In some ways this limits the operation of the forces that have been created. It is appropriate to execute the defined groups, but certainly not the groups on whose behalf one strives. One kills lesser races on behalf of the higher races, or one kills communists to preserve the purity of Argentinean life. Of course, the target groups tend to grow larger. From our own history, not only "communists" but also "fellow travellers" were a threat to the American Way of Life. And soon, "unknowing fellow travellers" or "communist dupes" also needed to be ferreted out. To cite a particularly horrible example, some of the Argentinean military were unable to conceive children, and so the practice grew of identifying young women who had just had a child as "communists" so they could be killed. The children were then given to the military families. The groups that this sort of evil-doer feels justified in attacking are contained, but only partially.

The second consequence of the mental adjustments caused by participating in harm-doing organizations is straightforward: an increased readiness to participate in harm-doing activities again if any of a number of social conditions are recreated. The normal outcome of the kind of socialization process we have described is a permanent one. This is not to deny the possibilities of a moral reorganization taking place, in which the individual turns away from his previous actions, and painfully reconstitutes a morality in which those previous activities are seen as morally wrong. However, the guilt produced by this, certainly in the moral sense and possibly in the legal sense, is going to be high. Lifton's doctors had lived in a culture in which the wrongs of the Nazi era were about as thoroughly

acknowledged as we can ever realistically expect, and I think that Lifton does not see many signs of a moral reorganization on their part. My sense is that the moral reorganization caused by the perverse socialization that I describe generally persists, making the individual so socialized permanently susceptible to being caught up in harm-doing institutions in the future.

One way of characterizing these mental adjustments is as a neutralization or even a positive valuation of actions that are generally regarded as morally reprehensible. This tells us how the person will continue to act vis a vis those actions. That individual will autonomously and independently continue to harm others, but <u>if and only if</u> the harm-doing actions are rule governed by the rationalizations of previous harms, and if the social conditions are generally supportive of harm doing in the present. Those who have become evil in this fashion require cultural or small group support for the rationalizations that supported their doings. (And in this fashion are quite different from those such as serial murderers who fit the common-sense prototype of evil-doers. They either are able to independently support whatever conceptual system justifies their acts, or have no need for such a system.) If the Nazis had successfully invaded Britain, then Nazi doctors would have helped design and build concentration camps in Britain, brilliantly and logically adapting what they knew of selection ramps to the local conditions of Manchester or Liverpool. History turned out otherwise, and many of them returned to the conventional practice of medicine. Those who tortured in Argentina or Greece can now be encountered on the streets, going about mundane activities. All would commit evil again if social

conditions altered.

THE CREATION OF KILLING ORGANIZATIONS

My argument thus far is simple. Most evil-doers are produced by a process of socialization into doing evil, a process that makes them capable of doing evil in an autonomous and independent fashion in the future. If this argument is correct, then we come face-to-face with a question that we now recognize as urgent. How are the organizations that socialize an individual into doing-harm created and sustained? If they are an important source of harm-doers, then how do they themselves come about? I do not think we have a complete account of how this happens, and what I have to suggest is tentative and incomplete. But I am sufficiently convinced of the importance of the task to make those suggestions, to advance the debate. First, we will look at the cultural and social conditions conducive to the development of such organizations, and next at the specific events that are the origins of such organizations.

The cultural preconditions for destructive organizations

Staub sets himself the task of describing the cultural conditions that lead to genocide. Specifically, he has analyzed the Nazi holocaust, the killings of the Armenians in Turkey in 1915-1916, the Cambodian massacre of their own countrymen during the 1970s, and the mass killings of "leftists" under the Argentinean dictators during the 1970s. His analysis deserves our attention for two reasons. First, genocidal movements are certainly evil ones, and therefore of direct interest. Second, as I have come to see, we can extract some generalizations from his conclusions that can be applied to explain the origins of other destructive social organizations, in the

interests of understanding these origins and the hope of preventing them.

Staub's story begins when a society or powerful groups within that society are subjected to difficult life conditions. The possible sources of these difficult life conditions are numerous and various; they can include economic hardship, political conflict between groups within a society (with the associated feelings of loss of control), perceived threats from criminal violence, as we currently experience in this country and so on. As a psychologist is likely to do, Staub includes such things as threats to a sense of security, well-being, and even self-esteem as conditions that can be experiences as difficult life experiences. "The threat may be to life, to security, to well-being, to self-concept, or to world view" (p. 14). These difficult life circumstances bring about psychical and psychological needs in people that are sometimes filled in positive ways, in ways we would regard as effective and morally appropriate. At other times though, the circumstances give rise to feelings of hostility directed at whomever can be made to seem responsible for the problems. Staub puts his case this way.

"Blaming others, scapegoating, diminishes our own responsibility. By pointing to a cause of the problems, it offers understanding which, although false, has great psychological usefulness. It promises a solution to problems by action against the scapegoat. And it allows people to feel connected as they join to scapegoat others. Devaluation of a subgroup helps to raise low self-esteem. Adopting an ideology provides a new world view and a vision of a better society that gives hope. Joining a group enables people to give up a burdensome self,

adopt a new social identity, and gain a connection to other people. This requires action, but it is frequently not constructive action.

"Often all these tendencies work together. The groups that are attractive in hard times often provide an ideological blueprint for a better world and an enemy who must be destroyed to fulfill the ideology. Sometimes having a scapegoat is the glue in the formation of the group. But even if the ideology does not begin by identifying an enemy, one is likely to appear when fulfillment of the ideological program proves difficult. Thus these psychological tendencies have violent potentials" (p. 17.)

Certain cultural tendencies can make the forces unleashed during difficult times lead to scapegoating. "What motives arise and how they are fulfilled depend on the characteristics of the culture and society. For example, a society that has long devalued a group and discriminated against its members, has strong respect for authority and has an overly superior and/or vulnerable self-concept is more likely to turn against a subgroup" (p. 4). Staub goes on to make another point, which we have alluded to earlier in our discussion. The scapegoating group is not capable of leaping immediately to genocide, to killing the members of the scapegoated group just because of their group membership. There is the familiar progression of acts. Open criticism of the scapegoated groups produces derogation, which licences brutality, and brutality is justified, and leads to further derogation and the discovery that the scapegoated group is somehow not included in humanity. Finally, killings, and then systematic killings. Genocide.

Initially, I found Staub's essential conceptualization of

"difficult life conditions" too broad. It is a notion that, if defined narrowly, we can all understand and know when to apply. For example, the rampant economic inflation of Weimar Germany, led many previously well-to-do people into poverty, and created the difficult life conditions he alludes to. However, Staub gave the notion of difficult life conditions a broader and less concrete definition. Essentially, he psychologizes it. Experiencing "difficult life conditions" is after all a psychological state, and may be caused not by the obvious forms of economic circumstances or hardships of living such as those caused by famines, but by more symbolic and subjective disruptions. Threats to self-esteem, for instance, can cause the perception of difficult life circumstances.[19]

By psychologizing the concept, Staub has made it potentially much more arguable in its application. It is relatively easy to determine when the material and economic conditions of an individual's life have declined. It is going to be much harder to determine when, historically, it makes sense to say that individuals were experiencing psychological feelings of deprivation. Some peasants in Cambodia were experiencing painful economic hardship but conditions for some were improving. Some Argentineans were doing more poorly, some were not. Staub makes the argument, particularly in the case of Argentina, that the feelings of decline were, at least considerably, psychological in nature, stemming from a perception that Argentina's hope of becoming a world power were fading. Although I do not think Staub stretches the application of his concept, I think it could be stretched by those who use it in the future. (In fact, I am about to do so.) The core of my problem is this; I would be hard-pressed to think of a time when one

could not make the case that any population had reasons to feel psychological difficulties, either by comparing their status with that of past generations, individuals in other cultures, or some glorified notions of what they were entitled to; or alternatively, that some subgroups within a nation or culture had reasons to feel this way, given similar comparisons. Thus it seemed that Staub's "difficult life conditions" precondition for genocide could be found to exist in, if not all places at all times, then at least most places at most times.[20]

The part of Staub's analysis that I have presented gives us the preconditions for a culture becoming "genocidal," more specifically, for the national leadership turning to killing members of an outgroup that exists within or at the margins of that nation. But the analysis seems to me to be equally applicable at the organizational level. The cultural forces that he identifies must be the background conditions for the formation of organizations that actually carry out the genocide. With this as background, we can now, and perhaps the reader will feel, "finally", turn to questions concerning the formation of those organizations. If it is a central claim of the social psychological analysis that evil doing is frequently a product of organizational processes, then it is necessary to say how the organizations that come to produce evil outcomes and evil-doing individuals come into being and reproduce themselves.

The origins of destructive organizations

It seems, though, that we are avoiding what we ourselves have made the central question. How do killing organizations come into being in the first place? Is it not the case that we have just spent

a great deal of time simply making minor shifts in the origins of evil? Are the people who put together the first killing machines not evil in the demonic sense that our common-sense analysis suggests? The answer of course, is frequently, "yes." Certainly Hitler was evil. Certainly too, the commanders of the Argentine forces who ordered the torture and killing of large segments of Argentinean society completely intended the killings they caused, and are evil.[21]

However, and this element is perhaps the most disturbing of the case I am constructing, I believe that organizations can lurch toward evil, in ways not intended by any of the participants in the organization.

Organizations of social control. First, however, the "yes" part of the story. Notice the organizations that we recognize have a propensity for harm. As Kelman and Hamilton remark, "The most obvious sources of crimes of obedience are military, paramilitary and social-control hierarchies, in which soldiers, security agents, and police take on role obligations that explicitly include the use of force. These hierarchies are the classic ones from which the term chain of command is borrowed; authority is bureaucratically stringent. The goals of these bureaucracies and the role definitions of actors within them in fact require harm to certain categories of others (such as an enemy or subversive). The sole question concerns the scope and definition of the target of harm rather than the existence of such a target" (p. 314).

In these organizations, coercive pressures are high. One "obeys orders," and often one's own life is in danger. Those to be controlled are the enemy, and are often dehumanized. Criminals are

"scum," Vietnamese "gooks." What one can do to the enemy or who counts as the enemy is rigidly rule-bound, but the reader will be well aware of the pressures to bend those rules, and replace the formal rules with informal rules that prescribe different and more lax standards. These informal rules come to govern behavior, and are well understood at the level of the police officer on the beat or the soldier in the field. We do not have much difficulty seeing how those organizations can shift toward becoming illicitly destructive machines; they are destructive machines to begin with.

Of course, this does not imply that those who command such organizations are always evil, or that those organizations must necessarily shift in this fashion. The Argentine generals and Hitler were evil; I at least do not think that the Army high command in the Viet Nam conflict was.

Yet large segments of the American Army did massacre civilians. So we face the fact that organizations can somehow be subverted or otherwise altered to turn persons within those organizations into evil-doers, even when the apex of the organization does not direct this. Again, we do not have too much trouble understanding how this happens in an organization set up for the purposes of social control. We will need to say something specific about this, and will do so shortly. However, before we do so, let us consider whether a more disturbing possibility isn't also true. The analysis we have constructed so far can be read in the following way. There is a particular subclass of organizations, roughly those concerned with social control, that have the unique capacity to turn their members into evil-doers. We have a reasonably clear notion of what those

organizations are. Our task, therefore, is to be particularly vigilant in monitoring those organizations, so they do not consciously stray or unconsciously slip into creating evil actions, and in the process, create evil doers. Success in this task, admittedly not easy to achieve, will protect us from this problem .

This analysis seems to me to be accurate as far as it goes, but it has one unfortunate implication. The truth is bleaker. Although I agree that organizations of social control are particularly vulnerable to this process, I disagree with the implicit contention that other kinds of organizations are not subject to similar problems. Normal organizations also bring their members to harm others.

Normal organization's propensities for harm

Many organizations exist that would not be conventionally regarded as organizations of social control. Schools and universities, manufacturing firms, research organizations. Do they need to figure in this discussion in any way? More specifically, what is their potential for socializing individuals into the harm-doing process? My answer is that their potential for the incubation of harm is high, and in many cases that we can cite, that potential has been actualized. It is within the brief of only one of the books we are examining to answer this question directly, and I have already indicated Kelman and Hamilton as answers. They invite us to consider several examples in which corporations or other organizations have gone far down this road. Recall the design of the Ford Pinto, sold for years by a company in which many executives were aware that it had a gas tank likely to rupture in low-speed rear-end crashes, and thus incinerate its passengers. Recall Watergate or the Iran-Contra

affair. Consider the silence of Morton Thiokol executives who were aware of the dangers to the space shuttle O-rings of low-launch temperatures. We could add to Kelman and Hamilton's list. Think about executives who continued to have shipyard workers work with asbestos long after its carcinogen properties were known to them, or government bureaucrats who kept uranium miners at work long after the dangers of that occupation were known to them. Consider any number of defense contractors who have delivered military weapons systems to the defense department with faked safety and effectiveness tests and substandard internal electronic components.

A complicated set of issues are raised here. First, we have the case of an organization whose activities bring a great deal of harm to individuals, but in which it is hard to fix the responsibility for that harm within the organization. Second, we have the case of the organization in which evil individuals are produced but produced in a more complex way than they are produced in the concentration camp. Third, I will argue that the division of organizations into those engaged in social control and related activities versus those engaged in, for instance, production or other purposes, is less useful for identifying organizations that may engage in harm-doing than we might think.

Let's look first at the case in which harm results from the unfortunate assembly of a set of innocent actions. When an organization does harm, that action can be the result of the interaction of a number of other actions, each of which is, on the face of it, innocent. Assume an organization has produced and marketed a drug that is later found to have terrible

side-effects--thalomide, or DES for instance. One corporate unit can develop a drug, and assume it will be tested for side-effects. Another unit, can arrange for it to be marketed, assuming those safety checks have been completed. Those who actually carried out the drug tests may be aware that their tests were not the sort of tests that can determine side-effects with any sort of precision. (For instance, consider DES, a drug given to pregnant women to reduce nausea during pregnancy. Only many years later could it be discovered that it produced various effects, including increased likelihood of cancer, among the young women who had been in utero when their mothers were taking the drug.) No individual intentionally brought about the horrid side effects produced.[22]

More to the point, it is difficult to identify exactly who within the organization was negligent in allowing the mistake to happen. This seems to become recognized in those few cases in which members of organizations are put on trial for the consequences of their actions. Rarely are any specific individuals found criminally liable.

As Kelman and Hamilton point out, this conclusion can be generalized to other cases in which on first glance there seem to be obvious wrong-doers to hold to account. They report what they found in their survey of American's reactions to "the Lt. Calley trial." Recall the circumstances. During the Viet Nam War, at the hamlet of My Lai, U.S. soldiers knowingly shot, clubbed, and bayoneted Vietnamese woman, children, old people, and babies. Once the coverup was exposed, an investigation revealed that superior officers had ordered a "search and destroy" mission into a hamlet that intelligence

indicated would be empty of civilians, and occupied only by enemy. Certainly nothing was said about the care to be taken if civilians were encountered in the hamlet. The company commander interpreted these orders to involve leveling the hamlet, and transmitted them to his subordinates, including Lt. Calley, who heard those orders as including the killing of the inhabitants.

Calley's platoon did so. They rounded up the inhabitants, saw that they were old people, women and children, and massacred many of them. Calley both gave the orders to do so and shot many of them with his automatic weapon. Enlisted men also shot civilians.

Who was responsible for this? As Kelman and Hamilton analyze the situation, the answer depends on what kinds of responsibility we are considering. Clearly, Calley and the enlisted men had direct causal responsibility; they did it. They killed people and they did it knowingly. Yet we also hold the notion of role responsibility; in the military this is discussed under the notion of "command responsibility." Officers are responsible for the conduct of their subordinates whether they ordered the actions of those subordinates or only allowed them to happen. From that point of view, the higher-ups were responsibe for the massacre. They certainly gave no orders concerning the protection of innocent life; some listeners read them as "saying" that they wanted the inhabitants killed.[23]

Calley, the only individual who had both role and direct causal responsibility, was the only individual tried and convicted for his actions. This makes intuitive sense. The enlisted men were seen as the physical cause of the killings, but it was recognized that they had a role responsibility to obey orders in general, which made them

unattractive candidates for punishment. But looking at higher authorities, many felt that they had a plausible claim to deny that murder of innocents was what they meant. True, they in some sense allowed the murders to happen, because the murders did happen, but they were not present, perhaps couldn't conceive that anyone would murder innocents, and so on. Only Calley, having both kinds of responsibility, was convicted.

Kelman and Hamilton went on to discover another interesting fact. Their survey discovered that citizens had quite different reactions to Calley's conviction, and those reactions could be related to which view of responsibility they held. Some respondents held to the view that the individual actor is responsible for his actions, and that this responsibility is not canceled if those actions are committed under orders. A majority of them approved of the Calley trial. Interestingly, they were also likely to say that the higher-ups should be tried. Others believed that in the massacre situation they themselves would have obeyed orders, most people would have obeyed orders, and it was unfair to try Calley for "doing so." Since this latter group also tended to disapprove of trying higher-up officers, they remind us of the way in which responsibility can be extraordinarily diminished when an organization commits an evil action. As Kelman and Hamilton remark,"individual responsibility and command responsibility together can add up to 200 percent responsibility, as they did for many (who asserted personal responsibility); or to 0 percent responsibility, as they did for many (who denied personal responsibility); or (presumably) to anything in between. With disturbingly high frequency, joint responsibility for

the My Lai massacre added up to zero in the public's eye" (p. 223).

In sum then, sometimes in organizations an act that harms others is innocently or unknowingly "assembled" from the actions of many individuals who are not aware that the consequence of the act to which their actions contribute will be destructive. Thus sometimes organizations perpetrate major evils, with no single individual having evil intentions, or being guilty of more than, arguably, negligence in not foreseeing the harmful consequences. Even when the organization acts through an individual who knowingly commits evil actions, if the individual's phenomenology is such that the individual may have regarded himself as acting at the behest or command of the organization, many people decrease the responsibility assigned to that person.

Consider now a second path by which organizations that are not military or social control organizations can bring about harm-doing actions that may change the actors into autonomous sources of harm in the future. In many organizational settings in which an action that is going to result in harm to others is taken, at least initially, there is no overt target for the actions committed, no salient other human who is seen to be a victim of the actions. The individual who decides to let the assembly line use substandard cord in the fabrication of radial tires is not thinking of the accidents that decision could cause; he is simply keeping the assembly lines moving. Because a good many of the forces that cause people to avoid doing harm to others rely on the salient presence of specific or specifically imagined victims, if they are not present, then restraining forces are considerably weakened. "These opposing forces

rest ultimately on the actor's awareness that he or she is connected to a victim," as Kelman and Hamilton remark (p. 313).

What this creates is the possibility that individuals within organization can lose sight of the fact that individuals may be harmed in the course of fulfilling the other goals of the corporation or bureaucracy. Then, let us assume that, suddenly and dramatically, it is discovered that the actions of the corporation have already harmed large classes of others. It is now realized that certain actions of the organization inevitably led to harmful outcomes. Pintos are actually rear-ended, gas tanks actually catch on fire, and actual passengers are actually, horribly killed. Memos are found to exist within the corporation in which design engineers warn about exactly these possibilities. To an outsider observing the situation, it seems apparent that those in the organization must have been aware of the harms risked, and thus, somewhere there must be evil individuals who have knowingly brought about those evils.[24]

Inside the organization, however, the phenomenology is very different. It is possible that the negative outcomes simply could not have been anticipated by any individual--an unanticipated drug side-effect might be an example of this. However, it is more likely that some evidence existed calling attention to the negative outcomes, but that evidence was paid insufficient attention within the organization. The people within the organization were focusing on other organizational goals, and missed the meanings of the danger signals because they were "negligent, hurried, sloppy, or overworked" (Kelman and Hamilton, p. 312). To this list could be added interpersonal processes involving breakdowns of communications and

diffusion of responsibility.

However it comes about, harmful actions have been committed, and now the individuals who had some responsibility for those actions have become aware of those consequences. To my mind, this is a critical point at which those individuals can become evil actors. Notice that the question is not whether or not to commit an immoral act. It is what to do when such an act has been committed and is now recognized. To those "organizationally responsible" for the harm-doing act, there are several choices, none of which is comfortable. These choices all seem to me to take the system in the direction of rationalization and coverup, rather than toward acknowledgement and amends. Again, the moral essence of the situation is this, an organization has unforeseeably, carelessly, or in some sense willfully harmed others. In the clear light of hindsight, to the organizational higher-ups, it must seem, as it seems to the potential outside observers, that the negative outcomes were at least forseeable and perhaps in the complex sense that an organization can be said to intend something, "intended." There may be internal evidence that all of the information was available within the organization to know that the effects would be harmful.[25]

Thus, were they to publicly or privately admit to the existence of the outcomes, or their role in producing them, they would be publicly convicted of harm-doing, and internally meant to feel shame and guilt. These are negative outcomes, and do not fit in with the people's dim memories of the paths that led them to the present predicament. At this point, it must be extraordinarily tempting to "cover up" the evidence if it is possible to do so. A number of

mechanisms are available to do so, depending on who has become aware of what. If the negative consequences are known only within the organization, then their existence can be minimized or denied. Apparently executives in cigarette companies to this day deny that cigarettes cause cancer. Thus the person denies the negativity of the consequences, or the responsibility for those consequences, and in doing so denies guilt, both to himself and to others. The second part of the motive, not to appear immoral in the eyes of others, leads to concealment of the harms from the outside world. Individuals in corporations, when they discovered that, e.g. the asbestos used by workers was leading to a high rate of cases of lung cancer, sometimes chose to conceal that fact, perhaps because they were concerned with the liabilities they would incur if they revealed that information.

Concealment has a price. Covering up past evidence is also likely to lead to maintaining the current practices that bring about the harms; it is at this point that I think that this organizational actor becomes evil, becomes an independent perpetrator of further negative acts now knowingly done. Historically, it is clear that shipyard managers or nuclear plant managers concealed increasing amounts of evidence that made clear to them that working with asbestos or mining uranium (or even living downwind from nuclear plants) caused cancer. But often the failure to acknowledge past harms is to continue to commit those harms in the present. On one hand, this may be exactly what those who conceal intend to accomplish; they can continue practices that they now know are unsafe. But the psychological dynamics can be more complex. Consider the plight of the manager who, although he wants to conceal evidence of past harms,

also wants to change current practices. In may not be possible. How can a shipyard worker who has worked with asbestos for twenty years interpret a sudden request to put on a filter mask? Thus it is often the case that, driven by a desire to hide past inadvertent harms, managers continue to have the workers work in what they now know are dangerous settings, or otherwise engage in dangerous activities. They now do intentionally what they had previously done unknowingly.

Concealment of harm within organizations is not easy. To maintain it, further concealments are likely to be necessary, even though these were perhaps not contemplated by the organizational actor at the moment of choice between acknowledging and denying the harms done. The evidence of previous harms had better disappear. Those in the organization who might discover the previous harms had better be hindered or muzzled. Computer memories had better be wiped clean. A number of repugnant and evil actions are found to be required following the initial decision to conceal the initial harm. People who don't think of themselves as corrupt find themselves burning incriminating documents and paying out bribes to potential informers. (Needless to say, one thinks of Watergate here, and the Iran-Contra scandal.)

At some point the "face" and the honor of the organization becomes committed to the concealment and the processes of denial that real harms have been done or real wrongs perpetrated. For those versed in history the Dreyfus affair comes to mind. An individual was falsely convicted of treason on rather flimsy evidence. This became apparent and when considerable new evidence pointing to Dreyfus's innocence had accumulated, a new trial was finally ordered. The

original conviction was affirmed. A more likely candidate for the treasonous act was later tried, and although the evidence was better that he committed the crime, he was acquitted. Why? Because those doing the retrospective reviewing did so with the burden of the fear that to reverse the verdict would be to dishonor the military or admit the national disgrace. And they were right. To do it now would to dishonor the military justice system and the French government. So they chose a path that further dishonored and discredited the system.[26]

What we have discovered here, I claim, is a second way that an individual can be caught up in and altered by a harm-doing process. Whatever else might be said about the Nazi doctor who stood on the selection ramp, designating those who would live and those who would die, he knew that was what he was doing. But often an individual within an organization carries out what seem to be routine actions, and then discovers those actions had negative consequences that now seem to have been anticipatable. Because he or she denies or conceals those consequences, and becomes enmeshed in a widening circle of actions necessary to maintain this denial and concealment, the person has moved to become an independent and autonomous perpetuator of the harms done. He or she has become evil. But the process here is an after-the-fact one, in which the person faces not the prospective choice to do harm, but the retrospective choice to acknowledge that his or her actions have already done harm. The more the person now sees those harms done should have been forseen, the more guilt, shame, and blame is acquired if he or she chooses to acknowledge past harms.

"Normal"organizations sometimes intend harm

I suggest there is a third way that many organizations cause harm. Bluntly put, they set out to do it. That is, their corporate ideologies make it appropriate to harm others, and the conditions of life include elements Staub identified as important in facilitating the development of genocidal practices. Reading Staub, while reading several other similar books at the same time, caused, as the saying goes, the penny to drop. That is, it occurred to me that many elements of Staub's analysis could be used to analyze some otherwise puzzling things that occur within organizations, that may explain how those organizations come to initiate harm-doing acts, and convert their members into evil individuals. In many organizations, the members are in fear of losing their positions; thus, even if they are well to do, they are experiencing difficult life conditions. Only if they perform up to a certain level, will they keep their jobs. Or perhaps more interestingly, only if they perform up to very high levels will they advance within a corporation. Echoing Staub, to be deprived of opportunities is to be in danger in a competitive corporate environment. Second, within a good many corporate structures, there exist certain well-identified groups whose interests are in some zero-sum relationship with the interests of the corporate roup. When one is in a zero-sum relationship with another group, it is easy to depersonalize members of that group and rationalize harming them. A few examples may make this point clear. Union management relations often take on this perspective. Corporations competing for the same markets tend to regard the others as the enemy, and act accordingly. Political parties competing for the votes certainly are

in this relationship with one another, and we have recently seen cases that make the point. For instance, to justify to oneself launching the infamous Willie Horton campaign ads, one must have been convinced that the "other side" consisted of people who would so disastrously govern America that any means of stopping them was warranted. At the end of that path lies Richard Nixon, Watergate burglaries, and beating up demonstrators who might cause the electorate to vote against incumbents. In a similar vein, it is interesting to speculate about what certain corporations think of their customers. Cigarette companies, for instance.

Michael Lewis, who wrote Liar's Poker, provides a richly detailed case of how those joining a stock brokerage firm were socialized into regarding their customers as sheep to be fleeced. A good many customers' lives were destroyed in the process, as the book reveals. At one point the narrator, Michael Lewis, describes selling a bond to a customer that somebody within his brokerage house has advised him is a good bond to sell. It falls, taking the customer down with it, and Lewis discovers that it was indeed "a good bond to sell." It was one that the brokerage house held a large inventory on, and had inside information that it was going to fall. Thus, they moved them out of inventory onto customers, letting the customers take the upcoming loss.

Considerable hilarity ensues within the brokerage house. Perhaps bent, although not morally broken by a similar set of experiences, Lewis leaves the firm, but the socialization process that he describes corrupts many of the participants. [27]

Of course, it was intended to. That is, his book makes clear the

willing participation of the firm's managers in the corruption, and their calculated efforts to corrupt lower-level staff. As an example, higher commissions were paid for moving poor-quality bonds off on unwary customers. One is reminded of the people who worked for the now defunct Lincoln Savings and Loan Company, which sold a good many nongovernment-insured investments to elderly customers, while allowing them to believe they were insured. Many lost their life savings.

Thus, in several complex ways, organizations that are not social-control organizations can still corrupt their members. In fact, they can do this is several complex ways and in one simple way. In the simple way, that is what they intend to do, to corrupt their members into dealing unethically with people that they regard as the enemy or their appropriately dehumanized "marks to be fleeced."

The reproduction of destructive organizations

We now consider another aspect of the usually unthinkable. If one were to take on the task of duplicating a killing organization, how would one do so? The question of organizational reproduction is quite easy to answer. Implicit in our previous analysis is an account of how such organizations reproduce themselves and grow. Organizations such those involved in the Nazi death camps have not one but two outputs. They produce not only death, but individuals who become autonomously capable of and committed to producing other deaths. They produce evil individuals who become available for the reproduction of the evil organization. Concretely, SS officers and soldiers who first murdered civilians on the eastern front could then be used to staff the concentration camps and initiate and socialize other individuals into the new organizations. Older soldiers in the

U.S.army in Vietnam made clear to the new inductees how the war was really to be fought. Using a single evil organization "intelligently," it can be made to produce a surplus of individuals who can be used to replicate the organization in other settings. Given that the individuals who have been "processed" by the evil organization have been brought to a point where they use their intelligence in the service of their evil actions, the replicated organizations can be counted on to transcend whatever local obstacles stand in the way of reproducing the results of the original organization. The staff of various concentration camps made numerous grisly procedural refinements that increased the efficiency of their activities.

The realization that evil-doing organizations have the capacity for self-replication provides part of the explanation for one of the facts that so bewilders us about, for instance, the Nazi death camps. What bewilders us is why so many individuals were willing to participate in their immoral activities. One answer is that different individuals were "trained" (a horrible word, used in this context) at different times, and they in turn trained others, and so the camps were staffed.

CONCLUSIONS

The argument has been a long one and I am not so convinced of its validity that I will try to summarize it. Instead, to draw others into the discussion, it seems useful for me to suggest some of its implications. We now have in modern culture a well-developed psychology concerned with the origins of antisocial acts in the personality structures of those who originate those acts. The

clinical investigation of "psychopaths," "sociopaths," "antisocial personalities," and other diagnostic categories into which we encode those who best fit our intuitive definition of the evil individual, while by no means concluded, has much to say about the origins of those individuals.[28]

This analysis is the sort we are all naturally drawn to because it fits with our everyday conceptualizations of evil-doing, in which the person who does the evil contains the appropriate quantum of evil, which is ultimately recognizable although it might not be apparent on casual scrutiny of the individual. But, the present argument goes, that individual level psychology is largely irrelevant to the occurrence of a much more common source of evil actions--produced by what I will call "organizational pathology." We now need to create--and the authors mentioned in this essay are creating--a psychology and sociology of how human institutions can purposively move or accidentally lurch toward causing these actions, somehow neutralizing or suspending or overriding or replacing the moral scruples of their members. That psychology will inevitably be a social and organizational one, rather than one centered on the individual acting alone, although, as all of them show, it will draw on the conceptualization of an individual-level psychology, particularly to explain how the individual participates in his training in the social movement, and continues to access his own particular skills in the service of the pathological group projects.

A polemical message lies behind this scientific one, or at least I have extracted one. It is too easy to conceptually defuse the chilling implications of evil actions by psychologically distancing

them. Reading about an evil action, we assume that it was committed by an evildoer, a person who, because of a psyche twisted by genetic mischance or developmental trauma, is abnormal and evil. We assume evil actions normally flow from the actions of individuals who contain the quantum of evil I described earlier. By doing this, I would argue, we preserve our belief in the essential justness of the world, by having a limited and contained generalization about when that justness will not prevail. We are assisted in this process in that we are led to commit what social psychologists call the fundamental attribution error, to attribute behavior to the internal dispositions of an individual rather than to recognize that it stems from situational pressure. Thinking about evil actions, we call to mind typical or modal (or "prototypes" or exemplars) representations of such actions, and in examining those representations, we find that they include images of evil individuals. In our minds evil acts are committed by evil individuals.[29]

The point that the social psychologist wants to stress is this: evil-doing is not confined to individuals who are evil at the time of the commission of the act. Each of us has the capacity to do evil actions if our surroundings press us to do so. The wonderfulness of our upbringings and the goodness of our personalities do not protect us from doing so. What social psychologists generally call the forces of the situation, but what I have argued here is the recruitment into a killing organization, entrain us into committing evil actions.[30]

Many social psychologists, myself included, have made a good deal of intellectual and career yardage by demonstrating the entraining nature of the forces of the contextual pressures on people, and the

definitions of the situation that they engender in those people. We thus show how actions that seem from the outside to be apathetic, or inhuman, are actually very human responses to flawed social situations. Frequently, having shown this, we end our lecture with a second message, which goes something like this: "Students. I have now made you aware of the ways in which social forces bring about the social constructions of the actors in the situation, and lead them to participate in doing evil. By making you aware of those social forces, I intend to enable you to resist the apparent imperatives of the situations in which you find yourselves, so you can avoid doing evil or step forward to do good." It is a rare lecture on bystander responses to emergencies that I haven't ended with that ringing affirmation of individual powers.

I continue to believe in that message, but I find I cannot apply it with such conviction as I used to when I think about the cases discussed here. To resist the psychological forces characteristic of the organizations discussed herein, pressures which strike me as often coercively high and reinforced by real physical threats, requires a rare degree of individual strength indeed. This plea for resistance at the individual level to the contrary, the real action in evil-prevention may lie elsewhere.

Where does it lie? What I suggest is that the prototypes we carry around about the sources of evil actions, that assign those actions to individuals who are themselves in some way intrinsically evil, causes us to ignore the more likely source of harm-doing actions, which is organizational in nature. If harm-doing actions are in the main committed by individuals caught up in organizations and

their pathology, then prevention or amelioration of evil may be best done at the organizational level. How could we do this? We have a standard set of interventions designed to prevent the development of pathology in military and social-control organizations. What can we learn from these that could be applied in the context of conventional organizations? Given my comments about the somewhat different ways conventional organizations slip into wrong-doing, ways of preventing evil-doing in those organizations other than the ways used in social-control organizations may be possible and necessary to discover. How, for instance, could we halt or limit the tendency of organizations to coverup past harms, and in the process inadvertantly commit themselves to perpetrate future ones? Other writers who have contributed to what I have called the social psychological perspective on evil clearly direct us to these questions.

One last word about the banality of evil. One way of wording the insight that arises from considerations such as have been examined here, is that it is generally only possible for a person to do evil when that evil has been "banalized"--rendered routine and morally neutral. To analyze these processes in order to understand them, we give phenomenological accounts about how ordinary people neutralize evil as they are caught up by forces urging them to commit it. By doing this, do we not banalize evil at second hand, as we render it understandable, and make its commission easier?[31]

I began with other discomforts; I end with that one.

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1.. If the above is taken as a description of the present state of philosophy, then it is a rather poor description. Within philosophy, there are a number of clear-headed and cogent analyses of evil that are internally coherent and well reasoned. But it is not the current state of philosophy that I am attempting to explicate. Instead, I am --I think accurately--trying to sketch in the ways in which most of us ordinary people, perhaps dimly remembering a college philosophy course or two, would enter into discourse about evil.

2.. These remarks raise rather acutely the question of who the "ordinary person" I am talking about here is to be taken to be, and just how many courses in moral philosophy I am assuming he or she has taken. One group that initially strikes us as quite different includes those who hold fundamentalist Christian beliefs, and who do believe in sin. But I want to suggest that they are also prone to the utilitarian groundings of morality that I suggest is the bedrock for the rest of us. As a test, ask a fundamentalist why some particular action is wrong. The initial answer may be some variant of "Because the Bible pronounced it a sin." However, if one continues to ask why God, Christ, or the Bible pronounced it a sin, answers will be forthcoming, and in my experience are based on causing harm to others or to self.

3.. Not irrelevant here, is the recent, "deconstructionist" movement in literary analysis, which argues that those works of

art we have characteristically regarded as masterpieces, and thus exemplars of the good, are in fact categorized as such because certain privileged elites have foisted this perspective on the rest of us. Thus, they too have been read as arguing for a relativistic world.

4.. For instance, even if somebody consented to being tortured, would not it still be evil to torture him?

5.. An individual who tortures animals is generally seen as evil. Thus, the inference of evil arises from other than crimes against other people. In fact, many feel mistreatment of animals is somehow particularly evil. I suspect that this is exactly because to hurt a creature who cannot have any reasoned role in the causal circumstances surrounding the incident seems particularly egregious. Still, this means that it is not the infliction of suffering on a human being that is necessary for evil, but the infliction of suffering on an organism capable of suffering--experiencing pain and perhaps anticipatory dread about that pain.

6.. Among the other things that arises is an inference of craziness. The two do not preclude each other.

7.[7]. The reader is invited to explore this. Imagine a series of acts, some of which seem bad and others evil, and examine the differences. Ask others about these cases. If your experience

matches mine, the others will agree with your classifications of most of the acts. Some may be classified differently; this is because the ndividuals doing the classifying are emphasizing different aspects of the ways of thinking about evil that I have elucidated above. Alternatively, they may be bringing to bear genuinely different perspectives.

8.. Since Saddam Hussein has some possibility of playing the role for this generation that Hitler has played for earlier generations, a few remarks about him may be appropriate. It needs to be remembered that these remarks are made soon after the conclusion of the ground war in Iraq. Briefly, I have no difficulty asserting that he is evil, and that the commander of the Allied forces (I suppose ultimately, George Bush) is not. This is so even though we assume for a moment that the Allied forces killed more civilians than did the Iraqi forces. The discussion to back that up would involve reference to Hussein's indiscriminate gassing of fleeing Iraqi Kurdish tribespeople, quasi-random launching of Scud missiles, and so on. Certainly Hussein will be enshrined within the institutional memories of those determining what sorts of conflicts American military must be prepared to fight. We will be, and probably should be, prepared to fight evil nations for years to come. It is also likely, however, that Hussein will not be as great a figure in the pantheon of demons as Hitler because he fought so ineptly. Perhaps complete evil needs to almost prevail.

9.. A comment about mental illness, and the relations between conceptualizations of individuals as crazy and as evil. Probably the most famous example of the serial killer plot in movie form is Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho. Certainly, one would not deny that Norman Bates (played by Anthony Perkins) is crazy. This is brilliantly suggested by his conversations with his mother, whom we discover is mummified. However, and the reason why the movie works, is that we retain a perception of Bates as containing that quantum of evil that I suggest is necessary to fulfill our stereotyped vision and for the psychological drama to grip us. In the current classic of the genre, Silence of the Lambs, Anthony Hopkins does an equally good job of showing us that it is possible to be both crazy and evil.

10. Readers will recognize this as a special version of Goffman's general account of retrospective biographical reinterpretation. In asylums, he points out that the process of interviewing and testing the mental patient is the process of constructing a biography that leads up to the mental breakdown or criminal episode that caused the inmate to be incarcerated in the asylum. This "leading to" is accomplished by discovering pathological meanings in events that might otherwise have been regarded as neutral, and emphasizing the frequency of occurrence of negative events in the individual's biography. Rosenhan, in his famous paper on the mental hospital careers of the normal individuals that he signed in to those hospitals, gives a

particularly poignant example of this. He reports what one of the "psuedopatients" (I suspect himself) toldd the interviewer about his childhood, and then gives the interviewer's writeup of the case. The description is normal, the case writeup reeks of pathology. Kai Erikson generalizes the notion of reconstruction further. He argues that although history is lived from the past to the future, whether we are constructing the history of a person or a social movement, we do so from the present into the past, emphasizing those elements of the past that can be seen as leading into the present state of things. Laus, for example, the South of the 1850s will always be the "precivil war South."

11. Humanity has a long history of struggle with the problem posed by the existence of evil. For instance, it is obviously in conflict with the concept of an all-powerful God, and thus has generated a number of views that the early Christian church labeled heretical.

12. Here we use the notion of "protagonist" in the technically incorrect but usual sense of hero-protagonist--the detective who is tracking the killer. In the better-done suspense books, it is possible to make the case that the role of protagonist is shared equally between the villain-seeker and the villain.

13. It is as if the world fits a generic plot for science-fiction novels. Somehow living among us is a race of aliens, creatures from another planet, who commit evil. Under

certain conditions, we can recognize the aliens for whom they are, and thus guard ourselves against their evil actions. However, terrifyingly, sometimes these aliens appear in the guise of humans, making it difficult to recognize them and guard against their actions.

14. Of course, the authors would not want to deny the existence of evil done by evil individuals, who do meet the specifications of our intuitive requirements for the evil actor. However, if we can extend their argument, surely they are showing us that the huge predominance of evil actions committed in the world are in keeping with their model rather than the intuitive individual-origins model. And surely they are correct here; surely this is one thing that the fate of the six million means.

15. Kelman caused me to see this first. In his discussion of a talk I gave on the Milgram work, he pointed out that, physiological readiness aside, a good many elements in modern culture generated what is clearly a habitually assumed agentic role. When in that role, the role incumbent accepts the authority's judgments of the right and wrong things to do. Perhaps this is a good time for the now customary acknowledgements of my own connections with the authors of the various works under discussion.

16. Bandura distinguished his account from one that would be given by what he calls a "radical behaviorist" by giving causal weight to cognitive factors in governing behavior. However, the life events and external influences shaping these cognitions would be similar to the ones that behaviorists would point to, including evaluative feedback, instruction and tuition, and modeling.

17. This description is quoted in Staub, p 139. It is taken from Jan Karski's 1944 book, Story of a Secret State, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1944).

18. Does this mean I am accusing Milgram of behaving unethically in inflicting his paradigm on subjects? The answer to this is complex, but has more elements of "No" than it does of "yes." We now have a much clearer picture of the dynamics of the Milgram experiment than was possible at its inception.

19. There is an interesting parallel between Staub's notion of life difficulties, and the hypothesis about the revolutionary potential generated in populations experiencing rising expectations. That hypothesis suggests revolutions occur when the gap between life conditions the masses are experiencing and the life conditions they can imagine experiencing grow larger. The summary phrase is that revolutions are caused by rising expectations. We could unify that hypothesis with Staub's hypothesis by noting that both terms in the equation, the

assessment of the current state and the assessment of what is possible, have psychological components (the expectations component, in fact, seems almost completely psychological in nature). Let us add the notion that people are aware of the source of the discrepancy between what is and what ought to be; that, for instance, they sense their own conditions have worsened or those of other groups improved, and they have or can be given some sense of the cause of this gap. This information may guide their choice of remedy, which can be either removing the government (revolution) if they identify it as the source of the gap, or eliminating subgroups within the population, if those subgroups can be scapegoated as the source of the gap.

20. Obviously modern polling techniques create the possibility of determining with some precision who it is that is experiencing significant feelings of deprivation. It is difficult to do this retrospectively, for populations of another culture, in which these sorts of surveys are not taken.

21. They are also free. As of the end of 1990, they were pardoned by the President of Argentina, Carlos Menem.

22. A science fiction reader reminded me of Asimov's famous laws governing the conduct of robots. Obviously, in a thoughtful society, one would build a prohibition against killing a human being into the governing program of a robot. In one

disconcerting short story, I recall that the author figured out a way that robots could bring about the death of a human being. The programmer simply created a series of apparently innocent steps that brought about a human's death. For instance, one robot puts rat poison in a container in the tool shed, another robot is told to move the container from the shed to a kitchen shelf, the third robot is told to put a spoon of "sugar" from the container into the victim's coffee._ To return from the fanciful, the general point is that a number of subroutines, each not morally outrageous, can sum to an outrageous act.

23. When uttered in different contexts, sentences sometimes "mean more than they say." This is the psycholinguistic notion of "pragmatic implicatures." For instance, I am teaching a seminar. John the student comes late to the seminar and leaves the door to the hall open as he slinks to a seat near the door. If I say, "John, it is noisy out in the hall." I report a fact about noise, but surely mean that John should reach out and shut the door. It may go a step further; I may be telling John that his lateness is noticed and marked up against his name. This provides an interesting retrospective illumination on the Milgram experiments. At some points the experimenter said to the shock giver, "please go on, the experiment requires that you go on." Because the shock-giver know that the experimenter had heard the victim's protests, he read the meaning of that sentence to be, roughly, "I am in charge here and I am sure that the learner is not getting harmed. He may be getting a little hurt, but he

agreed to that in the beginning."

24. And sometimes this is true. There are those evil individuals. One thinks of the bosses of the company that recovered precious metals using processes that involved terribly dangerous chemicals, took almost no safety precautions to shield the workers from the effects of these chemicals, and hired illegal immigrants who spoke little English so they would not understand what was happening or be able to reveal it to others.

25. In the case of the Ford Motor Company, Kelman and Hamilton tell us that there were internal memos acknowledging the flaw, the danger it represented, and the cost of a redesign fix. The fix was about $11 per car, which was then cost-benefit compared to the costs of the estimated payouts to persons killed in rear-end accidents, estimated at about two hundred thousand dollars per death (p. 311). It would have been rather difficult to deny corporate forseeability or intentionality here.

26. Lest anyone think this is an isolated incident, let me remind them that the British justice system is currently seriously dishonored by exactly the same pattern of events in the case of the "Birmingham six," a case where the initial conviction and subsequent denial of appeals of individuals accused of terrorist bombings were upheld. Initially, the system brought in a flawed verdict based on faked evidence. It

dishonored itself by willfully blinding itself to this during the appeals process. And more recently, the Los Angeles police department brutally beat a black speeder they stopped, and had filed the papers to cover this up. An amateur's videotape of the beating derailed that coverup.

27. He was, after all, a Princeton Man.

28. This is not to say that the current trend in clinical psychology is to label as evil these individuals. Indeed, it seems to be the opposite. As the pathology of each individual is examined, the individual's evil character firsts shimmers, then disappears. Genetic influences hint at a deterministic story that makes the individual a victim rather than a cause of his impulses. Early childhood trauma has the same cause-removing effect.

29. An example of this may make it concrete. Stanley Milgram made a film of his experiments, in which he included several sequences of shock-giving individuals who "go all the way," That is, a person in the role of teacher was to give an ascending series of painful shocks to the learner if the learner made mistakes on an associative learning task. Several individuals shown in the film, under what appeared to be mild prodding from the experimenter, escalated to the maximum levels of shock, even in the face of the protests of the individual receiving the shocks. When this film is shown to introductory students, they

invariably attribute a sadistic personality to the "teacher." The experienced lecturer sometimes allows this perception to be created, then dismantles it by showing that the degree of situational control of this behavior was so high as to preclude this explanatory possibility.

30. One needs to put this cautiously. A number of studies in social psychology including Zimbardo's on deindividuation, Latane's and my own on responding to emergencies, and Milgram's, have demonstrated a high degree of situational control over actions usually thought to be largely under dispositional control. Certainly, the Milgram findings of a high percentage of subjects behaving obediently defeats the attribution of sadistic personalities unless we want to make the rather improbable claim that a majority of New Haven dwellers are sadistic. However, as Funder and Ozer (1991) point out, there is still plenty of variance in those studies that potentially could be explained by individual difference variables. True. Still, it may not be useful to conceive of these individual differences as trait-described dispositions acquired during childhood socialization.

31. As the philosopher Lichtenberg remarked in another context, "warm, slightly burned, thanks" to Dan Robinson for forcefully reminding me of this point during a talk I gave on processes socializing individuals into evildoing.

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