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THE SOCIALIZATION INTO CRIMINALITY: ON BECOMING A PRISONER AND --ETC(U)

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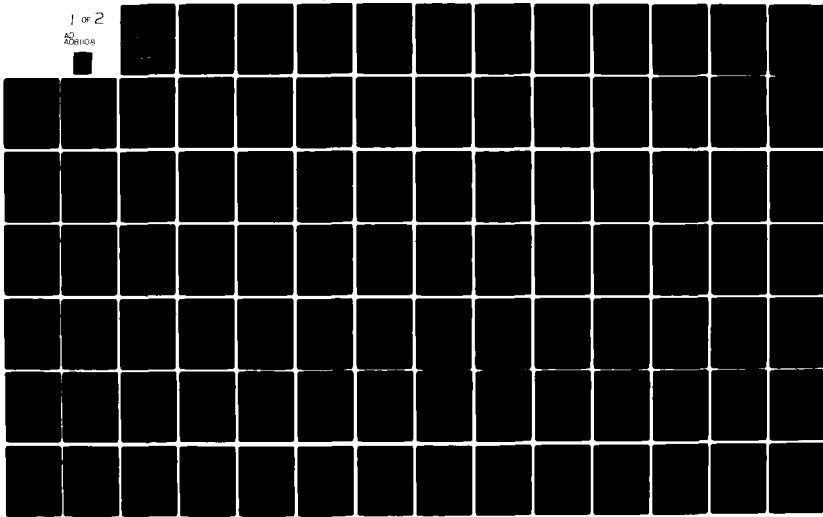
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The  
Socialization Into Criminality:  
On Becoming a Prisoner and a Guard  
(10) Craig Haney Philip Zimbardo  
Stanford University

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A REPORT FROM THE  
**Social Psychology Laboratory**

15 Feb 1974

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The  
Socialization Into Criminality:  
On Becoming a Prisoner and a Guard

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The devices for effecting degradation vary in their feature and effectiveness according to the organization and operation of the system of action in which they occur. In our society the arena of degradation whose product, the redefined person, enjoys the widest transferability between groups has been rationalized, at least as to the institutional measures for carrying it out. The court and its officers have something like a fair monopoly over such ceremonies and there they have become an occupational routine.

--Harold Garfinkel  
"Conditions of Successful  
Degradation Ceremonies"

I. An Introduction to the Power of Situations

One of the fundamental assumptions of our criminal justice system is that the causes of behavior reside primarily within the individual. This assumption is most clearly reflected in what the institutions of justice have come to view as the most appropriate response to criminal behavior: the apprehension and treatment of the individual lawbreaker. However vehemently social and moral philosophers may debate the ultimate nature of the forces which engender crime, the criminal justice system functions not to change environmental or situational conditions, but rather to distribute punishment to those persons whom it has identified as "guilty" of engaging in criminal behavior. Thus, Wilkins (1973)

wryly observes that:

. . . society has attempted to deal with those events which were defined as criminal by seeking to deal with the person who committed the act. We even refer to a crime as being 'solved' when we have found someone who can be blamed for committing it; this is an odd use of the term 'solved'. (p. 22)

The assumption that the causal locus of criminal behavior is personal and resides within the individual is manifested in the most commonly cited justifications for invoking the criminal sanction. The very concept of rehabilitation or reformation, for example, presupposes some defect or deficiency in the individual offender which his incarceration is designed to correct. Depending upon both the philosophy and facilities of the institution to which he is entrusted, the lawbreaker's "rehabilitation" is thought to be either: the result of some specific training designed to provide him with skills that were previously lacking (e.g., vocational training); a product of the treatment or eradication of his personal psychological problems (e.g., psychotherapy); or, more simply, a function of the offender's increased and more intimate knowledge of the conditions of punishment (which may range from a mere traffic fine to lengthy imprisonment.) Whatever the specific source of reformation, however, the general implication is quite clear--undesirable behavior is to be reduced or eliminated by effecting change in the individuals who perform it. This philosophy attains its most vivid physical embodiment, of course, in the institution of prison, where individuals are taken and kept presumably until they have been rehabilitated or "learned their lesson".

Given the orientation of person-as-cause, it is understandable that the criminal justice system and its agents most frequently

account for the obvious fact that some persons engage in criminal behavior while (presumably) others do not, simply by inferring the existence of special properties or dispositions in those persons who do. Individual differences in behavior are explained in terms of individual differences in the very nature of the people themselves. Thus, the prevailing (if not enlightened) view among criminologists and penologists is that certain people engage in criminal activity because they possess some special dispositions or deficiencies which predispose them to do so. These dispositions may be inborn or they may be the result of environmental conditioning, but they are properties of the person nonetheless.<sup>1</sup> It follows as well that if criminal behavior is seen to be a function of personal defects or dispositions, then the problem of crime and criminals is best addressed by acting on these dispositions directly. This action may take the seemingly well-defined form of attempting to cure an individual's psychological disorder or as ambiguous a form as the substitution of strength and good character were once there was only weakness and turpitude. The most extreme (but increasingly recommended) extension of this approach is the concept of "preventive detention" whereby the mere hypothesized existence of the underlying disposition is taken as sufficient justification for the use of the criminal sanction, in the absence of any criminal behavior.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, the tendency to explain certain behaviors by imputing special characteristics or dispositions to those persons who engage in it is not limited simply to the criminal justice system. Indeed, reflection upon our everyday experience suggests that most of us use dispositional explanations in a variety of contexts to account for behavior we observe. So that, in the absence of substantial information to the contrary, we are likely to assume that one man behaves cruelly because he is "sadistic", another

man cowers because he is "timid", and another argues because he is "disputatious". Psychologists, too, have contributed much to the existence of this dispositional bias by emphasizing personality or trait explanations in their theories of human behavior. The concept of "personality" as a nexus of underlying traits or dispositions which control and determine man's behavior has dominated most areas of psychology for many decades. To understand man's nature, the traditional doctrine holds, you must comprehend his personality--those traits which distinguish one man from another and those dispositions which compel each to action.

Moreover, psychiatrists and psychologists have provided the conceptual and terminological framework within which lawyers, judges, and criminologists could "scientifically" interpret deviant or criminal behavior. In fact, it is not uncommon to find criminal behavior being explained totally in terms of concepts borrowed directly from the psychological literature: juvenile delinquency is thought to be a function of the "inability to delay gratification" or an "acute character disorder", while adult crime is seen as the product of a "sociopathic personality" or someone's "deficient super-ego". It is not surprising, then, that a continuing theme in many prison reform movements has been to supplant or supplement the traditional punishment model with a more sophisticated model of psychological treatment which is designed to alter and improve the offender's presumably maladaptive psychological dispositions. In fact, a number of prison systems have already adopted an approach whose primary, if not exclusive, focus is on making fundamental changes in the basic nature of prisoners' personalities through such techniques as intensive psychotherapy and behavior modification procedures (cf. Mitford, 1973; chapters 7 and 8.)

Yet, if there has been a single important lesson emerging from



recent social psychological research it has been to emphasize the degree to which situations and not personalities control behavior. Quite simply, the validity of our dispositional bias has been given careful scrutiny and it has been found lacking: all of us, laymen as well as psychologists and judges, overestimate the extent to which traits or dispositions determine behavior. This finding has been perhaps most systematically presented by Walter Mischel(1968) who carefully examined the utility of a very extensive range of personality and trait measures and found them to be of exceedingly little value in accounting for or predicting individual behavior. Rather, concluded Mischel, there is evidence for tremendous situational specificity in behavior: people tend to respond to the relevant characteristics of the environment and rarely behave with demonstrable consistency across a variety of different situations.

This position, of course, argues persuasively against the existence of any broad, underlying personality dimensions, including, incidently, a generalized criminal tendency or dispositions which might compel "immoral" behavior. In fact, one of the studies Mischel relied upon in his analysis was the early but very sophisticated research by Hartshorne and May (1928) on the moral behavior of children. In their ambitious project they exposed thousands of children to a variety of temptations, including the opportunity to cheat on tests, lie, and steal money, only to find that there was very little generality of honesty across settings. From the specificity of the behavior they observed, Hartshorne and May concluded that children simply do not have a generalized code of morals. While the implications of their results went largely unrecognized, their findings are not unlike those of more contemporary researchers who have found even the most extreme

adult behavior like violence and aggression to be a function of the evoking and maintaining conditions of the situation in which it occurs (e.g., Bandura, 1973).

In addition to highlighting the lack of consistency in individual behavior across different situations, the research of Mischel and others (e.g., Peterson, 1965) makes salient the tremendous potency of the situation or environmental setting in the control of behavior. It suggests that the causes of even markedly deviant behavior are best conceived of not as continuing properties of the individuals who perform it, but rather as residing in the characteristics of the situations in which these individuals find themselves. Indeed, it is instructive to view the results of one of the best known paradigms in contemporary psychology, the Milgram obedience studies, in precisely this context. Under the guise of conducting an experiment on the "effects of punishment on memory", Stanley Milgram (1965) found that an average of two-thirds of the subjects who entered his laboratory were willing to behave in ways they believed to be painfully (though not necessarily permanently) injurious to another person. Even though the "victim" cried out in pain and literally begged for the study to be terminated, most subjects continued to deliver what they believed to be high levels of electric shock (up to 450 volts). In some conditions, Milgram and his replicators required subjects to hold the victim's hand in the shockplate while delivering the shocks, and in another a plausible cover story made it seem likely that the victim was suffering a heart attack. Yet, subjects continued to obey. It is particularly important for the present discussion to recognize that, from the standpoint of the law, such behavior may be regarded not only as cruel, but felonious as well--ranging from simply assaultive to (potentially) homicidal in the case of the feigned heart attack. These studies, then, actually demonstrated that under

the proper circumstances a substantial majority of the population was willing to perform what amounts to a serious felony, merely at the urging of an authority figure and despite any personal reluctance to do so.

How are we to interpret these data? Surely, few would argue that fully two-thirds of the population possess criminal, even murderous, tendencies which predisposed them to such actions. Quite obviously, the data speak instead to the exceptionally powerful situational forces present in the experimental paradigm, and their ability to produce hitherto unpredictable, nonetheless, reprehensible behavior. Milgram himself recognized this when he wrote that "under certain circumstances, it is not so much the kind of person a man is as it is the kind of situation in which he is placed that determines his actions"(p. 75).

But the criminal justice system, as we have described, takes little formal account of the contribution of situational forces in the determination of criminal behavior. Premised as it is upon the notion of the individual criminal as causal agent, its machinery is not designed to confront issues of what might be called "situational responsibility". The manifest purposes of its guilt-fastening process become even more ambiguous than they presently are if the acknowledged determinants of behavior are taken to be impersonal forces rather than individuals.

There are, we should note, some provisions made within the criminal law for situational elements to mitigate the seriousness of a crime, as when "passion and provocation" reduces murder to manslaughter. These provisions, however, are generally reserved for highly unusual or anomalous forms of situational influence, for example, those instances in which the individual is uniquely affected by the situation such that

his subsequent perception and ability to act in a rational manner is impeded (e.g., Cardozo's "mind swept from its moorings"). The criminal law generally does not consider the issue of situational control in what we would regard as at once the more common and important instance: when the veridical perception of situational elements and a rational response to them leads one irrevocably into the performance of what is defined as criminal behavior.<sup>3</sup>

It is possible, however, for juries to take situational control factors implicitly into consideration in their determination of the facts of a case and in deciding upon a defendant's guilt. When this does occur, though, jurors are most often operating in sub rosa fashion--recognizing the operation of environmental contingencies in spite of, rather than because of, the dictates of the law. Thus Michael and Wechsler (1940) comment:

. . . No one who has observed juries at work in criminal cases can doubt that jurymen's answers to the question of fact submitted to them by the court are influenced to an incalculable degree by the circumstances under which the defendant committed his crime or the sort of person they believe him to be, even when such considerations are legally immaterial. (p. 22)

Yet, if our observations about dispositional biases in perceiving the causes of behavior are applicable to the jury situation, it is likely that the "kind of person they believe him to be" influences jury decisions far more than does their consideration of the "circumstances under which he committed the act".

However, it would be unreasonable, even quixotic, to expect that the criminal law and the institutions of the criminal justice system might have anticipated or swiftly adapted themselves to the changing conceptions of

the causes of behavior. And we should recognize that it will undoubtedly take considerable time for such adjustment to be finally made, in part because the law and legal apparatus are by nature slow to react to changes in social and intellectual realities; in part, also, because the concept of situational control challenges some very fundamental assumptions of the criminal justice system. To adopt this more pragmatic view of legal reform, though, is not to suggest that the thesis of situational determinism should be withheld from legal contexts, but on the contrary, to signal that this dialectic must be even more vigorously pursued if the appropriate institutional accommodations and adjustments are to be made with dispatch. And there is perhaps no better place for us to begin than with an analysis of the way in which situational forces influence and determine behavior within the criminal justice system itself. For surely, if environmental contingencies control the behavior of persons in the larger society, they operate no less potently on the actors and agents of the law.

There are few places in society where the forces of behavioral control are more salient and their effects more extreme than in the institution of prison. A prison is fundamentally an institution of power and control. It can be seen as a kind of social crucible in which the dynamics and the power of situational control are distilled and concentrated to such a degree that the behavioral reactions which they catalyze profoundly change and sometimes thoroughly denature those who dwell inside it. But the evil, the violence, the degradation and despair that characterize prison cannot and should not be comprehended in a vacuum, for many of the same mechanisms of social control occur extensively in other more prosaic contexts and are, therefore, in some ways familiar to us all. Consequently, we have chosen to begin our analysis in its most general terms, seeking an understanding of the social psychological processes by which one becomes socialized into any confining institutional role, within prison as well as without.

## II. Institutional Socialization: Some Generalizations About Process

. . . today it is hard to resist the thought that the equation of evil with irrational violence deflects our attention from the highly calculated, indeed rational, forms that evil may take.

Charles Drekmeier (1971)

Social institutions constitute a constant and prolonged "situation" for those persons who live and work within them. And it is through the process of institutional socialization that the institution acts to maintain and to increase its protracted situational control. To best understand the way in which a prison socializes men into the roles of "prisoner" or "guard", we can first consider certain features of adult socialization itself, as it occurs in more diverse and familiar settings. In this section we will focus on the kind of socialization processes most akin to becoming society's guards, since it is the guards who in turn become the "socializers" of prisoners. And, so that we do not confuse the prosaic sources of this process with its impotence, we turn initially to some of the most extreme and regrettable forms of behavior which have resulted from institutional socialization outside prison.

### A. On the Banality of Evil

If nothing else, history should certainly have taught us the futility of seeking the sources of evil deeds in the nature of the men who perform them. Studies of even the greatest iniquity and inhumanity have shown them generally to be the products of normal, average men whose commonplace motives and relative naivete were perverted in the service of evil purpose. As comforting as the notion would be for us to maintain, the belief in evil as the result of a few individuals of abject moralities

and deranged vision is simply not viable: the greatest malefaction has always required the participation of many and the tolerance of most. Even the leaders of corrupt and evil systems often fail to show the abnormality and deviance we assume produced their actions, as is dramatically documented in Arendt's (1965) study of Adolf Eichmann:

. . . The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgment, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together. . . . (p. 276)

Studies of the men who engaged in great cruelties during the Vietnam War, even those who participated in My Lai, show them to be average men with little to distinguish them from the rest of us--except for the experiences to which they were exposed and the events in which they were lead to play a role. Having learned that virtually no one had reported noticing any abnormal behavior in the My Lai soldiers prior to or following the atrocities, Opton (1971) wrote that:

The fact that the accused officers and men did nothing to draw special attention to themselves in the months before and after the massacre indicates that they were not remarkably different from run-of-the-mill soldiers. (p. 51) (Emphasis added.)

If we are to understand the forces which produce evil in our time, then we must seek insights into the processes by which normal and good men are lead to the performance of evil deeds. It is becoming increasingly true that effective power cannot be utilized without large groups

of individuals being mobilized in the process. In our society the behavior of persons in groups is controlled most commonly (and effectively) in institutional settings. Thus we must look to the techniques by which institutions gain power and control over man's behavior, co-opting individual purposes to its own.

B. The Process of Becoming Socialized

"Socialization" is a process of transformation. When applied to the infant, this process transforms behavior which is initially controlled by biological exigencies and hedonistic principles into that which is governed by considerations of propriety: time, place and occasion for eating, sleeping and eliminating. Despite the effort required by parents and other socializing agents, it is 'well worth it' for them in the long run to have a socialized child whose behavior follows predictable and "civilized" conventions.

When applied to the child, socialization becomes a more pervasive indoctrination program with multiple goals: compliance with the laws and norms of the given society; conformity to the political, economic and religious beliefs of the society; loyalty to family and other groups which the family deems deserving of such loyalty; acceptance of ethical and moral values as guides to action and learning of the secrets of "making it"--of successful survival in the society at hand. Despite the time and energy invested by society's agents of socialization, this second transformation is even more "worth it" to them than the first because it insures the continuation of the status quo, and (perforce) their own perpetuation.

Socialization is thus assumed to be the means by which egocentered, selfish, uncontrolled organisms become responsible, law-abiding adult citizens. Therefore, socialization has traditionally been considered to



be self-limiting in duration, ending with adulthood when it is presumably no longer necessary.

But sociologists such as Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel have made us aware of the many areas of life in which adults continue to be socialized and transformed into even more socially approved and acceptable actors. When applied to adults, socialization designates the process by which mature individuals are given further training. This informal training, via models or perceived contingencies, takes the form of refraining from behaviors that might bring them immediate pleasure, while engaging in behaviors that often bring them immediate dissatisfaction--but long-term gain to either themselves, or to some other person, group, institution or society. In general, adult socialization limits individual freedom of action because some more powerful agent of socialization believes that freedom to have been misused, or else that it must be used in the service not of ego but of some other entity, such as national security, work and profit, the common good, etcetera. In many cases, this final stage of socialization espouses values contrary to those revered and upheld in the more innocent transformations of the young. Practicality and cynicism are the working principles which supplant potentiality and idealism--doing some one else's thing replaces doing one's own. To "not make trouble" and not be noticed are the resocializing principles for which a sense of moral righteousness and individuality must give way. In adulthood, training in socialization is concentrated into institutionalized forms within the military, prisons, mental hospitals, factories and other work settings. In his essay on "Work and the Self", Everett Hughes (1951) noted that there are generally several activities subsumed in a man's occupation, and that:

some of them are the dirty part of that trade. It may be dirty in one of several ways. It may be simply disgusting. It may be a symbol of degradation, something that wounds one's dignity. Finally, it may be dirty work in that it goes counter to the more heroic of our moral conceptions. (p. 319)

"Becoming socialized" in institutional settings involves primarily accustoming oneself to performing these varieties of "dirty work".

And it is a characteristic feature of the truly dehumanizing institutional structures in our society that their work borrows many elements from each of Hughes' categories, thereby insuring the degradation and compromise of the agents as well as the objects of their "institutionalization."

Generally, this process of socialization or adjustment is a gradual one, proceeding often in almost imperceptible steps. Initially the discontinuities between the self and the required tasks are minimal, and the effects of these adjustments are experienced perhaps only as mild tension or unease. Although the process is persistent and one's exposure to it may be prolonged, the exertion of power and control generally advances at a consistent rate, and the individual may be moved gradually toward the desired institutional goal without being subjected to severely traumatic or wrenching accommodations at all.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, a crucial aspect of the process, at least in the early stages, is the avoidance of posing a definitive choice for the individual in which he is either ultimately compromised or self-affirmed. The effects of this gradual progression as it operates in a more general context are described by Bettelheim (1960) who asks:

. . . when the state makes small inroad after small inroad, at which point is one to say: No more, even if it cost me my life? And pretty soon the many small inroads have sapped

so much courage that one no longer has the nerve to take action . . . if action is delayed, the longer anxiety lasts and the more energy is spent on binding it, that is, on not acting to relieve it, the more a person is drained of vital energy and the less he feels capable of acting on his own. (p. 261)

It is man's inability to react decisively to these "small inroads", to know when to resist even minor compromise or else find that his position has been hopelessly eroded, which makes man prey to this gradual yet seemingly relentless wearing down process of the agencies of socialization (who are not in a hurry to transform him, but can afford to wait patiently as it evolves.)

And perhaps even more insidious is the fact that the motives which underlie the passive accession to control need not be, in themselves, exceedingly powerful nor inherently evil. Rather they are most often among the most common and mundane of considerations: occupational security, advancement, peer approval, and the like. They are the motives we have all been taught to value and which impel us to perform conscientiously at what we do. Yet, so compelling may these motives become that they have the constant potential to corrupt, even to invert, the basic purpose of a man's occupation. In his study of city police, for example, Rubinstein (1973) observed that a patrolman is often obliged to violate the law, to lie and to steal as a necessary part of his job. For a policeman, he writes:

. . . knows that the only way [which he] can be honest in the exacting sense required by his oath of office is to resign. The policeman does not want to quit, so he makes little compromises. . . . He does things that are illegal, but he has no choice. He knows there are many dishonest policemen, but his rewards for doing work he considers 'dirty' are little more than the renewal of his right to continue in the job. (p. 401)

Thus, in order to simply "stay on the job" the police must engage in precisely those activities which their occupation is designed to prevent. As we will see, this is no less true (and certainly no less ironic) in the case of another agent of criminal justice, the prison guard.

The series of events which has come to be known as the "Watergate Scandal" provides further evidence of the banality of motives which can compel the most dangerous of acts. Particularly in the course of the Senate Subcommittee hearings, many Americans witnessed a procession of mostly young, generally bright men whose testimony highlighted the process by which commonplace motivation and seemingly good intentions could be perverted in the service of ignoble ends. One convicted Watergate conspirator describes the way in which a combination of gradual compromises and everyday motives can coalesce:

. . . It's a question of slippage. I sort of slipped right into it. Each act you take leads you to the next act, and eventually, you end up with a Watergate. It's very typical in large corporations. Someone else is influential. He has an idea and he gets the idea approved. You're the one who has to carry it out. You don't agree with it, but it's important to satisfy the group consensus: 'It isn't that important and I might as well go along.'

(Magruder, quoted in Terkel, 1973, p. 67)

Thus men could become inured to great wrongdoing, indeed participate in it, by merely applying the identical formula through which they and others had become corporately successful.

Yet, the essential element to insure the success of this socialization appears to be the individual's lack of awareness of the potency of the institutional setting-- the power which the situation possesses to gain control

over him. He is generally unaware not only of the power of the situation but as well of the very process of socialization in which he is participating. He tends to become submerged in the assumptions of the institution and absorbed by the contingency of the moment. To the extent those around him behave similarly, perspective fades and he becomes unable to evaluate his own behavior critically.<sup>5</sup>

An example of the way in which routine motives may combine with this lack of awareness to produce the most extreme of evil is again provided by Arendt:

Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, [Eichmann] had no motives at all. And this diligence in itself was in no way criminal; he certainly would never have murdered his superior in order to inherit his post. He merely, to put the matter colloquially, never realized what he was doing. (p. 287) [emphasis in original]

When persons are not aware of the potential of the situation to control them and become obsessed with the contingency of the present, their behavior is devoid of the vigilance which might otherwise prevent their situational co-optation. A kind of social amaurosis or gradual dimming obtains whereby people become progressively less able to see where they are going because they are being moved in imperceptible steps. Consequently, they tend to be even more profoundly ignorant of the directions in which they are being changed and the ultimate goals towards which they are being socialized. A person may thus find himself unwittingly in compliance with a series of situational demands which, taken individually are in themselves trivial, but whose totality he might otherwise reject and whose final outcome he might regard as reprehensible--if only it could be viewed in perspective. Thus we often accede where we might otherwise resist and rebel, not because of

our total insensitivity to situational pressures but because we lack broader awareness of the pattern or direction of situational control, and of the final goals which are to be ultimately realized.

The force of the situation, the contingency of the moment, and the motive of the commonplace come to govern ongoing behavior in institutional settings and, although he may experience briefly the discrepancy between their demands and his ideals, ". . . the individual" in Goffman's (1959) words "constantly twists, turns, and squirms, even while allowing himself to be carried along by the controlling definition of the situation."

But further, there is much evidence to suggest that even the discontinuities which we experience between our self and our institutional role--the twisting, turning, and squirming of compliance--are transient. There is a large body of social psychological evidence to suggest that the best way to change a person's attitudes or beliefs is to get him to behave as if he believes in what he is doing (e.g., Bem, 1972). Contrary to what has generally been assumed, it appears that it is man's behavior which is primary, while his attitudes and beliefs seem to change as a consequence of it. Thus, when we are lead by the subtle demands of a situation or institutional role to perform behavior with whose aims we do not agree, our belief systems eventually change to become consistent with our behavior (and as well with the institutional values that guided our performance.)<sup>6</sup> The "dirty work" of which Hughes spoke becomes our own, and when it does, then we have become truly "socialized"--to believe we are acting from conscience, personal beliefs and values. Then, we are likely, in turn, to strive to remake others in our (new) image.

### C. The Presumption of Institutional Rationality

The process of institutional socialization is also facilitated by a tendency in most people to grant institutions a "presumption of rationality,"

i.e., we simply assume that institutional behavior is founded on rational grounds and considered purpose. It is this fact which helps to explain why, although most of us are not continually submerged in the environment of a dehumanizing institution, we allow them to prosper in our midst, tacitly if not enthusiastically condoning their activities. The veneer of rationality which surrounds institutions thus functions to protect them from criticism and (simultaneously) contributes to the unwitting participation of many persons in the activities of institutions whose assumptions they simply do not consider or are not able to clearly see. Thus, political scientist Charles Drekmeier (1971) laments that:

. . . rational organization, the principle of efficient coordination of acts pursuant to the achievement of some goal, has limited our individual capacities to see causal and structural relationships; in other words, that one kind of rationality is threatened by another. (p. 200) <sup>7</sup>

By automatically granting to institutions the assumption of rational purpose, we disarm ourselves of the ability to engage in their critical analysis, since rationality has become a sufficient justification for existence and continued functioning in our culture. So, for example, we rarely question the assumptions which underlie the behavior of institutional functionaries, but choose instead to focus on the objects or "targets" of their activity: we study students but not teachers, mental patients but not psychiatrists, and prisoners but not guards.

And nowhere is a presumption of rationality granted more frequently than with respect to the law and the activities of legal institutions. A passage from Franz Kafka's novel The Trial only slightly exaggerates this tendency in all of us to venerate the law and its institutions. His words are instructive, if sardonic,

. . . we're quite capable of grasping the fact that the high authorities we serve, before they would order an arrest, must be quite well informed about the reasons for the arrest and the person of the prisoner. There can be no mistake about that. Our officials, so far as I know them, and I know only the lowest grades among them, never go hunting for the crime in the populace, but, as the Law decrees, are drawn toward the guilty. . . . That is the Law. How could there be a mistake in that? (1956, pp. 5-6)

But further than simply presuming the reasonableness of institutional behavior, there is an illusion of permanence and inevitability which we attach to institutions and thereby further confirm their ultimate rationality. Since they are part of the "given" of everyday life, we find it difficult to even imagine their non-existence, and come to view them as the only viable response to the problems they supposedly address. Even when they no longer serve the purposes for which they were originally conceived, social institutions persist until other acceptable and similar (institutional) "solutions" are found. (The empirical status of the popular maxim that "it's better than nothing" has rarely, if ever, been computed for most social institutions--we merely assume it to be true.) And since the nature of an institutional "solution" contributes substantially to the very definition of the problem, reforms or supposedly innovative alternatives usually greatly resemble, far more than they depart from, the original, so that "institutional change" masquerades for what are most often thinly disguised, rhetorical variations on "more of the same".

Rothman's (1971) study of the invention or discovery of the "asylum" (mental hospitals, orphanages, almshouses, and penitentiaries), shows that this particular form of institution was created largely in response to very historically specific forces and needs (e.g., the attempts of a young and struggling democracy to symbolically promote order in the midst of new and changing



social conditions). While these especial historical contingencies no longer obtain, and have not for some time, the institutions they spawned persist. We live with them and accept their presence as inevitable, so that, as Rothman concludes:

. . . Despite a personal revulsion, we think of them as always having been with us, and therefore as always to be with us. We tend to forget that they were the invention of one generation to serve very special needs, not the only possible reaction to social problems. (p. 295)<sup>8</sup>

From the wardens who run prisons to the inmates who are locked involuntarily inside, most people would agree that this institution has been an unqualified failure.<sup>9</sup> Their critics argue that prisons accomplish very little more than the collective dehumanization and degradation of all who come in contact with them. Yet, they persist. They persist in spite of this total failure partly, because we do not judge (nor, as we have argued, are we generally capable of judging) institutions by the same standards that we judge men. In part, prisons persist because no seemingly appropriate alternative has been proposed to take its place. That prison itself can be regarded as in no way viable, that it accomplishes virtually none of the purposes for which it supposedly exists, and that it engenders palpably more harm than good, does not appear to matter--it persists simply because its nonexistence is, for most, quite literally inconceivable. Thus, when there is nothing to take its place, even that which is demonstrably evil must be maintained.

#### D. On Blaming Persons

When we are confronted with undeniable evidence that one of our presumably rational institutions has failed, the response is quite predictable: we tend not to blame the institutions or their policies, but

turn instead to individuals as the source of failure. When, for example, institutions have implicitly (or explicitly) directed their agents into activities which exceed our general limits of acceptability, we choose to believe that the event represents only some infrequent anomaly, the product of a few deviant or special persons (as in the public's insistence that My Lai was a unique event perpetrated by a "monstrous" few, despite the admissions of thousands of Vietnam veterans that there were many massacres which occurred as a logical extension of the atmosphere of senseless violence and the policy of destruction which the military pursued). Similarly, when a social problem has proven refractory to an institutional program or agency which is designed to remedy it, we are more likely to attribute its intractability to personal causes or individual failure, rather than an inept or misguided institutional policy (e.g., many people attempt to explain the supposed failure of welfare and poverty programs

by contending that "some people just don't want to work", rather than that inadequate funding, lack of necessary governmental commitment, or an inadequate conceptualization of the problem were at fault). The most extreme form which this person-blame can take is actually to hold the victims of deplorable social conditions responsible for their own victimization (cf. Ryan, 1971).

Note also that the very definitions of most social problems are constructed with an inherent "person-bias" or orientation: we are, for example, quite accustomed to hearing about children who "can't learn", less accustomed to hearing about teachers who "can't teach", and least of all used to hearing of school environments which "can't educate". If an educational problem is defined at the outset in terms of a "failure to learn", then the relevant level of analysis becomes the individual student and attempts at finding a solution will be focused appropriately. Behavior modifiers are consulted to

instil motivation, correct learning disabilities, or make whatever changes are necessary to accommodate the individual to the system. Questions which concern the basic nature of the curricula, the classroom philosophies of the teachers, and other system or situation-oriented issues are simply not posed when problems are defined as the failures of individuals to adjust to what are regarded as immutable environments. We do not yet have a corps of behavior modifiers whose patients are social institutions.<sup>10</sup>

Attempts to provide an explanation of the deplorable conditions of our prison system and its undisputed failure similarly employ this person-blame orientation: on the one hand, proponents of the prison status quo attribute the violence and disruption in prisons to the aggressive, psychopathic nature of the prisoners,<sup>11</sup> while critics of the system tend to focus on its brutality and repression as a function of what they regard to be the sadistic and insensitive persons who work as guards and prison administrators. This tendency to blame the failure of prison on the nature of guard and prisoner populations diverts attention from the structure of the institution itself, and from the complex social, economic, and political forces which make prisons what they are. It diverts attention as well from the fundamental, even revolutionary solutions which would be required to accomplish meaningful change. Instead, rioting prisoners are identified and punished, others are transferred to maximum security areas or different institutions, overzealous guards may be reprimanded, and corrupt officials suspended--while the institution itself continues fundamentally unchanged, its basic structure and assumptions having been unexamined and unchallenged.

And it was, in fact, precisely to confront this person-blame orientation that the authors conceived of an unusual study of prison life. To truly understand the process of institutional socialization in prisons, we felt that we could not

simply study the conditions within existing prisons, since such naturalistic observation necessarily confounds the acute effects of the environment with the supposedly chronic characteristics of the inmate and staff populations. Only by populating a prison or prison-like milieu with perfectly normal, healthy persons, we reasoned, could we learn about the effects of the prison environment per se.

We have described in elaborate detail the procedures and results of this study which we carried out along with Curt Banks and David Jaffe (Haney, et al., 1973; Zimbardo, et al., 1973). Our present purpose is not to reiterate those data, but rather to convey as vividly as possible the experience of situational control as it occurs in prison. Because we believe that institutional socialization is best comprehended by developing an appreciation of the pressures and tensions which the structure of the prison environment exerts on those who live and work within it, we have chosen to present the findings from our study, as well as what we have learned from subsequent study of real prison, in a rather unconventional manner.

## II. A Phenomenology of Imprisonment

. . . Objectivity, like the claim that one is nonpartisan or reasonable, is usually a defensive posture used by those who fear involvement in the passions, partisanship, conflicts, and changes that make up life. . . It is academic and the word 'academic' is a synonym for irrelevant.

--Saul Alinsky

The language and orientation of social science is designed to make objective the subjectivity of experience in order to remove the individual bias of the observer and establish the basis for a consensually validated "reality." However, this analytical process itself is but a biased translation from one to another reality -- from the experimental, emotional to the detached, rational. By describing the experience of becoming dehumanized within a prison setting in the terms appropriate for a social scientific analysis (i.e., variables, factors, processes, interaction effects, and the like), we allow ourselves to gain sufficient distance from the subjective so that we can deal with the phenomena at a more comfortable intellectual level. Thus the very form and structure of our "professional" approach to observing, interpreting, and reporting the experience contributes to the dehumanization we are studying.

Our scientifically motivated "detached concern" for the object of our investigation is akin to that of the college class visit to a mental hospital. As the students walk through the wards, the teacher may point out how the patients are treated, and also how they are mistreated. Despite the apparent concern of the students for the plight of these poor creatures, their guided tour of the facilities invades the privacy of the patients, makes them objects to be examined and makes this another instance of the dehumanization to which our patients (and subjects) are exposed without their consent.

To avoid this special form of academic dehumanization, we have decided to summarize the data which we collected from our prison simulation, as well as extensive observations and conversations with prisoners and guards from real prisons, in the form of four scenarios designed to convey as directly and accurately as possible the nature of the social forces which control human behavior inside the institution. For regardless of the frame of reference from which it is viewed and the lexicon in which it is described, institutional socialization reduces also to an experiential level, and it is this crucial dimension which is so often neglected by social scientists in our attempts to truly understand the behavior of individuals in institutional settings. In the final three sections of this paper we will again return to the more traditional stance of social psychologists, in an attempt to regard these data in a somewhat more analytical, and familiar fashion.

A. The Stanford Prison Experience

". . . because it was a real prison to me. It was just a prison run by psychologists and not by the state, that's all."

--A Stanford Prison "Inmate"

Scenario I

It's your first day on the yard at the Stanford Jail. Your khaki uniform is just a size too big and there's too much starch in the shirt to make you feel comfortable wearing it. But it does feel good to carry this big police billy club -- must be a yard long and filled with a solid metal core. Bet you could crack someone's head open with one good clout! Of course, we've been told by the Superintendent not to use them as weapons, but carry them merely for "show." I hope the prisoners don't do anything stupid to force us to use them; I sure wouldn't want to get smashed with this thing. It's all just for the show we're putting on.

[Diary entry after learning I've been accepted to be a guard here: "As I am a pacifist and nonaggressive individual, I cannot see a time when I might maltreat other living things."]

[After our first group meeting with the other guards, a few of us went out to pick up the uniforms for the rest. Diary entry reads: "Buying uniforms at the end of the meeting confirms the gamelike atmosphere of this thing. I doubt whether many of us share the expectations of 'seriousness' that the experimenters seem to have."]

Can't get used to wearing these sunglasses indoors, though. They're supposed to make us more anonymous to the prisoners because with the silver reflecting surface it's impossible for anyone to see your eyes or "read"

your emotions. The idea was borrowed from the movie, "Cool Hand Luke," where that bad bastard who tormented Paul Newman always wore them (I think even in his sleep). You can imagine how surprised I was when I noticed that the arresting officer from the City Police Department was also wearing them, and not because he had to, but because of the effect they created.

Well, here comes the last of the bunch. That makes nine arrested today, booked for violation of Penal Code 459, warned of their rights, then handcuffed and spread-eagled against the squad car, searched, plunked in the back of the car, and whisked off to the station with curious neighbors and relatives gaping at the whole incredible scene.

Police sure did their thing at the station. No rough stuff, mind you, but really efficient: fingerprinting, preparing the information file, hustling the prisoners from place to place, and finally leaving them blindfolded in the detention cell until we transferred them down here to our prison. Whole operation took less than an hour.

"Take those dirty clothes off of him. What filthy hippie hair. This guy is going to infect the whole place with lice. Delouse him real good -- he's not going to get a bath for a long time down here. Take off his blindfold, so he can see where he's at and look at his scrawny body in the mirror while we fit him for his new prison dress."

"Attention, all prisoners, the warden is here to greet you:"

As you probably already know, I'm your warden. All of you have shown that you are unable to function outside in the real world for one reason or another -- that somehow you lack the responsibility of good citizens of this great country. We of this prison, your correctional staff, are going to help you learn what your responsibilities as citizens of this country are. Here are the rules. Sometime in the near future there will be a copy of the rules posted in each of the cells. We expect you to know them and to be able to recite them by number. If you follow all of these



rules and keep your hands clean, repent for your misdeeds and show a proper attitude of penitence, you and I will get along just fine.

"O.K., here they are. Rule Number One: Prisoners must remain silent during rest periods, after lights are out, during meals and whenever they are outside the prison yard. Two: Prisoners must eat at mealtime and only at mealtimes. Three: Prisoners must not move, tamper, deface or damage walls, ceilings, windows, doors, or other prison property. . . . Seven: Prisoners must address each other by their ID number only. Eight: Prisoners must address the guards as 'Mr. Correctional Officer' . . . Sixteen: Failure to obey any of the above rules may result in punishment."

It's just the three of us and nine of them -- not such good odds, but as long as they behave properly there shouldn't be any trouble. No question about it, I'm the little guy on this shift; those other two guards must be 6'3" at least. Going to have to work a little harder to make myself noticed around here. That's the drag about being small -- the big guys always assume they run the show because they're physically bigger, even if they've got no brains at all. We'll see. In case something breaks out, though, they will come in handy -- better than being paired up with a bunch of weaklings.

Here we go. My turn to do my scene. Feel sure that the prisoners will make fun of my appearance and I evolve my first basic strategy -- mainly not to smile at anything they say or do which would be admitting it's all only a game. At cell 3 I stop, and setting my voice hard and low say to 5486, "What are you smiling at?" "Nothing, Mr. Correctional Officer." "Well, see that you don't." (As I walk off I feel stupid).

"So, 5704 wants a cigarette, does he? I don't smoke and I think smoking is a rotten habit. Don't you see the sign posted there? - - smoking without permission? Even if you get a cigarette, you won't get my

permission to smoke it, not on this shift. No smokes, no empathy on this shift."

"That goes for you too, 1037 -- wipe that damned stupid grin off your ugly face." I am feeling empathetic toward 1037. He seems like a real nice guy, but I can't let him know, because it will be more difficult then to play my role convincingly. When it's all over, I can tell him I really like him and I had to act this way because of my role. After all, a guard can't afford to get too friendly with a prisoner -- it's not a fraternity house we're running.

Before we leave for the night, the captain of our shift and I can't resist taunting the prisoners with vivid descriptions of what we are going to do to our girlfriends when we see them tonight. They try to act as if we are not getting to them, but we can tell how envious they are.

"Just because we're leaving, don't think we won't be thinking about you guys enjoying yourselves in your grubby little cells. I'm gonna think about nothing else the whole time I'm with my girl. Sleep tight -- good dreams, men.

\* \* \* \* \*

Those ding-dong guards on the morning shift must have been too permissive to allow that rebellion to get started today. None of that would have happened on our shift. I heard a lot of heavy stuff came down; they had to use carbon dioxide fire extinguishers on the ringleaders so they could get them away from the cell doors they had barricaded. Then they really opened up on them -- stripped them naked, stuck them into the hole, no more privileges, all work and no play, toilet-bowl cleaning with their bare hands, the whole trip. No wonder they seem so docile tonight.

That 5704 is the real trouble-maker of the lot. I can't stand him, he doesn't know how to take a joke. During the inspection, I went to cell 2 to mess up a bed which he had made and he grabbed me, screaming that he had just

made it, and he wasn't going to let me mess it up. He grabbed my throat, and although he was laughing I was pretty scared. I lashed out with my stick and hit him in the chin (although not very hard), and when I freed myself I became angry. I wanted to get back in the cell and have a go with him, since he attacked me when I was not ready.

The warden asks me to bring 5704 to the counseling office so the psychologist can discuss his negative attitude with him. I am surprised and angry that the psychologist rebukes me for handcuffing and blindfolding the prisoner before leaving the office, and I resentfully reply that it is both necessary security and my business anyway. It's easy for him to give orders from his safe easy-chair, to play Jesus Christ -- he doesn't have to deal with these guys on their own terms hour after hour.

I am secretly delighted that 5704 does not have any visitors coming tonight. After warning the prisoners not to make any complaints about how we were treating them, unless they wanted the visit terminated fast, we finally bring in the first parents. I make sure I am one of the guards on the yard, because this is my first chance for the type of manipulative power that I'm finding I really like -- being a very noticed figure with almost complete control over what is said or not. While the parents and prisoners sit in chairs, I sit on the end of the table dangling my feet and contradicting anything I feel like. This is more like it! This is the first part of this whole prison experiment I am really enjoying.

But this glow doesn't last too long after the last parent and friend leave and we have to get back to the boring routine of bringing the prisoners back and forth to the toilet, seeing that they don't make trouble, feeding them, and listening to their complaints.

I'm getting tired of seeing the prisoners in their rags and smelling the

strong odors of their bodies that fill the cells. I watch them with a curious detachment as they tear at each other on orders given by us. They don't see it as an experiment. It is real and they are fighting to keep their identity. But we are always there to show them who's boss. I harass "Sarge" who continues to stubbornly overrespond to all commands. I have singled him out for special abuse both because he begs for it and because I simply don't like him. That 819 is obnoxious too; he bears close surveillance. Although they are buckling under our force, and acting like sheep, or more like "cattle," I still keep thinking to myself, "I have to watch out for them in case they try something. You never know."

\* \* \* \* \*

Sure enough, today the real trouble starts. We have a new prisoner to replace one of the ones who was released because they were acting as if they had a nervous breakdown (personally, I think they were faking it and conned the big-shot psychologists). This new prisoner, 416, refuses to eat his sausages. That is a violation of Rule Two: "Prisoners must eat at mealtimes," and we are not going to have any of that kind of shit, not now when we have everything working so smoothly. He's so scrawny and scraggly, you'd think he'd be begging for seconds instead of refusing to eat any food. Obviously we have a trouble-maker on our hands.

If that's the way he wants it, that's the way he gets it. We throw him into the Hole ordering him to hold sausages in each hand. After an hour, he still refuses. We punish his cellmates -- they get no dinner or more food until 416 eats his sausage. They ask him to be reasonable, but he's too selfish to think of anyone else. We have a crisis of authority; this rebellious conduct potentially undermines the complete control we have over the others. We decide to play upon prisoner solidarity and tell the new one that all the

others will be deprived of visitors if he does not eat his dinner. Prisoner 3096 gets furious -- he has been hanging on all week waiting for the ten minute visit he could have with his girlfriend. He blows up -- at 416 -- screaming at him, cursing him for being so selfish and making trouble for everyone. Still 416 refuses. We don't want to cut off visiting hours, but what can we do? I walk by and slam my stick into the Hole door. I am very angry at this prisoner for causing discomfort and trouble for the others. I decide to force-feed him, but he won't eat. I let the food slide down his face. I don't believe it is me doing it. I just hate him more for not eating.

Just then, "John Wayne," the leader of our guard shift, came up with the right idea. He has a way of knowing how to break the prisoners without resorting to too much physical stuff -- making them hate one another instead. I especially liked it when a prisoner requested permission to sing "Happy Birthday" to a fellow prisoner, and our John Wayne was only too glad to have the whole cell block join in the singing -- at the top of their lungs, forty-three times over and over until they hated the guy for having a birthday even more than the guy who had asked for the favor. Little things like that make me glad he's on my side.

We line up the prisoners and tell them that the fate of 416 is up to them. The guards do not want to be unreasonable. The prisoners are going to have to decide what should be done about this "problem" and we will abide by their decision. Should 416 be allowed to come out of solitary confinement or stay in that dark, cramped closet all night long? Those who wish to vote for him to come out, even if he doesn't eat his sausages, will cast their vote by giving up their blankets and sleeping on the bare mattresses. Those who freely choose to teach the selfish bastard a lesson and have him stay in solitary all night can keep their blankets and call out loud and clear, so 416 can hear it, that

they vote instead to leave him in solitary.

As you might expect, the majority vote to punish that asshole trouble-maker. It's the only thing they do this whole week that staff can respect. They are on their way to becoming good prisoners! We are doing our job of rehabilitation real well.

#### Scenario II

I don't understand it, any of it! Nothing makes sense in here and no one is concerned that nothing makes sense. It's as if they all accept that this is how it has to be; that this is the only way it can be. Everybody has gone mad in this place and they don't know it. No one person sees the change in him because the place and all the others are all mad in the same way he is. Whatever craziness he feels or engages in seems appropriate -- it fits. As long as it fits, it doesn't have to be rational, doesn't have to make sense.

No one asks "why." No one questions arbitrary, inane institutional rules, like "You have to eat at mealtimes," even if you are not hungry or do not want to, or "No talking allowed during meals," or any of a score of other rules. I can't tell whether the guards are more into this insanity than the prisoners or if it's the other way around. If you don't smile when that black-haired guard tells a dirty joke, you get punished. When he repeats it and you do smile, you get punished again for overreacting. I've noticed that you can't even predict whether a guard will give you a straight answer or ridicule you when you ask a question. Sometimes he'll make you do push-ups with someone stepping on your back, or maybe force you to ask the same question a hundred times over until the words themselves sound strange and lose their meaning.

My buddies are acting like robots--servile, conforming, obedient robots--

doing whatever they are asked to, even anticipating what will be demanded and doing it before the order comes. "Sarge" is really in deep--he thinks he's beating the system by being the ultra-good, model prisoner, doing more than he has to. It's clear the guards dislike him for being so obedient and for seeming to enjoy their harrassment. The other prisoners are even more down on him for being such a nut. Whenever he overdoes something, that becomes the new standard for all the rest. I feel sorry for "Sarge"--he's trying to be what he thinks they want him to be and instead he is becoming a negative particle.

Maybe I'm reacting so adversely to this prison set-up just because I'm new. The others have gradually adjusted to the escalating level of aggression, to the degradation, to the mental and physical abuse, and now they don't notice how far they've come. That 5704 was supposedly the ring leader of a rebellion they had here the other day. I can't believe it; the guards have him behaving like a trained seal, doing anything they ask, however servile or obscene--for a lousy cigarette. They discovered he's a cigarette addict and they've used that to turn him into their toady. My cellmates talk about the "him" who was their rebel leader as if it were a different person from the "him" I see now as a brown-nosed prisoner trustee. Maybe the rebellion itself is a collective fantasy trip all of the prisoners are on. You must need some fantasies to survive in here--there sure isn't any reality to hang your hat on.

My cellmates whispered to me during the morning work break that this was a "real" prison, that you couldn't get out unless you were sick. They must be sick to think that way. We are human beings with human rights--inalienable rights. They can't be taken away, even in a real prison--can they?

Because I'm the new prisoner, I've really been getting incredible shit from all sides. The guards have been making me work like a slave, and when I complain, the prisoners urge me not to make trouble because the next guard

shift is better and things will ease up then. When I try to make a joke to cheer up the other guys while we are moving the same boxes back and forth between two closets for hours on end, no one laughs. They just nod--yes, they heard the joke, please don't require them to respond any further. Things ain't so funny in here.

The only faint trace of emotion I detect is prisoner 819 down in cell 1, who in a rage smashed a hole in the wall. He says he needs a doctor and refuses to leave his bed. When he is taken out to the warden's office, it's clear to all of us that he is very agitated. The guards line us up and we chant, again and again and again in single-voiced unison, "819 is a bad prisoner," "because of what 819 did we must all suffer," "819 tampered, defaced, and destroyed prison property." We realize 819 must be overhearing this, but what difference does it make--we never see him again anyway.

I evolve my first basic strategy to get out of this looney bin. I will refuse to eat any of their food, pretend to get sick from lack of nourishment, and force them to release me. It's tough to do because I'm hungry already, but it's the only way out. Not one taste of their food, not one drop of water, no matter what.

The guards are really going out of their skulls now, just because I don't want to eat their lousy, greasy sausages. They don't care about me--why should they care whether or not I eat? They can't handle it--they start cursing, screaming at me, yelling that they're gonna cram the sausages up my ass. Into the Hole, sausages in each hand, out of the Hole, sausages still in each hand. I'm beginning to find new strength in my decision not to eat their food. I do not need their food to live, only their anger. As long as I choose to refuse to eat, I am free, I am still my own man. I am not imprisoned.

It hurts me, however, when the other prisoners start putting me down. I can understand why they're upset but it's not my fault--it's the stupid rules of



the guards. What does my eating a sausage have to do with their visitors not being allowed in, as long as they have obeyed all the rules? I doesn't make sense to me but it seems to make perfect sense to all of them.

I don't really mind the darkness of solitary--in fact, it's comforting. I doze off from time to time, awakened only by the deafening echoes of a big billy club cracking down on the door to the Hole. I'm beginning to feel a little nauseous. The strategy is working. I'll be sick by tomorrow.

What's that they're saying? The prisoners have voted to keep me in here all night? I don't believe it! The rule says that no prisoner will be kept in solitary confinement for more than one hour. "Violation of the rules." "You can't do that to me." "Violation of Prison Rules . . ."

"John Wayne's" strained Texas drawl interrupts. "The guards aren't doing anything to you--you're doing it to yourself. You started it and your friends have voted in a true democratic election to finish it. So just get used to it--you're gonna be in there for a long time."

A crack of light filters through the darkness; a bead of perspiration falls on my sausage. My reflection grows as I look closely at the drop of water. What am I doing here? What have I done to be in such a place? What am I doing to myself to get out? Despite all the threats, abuse, noise, pushing around, I was never really frightened until this moment. As I look deeper into the watery reflection, I don't see me looking back any more. I don't recognize the person in the reflection at all. He isn't me--or to be more precise, I am not him. The person I call "Calvin," the person who put me into this place, the person who volunteered to go into this prison--is distant from me, is remote. I am not that person, I am prisoner 416--I am really my number. Now 416 is going to have to decide what to do because Calvin's not here and would never want to even visit here. I don't blame him--nothing makes sense in this prison and he likes to live in a world where everything is sane and secure and respectable.

It's better if he doesn't even know what 416 is going through--he wouldn't understand and it would hurt him too much. 416 can handle it all alone; he has to! He just needs a little time to learn not to need food or friends or explanations--but most of all, not to get emotional. Emotions really don't make sense in a prison. They just don't fit.

B. Kind and Usual Punishment

The only way you really get to know San Quentin is through experience and time. Some of us take more time and must go through more experiences than others to accomplish this; some really never do get there.

-- Excerpt from San Quentin Orientation Manual

Scenario III

It's your first day on the yard at San Quentin. You've completed the orientation program, and if you perform satisfactorily during the probation period, you can have a steady life-time job. You wish the "training" program had been longer than four half-days and that you knew how to use restraint gear and were more familiar with the procedure for getting your gun and ammunition when you get assigned to be gunman in the Adjustment Center.

You've heard the story ten times already from the old bulls, how that crazy nigger Jackson shot three officers and slit the throats of a couple of trustees before he got his trying to run the wall. That was a crazy thing to do! You wish you could remember more of the names of the other officers, especially the senior ones, but all in good time. What could make somebody murder officers and inmates indiscriminately and then try to jump a 20-foot wall manned by gunmen with their .347 Magnum, 30-30's, and enough fire power to shoot down a jet fighter? Prison sure must get to some of these guys!

You feel pride in sporting your new uniform with the California Correctional Officer's patch neatly sewn on the shoulder and with your C.C.O. badge on your good-looking military styled cap. Hair cut maybe a little too short, you think, as the November breeze sends a chill up your neck. But no aftershave lotion, no sir, no one is going to think I smell like a sissy. Feeling kind of powerful--my word will be law here with the inmates, not like the grief I

have at home getting the kids to clean their room or do their damn homework. Things run like clockwork here. It's a tight ship, if you sail it right.

"Remember," he said, "in case of trouble, blow your whistle and blow it loud." Why should there be any trouble? I intend to be a good guard, to be fair, honest, and straight in my dealings with inmates. They've made a mistake, gotten caught, and we're here to help them get rehabilitated so it won't happen again. I'll bet a lot of them have a helluva story to tell. I might even get some good ideas for a little novel.

Slowly the cons shuffle in, moving as if they were standing still on a slow, jerky escalator tread invisibly concealed on the ground just in front of the walls. When most of the wall space fills, the others filter into clumps in the center of the yard. No one runs, no sudden movements of any kind, no loud talk, no laughter.

It must feel good for them to have a chance to get out of their cells to stretch, light up, talk to buddies. Wonder what they talk about? I'll walk around and let them get used to seeing me. We're all going to be here for a long time, I hope.

There must be five hundred of them, easy. Say, where are the other guards? That's funny, I'm all alone out here. I don't even see any of the tower guns. Why are they all looking at me like that? Guess they know I'm new here.

"Did I hear you say 'fish bull'?" "No sir, Mr. Correctional Officer." Sneers. Smirks. Icy stares. I feel as if they hate me. How could they hate me?--they don't even know me yet.

But it couldn't be anything else. I can feel it. I can feel their collective hatred sticking me just as if each one was using his machine-shop tooled shank on me. We need more shake-downs and skin searches; it's too easy for them to conceal a home-made weapon.

Better not to make eye contact with any of them, anyway. Where the hell are those other officers? Did they all go on a coffee break and leave me to take care of the store, all alone? Hmm, not very funny. No gun, no club, nothing but this goddamn little whistle between me and a knife in my back by any one of those nuts. They're all felons, you know, they've been through the mill; that's why they've deadened here at Q.

How can you tell a killer by just looking at him? They all look the same in those baggy vomit-green uniforms and expressionless faces. They walk the same, stand the same, and act the same. Only difference is that there are the whites in one bunch, the blacks over there, and the Chicanos hovering around at the South Wall.

Shit, they all look like hardened killers to me. I wouldn't turn my back on any of these cons for a moment. I'll show them I'm a man. Their stares don't mean a goddamn thing to me, nothing at all. I'm The Man here. I've got enough fire power backing me up to shoot their asses off to kingdom come. They must know that's how that madman Jackson got his head--Afro and all--blown off. No fild'v con is going to make me back down.

"Hey, you! Heah, you over there, Shorty. Come over here. What's your number?"

"A-94375, why?"

"Never mind the backtalk, A-94375, I'm writing you up. You threw away your cigarette wrapper there on the ground. You know there are rules against littering State property."

"Aw, come on."

"Don't give me any lip, punk, or you'll learn what real trouble is. Pick it up and move on."

"Yes sir."

Just then, my senior officer appears. I stand tall and tough, sure he'll be pleased by the way I handled the yard all alone.

"Put Jones--A-24768 over there--in restraint gear; he's got a court appearance."

"Yes sir, but . . ."

"Move it out, this is not a tea party, you know."

"Yes sir."

How the hell should I know how to put this mess of chains on a con without any lessons? Why didn't they teach us how? Embarrassed, I have to ask the prisoner for help in putting him in the damn chains. One for their side--or rather, one for the prisoners, and one for my so-called "fellow" guards, and none for me. If it's every man for himself here, then that's O.K. with me. I'll make it in spite of those senior officers with their fun-and-games-initiation-rites for us newcomers. Everything is set up to see how tough we are, how manly we are, and whether we can handle the hate and the fear. I can take it, and I can dish it out. They'll all see.

Those animals better watch their asses too; they are animals, you know. They have to be, to survive here. They have to rely on primitive animal instincts because only the fittest survive in this jungle. Fortunately, they're caged. Maybe it's not such a good idea for them to be loose so long or so often in the yard. It would be simpler all around if we just kept them in their cells--they're used to it, probably prefer it. I heard some of these dumdums even call it "home." Imagine, calling a barred, concrete box your "home!" They really get screwy from being here too long.

My neck is really tight--must be the cold. A good stiff drink when I get home is all I need to make me feel good as new again. God, this is a long day--can't wait to get home and get cleaned and relax. The place really

makes you feel dirty and grimy. Bet the cons don't even notice it.

#### Scenario IV

Hi, kid! I'm Big Joey. I hope you've been enjoying the candies and the paperback I sent over. Sorry I couldn't get a detective story, but they were all out of them at the Commissary. Do you know how to use the headphones? You realize that you "fish," I mean first-timers here at Quentin, don't get no headsets for quite awhile. So you got no music to listen to on the house radio, and it can get awfully quiet and lonely up here in the "fish bowl" before you get put into the general population.

You'd be surprised how much I know about you--where you come from, your family, your rap, even where you have your appendix scar. Paid a whole carton of Luckies to look over your file, and now that I see you in the flesh, I'm glad I did. You certainly are worth it.

You see, kid, Quentin ain't like no other place you been in before. It's real dangerous here. Lot of racial stuff coming down. Guys get shanked for just looking the wrong way at some dude. Bulls putting the squeeze on to be a snitch. Lot of just plain mental cases running around in here too. You never know where to turn.

Unless, of course, you got yourself a friend. That's why Big Joey came to see you personally. I want to be your friend, because I like you. Nice-looking kid like you is gonna be in real trouble in a place like this--an awful lot of animals in here. Can't blame them--some guys been here for most of their lives and never gonna see pussy or moonlight again.

Me? Twelve years, assault with a deadly, Oakland traffic cop, should be getting my date real soon now.

But we're getting off the point. I want you to consider me your friend. I want you should feel I will protect you from any mother here who tries to

lay a hand on you. Don't want to brag, but my clique runs the drug action in A-block.

For two more cartons, I can arrange for you to be my cellmate so we can spend a lot of time together getting to know one another real well. What do you say, wanna be Big Joey's kid?

No reason to go get yourself so upset. No rush. Take your time, think it over.

You say you won't? Maybe you don't understand how important it is to have one good friend in here. You know no one escapes from here, not even from those animals in my clique. I can understand where you're coming from--used to feel the same way once.

It's not a matter of whether or not you will--it's only a matter of when.

Be seein' ya around, kid!



#### IV. The Techniques of Prison Socialization

. . . It is indispensable to order that man should feel himself on the point of being worthy of being a man. If he does not attach great value to this conception, very soon the whole structure will collapse.

Paul Valéry (1950)

The dehumanization of imprisonment occurs at many levels and in many ways, but it begins at the political level where presidents, governors, and other politicians may elect to use prisons as a means to gain votes and to insure concerned citizens that, indeed, something is being done about the problem of crime. Since prisoners have no political lobby and are not a legitimized constituency, they are convenient pawns in political and economic power plays that take place at various levels of federal and state bureaucracies. Although they are somewhat better organized, prison guards exert little real political influence either. And, since the position of prison guard is not held in sufficiently high esteem by the general public, the guards themselves become expendable when it is a question of their lives versus the "face-saving" of politicians and upper-echelon correctional administrators.<sup>12</sup>

Legislators can easily get tough on prisoners when there is increased public concern over a rising crime rate, by putting more people in prison, keeping them in longer, and returning parolees faster by more frequent parole revocations. This kind of activity on the part of politicians deflects attention away from the actual causes of crime, provides citizens with the illusion that something effective is being done, and obviates the necessity for legislators to grapple with real issues--which are more

difficult and complex, and whose solutions may involve changes in other sectors which they are willing neither to recommend nor be associated with.

Because the public has been "educated" to believe that crime is simply a function of criminals, and that the only reasonable response to crime is more efficient and harsher treatment of lawbreakers, legislators who recommend otherwise do so at their peril. Even legislators whose personal values might lead them to champion the cause of promoting the human rights of prisoners and guards are reluctant to do so because they fear a negative reaction from their constituency. California legislative analyst Jerry Haleva claims that many lawmakers are sensitive to the problems of crime and prisons, and are aware of humane legislation which could alleviate the problems, but do not advocate it because "their first concern is with getting re-elected." It is not clear whether this statement reflects more directly on the legislators or on their constituents.

To what extent are decisions about prisons, prisoners, and guards made largely for vested private interests, and not in the interest of the community in which they are located, come from, and return to? We have recently learned that considerable pressure is put on politicians to resist termination of antiquated prison facilities, encourage building of monolithic prisons to house large populations, and to maintain the status quo. This political pressure comes from the many businesses that profit from the existence of prisons--the building trades, food services, trucking, and especially private companies and states which rely upon the cheap (virtually slave) labor of prisoners to pick cotton, make institutional furniture, auto license plates, and so forth. Prisons, to many entrepreneurs, are a business enterprise, and prisoners are there to be exploited without benefit of unions, arbitration, or even federal protection under minimum wage laws.

However, while some would dehumanize the members of prison society by making them into impersonal quantities in the calculus of political and economic gain, the actual experience of dehumanization for the prisoners and guards reduces ultimately to a very different level. In examining more carefully the social-psychology of prison socialization, we can identify several facets of the process by which one becomes a prisoner and a guard.

A. The Ecology of Dehumanization

The physical structure of the prison conveys a very direct, immediate, and constantly repeated message to all within its walls: this place is different from all others you have lived in, and from where respectable, trustworthy people live. Rows of steel gates, locks, high walls, barbed wire, gun towers on the outside and gun turrets on the inside, windowless cells all convey the invincibility of the law and the need to isolate and segregate those inside from those outside. By the time prisoners are permitted to return to the larger society, this message has generally been internalized, and the concept of the "self-as-deviant" for some ex-convicts only gradually, if ever, disappears.<sup>13</sup>

The interior design of the prison furthers the dehumanization process by minimizing the possibility for any privacy, except in solitary confinement. Mass eating in cafeterias, mass exercise in the yard or corridors, cells with bars instead of doors, animal cage cells which can be looked in from all sides, mean the prisoner has lost the right of privacy, solitude, and individual treatment. Prisoners must begin to psychologically detach themselves, to daydream or fantasize privacy in order to be alone in a crowd, or to be unseen, though constantly watched by guards and other prisoners. And we know from the psychological

literature that excessive control and surveillance have undesirable effects on those who practice it as well: they come to believe in it as necessary and as solely responsible for the proper behavior of those being watched (Strickland, 1958). The guards convince themselves of the effectiveness of their elaborate mechanisms of surveillance and control, and of the prisoners' readiness to disobey and revolt if procedures are relaxed, thereby further dividing the two groups, alienating them one from another, and engendering mutual suspicion and mistrust.<sup>14</sup>

The long corridors, barren cells, drab-colored walls provide minimal sensory variation and contribute to a dulling of the senses, as does the monotony of daily routines of being processed for meals, for work, for relaxation, for everything. A San Quentin guard told us of the lengths men in prison will go to escape the boredom of endless routine:

Men in total confinement and their 'protectors' play games to break the monotony. These games pass the time--create and stir an often boiling pot. The boiling pot then boils over, alleviating the pressure. Many men have been injured and some killed as a result of prison games.

#### B. Anonymity

A growing body of literature in social psychology clearly indicates that conditions which reduce an individual's sense of uniqueness and deter individuality, also promote anti-social behaviors, such as aggression, vandalism, stealing, cheating, rudeness, as well as a general loss of concern for others (Zimbardo, 1970). Conversely pro-social behaviors are encouraged by the environmental and interpersonal conditions which enhance one's sense of social recognition and self-identity.

Prisons are designed to maximize anonymity. They do so by putting everyone in uniforms which categorize individuals as "guards" or "prisoners."

Numbers may replace names or become more administratively important than names. Uniqueness is often reduced by having hair shaved off of new prisoners, by insisting on standard hair lengths for prisoners and guards, and by having standard meals in standard plates and glasses eaten with standard silverware at standard times. Loss of individuality is furthered by restrictions on personal possessions and personalizing one's cell (in many prisons), and by unannounced cell and body searches. There are reported cases of inmates being punished for putting too much starch in their uniforms, for trying to look too good or too sharp or too different.

To some extent, the individual guard gains reflected strength from his immediate group identification as "guard" and may prefer the anonymity which conceals his personal fears and anxieties. It is curious that the silver reflecting sunglasses which we used in our mock prison as part of an anonymity manipulation were similarly worn both by the arresting city policeman in our study and by the captain of the troopers at Attica--out of personal preference.

The need for uniqueness in an anonymity-enveloping environment forces prisoners to define their world into "mine" and "not mine." Since they have so little personal territory, they must defend it (often with their lives) if they are to have any situational identity at all. A prisoner's bar of soap, or towel, or pencil become precious possessions he is willing to fight for if they are used or stolen by anyone. They are his--and in a world of much that is not, what is his must be defended. (Incidentally, such a need may underlie the arguments that occur in mental hospitals when one patient sits or rests against another patient's bed. When your bed is your only territory, even though it looks like all the others on the ward, it becomes unique and private to you.) Former Texas inmate, Mike Middleton describes one

aspect of the unwritten "inmate code": ". . . when you brush against a man, you had better apologize. If you don't, then the man is free to do what he wants to you. I have seen a shank put in a man's back for that."

A seemingly senseless and barbarous act until it is viewed in context: an environment where men are deprived of their most basic freedom and dignity can turn trivial intrusions into life and death matters, so that it becomes perfectly "rational" for a man to react with total commitment, even to a violation of his personal space, if that is all he has left to defend.

Eventually, prisoners learn not to share, and to associate material possessions with their personal identity and integrity. It is obvious how such an orientation can lead to problems when the prisoners are paroled and return to a family environment where the unit of ownership of food, soap, toothpaste, and so on is the family, and not the individual. In fact, former Arkansas warden Tom Murton notes that prisoners must adopt a totally inverted value system to survive and be successful in prison. The prisoner "learns a value system precisely the opposite of that intended. He perfects the ability to lie, cheat and manipulate others--and, if he does it skilfully enough, he will be paroled. He finds that he is conditioned--to reject any vestige of decency he brought to the prison with him" (Murton, 1973)

### C. Rule Control

"If you follow all of these rules . . . you and I will get along just fine." If you do not, the final rule always describes how you will be punished. Rules are the backbone of all institutionalized approaches to managing people. Institutions vary only in how many rules they have, and how explicit and detailed they are--never in whether or not they have rules.

Rules impose an impersonal, externalized structure on interpersonal relationships. They remove ambiguity from social interaction. They make

human conduct more predictable by reducing idiosyncratic reactions and individualized interpretations of how to behave. Rules obviate the need for personal explanations or justifications for any desired course of action. "It's the rule" is sufficient reason. Rules proliferate in institutional settings and, eventually, they come to have a life of their own, continuing to be enforced even after they are obsolete and their original purpose can no longer be remembered by the rule-enforcers.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond simply instructing one in how to behave, under some circumstances rules can actually come to define reality for those who follow them. Since the definition of the situation frequently is the situation, rule-breaking per se may be defined as the problem, rather than the rule itself, no matter how unjust the latter may be. Becker (1970) writes that ". . . From the point of view of the well-socialized participant in the system, any tale told by those at the top intrinsically deserves to be regarded as the most credible account obtainable" (p. 18). When the guards in our simulated prison threatened to suspend visiting privileges unless a prisoner who was fasting ate his dinner, the other prisoners turned violently against him, yelling and cursing at him for his refusal to eat, and not against the guards for their completely arbitrary rule. They had accepted the guards' definition of the situation and regarded the prisoner's defiance as blameworthy, rather than as the heroic, symbolic act which might have given them the unity and courage they so desperately needed.

Coercive rules automatically force power relationships upon people: someone must have the power to enforce the rules, and there must be someone to obey them. Those who obey often come to expect, and even respect, the structure which a rule-governed environment provides. In response to the question, "what are the characteristics of a good guard," many prisoners (with whom we correspond regularly) have told us: "the guy who goes by the book, the one who is fair and who is a

real 'professional' because he doesn't make exceptions. He can be counted on, and his behavior is predictable by the prisoners because he, too, is controlled and dominated by the rules."

One unnoticed feature of rule control in prisons (and on the outside as well) concerns the implicit consequences of either breaking or obeying the rules. Since rules are statements of expected behavior or normative standards of conduct, you are merely doing what is expected of you when you follow the rules--and so your behavior goes unnoticed (and unrewarded). Mike Middleton says that, "The only way to make it with the bosses is to withdraw into yourself, both mentally and physically--literally making yourself as small as possible. It's another way they dehumanize you. They want you to make no waves in prison and they want you to make no waves when you get out."

But, if rule observance is expected and thus not rewarded, it is rule violation which is always noticed and, consequently, punished. The severity of the punishment may vary with the nature of available institutional sanctions or the individual preferences and proclivities of the controlling agent, and it is facilitated by the extent to which the target of the punishment is already perceived in a dehumanized manner. Thus, a social space which is encompassed by a network of explicit rules reduces the probability that behavior change will be attempted through reward, while increasing the likelihood that punishment strategies will be employed instead. Punishment is therefore likely to be both a consequence of a dehumanizing environment, and a contributor to its continued existence.<sup>16</sup>

D. Emotional expression and suppression

When people lose the capacity to experience emotions, or when their emotional expression becomes flattened, it is taken to be a sign of a major psychological disturbance, as in autism or schizophrenia. Without emotions



there is little basis for empathy, for developing attachment to others, for love, for caring, and for fear of the consequences to oneself of one's actions. A person who is without emotion becomes as a robot, an automaton, and can be potentially the most dangerous enemy of other men.

Rather than promoting a fuller, more normal expression of emotions among the inmates, prisons do exactly the reverse by creating conditions that distort, inhibit, and suppress emotions. Emotions in institutional settings must be contained to the extent that they represent spontaneous, impulsive, often unpredictable, individual reactions. In institutions charged with the management of "deviant" individuals, such emotional expression is seen as a source of potential danger and must be minimized.

George Jackson's Soledad Brother letters proclaim, "I have made some giant steps toward acquiring the things I personally will need if I can be successful in my plans . . . I have repressed all emotion." A long-time prisoner at Rhode Island Adult Correctional Institution told us that he "beat the system" by learning how to turn off all emotions so that he now no longer feels anything for anybody. There is nothing more they can do to him, he claimed, nothing that will get to him or will in any way disturb him. He learned this lesson in "self-control" after being in solitary confinement for several years in a Maryland prison. He expects to be able to turn his emotions on again when he gets out. But will he be able to?

Prisoners who show their emotions publically reveal a sensitive weakness, and become more likely to be chosen by the guards as candidates for an "informer" role or for the female role in forced sexual encounters initiated by other prisoners. Also, the more strongly you feel about other people, the more open you are to being hurt when they are punished

or when they leave, die, or betray you. In a prison environment, where you have so little control over the nature of your interpersonal relations with other people, such tender emotions ultimately result in more pain than pleasure, and so are better dispensed with altogether.

For the guards, emotional control begins with having to conceal their fear of working in a situation where their lives are literally on the line at every moment. The denial of their fear goes beyond "whistling a happy tune" to constantly affirming their fearlessness and toughness in interactions with prisoners and with each other. A guard who is afraid is a threat to every other guard, because he cannot be counted upon in an emergency--and it is this eventuality for which the guards are always preparing.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, a guard who shows any warmth or positive emotional regard toward the prisoners is suspected of being "wired up" by them, of taking graft, or of being controlled by them in some way.

It is not surprising, then, that the basic advice given to "fish bulls" by the captain of the guards at San Quentin is to be "firm and fair but not friendly" in dealing with the inmates. But it is not enough for the guards to conceal their emotions only from the inmates; they must also conceal them from each other. There is an implicit norm among many correctional officers not to even discuss their emotions among themselves, and certainly not for the new men to tell the old bulls how they feel. This bottling-up of their intensely felt emotions can be expected to be displaced onto family and friends, and also expressed in the disguised, introverted form of psychosomatic illnesses. We are beginning to accumulate evidence that this is indeed the case--that there is considerable "silent suffering" occurring among correctional officers who have not

yet learned how to completely detach their cognitive self from the affective. And once they finally have, how difficult it must be for them to become whole again.

We may extend this analysis of the way in which the institution of prison suppresses emotional expression to the way in which most of our other social institutions do likewise. It is as if emotions were the antithesis of reason, order and control. When was the last time you witnessed strong emotions being expressed in any institutional setting you are in--especially in academic ones? When, in fact, was the last time you responded with intensely felt emotions? The diminution of emotional expression leads to a denial of our own humanness--whether we are the "guards" or the "prisoners" of this world.

### E. Time Distortion

Prisons are time machines--they distort and play tricks with the human conception of time. In doing so, they dehumanize those people whose temporal perspective becomes altered as they try to cope with their new life of imprisonment.

In order to develop and sustain a perception of one's self-identity, it is necessary to have a sense of continuity of behavior, across time and over situations. The "you" in the present must be anchored to the "you" in the past and must be projectable, without major changes, to the "you" that will be functioning in the future. A balanced temporal perspective is vital for establishing not only the concepts of personality and history, but also for giving meaning to one's life and to the concepts of obligation, commitment, responsibility. Events in our lives assume significance by being "time-tagged" in memory, that is, by being assigned a temporal location in our information retrieval system.

Imprisonment however, breaks the continuity of life by separating the imprisoned from their past, distancing the future (especially with an "indeterminate sentence"), and by imposing a limited, immediate present as the dominant temporal frame of reference. The endless routines and undifferentiated daily activities create a seeming circularity of time; it flows not in discrete, meaningful units, but like an ant's continuous and undifferentiated journey along the Mobius strip of its life. It does not matter who you are or where you've been, or even where you are going. Rather, all that matters is how much protection and power you have now, in the present, and, in an atmosphere where survival is the primary concern, one soon learns that too frequent reliance on either the past or the future simply cannot be afforded.

Where there is pervasive fear, limited personal resources, unfavorable power relationships, and no exit, one's survival may depend upon sensitivity to every potentially important cue. No event can be summarily regarded as trivial, and each action may elicit counteraction for which one must be prepared. Every prisoner and guard learns to become an instant "personality diagnostician" under these circumstances, since misplaced trust may cost them dearly.

This immediate or present-time focus necessitated by the pervasive concern for survival in the prison environment causes men to lose perspective on life--to overreact to minor stimuli while failing to plan for major events (such as what to do after the parole date finally comes). And, once it has been determined that an event is not dangerous, it loses its significance and cannot be dwelt upon or given a special place in memory. Events become trivialized as they pass, further establishing the timelessness of prison experience, and contributing to an atmosphere of unreality.

The subtle manipulation of one's time sense in prison alters fundamental aspects of thinking, feeling, and social interaction, and drains meaning from the life of the imprisoned: "The time slips away from me . . . There is no rest from it even at night . . . The days, even the weeks, lapse into each other, endlessly into one another. Each day that comes and goes is exactly like the one that went before" (George Jackson, Soledad Brother).

#### F. Image, role and identity

In an all-male world of male inmates and male guards, one's survival often depends on projecting an image of toughness. The basis for power and control is physical superiority by virtue of muscle and strength, by weapons, by having the odds, however they might be determined, in your favor. It

doesn't matter what you feel--only what you show. But, once you create an image, you have to stand behind it and back it up with deeds. A former leader of a big prisoner clique once told us what he would do to frighten someone into doing something they did not want to do: "I never tried to frighten anyone," he said, "because that would show you were unsure of yourself and had to go around threatening people. I would only ask. If he refused, I'd break his ankle or his knee. Next time when I asked, he'd agree. No threats, just simple logic."<sup>18</sup>

In prison, much as in a military, fraternity, or prep school setting, everyone is given toughness or manliness rating by everyone else. You can get a high rating by confronting and beating the men who have a reputation already, by being a deviant who refuses to obey orders and rules, or by appearing not to be affected by punishment. Strangely, a prisoner in many penitentiaries becomes most feared when he is considered by the others to be an "animal"--powerful, fearless, emotionless, and concerned only about gratification of his appetites. One such ex-con still had a ring of pride in his voice when he recounted for us how he had earned this title. Another, who was less physically capable of brutalizing other prisoners, attained a reputation as someone to be feared by affecting the role of a madman--erupting into violent outbursts one minute, calmly quoting Thoreau the next. Since the prisoners could neither understand nor predict his behavior, they left him alone. His "irrational" behavior suggested to them that he was not subject to the same contingencies which controlled everyone else, and so gained for him the reputation of a man to be reckoned with.

Guards, too, attain reputations amongst themselves which are based on how masculine they are and how much experience they have had in "handling"

violent encounters. Robert Doran observes that:

Those staff who have 'really been there', experienced the trouble, used the gas, the batons, the weapons, and the muscle, and did so effectively, receive the highest status and deference from other custodial staff

(Quoted in Mitford, 1973, p. 134)

In our simulated prison, the guards who were looked up to by the other guards were those who were most authoritarian in their treatment of prisoners and responded most forcefully to every real or imagined affront. Implicitly, they became the leaders on each shift, and their aggression came gradually to be modeled by the other guards, until eventually their tough outward manner was affected by nearly all.

But for every man, in real prison who is genuinely tough and strong, there are scores who are just children playing grown-up--scared and defenseless. They, too, must play the game of standing tall, never backing down, willing to sacrifice life and limb over a trivial point of masculine pride.

Acting out one's assigned role in a given occupation or profession is the ultimate self-deception procedure. It allows you to: assert a difference between the "real" you and the role-playing you; to engage in behaviors which are contrary to your private values; to degrade, brutalize, and dehumanize other human beings; and to abdicate personal responsibility for your role-instigated behavior. <sup>19</sup> Thus we may hide behind our roles while getting perverse satisfaction from doing what is appropriate to one's role in any given situation--being a tough, sadistic guard or a hardened, incorrigible prisoner. As in the rest of society, of course, social roles are adopted in prison for a variety of reasons,

and similarly there are individual variations in the way prison actors play the roles they have assumed. The difference is that in prison the available roles tend to be far less desirable, they are more often imposed than chosen, and the negative consequences of failing to act well your part are much greater. And since role behavior does tend inevitably toward stereotypes, individual variability in prison is reduced by these imposed and limited roles, which contributes further to a diminished sense of individuality and a more totally dehumanized atmosphere.

When the socialization into one's role is very abrupt, as it often is in becoming a prisoner and a guard, the discontinuity between one's true feelings and those which the situation demands one emit can be vividly and painfully experienced. The participants in our simulated prison had no extensive preparation for the situation in which they were placed, and many became acutely aware of the chasm developing between self and role. Here are the sensitive reactions of a guard in our study who could feel himself coming increasingly under the control of the prison environment and his role of guard, yet seemed helpless to struggle against it:

What made the experience most depressing for me was the fact that we were continually called upon to act in a way that was contrary to what I really feel inside. I don't feel like I'm the type of person that would be a guard, just constantly giving out shit and forcing people to do things, and pushing and lying--it just didn't seem like me, and to continually keep up and put on a face like that is just really one of the most oppressive things you can do. It's almost like a prison that you create yourself--you get into it, and it's just, it becomes almost this definition you make of yourself, it almost becomes like walls, and you want to



break out and you want just to be able to tell everyone that 'this isn't really me at all, and I'm not the person that's confined in there--I'm a person who wants to get out and show you that I am free, and I do have my own will, and I'm not the sadistic type of person that enjoys this kind of 'thing.'

However, even this guard did nothing to intervene or moderate the behavior of the more creatively sadistic guards, and at no time did he offer aid or assistance to any of the prisoners. He, like all others in the prison environment, appeared powerless to resist the demands of the situation and role, and behaved in ways he seemed in retrospect to despise.

#### G. Force and Power

"Our sense of power is more vivid when we break a man's spirit than when we win his heart."

--Eric Hoffer

Prisons are best comprehended as variations on the themes of force and power. What has been largely implicit in our description of prison conditions is a most salient aspect of the life inside prison, namely, the tremendous imbalance between guards and prisoners in terms of the power which each group wields. A prisoner who disobeys the orders of a guard or engages in certain behaviors without permission, soon learns that the guards have an arsenal of potent sanctions which they may "legitimately" employ against him. However, because prisoners have virtually no officially recognized avenues of redress, those who feel they have been wronged can only act "illegitimately" in retaliation, and even then risk almost certain, harsher treatment at the hands of the guards.

In describing the social conditions which give rise to human aggression, Bandura (1973) writes that "[m]altreatment is most prevalent where marked

imbalances of power exist" (p. 320). Since guards can and do commit acts against prisoners for which prisoners have no officially sanctioned means to react, there is really little reciprocity to the relationship between guards and prisoners, and the unbridled use of force and power becomes more commonplace. But, in this most unnatural of all human relations, where one man has such absolute control over another and all vestige of mutuality is stripped from their interactions, the use of force not only becomes more likely but takes on certain pathological characteristics as well. In the Stanford study, for example, we found that physical aggression, and verbal harassment by guards continued to steadily increase, in spite of the fact that prisoner resistance dramatically decreased during the same time period. Thus, the exercise of power seemed to become self-perpetuating and self-aggrandizing; acts of aggression appeared to acquire inherently rewarding properties and were no longer even quasi-rational responses to threats or affronts in a given situation. It appears as well that when there is little accountability for one's actions, and where force is available to be used, alternative and potentially more appropriate responses are not considered, let alone employed with any frequency.

Because of the marked power imbalance which exists in their favor, guards know that they will rarely be held responsible for the consequences of their actions against prisoners, and so their exercise of force may become totally arbitrary and capricious.<sup>20</sup> From the point of view of the prisoners, however, the prison environment acquires a profound quality of unpredictability. At the mercy of guards' whim and caprice, and rarely given explanations for even the presumably rational administrative decisions which affect them, prisoners soon learn that environmental contingencies are unreliable, and that they are incapable of accurately anticipating the consequences of their actions.

Thus, for example, when we analyzed the videotapes of guard-prisoner interactions in our simulated prison, we found that when prisoners asked a question of the guards, they were just as likely to get harassed or abused as they were to receive an answer. This kind of randomness or unpredictability in the environment, we think, was responsible for a more dramatic observation: by the end of the study prisoners had simply stopped behaving, and initiated virtually no activity of their own. Rather, they simply reacted in a totally passive manner to the threatening environment which surrounded them. In this sense, they had become the human analogue of the "learned helplessness" syndrome found in laboratory animals who have been arbitrarily shocked in research reported by Seligman (1973) and his colleagues.<sup>21</sup> When an organism can no longer predict the consequences of its behavior, it ceases to initiate activity of any kind, and, literally, does not behave.

We have found that in such an environment, power comes to be vicariously modeled by prisoners, and strength and forcefulness are qualities to be admired and revered. When they are released, many prisoners essentially aspire to "guard" status whenever it can be attained. The knowledge that any man's unmitigated dominance is bought only at the expense of another's deprivation does not moderate their veneration of power. Empathy appears to be a luxury which only the very secure can afford, and if they learn only one thing from the desperation of imprisonment, most prisoners learn to avoid the condition of powerlessness at all costs. Not surprisingly, then, when a prisoner is released he may demand absolute obedience from friends and relatives and others around him, much as it was demanded of him when he was imprisoned.

Another consequence of prisoner socialization into the comprehensive system of prison control is that prisoners come to depend on rules and regulations to order their daily lives. Although the initial adjustment is frequently uncomfortable, the prisoner has little choice but to comply. Gradually, however, he may find that those more benign and less confining rules add a little structure and regularity to his life--ironically, he is "freed" from the mundane and trivial contingencies which occupy much of the time of most people on the outside. Laundry, food, and so on are provided according to the predictable schedule. This rule-dependency, of course, becomes debilitating when prisoners are released and begin to live again where rules do not regulate nearly as much of their personal life. In fact, when prisoners become socialized into total reliance on these enforced regularities over a long period of time, they may actually become creatures of institutional life who find themselves functionally helpless to deal with the trivial, day-to-day spontaneous contingencies of ordinary life--so much so that many return to prison simply because they cannot make this adjustment.<sup>22</sup>

However, there is another, even more insidious side to this encompassing net of control which regulates prisoner life. Prisons deny the exercise of the individual will and the freedom of choice and, in so doing, they compromise the basic ingredient of human nature. This is, perhaps, the most devastating facet of the dehumanization of imprisonment. When the negation of choice operates in a total environment, actors become reactors, and individuals become passive processors of environmental inputs. Such people lose the capacity of self-direction, as well as the cognitive ability to alter the impact of external, aversive forces impinging on them. In a prison society, the inmate loses his rights as a citizen, and thus his power to choose and

the responsibility for his own choice. By systematically depriving the imprisoned of the opportunity for even trivial choices, prisons trivialize and render meaningless the lives of the inmates. That is the final act of dehumanization. "Beggars can't be choosers," we remind the poor--and all the others we have imprisoned.

#### H. Dynamics of Desperation

When people are forced to adapt themselves to pathological environments, they must often adopt seemingly pathological strategies for living. To become socialized or adjusted in such situations is to accept the internally consistent illogic of events, to learn to seek one's only joys in the baseness of the surroundings, and to manufacture meanings for oneself in the remotest corners of a limited universe in which there is none. And most insidiously, survival under such conditions, often demands that men employ behavioral heuristics which, of their own perversity, insure the continuation of the pathological environment itself.

There are many ironies and inversions generated by the structure of the prison wasteland (as perhaps best typified by Murton's observation that in order to be supremely successful--to be paroled--a convict must truly perfect the skills of manipulation and deceit). Under the conditions of total sexual deprivation which prisons impose, for example, an inverted code of sexuality evolves: homosexuality becomes the necessary accoutrement of power, while on the outside it is considered its antithesis. A former prisoner leader told us in an interview that "my partners would have thought I was queer or something if I didn't have my stable of young white boys, since it was clear I was in a position to afford them." And, in prison vernacular, the unwilling victim of a rape is known as the "punk" or "queer", while his attacker, the initiator of the homosexual encounter, becomes a "jockey" or a "stud"--a man.

In an attempt to preserve some vestige of self-esteem in an environment which systematically deprives them of it, prisoners create and impose distinctions among themselves. The infrastructure of prisoner culture creates an illusion of power and status within a group which is collectively powerless and devoid of status. Prisoner hierarchies are rigidly enforced and they provide a mechanism by which some minimal sense of control and effectance is preserved through mutual victimization.

Perhaps, the most extreme version of this imposed structure of prisoner hierarchies can be seen in Polish prisons. Podgorecki (1973) describes the "double life" of prisoners, in which each newcomer is put on probation for a period of time while he is judged by his peers. On his initiation night he is labelled either a "man" or a "slave": If a man, then he is afforded many prerogatives by the prisoner infrastructure; if a slave, he is afforded no choices whatsoever and must submit to any homosexual or other desires of the "men". With this dichotomy, there are several gradations, ranging from untouchables (who can never rise out of the "slave" class), to "real men" who administer the convicts' code of behavior. Thus, the imposed dehumanization is extended and made inescapable by the prisoners themselves who, ironically, are driven by circumstance to most effectively imprison one another.

Such prisoner hierarchies are tolerated by the prison administration because, in fact, the system depends on them for its operation. Since even under the optimal conditions, guards are hopelessly outnumbered by prisoners, some means must be found by the staff to prevent prisoners from organizing in common purpose against them. Prisoner conflict and frictions can be manipulated through such strategies as promoting racism, and pitting one prisoner faction against another. Further, by allowing some individual prisoners to become moderately powerful at the expense of many others, the

prison staff insures the collective impotence of the entire prisoner population. Thus, the illusion of power is permitted in a few so that it may never become a reality for the many.

In fact, the generally expressed complaint of prison officials that prisoners have recently become "politicized" can be interpreted in terms of the prisoners' increasing reluctance to be co-opted by the prison system and to, thereby, further imprison their fellow inmates. This trend is candidly described by Flynn (1972) who begins by noting that while the "requirement for inmate cooperation is just as true today as it was decades ago" it is becoming progressively more difficult to obtain, since:

. . . the experience of the past few years indicates a dramatic change in the ground rules by which institutions function. There appears to be less willingness on the part of prisoners to exercise a controlling effect over other inmates, which is accompanied by an increased toleration of the use of violence on the part of fellow inmates. (p. 20)

Prison guards, too, are controlled and degraded by the prison environment. Although they wield considerable power over individual prisoners, they exercise little freedom to make real choices which might affect or improve their working environment. As an occupational group, prison guards have a low status and are paid very poorly, so it becomes especially important for them to maintain the exceedingly degraded position of prisoners, if only to provide a personal contrast in becoming resigned to their own plight. Thus, reminding us of Thoreau's observation that:

"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation!"

But beyond this, the institutional setting is designed to place guards and prisoners in opposition, not just through contrasting uniforms and

physical arrangements, which emphasize their separateness but also through the elaborate procedures and precautions which guards are required to employ when dealing with prisoners. And much of the training or initial socialization which the guards receive is designed simply to instill the notion of prisoner-as-enemy, insuring that an undertone of fear and hostility pervades the environment.

Such a perception is not difficult to maintain, since guards do become a convenient symbol towards which prisoners may direct their repressed hostility. A former prison guard who told us that the most difficult transition for him was "working in an atmosphere of hate" describes this dynamic, and the reciprocal feeling to which it leads:

I have worked with men who have been incarcerated in the same cell for years. Their hatred keeps them going. I was the authority to keep them there. I was the one to whom together they could and did transfer their hatred. I have worked with correctional officers who have lived with this hatred and they, as I, learned to project [it] as well.

Thus, in response to prisoner hostility, guards behave in ways which function to generate even more hostility. The encirclement grows ever wider but ever tighter, alternative ways of reacting becoming less likely as the tension and fear increase.

Guards often become excessively concerned with their own safety, which further promotes a perseveration of standard or "accepted" ways of dealing with prisoners, even though it may be these very methods which have caused and exacerbated tensions in the first place. When Superintendent Mancusi of Attica was asked by a House Sub-Committee what he had learned from the riots which had shaken his prison, he replied, in a revealing mixture of idioms: "We have instituted two gunposts in our rehabilitation of the institution," thereby demonstrating that the uncritical devotion to an obsolete set of



principles is not restricted to any one level of the prison administration.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, however, individual guards do often learn from their initial experience in prison that kindness and consideration on their part is sometimes exploited by the prisoners. Prisoners may, for example, attempt to manipulate an overly concerned or helpful new guard, convincing him to constantly run errands, making unreasonable requests, and so on--usually at the delight of other prisoners--until he "gets wise". But the exploitation of these friendly guards is only made necessary or even desirable for the prisoners in the context of the treatment they receive from other guards. Most prisoners have come to be suspicious of favors from guards, since they are often only a ploy by which guards may make additional claims or demands on prisoners at a later time. Since it is incompatible with the internal structure of the prison, genuine friendliness from the guards cannot be relied upon to occur with any regularity and, even in the new well-meaning guards, personal consideration and sensitivity to prisoner concerns generally extinguishes in a very short time (still, in part, because of the reception it gets at the hands of the prisoners).

Moreover, in this impoverished environment of prison, individual kindnesses have no easily interpretable meaning--they seem to make little real sense in the midst of such cruel surroundings. Not surprisingly, such behavior is often taken simply as a sign of weakness on the part of individual guards. In this sense prisoners actually require guards to be tough; since toughness is the code by which they live, they have come to neither trust nor respect less. Within the confines of these normative expectations, then, it becomes nearly impossible for an individual guard to effect change, even at a simply personal level. Consequently, it is not unreasonable to speak of the way in which prisoners and guards "imprison" each other through inflexible negative expectations, in an environment which makes prosocial behavior desirable to exploit.

Because they have been socialized and conditioned to see each other exclusively as "enemy", guard and prisoner groups cannot appreciate the degree to which their individual plights are actually common ones. Perhaps no event more tragically symbolizes the functional equivalence of prison guards and inmates than the massacre at Attica, where, in fact, state troopers killed nearly as many guard hostages as they did prisoners in regaining control of the prison. Yet, the friends and relatives of those who were killed (as well as the guards who had not been taken), had come so deeply to believe that prisoners, and only prisoners, could be the arch enemies of guards, that they literally refused to believe the coroner's report which showed that the hostages had been killed by other guards and police. So strong was their need to avoid this lesson of mutuality that they were compelled to literally deny even the medical reports and physical evidence which were presented to them.<sup>24</sup>

#### IV. The Socialization Into Criminality: Prison as Emblem

As we begin to move from micro-situations and work up to macro-situations we find that the apparent irrationality of behavior on a small scale takes on a certain form of intelligibility when one sees in context.

--R. D. Laing

In describing the specific techniques of prison dehumanization and the perverse dynamic which it generates, we have concentrated primarily on specific (negative) effects which are caused by this special form of institutional socialization. It now remains but a logical extension to the ultimate consequences of the debilitating psychological adjustments demanded by this environment and their implications for the society at large.

Ironically, the institution of prison, which rises as a symbol of the criminal law's devotion to the person-as-cause view of crime and corrections, stands equally as a (grim) reminder of the consummate power of situational control, for perhaps nowhere in society are men controlled by their environment more

oppressively than in prison. An even more bitter irony, however, is contained in the observation that prisons, whose express purpose is to rehabilitate criminals and deter crime, actually operate to make it more (not less) likely that men will engage in illegal behavior. And it is precisely in this sense that one can begin to speak - most directly of a "socialization into criminality".

No matter what a man's past experience has been, his socialization into further criminality must surely be intensified by affixing the label "convict" and taking him away to prison where this abstract label is given tangible meaning, and begins to be reinforced by very real consequences. Coming to think of oneself as "prisoner" is, in many ways, functionally equivalent to adopting the concept of self-as-criminal. And whether it is intended or incidental, the ultimate outcome of this labelling process is usually that a man will begin to categorize himself as truly "apart" from others, and not just in the sense of "outside the law", for the prisoner label partakes as well from the categories of "deviant", "strange", "undesirable"<sup>25</sup>-concepts which, when applied to the self, can greatly facilitate, indeed, compel one's participation in so-called "pathological" and anti-social behavior.

But beyond this, whether a man occupies the role of prisoner or guard within prison, he is led almost inescapably to engage in illegal activities by the immediate conditions which he confronts in prison. The physical as well as psychological survival of prisoners often depends on how well they have mastered the necessary "criminal" skills. As we have described, the inherently pathological constellation of social forces which controls behavior inside prison makes physical violence ever more likely, dishonesty and deceit the very prerequisites for success.

Moreover, in addition to making necessary the participation in crime inside the prison, prison conditions actually constitute "schools for crime"--

and not just in the superficial sense that they provide occasion for experts to exchange the "secrets" of their trade. Whether it is because they have been completely institutionalized to depend on a comprehensive rule structure, or have learned to distrust others and perceive all men as potential "marks", or possess a burning hatred which will motivate acts of recrimination against the system which placed them there, many prisoners are so changed by their prison experience that they are led inexorably towards crime when they are released from prison.<sup>26</sup> Yet, most of the so-called "debilitating" effects of prison would be transient, if only the ex-convict could enter an environment on the outside which would allow him to prosper. But, of course, most are reintegrated into the society at large under conditions which are scarcely less hostile than prison itself, and where anti-social and manipulative strategies are actually, if only in an immediate sense, functional and adaptive. (Here is another way the label "criminal" has tangible consequences for those who have ever been given it: having been in prison generally guarantees that acceptable work is difficult if not impossible to obtain--making crime a likely, if not the only, way of surviving).<sup>27</sup>

Guards, too, are criminalized by their prison socialization in the sense that they must become hardened and inured to the degradation and desperation of other men. Eugene Debs (1927) once observed that:

. . . The guard and the inmate cease to be human beings when they meet in prison. . . . The rules enforce this relation and absolutely forbid any intimacy with the human touch in between them. (p. 25)

Now, it could be argued that such dehumanized interactions are criminal per se, surely in the sense that they are morally reprehensible. At any rate, however, there can be little doubt that they facilitate guard

maltreatment and brutalization of their captives, and may generalize to settings beyond the prison walls. And aside from becoming accustomed to and participating in cruelty, guards often behave in ways which are explicitly illegal, or would be if the legal sanction were applied with the same standard it is outside prison. Of course many instances of guard brutality and abuse of prisoners would constitute prosecutable offenses in a court of law. But, the tremendous prevalence and availability of contraband inside prisons suggests even another dimension of the guards' socialization into criminality.

Yet, finally, beyond the insights which the analysis of prison provides for an understanding of the behavior of those persons who live and work within it, we believe that prison socialization can be seen as a truly emblematic of the way in which the "socialization into criminality" occurs at the other levels and sectors of society. That is, that the forces which lead to criminal behavior inside prison differ only in degree and not kind, from those in the larger society--the situational control of prison actually provides a model of the processes by which one generally becomes "criminal".<sup>29</sup>

Crime is most fundamentally the product of impoverished circumstances and the imbalances of power which exist in society. It may be seen as part of the continuing behavioral dialogue between the controllers and the controlled. The brutalization of the impoverished by the agents of society's empowered institutions is, as in prison, facilitated by the dehumanization of both groups. The poor, too, become submerged in the dynamics of desperation, tend to lose perspective inside their immediate situation and to victimize those who can least afford it--each other. For many crime becomes not a choice, or even a necessary alternative, but rather simply a fact of life. As in prison, there are powerful socializing forces present to instill in the poor the

notion that the existing order, with themselves at the bottom, is the only legitimate or possible one.<sup>30</sup> Chronic powerlessness, the experience of being arbitrarily and totally subject to the circumstances which surround you leads eventually and inevitably to the feeling of hopelessness and to a truly, "learned helplessness". And when one has become totally immersed in despair, and lost sight of even the possibility of improvement or change, he can become in many ways the most malleable of men.

Just as in prison, the victimization of the poor in society is implemented largely by persons who are themselves collectively powerless and have been reluctantly or unwittingly brought under the force of situational control.<sup>31</sup> Whether as the objects or the agents of institutional purpose and the socioeconomic forces that dominate society, we are all prevented through potent socialization processes from learning that what distinguishes prisoner from guard, inside prison and beyond, is finally nothing more than the illusion of choice and power, and not its reality.<sup>32</sup>

V. A Postscript on Choice and Evil

"In order to defend individual freedom, it is necessary to enhance the power of individuals."

--Perry London

Social scientists are continually engaged in debate, amongst themselves as well as with persons outside their disciplines, as to the most appropriate objects of study and the best methods by which these topics may become known. Recently, the Chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley issued a policy statement which contained guidelines for "the protection of human subjects". It admonished social scientists to avoid research "procedures that may place the reputation or status of a social group or an institution in jeopardy." The statement then cautioned that:

. . . an institution, such as a church, a university, or a prison, must be guarded against derogation, for many people may be affiliated with, or employed by the institution, and pejorative information about it would injure their reputation and self-esteem.

San Francisco Chronicle, August 19, 1973

We believe that this position represents a confounding of the critical analysis of institutional structures with negative assertions about the people who work within them. Our thesis has been that certain institutions, most notably prisons, may be inherently pathological and, by their very nature, evil. We have attempted to show that (especially) through a variety of effective techniques of institutional socialization, human behavior may be powerfully controlled and often thoroughly perverted by social forces inherent in the situation in which it occurs. In so doing, however, we would concur with the observation of activist Saul Alinsky (1969), himself a social scientist, who once noted that experience had taught him "not to confuse power patterns with

the personalities of the individuals involved; in other words, to hate conditions, not individuals" (p. x). An appreciation of the potency of situational control and an understanding of its dynamics are vital to any analysis, not just of prisons, but of the behavior which occurs in other social and institutional settings as well. And rather than an accusation which might injure the reputations of the persons involved, such a position in actuality constitutes at least a partial vindication of them, for it emphasizes the extent to which men may become inadvertently controlled by the nature of the situations in which they find themselves.

Of course, if men are ever to resist these forces when they would choose to, they must first be made aware of their power, and of the potentiality of social situations to manipulate and control their behavior. Thus, rather than to deter research which might derogate institutions and the purposes they serve, it must surely be encouraged, and the results widely disseminated. For, as Kelman (1968) advises:

In order to build some protection against manipulation into the social structure, we will have to extend our research on processes of resistance to control and make a special effort to communicate relevant findings to the public (pp. 30-31).

But individuals must become knowledgeable of the varieties of behavioral control, not just so they may resist overt compliance, but also so that they may be aware of instances in which they are being involuntarily, but unavoidably, coerced. Research has taught us that when men perceive their behavior to be a function of environmental determinants rather than a product of their personal choice, they are less likely to change their attitudes and beliefs in accordance with their behavior. So that even when behavioral compliance cannot be resisted, attitudes and beliefs may remain independent of behavior, so long as the latter is seen as a function



of the pressures of social forces.

And, suggesting as we have, that the concept of the situational control of behavior be more fully recognized and integrated into the criminal law, we have not intended to propose the basis for a psychology of moral absolutism. Rather, quite the opposite, since it is important to recognize that only when individuals are fully aware and informed about their choices can they be said to make genuinely "moral" decisions. Thus it follows that it is only when a man is truly cognizant of the potential of a situation to control his behavior, and chooses still to enter it, that we may begin to talk about the extent to which he can be held "responsible" for his actions.

Individuals must be given sufficient knowledge from which to form a perspective, a point of view in which an equipoise between their personal ideals and the necessary demands of their surroundings may be attained. So that, in this sense, they become like Bettelheim (1960) who describes his strategy for surviving the environmental demands of the concentration camp:

. . . I had to accept that the environment could, as it were, turn personality upside down, and not just in the small child, but in the mature adult too. If I wanted to keep it from happening to me, I had to accept this potentiality of the environment, to decide where and where not to adjust. (p. 23)

It is in this way that a person's choices and actions may be rendered meaningful, both to himself and in a larger social context. And to be basically freed from the coercive influence of extreme institutional control by truly understanding its dynamics offers us the promise of eventually transforming our social order into one where more beneficent institutions may be created and preserved, detrimental and dehumanizing structures fundamentally altered and replaced, and the basic antinomy of authority and opportunity finally reconciled.

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## Footnotes

1. When genetic or innate theories of behavior were less generally discredited and more politically feasible, criminality was explained in terms of the lawbreaker's "bad blood". Three states still prohibit the marriage of persons with three felony convictions to a woman under the age of 45, and seven states presently authorize the sterilization of "habitual criminals". (See Bagdikian, 1972, p. 162).
2. A variety of different proposals can be subsumed under the term "preventive detention", but all of them denote incarcerating a person before he has been convicted of criminal activity. In perhaps its most extreme form it would involve institutionalizing young children who showed signs of possessing "violent or criminal tendencies." Psychiatrist Arnold Hutschnecker, who proposed mandatory psychological testing of six- to eight-year old children to identify those with criminal predispositions, advocated the preventive detention of the young as a "direct, immediate effective way of attacking the problem at its very origin, by focusing on the criminal mind of the child." (San Francisco Chronicle, April 6, 1972).

However outrageous this may seem, it must be recognized as but the logical extension of a theory of crime which views criminal behavior as the product of internal predispositions toward criminality.

3. The law comes perhaps closest to confronting this circumstance in its discussions of the concept of entrapment. However, the Supreme Court has insisted on meeting the issue obliquely, by focusing on the rationale that an entrapped defendant should not be convicted, only because the courts should not be put in the position of countenancing improper police methods. In this they are following Justice Holmes who wrote in Olmstead v. United States

277 U.S. 438, 470 (dissenting) . . . [F]or my part I think it less evil that some criminals should escape than that the Government should play an ignoble part."

Whether this "ignoble part" involves primarily, as Justice Warren (Sherman v. United States 356 U.S. 369) suggested, "play[ing] on the weaknesses of an innocent party and beguil[ing] him into committing crimes which he would otherwise not have attempted", there is little agreement. At any rate, the concept of situational control has been effectively sidestepped since apparently the Court regards the occasion as less ignoble, or, at least, less exculpatory, when a defendant is entrapped by persons or situations which are not agents of the government. And, the notion that some persons are continually "entrapped" by the conditions in which they must live, continues to elude the criminal law.

4. Sometimes, as when the socialization process is unexpectedly foreshortened, the disjunction between self and role is vividly experienced. Similarly, when the situation or task for which one is being prepared is exceptionally discontinuous with the conditions of everyday life (as in wartime), the self is experienced as subjectively distant from one's role behavior. People in these situations often make statements to the effect that they "couldn't believe it was me really doing it", suggesting an intensification of the experience of self-as-observer, as though one part of them was watching (in disbelief) while some other, less closely related part, acted.
5. Becoming more and more totally submerged in situational contingencies usually implies an alteration in time perspective--a kind of "expanded present" in which one becomes increasingly unself-conscious and less circumspect. J. Glenn Gray (1973) describes the state as it occurs in war:

"Reflection and calm reasoning are alien to it. I wrote in my journal that I was obsessed with the 'tyranny of the present', the past and the future did not concern me. It was hard for me to think, to be alone" (p. 32).

6. The exact parameters which govern this process have not been completely determined by psychologists. One generalization which can be made, however, concerns the centrality of perceived freedom or choice: to the extent that an individual feels he has freely chosen to engage in discrepant behavior, the more likely he is to alter his beliefs correspondingly, and make them consonant with his behavior.

Laboratory paradigms have generally not focused on the effects of repeated or prolonged involvement in "counterattitudinal" behavior, since experimentation with volunteers (usually college students) is severely limited by considerations of time. It is reasonable to predict, however, that the more extensive and protracted a person's involvement (again, particularly under conditions of only mild or subtle coercion), the more he will come to believe in what he is doing--further increasing the socializing efficacy of work environments and institutional settings.

Moreover, research by Haney and Collins (1971) and later by Collins and Hoyt (1972) has demonstrated that when persons expect their counterattitudinal behavior to have serious negative consequences for others, they are actually more likely to change their private opinions in a direction which is consistent with those acts. This finding, too, augurs badly for the potential of the individual to maintain "self" while performing in institutional roles whose tasks may be dehumanizing or detrimental to others.

7. In a statement which recent events have tinged with irony, former Vice-President Spiro Agnew provides an even starker perspective when he warns us that:



One need only recall the era of Hitler's Storm Troopers to realize what can happen to the most civilized of societies when such a cloak of respectability is provided thugs and criminals.

(San Francisco Chronicle, September 26, 1971)

8. In this sense an institution is not unlike a scientific concept or theory which, as Conant (1947), Kuhn (1962) and others have shown us, tends to persist in spite of considerable disconfirming evidence, until a replacement has been found. The human mind, it appears, abhors an explanatory vacuum. Conant writes that ". . . a conceptual scheme is never discarded merely because of a few stubborn facts with which it cannot be reconciled, a concept is either modified or replaced by a better concept, never abandoned with nothing left to take its place" (p. 90).

Unfortunately, in the case of those institutions which have outlived their usefulness, these "stubborn facts" often represent considerable human suffering and the proliferation rather than the solution of social ills.

9. On one of the few points in which he and virtually every inmate in the nation's prisons could find agreement, President Nixon has said that: "No institution within our society has a record which presents such a conclusive case of failure as does our prison system" (quoted in Bagdikian, 1972, p. 1).
10. In an excellent paper by Caplan and Nelson (1970) they perceptively detail not only the degree to which "person-blame" operates generally in our society, but also the part which psychologists and psychological methodologies have played in contributing to its impact.

Of special relevance to the role of psychology in the criminal justice system, they quote Judge David Bazelon who warns psychologists not to become "engaged as magicians to perform an intriguing side-show so that the spectators will not notice the crisis in the center ring." And even more telling for present discussion, we think, is his observation of "how much

less expensive it is to hire a thousand psychologists than to make even a miniscule change in the social and economic structure" (quoted in Caplan & Nelson, p. 210).

11. As symbolized by former Georgia Governor Lester Maddox's flippant reply when he was asked to comment on criticisms of Georgia's prison system: "We're doing the best we can and before we can do much better, we're going to have to get a better grade of prisoner."
12. This is perhaps one of the saddest lessons of the Attica tragedy. Would the order to fire upon the prisoners have been given if the hostages had been a group of senators, Wall Street brokers, or the Governor's family-- instead of just an anonymous group of Attica Prison correctional officers? Whatever its pragmatic utility, the rule which exists in nearly all prisons to the effect that hostages are not to be respected in attempted escapes and rebellions is in part, at least, a function of the knowledge of who those hostages are likely to be--prison guards.
13. Garfinkel (1956), in specifying the conditions of successful degradation ceremonies, writes: "Finally, the denounced person must be ritually separated from a place in the legitimate order, i.e., he must be defined as standing at a place opposed to it. He must be placed 'outside', he must be made 'strange'. (p. 423).
- 14.. An example of the extremes to which such mechanisms may be carried is provided by a new maximum security unit under construction in West Virginia. Designed as an "architectural method of controlling prisoners" its specifications exceed even Orwellian proportions: large metal screens behind which guards will remotely patrol the cellblock, an electronic system of serving food, and a closed circuit television network through which the

inmates will receive visits. Among the violations which Acting Warden William Wallace specified as leading to up to six months confinement in the unit was a "breach of trust" (Freeworld Times, 2 (6), 1973).

15. Some philosophers and sociologists of rules and the moral order have argued that often it is the most arbitrary and "irrational" rules which are invested with the strongest prohibitions against questioning or challenge. These are granted a near sacred status, which protects their purely conventional, otherwise tenuous, nature from becoming known. Of this obfuscation-by-veneration, one philosopher writes: "If their man-made origins were not hidden, they would be stripped of their authority. Therefore, the conventions are not merely tacit, but extremely inaccessible to investigation" (Douglas, 1973; p. 15).

16. This was dramatically demonstrated in our Stanford prison study where guards categorically employed punishment techniques to influence and control prisoner behavior, even though beforehand we had made them aware of the availability of a number of reward possibilities (movies, reading material, etc.) which they might have used. It is hard to know whether this proclivity for punishment was a function exclusively of the prison-like environment, or represents some generalized (perhaps culture-specific) tendency towards aversive control (which also seems tenable), or both.

Whichever, there is additional evidence to suggest that one is more likely to employ punishment strategies to control the behavior of people who are perceived as dissimilar to the self (Banks, 1973)--a finding that contributes substantially to an understanding of the prison guards' excessive use of aversive techniques to control prisoners, in an environment which emphasizes in so many ways the real or contrived differences between them.

17. There is a tendency among men whose occupations involve the element of risk or danger (such as soldiers, police, prison guards) to focus excessively on this aspect of their work, so that it exercises a kind of centrality or organizing effect on nearly all of their occupational activities. And, this danger need not be imminent or even likely, for it to serve as a justification of nearly everything they do. Our observations of suburban police, who rarely if ever incur physical attacks (or even verbal threats), indicate that they orient much of their occupational routine (interactions with citizens, response to certain kinds of calls, etc.) around the very remote possibility of harm.

The threat or anticipation of danger and harm may be utilized in the early socialization or training in these occupations as a device to gain unquestioning compliance with rules or orders. In fact, the invocation of ultimate, future danger often becomes a kind of blanket justification for obeying rules and orders which have demonstrably little relationship to the events invoked. Thus, cadets at service academies, for example, must uphold rigid and all-encompassing honor codes (which can require informing on classmates--who will be expelled--for violations like coming in late or missing dinner) because, they are solemnly told, "your lives may depend on each other some day."

The similar function of anticipating a slightly different kind of trauma is described by Gray (1973), who writes of his wartime experiences:

. . . It is true that most of us did not want to behave in this way; in fact, the faces of these green troops registered utter disgust with such senseless orders. But we did not protest; we steeled ourselves, thinking, no doubt, that much worse sights were in store. (p. 6)

18. In Manchild in the Promised Land Claude Brown recounts the way in which he got a reputation as being a tough little guy by smashing a bigger boy in the head with a Coke bottle. After that, he had to take on bigger and stronger boys and deal with them in ever more extreme terms. There is an asymmetry to such reputations built on strength or toughness: you can only move in one direction without losing face.
19. An interesting hypothesis about the way in which roles or masks function to suppress emotional expression in society in general is advanced by James Marshall. (1968). People in power, he maintains,
- . . . devise symbols, prescribe manners, and create masks to avoid making true feelings explicit, fearful of the consequences if they were to reveal fear or hostility. Obversely, they impose these symbols, manners, and masks on others; and through their prestige make them part of the culture, so as to avoid expressions of fear and hostility against those in power, which in turn might release the latter's repressed violence and guilt. (p. 47)
20. According to Rubinstein (1973), the arbitrary use of force is not restricted to the prison guard, but begins much earlier in the criminal justice process:
- Every policeman is faced at some point with the temptation to beat a prisoner. There is always someone who angers him or arouses fear in him that he seeks to eradicate by punishing the person who caused him to quiver. If his supervisors do not object, nothing can stop him. (p. 321)
21. Bettelheim (1960) reports that precisely this same phenomenon occurred in the concentration camps--so debilitating to them was their inability to anticipate the consequences of their own behavior that prisoners ceased behaving at all. And further:
- By destroying a man's ability to act on his own or to predict the outcome of his actions, they destroyed the feeling that his actions had any purpose, so many prisoners stopped acting. But when they stopped acting they soon stopped living. (p. 148)

22. Interestingly, in our own mock prison, the only personality trait which was related to behavioral differences was that of authoritarianism. Those prisoners who adjusted best to the prison, who remained longest, were significantly higher on the F-scale of authoritarianism than those who broke down and had to be released early. It may be that authoritarian personalities "fit" with the authoritarian structure of a prison, but there is another explanation. Authoritarians believe that power underlies all human relationships. Sometimes they have more power and control than others and are on top; sometimes they have less and are lower down in the pecking order hierarchy. They can better take the harassment of prison life because they are resigned to (and expect) the type of treatment and total control they would administer if the power tables were turned. Those with a more democratic orientation reject power as the basis for human relations and cannot accept the injustice of power domination under any circumstances.
23. When carried to its extreme, the concern for safety can be employed to generate yet another paradox of imprisonment, this time at a more ideological level.

Just as it has been made to appear that the purpose for the United States' involvement in Vietnam was to bring home the POWs with honor and dignity, it appears that the purpose of civilian prisons has become distorted into maintaining the security of the guards. Following a year long series of 145 stabbings (20 of which were fatal) in California's reputedly model prison system, five prisons were put on indefinite lock-up of all inmates. This means that all prisoners regardless of their personal record of "good behavior" are subjected to a uniform code of disciplinary action. Not only does this mean a loss of the already limited freedom of movement out of their confining cells, but a loss of all educational and rehabilitation programs. A spokesman for the California Department of Corrections conceded that

We're no longer able to have first priority to operate programs for inmates. Instead, the first priority is going to have to be safety.

In mockery of the so-called rehabilitation programs that are the rationale of modern penology, one prison official is quoted as saying,

You might say we're more interested in saving lives than teaching someone how to add two and two.

(San Francisco Examiner, December 2, 1973)

24. From a San Francisco Chronicle article of September 15, 1971:

The reaction of disbelief was widespread and strongly felt in this . . . town of 2800 whose major industry is a maximum security prison . . .

"Bull!" was the reaction of a brother-in-law of . . . a slain hostage. The brother-in-law, who declined to give his name, said he broke down emotionally and quit his job at the prison as a guard after the last hostage was freed . . .

[Another was] angry about the autopsy findings in Rochester, especially the medical examiner's statement that he found no evidence of mutilation. [The man] said he was in the prison when the bodies were removed after the carnage in the prison yard and he saw wounds that he was sure could not have been caused by bullets. . . .

25. The Government Accounting Office, a Congressional watchdog agency, recently reported that 88% of prisoners in federal penitentiaries could be characterized as having "undesirable character traits" (San Francisco Chronicle, November 14, 1973). (Unfortunately, they did not bother to report exactly to whom these traits were undesirable, nor even to specify the criteria used for defining the category. Rather, the statistic was presented in a series of objective, demographic measurements like average age, years of schooling, and so on.)

It is interesting that not only did the guards in our prison simulation come to view the prisoners as high on negative dimensions like "undesirable"

(even though both groups knew themselves to be selected randomly from the same sample), but the prisoners, too, came to think negatively of their peers and selves, adopting the guards' cognitive definitions of them, and referring in disparaging ways to other prisoners and themselves.

26. It is not uncommon to hear of citizen outrage over defendants and convicts who have been treated "leniently" by the criminal justice system, only to commit subsequent crimes.

But consider this excerpt from a letter written to us by an inmate in a state penitentiary system:

I was recently released from solitary confinement after being held therein for 37 months. A silent system was imposed upon me and even to whisper to the man in the next cell resulted in being beaten by guards, sprayed with chemical mace, blackjacked, stomped, and thrown into a strip-cell naked to sleep on a concrete floor . . .

Because of my refusal to let the things die down and forget all that happened during my 37 months in solitary . . . I am the most hated prisoner in [this] penitentiary, and called a "hard-core incorrigible". Maybe I am an incorrigible, but if true, it's because I would rather die than to accept being treated as less than a human being. . . . But now I don't think I will be a thief when I am released. No, I'm not rehabilitated. It's just that I no longer think of becoming wealthy by stealing. I now only think of killing--killing those who have beaten me and treated me as if I were a dog. I hope and pray for the sake of my own soul and future life of freedom that I am able to overcome the bitterness and hatred which eats daily at my soul, but I know to overcome it will not be easy.

Rarely, if ever, do judges and parole boards face public recrimination over what is the more common counter-example to the charge of being "soft on criminals"--crimes which are committed as a result of being treated too harshly and inhumanely by the system.



27. In this sense, then, it might be argued that the institution of prison itself constitutes an instance of "entrapment". To wit, to the extent to which persons become socialized into criminality by their prison experience, and are led either inside the institution or when released to engage in illegal behavior from which they would otherwise have refrained, then to that extent they have been entrapped.

28. John Rawls (1971), who writes that "[b]eing first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising," notes also, in a more realistic vein, that ". . . an injustice is tolerable only when it is necessary to avoid an even greater injustice"(p. 4).

Put simply, our implicit argument has been that prison fails even this relative test and, for this reason, has become an intolerable injustice.

29. The more psychological use of the term "model"--an object of identification--applies as well: prisons may actually promote rather than deter violence by serving as a behavioral model for potential aggressors, teaching the lesson that some persons in society actually ~~deserve~~ to be punished and abused for what they do. Since the poor and powerless are most often and most visibly "reprimanded" by the criminal justice system, this lesson is likely to focus on a justification for primarily their abuse. (And it could be argued that not only prisons but all legitimized agents of force and violence such as the police and military also serve a similar modelling function for those members of society who may be contemplating violent acts.)

30. It is the ability to resist the internalization of an imposed belief structure, to recognize that what exists is not necessarily what must be, and finally to advocate and work for change which is an individual's

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THE SOCIALIZATION INTO CRIMINALITY: ON BECOMING A PRISONER AND --ETC(U)

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ultimate defense against tyranny at any level. Because, as George Lukacs has pointed out:

. . . if it is true that an organization based on force can only survive as long as it is able to overcome the resistance of individuals or groups by force, it is equally true that it could not survive if it were compelled to use force every time it is challenged. . . [A] change can be brought about in an organization based on force only when the belief of both the rulers and the ruled, that the existing order is the only possible one, has been shaken. (p. 257)

31. In one of the most perceptive and revealing investigative reports written about the prison system (and one from which our own analysis has greatly benefited) Jessica Mitford (1973) observes that "[t]he people of us on the outside do not like to think of wardens and guards as our surrogates. Yet they are, and they are intimately locked in a deadly embrace with their human captives behind the prison walls. By extension, so are we" (p. 297).

We have suggested that guards and prisoners are our surrogates in still another sense--theirs is the more visible, symbolic instance of a common struggle in which we are all engaged.

32. This observation will hopefully contribute to a more personal appreciation of Eugene V. Debs' truly profound statement: "While there is a prison, I am not free."

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13. ABSTRACT  
A discussion of the way in which persons become institutionalized institutionally socialized is presented. Special attention is given to the processes take in the institution of prison. The concept of "situational control" is discussed and elaborated upon as a perspective from which to view the causes of behavior. The potency of situational control and social "roles" in institutional settings is emphasized. Included is a section designed to convey a personal, logical perspective on prison conditions, followed by an analytical treatment of control in prison. Parallels between prison degradation and dehumanization processes by which persons become "socialized into criminality" in society are suggested. The role of social science in investigating and disseminating information about these forms of social control is discussed.



## KEY WORDS

## LINK A

## LINK B

ROLE

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PSYCHOLOGY  
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 CRIMINALITY  
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 INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL  
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 SOCIAL CONTROL  
 OBEDIENCE  
 DISOBEDIENCE  
 SITUATIONAL CONTROL  
 DEHUMANIZATION  
 EVIL  
 FREEDOM  
 SOCIAL CHANGE