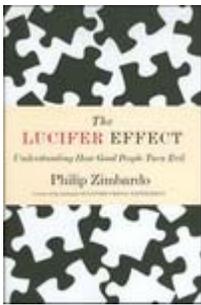


Evil: Understanding Bad Situations and Systems, But Also Personality and Group Dynamics

A review of



The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil

by Philip Zimbardo

New York: Random House, 2007. 551 pages. ISBN 978-1-4000-6411-3.

\$27.95



Reviewed by

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Philip Zimbardo's book *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* is a well-written, engaging, and passionate book about evil in the world. It is a highly personal book in many ways. A large portion of this long book (234 out of 488 pages of text) deals directly and specifically with the Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE), describing the project in detail, including Zimbardo's role as principal investigator and prison superintendent and the impact of the study on the participants, with many references to the SPE throughout the rest of the book. Zimbardo describes the way in which he was caught up in the situation he created and how he failed to stop it as its destructive effects on prisoners (and guards)

unfolded. The book describes research by others that supports the theoretical view that has guided the SPE—the powerful role of situations, rather than dispositions or personality, in creating evil.

Another large portion of the book deals with the abuse of prisoners in Iraq in general, and in Abu Ghraib in particular. Zimbardo had an immediate emotional connection to Abu Ghraib, both feeling outrage and seeing similarity to the SPE. He had an additional connection to Abu Ghraib as an expert defense witness for Sergeant Fredericks, whom the media and the literature about Abu Ghraib have identified as one of the ringleaders of the abuse of prisoners. At the end, the book moves from evil to goodness and discusses heroism, offering a classification of types of heroism as well as a categorization of heroes' motives.

The book ranges from social psychology and psychological knowledge in general to varied examples of and writings on evil (such as Jonestown, where a religious leader led a large group of people to mass suicide), drawing on many sources, including classical Roman writers. It offers concepts, examples, and descriptions of personal engagement by the author with issues and people, often related to the SPE.

I am substantially in agreement with the book's theoretical position, consistently stated throughout the book, about the great importance of situations and systems in shaping people's behavior and creating evil. But I believe it significantly understates the role of personal characteristics. I also have questions about the way the SPE was set up, maximizing the chances for abusive behavior by the guards. Reviewing this book calls for an exploration of the role of situations and the systems of which they are a part, of personal characteristics, of group dynamics, and of their interrelation, both to highlight issues in the book and to further the understanding of the roots of evil. The author is very knowledgeable and obviously knows about and writes about all of these, but with an overriding emphasis on the power of the situation.

The SPE

There is a lot of material already available about the SPE, through publications and media projects (a video, TV programs, and a Web site). The study also received a great deal of attention soon after it was conducted, according to Zimbardo because of two large prison riots at the time, and after Abu Ghraib as an explanation of what has happened there. In this book, Zimbardo reviews the

prison study in great detail. He uses written material from prisoners and guards and from the staff of the study, videos about life in the prison and audiotapes of conversations among prisoners in their cells, and information collected before the study from the participants using psychological measures such as the F test for authoritarianism and the Machiavellian test, on the basis of which they were selected for the study.

As is widely known among psychologists, college students responded to a newspaper ad looking for paid participants for a study of prison life. On the basis of various measures administered to them, 24 out of 75 applicants were selected as normal individuals who had no mental health problems and were not antisocial. They were randomly divided into prisoners and guards. Like real prisoners, those designated to be prisoners were arrested by the Palo Alto police and brought to the prison set up in the basement of the Stanford Psychology Department.

Immediately, the guards began to treat the prisoners badly, and their bad treatment soon escalated. On the second day, the prisoners rebelled, to which the guards responded with greater harassment and abuse. They conducted "counts" during the night, going on with them endlessly. They continually harassed and punished prisoners (e.g., by making the prisoners learn the 17 rules early on that they were to follow and punishing them when they made mistakes in recalling the rules). The guards made the prisoners do many push-ups, put them into isolation in a small room that they called the Hole, made them go naked, and deprived them of their beds. They berated and ridiculed prisoners. If one prisoner resisted their orders, they punished them all, both to make the resistant prisoner cooperate and to have the other prisoners turn against him. They deprived the prisoners of sleep; they awakened them and kept them awake for long periods during the night.

Some prisoners were soon strongly affected by this and appeared very distressed or depressed. As a result, before the study was terminated on the sixth day, five of them were "released." In spite of this, the prisoners' psychological state seemed affected by the belief that, contrary to the original agreement, they could not choose to get out of this prison until the end of two weeks. This was the result of one of the prisoners saying to the others that he tried to get out and those in charge of the study would not let him. This belief was reinforced when in "parole hearings" a prisoner would say that he would forfeit his pay to be able to get out, but because he did not make a straightforward statement terminating his participation, his parole would be denied. The prisoners who remained and

replacement prisoners became increasingly despondent and passive over the course of the six days.

The system created in the prison included “degradation rituals... [such as having prisoners]... stand naked for a long time in uncomfortable positions” (p. 47). Over time, the prison guards became increasingly abusive and established firm dominance over the prisoners. Both research and the study of genocides and mass killings (Staub, 1989) have shown that once violence begins, when there are no restraints or inhibiting influences, it is likely to evolve and become more intense. It is likely that a combination of changes in the perpetrators (increasing devaluation of the victims, changed self-concept) and changed group norms account for this.

As Zimbardo describes it, he did not expect the prison situation to have these dramatic effects on either the guards or the prisoners. He also notes that not only prisoners and guards but everyone else was also caught up in this situation. For example, they instituted “parole” hearings, and the head of their parole board, a former inmate in a real prison who had hated his situation in the prison and the way his parole board operated, became very rough on the prisoners during their parole hearings. Zimbardo himself was caught up in his roles as researcher and superintendent, without responding to the plight of the prisoners and the behavior of the guards.

The author accounts for the transformation in everyone by the power of the situation. Zimbardo recognizes the role of personality but believes that dispositions have been greatly overemphasized and that the power of the situation primarily creates evil. He created the SPE to show the power of the situation. He powerfully advocates the role of both the immediate situation and the system that creates the situation, in which the situation is embedded and that justifies it through ideology, as sources of evil. Ordinary people are led by situations, especially “total situations,” a term coined by Robert Jay Lifton, to engage in evil, and thus all of us are capable of evil actions. The book describes many psychological principles to explain what happened in the study, such as the roles people assume, the way rules guide and transform people, compartmentalization, deindividuation, cognitive dissonance, and dehumanization (both by guards of the prisoners and by the prisoners of themselves). Especially in later sections of the book, Zimbardo also writes about various group processes. He also provides an exploration of the ethics of the SPE.

The prison study was ended when a person not previously part of this

system entered it and was upset and outraged by what she saw. Christina Maslach, who had just finished her doctorate at Stanford and was at that time romantically involved with Zimbardo (they married a year later) was asked to be a member of the parole board. She saw glimpses of how the prisoners were treated. She especially reacted seeing them chained together and hooded as they were taken to the bathroom. Her very strong reaction and demand that the study be stopped brought Zimbardo to his senses. At the end of the book, he uses her action as an example of heroism—speaking out in the face of wrongdoing.

Other Research Showing the Importance of the Situation

The book reviews important studies, demonstrations, and research programs that show the influence of situations, including other people exerting influence as part of the situation, on harmful behavior. These include research on conformity, such as the Ash experiments in which a number of people judged two lines that were obviously very different in length as being the same length and led study participants to make the same judgment. They include Stanley Milgram's studies of obedience, in which many participants acting as teachers obeyed the experimenter in administering what they believed were increasingly powerful shocks to learners. Zimbardo reviews research by Albert Bandura and his students Underwood and Fromson in which they found that overhearing statements that devalued or positively valued a person strongly affected the intensity of shocks that study participants administered to that person. He also reviews his own work on deindividuation, in which hoods and anything else that hides a person's identity leads that person to behave more aggressively under aggression-generating conditions. In the prison study, the guards wore uniforms and sunglasses that could not be seen through. The book also notes the research by Latané and Darley that showed that with increasing numbers of people present, each bystander to an emergency is increasingly less likely to take helpful action.

Personality and Group Dynamics

There are a number of issues about the prison study that seem not to have been addressed in the literature. I, however, first address the issue of personality, which has recently been examined. I personally agree to a substantial extent with

Zimbardo's view of the power of the situation, and he quotes my book *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Staub, 1989) to that effect. In fact, in a recent article I included a statement I made to national leaders in Rwanda trying to help them understand the genocide they suffered and to prevent new violence. I said, in conclusion,

All this makes it psychologically understandable what they did [*they* refers to young men who were part of the militias that perpetrated much of the killings], horrible as it was; being part of the Interahamwe made it difficult for them to resist what they were asked to do. It is important, of course, not to take this understanding as an excuse for what they were doing, since people make choices. But to prevent violence, to practically enable people to make different choices, it is essential to inhibit the development of the kind of societal system and process that came into being in Rwanda. (Staub, 2006, p. 883)

I referred here both to the overall societal and cultural conditions in Rwanda and to the system and circumstances that young men faced in the Interahamwe, youth groups initially associated with political parties that were turned into killing militias.

However, I also believe that there is usually, if not always, self-selection among people who enter into certain situations and roles that are potentially violence producing. Then, given their characteristics, these situations and roles are more likely to move them to violence. (There is also selection by authorities of people with certain characteristics for roles that may or definitely do require violence.) Carnahan and McFarland (2007), in their recent exploration of the potential role of personality in the SPE, quoted me in their introduction as suggesting that the characteristics of those who would want to participate in a study of prison life may have predisposed them to aggressiveness: "Self-selection may have played a role in the prison study discussed earlier (i.e. the SPE)... . the personal characteristics of those who answered the advertisements may have been one reason for the intensifying hostility" (Staub, 1989, p. 70).

Carnahan and McFarland (2007) attempted to show the role that personal characteristics may have played in the SPE by putting two ads into papers around Western Kentucky University. In one ad, they were looking for participants for a "psychological study of prison life"; in the other, they left out mention of "prison life." Interestingly, they had more trouble getting responses to ads for the study

of prison life. They administered personality measures to study participants on the basis of their relevance to predicting dominance and aggressiveness, although they believed these measures were also relevant for predicting the behavior of the prisoners. They found significantly higher scores on aggression, authoritarianism, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and social dominance and significantly lower scores on dispositional empathy and altruism among those who responded to ads about the study of prison life, all consistent with their expectations. They added groups and asked participants to fill out the questionnaires as if they wanted to participate, responding to the two different ads. They found that respondents motivated by the desire to be accepted for the advertised study were unlikely to account for the personality differences.

Although Carnahan and McFarland (2007) were cautious in their interpretations, they suggested that people entering the SPE with personal characteristics like those who in their study responded to the ad for the study of prison life, and the resulting group dynamics among them, might have contributed to what happened in the SPE. They also noted that the mean authoritarianism F-scale scores for participants in the SPE, 4.57 (reported by Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973), is higher than the mean for 27 of the 28 subgroups on which the scale was originally developed and that "it is most similar to the 4.73 mean reported for a sample of 110 San Quentin male prisoners" (Carnahan & McFarland, 2007, p. 611).

The imprint of personality is quite evident in the book. There was significant variation in behavior and mood among both guards and prisoners. For example, one prisoner protested by refusing to eat some of his food and continued to do this in spite of intimidation, punishment, and, under the instigation of the guards, pressure from the other prisoners and even the attempt to force feed him. Some of the guards were especially abusive; others simply enforced obedience and the rules they had created, and some tried to act in somewhat kinder ways and felt guilty about what was happening, although, as Zimbardo emphasized, they never spoke out against the actions of the more abusive guards. Although Zimbardo stresses this more in his discussion of Abu Ghraib, he regards their passivity under conditions that urgently require intervention by bystanders as evil—as do I (Staub, 1999).

The behavior of some of the more abusive guards, the norms they established, and the dynamics they created—including the reactions by the prisoners—may be important to understand the evolution of increasing

aggressiveness. The most aggressive guard was Hellmann, a guard on the night shift, who because of his toughness came to be referred to as John Wayne by the researchers. On the first night,

Hellmann has come up with a creative plan to teach Jerry-5486 [the prisoners had numbers on their "uniforms" and were addressed by those] his number in an unforgettable way. "First five push-ups, then four jumping jacks, then eight push ups, and six jumping jacks, just so you will remember exactly what the number is, 5486." He is becoming more cleverly inventive in designing punishments, the first signs of creative evil. (p. 50)

One of the other guards on this shift, Burden, competed with Hellmann, which required him to be increasingly aggressive. This is consistent with a great deal of research on and observation of how in groups, members striving for dominance and influence tend to move the group in an already-established direction. One group of social psychology research studies has referred to this phenomenon as group polarization, but the phenomenon has also been observed in mob violence (Staub & Rosenthal, 1994) and in terrorism (McCauley, 2004).

Other Issues Surrounding the Prison Study

One cannot evaluate this book without examining the prison study. It is often referred to as an experiment (also on the book's cover). However, in essence, this was a case study. Zimbardo mentions that it was a demonstration, with plans to follow it with more controlled research. In an experiment, the impact of a particular treatment or condition (or situation) is repeatedly examined to see if it creates similar effects. Here the impact of a particular situation was examined only once. We don't know whether, with the next group of participants, the results would have been the same—especially if in this next group participants had had different personal characteristics, or if because of the initial actions of guards or for other reasons different group dynamics had developed.

Second, there were no comparison or control groups. Although it may be difficult to have an appropriate control, comparison groups or variations in the treatment condition could have been created. In this particular treatment group—in the actual study—the guards were given no rules; they made up their own rules. They received no training. To create deindividuation, which increases

aggression, they wore uniforms and sunglasses. There were no authorities who made them accountable—apart from physical aggression, they could do anything they wanted. In a couple of instances when they were physically aggressive, there was no reaction. When at the time of the prisoner riot on the second day they turned to the “prison authorities” for guidance, they received none—and the actions they then engaged in were highly aggressive, thus shaping further events.

The prisoners were intentionally degraded from the start. Their heads were covered with women's nylon stockings. They wore what looked like sack nightgowns, without underwear, so that “when they bend over their behinds show” (p. 40). Day and night, a chain was attached to the prisoners' ankle. All of this functions to dehumanize people and makes those with power more likely to devalue them, see them in a negative light—and abuse them.

The initial guidance by the “superintendent,” not reproduced in this book, had to affect the guards' orientation to the prisoners. Haslam and Reicher (2007, p. 618) quoted from Zimbardo's (1989) “Guard Orientation” on August 14, 1971:

You can create in prisoners feelings of boredom, a sense of fear to some degree, you can create a notion of arbitrariness that their life is totally controlled by us, by the system, you, me—that they'll have no privacy at all... . There'll be constant surveillance. Nothing they do will go unobserved. They will have no freedom of action, they can do nothing, or say nothing that we don't permit. We are going to take away their individuality in various ways. In general what all this leads to is a sense of powerlessness.

Haslam and Reicher also note the use of *we*, which puts the researcher—superintendent into a shared ingroup with the guards. Perhaps Zimbardo's directions, his seeming identification with the guards, were the result of what he writes in the book, that his initial interest was in how prisoners are affected by their prison experience.

The prison in the SPE was not a “neutral prison.” The conditions that were created made violence by people who had power or authority more likely. In writing this review, I wondered, did I learn this, acquire this belief, from the SPE? Although the SPE reinforced it, I think I learned it from my study of genocide, mass killing, and torture. Of course, this was just the point of the study—that when people are put into a certain kind of situation, this will affect their behavior.

However, comparison with varying conditions—including a “good prison” in which guards are trained, there are clear rules for their behavior, and there is supervision and accountability—would have been important. With such conditions, even without guards selected for positive characteristics (low on authoritarianism and hostility, and so on), the guards on the first day and night might have acted in a firm but fair and at least neutral manner. The group dynamics among the guards and between prisoners and guards would probably have evolved differently. Zimbardo was led by his experience with the SPE to suggest such conditions, including good supervision, to improve prisons.

Zimbardo refers to two other prison studies and reports that one of them, a study conducted at the University of New South Wales in Australia, replicated his findings and that a second one was too different to serve as a replication. He describes the first study in only a brief paragraph but notes that it included several conditions, one of which replicates the findings of the SPE. This second study was a demonstration by Reicher and Haslam (2006) created to be aired by the BBC. It has interesting and useful elements, but it was not intended as a replication. Instead, it shows that given a different setup or conditions, people will behave differently. The study had several phases. At the start, participants were told that in the course of the first three days prisoners could be promoted to guards. This should have made the psychological differentiation between “us” and “them” less sharply drawn. The guards did not establish dominance over the prisoners. One other interesting difference was in clothing. The prisoners were nicely dressed in sporty sleeveless T-shirts and shorts, and the guards were well dressed in shirts and ties. The knowledge that people would see them on TV may also have constrained the guards. (Some of the most abusive behavior by guards in the SPE took place when they believed no one could see them.)

Abuse in Iraq and Abu Ghraib

In a long psychologically, politically, and societally important section, the book addresses the extensive abuse of prisoners in Iraq. It describes the many aspects of the situation at Abu Ghraib under which the abuse by military guards, well documented in photographs, took place. All the violence-generating influences that were present in the SPE were present at Abu Ghraib, and much more. There was overcrowding, bad food supply, a dirty environment, constant mortar attacks with people injured and killed, and escape attempts and revolts by prisoners. At

the SPE, the prisoners' revolt intensified the guards' abusive behavior, and at Abu Ghraib some of the famously documented abuse took place after prisoner revolts.

As in the SPE, there was a lack of training of guards, a lack of established rules (the guards never received standard operating procedures in writing and whatever rules existed were word of mouth), and a lack of supervision and accountability. Prisoner interrogations were conducted by military intelligence and private contractors who used interrogation techniques that were extremely abusive, which the guards knew about. In addition, Zimbardo convincingly shows, interrogators asked the guards to soften up prisoners for interrogation and, according to various testimonies, even directly instructed them to engage in some of their abusive practices. Even the picture taking was probably initiated by interrogators. The varied situational influences reviewed earlier and the psychological processes they generate—the total environment and the influence of authority, conformity, and other group dynamics—were all present, as well as the frustration created by the existing conditions, including danger and attacks.

The book shows that abuse of prisoners extended much beyond the seven defendants at Abu Ghraib. There were more than 600 documented instances in Iraq. Using a variety of reports commissioned by the military and the government, the report by Human Rights Watch, a number of published books, and statements by individuals including interrogators and military police (guards) at Abu Ghraib and other prisons, Zimbardo shows the responsibility of interrogators and officers all the way up to generals, the Department of Defense, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, Vice President Cheney, and President Bush. It was one of the generals who brought interrogation techniques approved by Rumsfeld for Guantánamo to Abu Ghraib. Zimbardo draws on memos prepared by the president's lawyers and circulated in the White House by Alberto Gonzales, who later became Attorney General, arguing that the president is not bound by the Geneva accords and existing laws on the treatment of prisoners. Zimbardo notes the focus on the few bad apples rather than the bad barrel (situation or system), as he calls it, or those who were responsible for creating the bad barrel. (I also was an expert defense witness at Abu Ghraib for Sergeant Davis. In my testimony, when I began to talk about the role of the higher-ups, e.g., the Gonzales memos, the prosecution challenged its relevance, and the judge upheld their challenge.)

The book is compelling in indicting the government and the military for all the abuse that has taken place in Iraq, as well as for the policy of extraordinary rendition—capturing suspected terrorists and handing them over to countries that

use torture for interrogation. In writing about evil in bureaucratic systems (see also Darley, 1992, for a discussion of such evil), Zimbardo coins the term *administrative evil*. He also writes about the nature of war and its effects—another situational influence—in explaining some of the killings of civilians by American soldiers. Again, to a substantial extent, the focus on the situation, the system, and the role of the higher-ups (lack of supervision, establishing abuse-generating policies and practices, the overall situation) is correct. The extent of the abuse in Iraq supports this view. I took the same perspective as a defense witness for Sergeant Davis (see Staub, 2004, 2007).

However, from a conceptual point of view, there is again insufficient consideration of personality or disposition. Not everyone volunteers for the military; just as with police officers, there must be selective factors, including personality. Moreover, it is important to look at guidelines by which soldiers are selected for the military police (who served as guards), as their selection may put potentially aggressive persons into guard roles. Might they have a greater tendency to use power or, a less likely but important attribute, to devalue the other, the enemy?

The people who set the tone on the night shift at Abu Ghraib volunteered (self-selected) for their job. The two who became leaders in the abuse, Fredericks and Graner, had both been prison guards. Both the media and a superior who expresses regret for choosing the people who volunteered for the job (Reese, 2004) believed that Graner had engaged in such behavior as a prison guard and that he was even fired from his job. Another author (Saleten, 2004) wrote that

the soldiers implicated at Abu Ghraib, however, were led by two veteran prison guards, one of whom had received three court orders to stay away from his ex-wife, who said he had thrown her against a wall and had threatened her with guns.

(¶17)

However, Zimbardo refers to what was said about the two as rumors and innuendo. He writes that an examination of Graner's performance file in his job as prison guard "reveals that he has *never* been accused, suspected of, or disciplined for any offense or maltreatment of any inmate" (p. 361). He does not discuss the court orders. Zimbardo's description of what he learned about Fredericks presents a very positive picture, except that he may have been too easily influenced by others.

The issue of personality enters into who creates violent systems. Usually people create them in response to social forces or situations of various levels of generality. In the case of genocide and in response to difficult life conditions, including economic problems, political disorganization, and great social change, some people create ideologies and social–ideological movements that progressively lead to extreme violence (Staub, 1989). Such people may be led by a combination of their social roles (protecting privilege, etc.) and their personality. As a situation, 9/11 did not create the policies and practices of our administration. Values, beliefs, worldviews, and other dispositions or personalities of people at the top, which then led to group and social dynamics, were involved. Nelson Mandela, or even Al Gore, might have led us in a different direction.

As further evidence for the effect of situations, Zimbardo notes that the guards in his prison study have lived good, respectable lives since the SPE. However, he describes a study of Nazi SS men conducted by John Steiner after the war. Many of them were high on the F-scale measure of authoritarianism. Steiner considered some people as “sleepers” whose violent tendencies would be expressed only when “particular situations activate” them (p. 287). This is a perfect example of personality–situation interaction.

Once these men entered the SS, they received training and engaged in behavior over a long time period that not only set group norms (the situation) but also had to affect their personality. The evolution of increasing aggression (and helpfulness; see below) is not only a matter of changing group norms but also because people are affected by their own actions. In the case of aggression, they come to devalue their victims (and progressively other people as well) more and more, their values change, and they come to see themselves as capable of great violence for the right cause, the cause they believe in (see Staub, 1989). It is also likely that under certain conditions people change in positive ways, making such future behavior less likely—for example, when people are immersed in a situation that leads them to behave in ways contrary to their self-image but not too extreme and only for a limited time and are subsequently offered mirrors through which they can see themselves. This seems to have been a result of the “experiment” with brown-eyed and blue-eyed children, which Zimbardo describes.

One problem is that in most societies there are some people with dispositions who, given the right situation, will respond with aggression. In most societies, many children are not treated in ways that lead them to care about other people and their welfare and to resist situations and authorities that

generate aggression. Although this book does not address child rearing, it does concern itself with resisting aggression-producing situations and with heroism.

Resistance and Heroism

In the last section of the book, Zimbardo discusses ways in which people can be helped to resist the negative influence of situations and to see ways in which they can become heroes. As Zimbardo correctly notes, heroism has been a relatively unexplored topic, and this section is primarily exploratory. He describes some research in which altruism has been promoted, such as the foot-in-the-door technique (asking people to do something small makes it more likely that they will later do something bigger), altruistic role models, and identity labels (when people are told that they are helpful, they are more likely to later act in helpful ways).

Zimbardo provides a 10-step technique to resist unwanted influences. Then he discusses various types of heroism—military, civil, and social—and creates a categorization with 12 types. He gives examples of some of these types, ranging from well-known people such as Gandhi to people who should be well known, such as Ron Ridenhour, a soldier in Vietnam who was not at My Lai but heard about the massacre of civilians there from fellow soldiers and could not rest until he brought it to the world's attention.

One issue that is occasionally discussed throughout the book, something that has become fashionable to write about, is the banality of evil and the ordinariness of both evildoers and heroes. Hannah Arendt's (1963) book about Adolf Eichmann, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, started this. But what do we expect? Do we expect that people who are evil—or who do good—will be brilliant, or diabolical (whatever that means), that they will be people who stand out much of the time? Many evildoers and heroes do, such as Hitler and Nelson Mandela. Eichmann actually was much less banal than what Arendt (who left after the first two days of his trial in Jerusalem) saw (Haslam & Reicher, 2007). But hostility, caring, morality (and their absence), and becoming part of a system can be everyday matters. I believe that “evil that arises out of ordinary thinking and is committed by ordinary people is the norm, not the exception... . Great evil arises out of ordinary psychological processes that evolve, usually with a progression along the continuum of destruction” (Staub, 1989, p. 126). If so, then the “banality of evil” is a misnomer. Sometimes perpetrators of

evil, or of goodness, are extraordinary because of their ordinary personal characteristics, such as devaluing or valuing people, and more often because of their actions.

The author refers to the ordinariness of Joe Darby, who provided his higher-ups with a copy of a CD with photos taken at Abu Ghraib and put himself in danger as a whistle blower whom some people see as a traitor. There has been substantial research about the roots of helping, and more is needed to understand such extraordinary behavior. Joe Darby acted even though he was concerned about the danger to his future and even to his life (see also Thalhammer et al., in press). The situation might have had a role. Darby had been away on leave, away from the Abu Ghraib environment, and he learned about the photos and the abuse on his return. Shifts in perspective do affect people's reactions to the plight of others (Aderman & Berkowitz, 1970). However, with both Ridenhour and Darby, their values and other aspects of their personality had to be involved. Many soldiers knew about My Lai, but Ridenhour acted, with commitment and persistence.

Zimbardo has made a strong commitment to a focus on the power of the situation and writes that the “doers of heroic deeds at the moment are not essentially different from those who comprise the rate of easily seduced” (p. 487). But he struggles with the issue of personality. Both his suggestions to increase resistance to the power of the situation and his suggestions to increase helpfulness—by having people engage in small positive actions and move on to larger ones—have to do with changing persons. This latter suggestion is consistent with existing research, for example, that guiding children to engage in helpful behavior increases their later helpfulness (Staub, 1979). In this context, it is important to consider child-rearing practices that make people more likely to resist negative influences and to engage in helpful behavior (Staub, 2005). A great deal of research over the past several decades, including research on real heroes such as the rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe (Oliner & Oliner, 1988), has pointed to child rearing that promotes caring and helping.

A review of this length and detail would be incomplete without noting Zimbardo's discussion, which runs throughout the book, of his relationship to the SPE. The prison study has clearly been a pivotal experience for him, and he specifically discusses significant ways in which it has shaped his research, teaching, and involvement in advocacy and social change. He expresses, in various ways, guilt over having done wrong by allowing the distress and suffering

of young men to continue. He also expresses pride in the wide exposure that the SPE has gained and the influence it has had. He believes that it has done much good in showing people in prisons and the military what a bad system is and what they need to do to make it better.

This book makes a valuable contribution. People interested in evil should read it, but in the same way we must approach, consistent also with Zimbardo's thinking, any situational influence: with a critical consciousness, understanding and evaluating what we encounter. Readers should aim to develop the complex understanding that goodness and evil require—of the person, the immediate situation and the larger social conditions, the culture, political conditions, the psychological processes of individuals and groups, the dynamics of small and large groups, and the dynamic interrelation of these different elements. Developing such complex theories and deriving actionable knowledge from them are urgent tasks, given what has been happening in our society and in the world.

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