

We must confront the unthinkable: that human beings are capable of totally abandoning their humanity for a mindless ideology, to follow and then exceed orders of charismatic authorities to destroy everyone labeled as “The Enemy.”

This behavior lies just under the surface of any of us. (Page 15)

**In all men’s lives at certain periods, a dominate element is the desire to be inside the local Ring and terror of being left outside. Of all the passions the passion for the Inner Ring is most skilful in making a man who is not yet a very bad man do very bad things.
–C.S. Lewis, “The Inner Ring”(1944)**

The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil, by Philip Zimbardo, Random House, 551 pages, March 27, 2007.

An account of the 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE), with comparisons of the SPE to other historic events (such as Nazi crimes, Rwanda and Nanking genocide, Abu Ghraib abuses, and Jonestown suicides), and with psychological conclusions about the situational causes of evil. Zimbardo talks at great length about Abu Ghraib, and about the specific guard “Chip” Frederick, whom he helped defend. Zimbardo also focuses on “systems” that set up situations that lead to evil, again referring to the system that led to Abu Ghraib. A final chapter discusses ways individuals can resist situational influences and become what he calls “heroes” — those who “validate the human connection” and reject abuses of others.

The Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE):

- ◆ Simulated “prison,” designed to emphasize deindividuation, and dehumanization.
- ◆ Participants were paid (\$15/day), signed a release, and could quit at any time.
- ◆ 18 participants chosen after interviewing 100 students from the SF bay area.
- ◆ 9 randomly assigned as “guards” and 9 as “prisoners.”
- ◆ Prisoners never left; guards worked 8 hour shifts (3 per shift).
- ◆ The experiment was to last 2 weeks.
- ◆ SPE terminated on the 6th day, due to extreme problems:
 - guards: sadism, cruelty, abuse, degradation, aggression.
 - prisoners: either severe emotional and cognitive disorders (these quit early), or passive, obedient, and “zombie-like” (these stayed 6 days).
- ◆ SPE has been very widely studied, referred to, imitated, and made use of.

The author’s classification system for the motivators to evil:

- ◆ *Dispositional*: A man acts like a “bad apple” because of his bad core disposition. (These are often emphasized: genetic makeup, personality traits, free will.)
- ◆ *Situational*: He acts like a normal apple thrown into a bad situation (a “bad barrel”). (The author’s emphasis: “What conditions or circumstances contribute to the bad behavior?” “Trace an individual’s actions to factors outside the actor.”)

Key situational forces over individual behavior:

- ◆ Power, conformity, obedience (to authority), deindividuation, dehumanization, moral disengagement, and the evil of inaction.

Another experiment: Stanley Milgram's electric shocks:

- ◆ A volunteer "teacher," under supervision, administers shocks (which he thinks are real) to a "learner."
- ◆ Given encouragement, and an intimidating environment, more than half the "teachers" continue to shock a "learner" even after he appears unconscious or even dead.
- ◆ There have been a large number and variety of other experiments.

Zimbardo was a defense witness for "Chip" Frederick, Abu Ghraib guard:

- ◆ Zimbardo testified to the situational forces that contributed to Frederick's abuses.
- ◆ The military court refused to accept any mitigating circumstances.
- ◆ Frederick received a harsh sentence based only on dispositional factors, far harsher than other sentences because of the "trophy pictures" that he took.
- ◆ Zimbardo later served as an "informal" psychologist to Frederick and his wife.
- ◆ Zimbardo nevertheless believes Frederick was responsible for his actions.

Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments, yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their Ministry, . . .

—*BCP, Historical Documents of the Church, XXVI.*

16 Packs of dogs close me in,
and gangs of evildoers circle around me;
they pierce my hands and my feet;
I can count all my bones.
17 They stare and gloat over me;
they divide my garments among them;
they cast lots for my clothing.
18 Be not far away, O LORD;
you are my strength; hasten to help me.
19 Save me from the sword,
my life from the power of the dog.

—*Psalm 22*

The prayer in this psalm asks the Lord to save us from abuse, but what is really wanted here is a prayer to save us from *becoming an abuser*.

Links::

- ◆ <http://www.LuciferEffect.org/> (book's webpage)
- ◆ <http://www.zimbardo.com/> (author's webpage)
- ◆ <http://www.prisonexperiment.org/> (SPE webpage)
- ◆ <http://www.ushmm.org/> (Washington Holocaust Museum with pictures from Auschwitz at the link below)
- ◆ <http://www.ushmm.org/research/collections/highlights/auschwitz/>