# A STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

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# DIGEST

Egyptian Pharoahs, Assyrian kings, Roman emperors, Scandinavian crusaders, Gothic princes, holy inquisitors, and Polish noblemen alike have devoted their energies to the destruction of the Jews. So it was not without some familiarity that the Jewsof Europe faced the Nazi extermination machine. For some reason, however, one very difficult to ascertain, we have failed to understand the phenomenon. Generally, our attempts to understand have been through imaginative literature. This method has been, to some extent, successful in dealing with the impact-of-destruction. The fact-of-destruction, however, has been illusive. Although I believe that imaginative material is an effective vehicle toward understanding, it seems imperative that one first begin with a scientific study of the facts. Having done this, the other material will readily fall into place and an understanding of the Holocaust will be reached. As a beginning step, I have attempted to survey the facts--historical, psychological, and theological--interpret them and conclude with the effects that they had upon the survivors as they tried to put them into a meaningful perspective.

Chapter I deals with the strategy the Nazis used in the process of destruction. We begin with the relocation of the non-urban Jews into the large cities, the ghettoization, the transportation to the camps, arrival and processing and conclude with the camp life itself. For the statistics of the camp, e.g., food rations, medical supplies, etc., we use the 'official' German records confiscated following the War.

Chapter II deals with the camp personality as it developed. A study of prisoner behavior indicates that a paradigm-personality developed in logical stages among those prisoners who survived. This chapter describes and discusses that personality.

Chapter III deals with the prisoners' feelings about death. This is important for it presents to us how an overwhelming encounter with death can and was successfully dealt with. It also indicates the beginnings of a new life-style that could possibly be considered the basis of the Israel community.

Chapter IV deals with the question of passivity among the prisoners. This chapter is written as a response to those who would indict European Jewry with the following comment: "European Jewry left the historical stage without dignity." In this chapter we apply psychological axioms which indicate that "appropriate" behavior could not and should not have been expected. We find that all behavior is a reaction to experience and conditions--and that one cannot judge behavior on the basis of other time-place situations.

Chapter V deals with the conditions of the survivors following release from the camps. Here we find that from a psychological perspective, "liberation" did not in fact occur until 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel.

Chapter VI deals with the psychology of survivor behavior. We have here an accounting of the traumatic experiences--depression, isolation, somatization, and guilt--with which the

survivor was faced. An analysis of this behavior indicates that we are not yet free of our responsibilities vis-a-vis the survivors.

Chapter VII deals with Holocaust theology. This was a result of survivors' and contemporary theologians' attempts to find meaning in the Holocaust experience. The main "theologies" discussed are 1. the traditional G-d concept, 2. salvation through suffering: Frankl, 3. G-d is dead, and 4. nationalism--secularism.

The thesis concludes with what the author believes are the two major effects of the Holocaust, the psychological and the historico-political. The psychological effects are a more militant attitude towards the preservation of world Jewry as well as a strong communal orientation. The historico-political effect was the establishment of the State of Israel.

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# INTRODUCTION

Killing Jews is not a new thing. Egyptian Pharoahs, Assyrian kings, Roman emperors, Scandinavian crusaders, Gothic princes, holy inquisitors and Polish noblemen alike have devoted their energies to the destruction of the Jews. It was therefore not without some previous familiarity with the phenomenon that the Jews of Europe faced the murderous Nazi hordes that were unleashed upon them from 1933-1945. To this historical event, we give the title, "Holocaust." Given all our experiences with those previous attempts to obliterate the Jew, and the temporal proximity of the Holocaust, one would think that the Jews would be able to comprehend and possibly even accept what seems inevitable. Despite this, we have failed somehow to take in or to understand what happened much less to accept it.

Elie Wiesel, one of the more articulate of the victims described this 'inability': "Some events do take place but are not true; others are--although they never occurred."[1] Perhaps it is due to the vast, almost incomprehensible number of Jewish victims--6 million. Had it been fifty, one hundred, we might be able to understand. But 6 million seems beyond the human ability to accept as part of one's reality. Six million seems illusory, but the destruction of 6 million Jews is an historical fact. It took place all over Europe and in Russia in places like Babi Yar, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, and Auschwitz.

And the facts of the destruction are attested to. "The chronicled facts which allow us to catalogue and inventory what transpired in these places are so overwhelmingly vast as to be altogether numbing..."[2] Still, we find that we are unable to absorb the events of the Holocaust. We read about them and we feel that Anne Frank is Alice in Hell without a looking glass, and we too are lost. Our imaginations are staggered by the 'facts.' Somehow they haven't helped us to understand.

This understanding, however, I believe to be imperative for all humanity. The first reason is because it happened. Any event especially one that had such dramatic effect deserves to be understood. To disregard it would be to live only in the present. Secondly, we must understand the event not just historically but relate it to the present and derive what insights we can. To ignore it would be to lose an opportunity for guidance--for history is the guide for the present and the future. Without it we would be like the traveler without a map. And, finally, we have an obligation to memorialize the victims. The Holocaust was a result of 'human behavior', albeit an aberation of behavior. As humans, we, therefore have a responsibility to put back together what we had a hand in taking apart. We owe it to those who suffered and survived, and to those whose memories cry out to be remembered.

One attempt to deal with the Holocaust is through imaginative literature. The creative use of words to express

an emotion has been a successful mode of understanding if not the fact-of destruction, certainly the impact-of-destruction. It is true that the 'fact' can be sterile, but reality is sterile--the Holocaust seems to have proven this. Therefore, to try to understand the Holocaust in terms other than fact is to understand it in terms other than its reality. It is only with a grasp on the facts that the fiction will have its impact. It is therefore, the task of this paper to deal with the 'facts,' perhaps in a partially new perspective, so that along with the emotion of the fictional, we might understand a bit more about the reality of what took place.

The method we will use is first to describe the phenomenon as best we can. For this, there is an abundance of first-person accounts as well as official German reports confiscated following the war. Secondly, we will interpret the subjective responses of the inmates to the experience using appropriate psychological concepts. Along with this, we will discuss the personality changes that took place as the prisoners attempted to integrate the experience into meaningful and acceptable patterns. For this, we will draw on clinical observations and impressions made after the experience by psychologists and psychoanalysts who survived the camps. We will also draw on psychological studies done as a follow-up to the experience by psychologists who were not directly involved. Finally, we will deal with the effects of the Holocaust in determining a general world view (theo-

logical). This is significant as it indicates the existential impasse created by the Holocaust.

As a Jew the task will be most difficult. Each fact acts as a dagger in the soul of the Jew. And yet his being is intrinsically tied up with the fact of his destruction. The task for the Jew is even more imperative then. Just as the halachists and midrashists attempted to record and dramatize the hurban, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 and the subsequent exile of the Jews across the face of the earth, they also attempted to interpret and derive meaning of historic-religious significance from the event. The Holocaust is our modern hurban. We, too, following in our tradition are called upon not to disregard an event of such magnitude and significance to our people. As Jews, and even more so, as rabbis, we are asked to perceive, to understand, and to derive such meaning as to give hope to those generations of Jews who follow such a catastrophe. The task, therefore, is undertaken. Only then can we again rise to a call to worship and affirm our belief in what is just, right and good in the heavens as well as on the earth.

# I. STRATEGY FOR DESTRUCTION

> "How doth the city sit solitary,
> That was full of people! How is
> she become as a widow! She that
> was great among the nations..."
> LAMENTATIONS 1:1

The great masses of European people were unaware of the devastating effects Hitler's Germany was to have upon them. The events from Hitler's rise in 1933 until the destruction of the synagogues of Germany in 1938 had little significance for most of the Jews who were soon to live in the Nazi-occupied territories. Even the 600,000 German Jews remained relatively unaffected.

As the Nazis began to storm across Europe and annex nations under the sign of the swastika, they did not distinguish the Jews from the other conquered peoples. Gradually, however, the position of the Jews with respect to the rest of the populace began to change, and, consequently, they were unprepared for what was about to take place.

> The basic factor in the... lack of preparation for armed resistance was psychological; we did not at first believe the Resettlement Operation to be what in fact it was... For generations East European Jews had looked to Berlin as the symbol of law, order and culture.[1]

For the most part, the Jews believed themselves to be part of the general secular culture in which they had par-

ticipated. For example, over 50% of the lawyers in Berlin in the 1920's were Jewish. Thus, they were unprepared to see themselves as something apart from the rest of the nation or to see Berlin made into a spurious state. Up until this point, pogroms and the killing of hundreds of Jews were seen as particular incidents and not as a major reflection of common opinion. For the first time anti-Semitism became not only the attitude of the masses but legalized as national policy.

## RELOCATION

Orders to relocate into special sections of the large cities indicated that the Jews labored under a false sense of security. Even these orders did not have the effect one would have expected; the ghettoization was accepted in the main, for most of the Jews already lived and worked in such areas. Once the remaining Jews had relocated, the Germans began to fence them in. For example, in Warsaw, walls were built and one could enter or leave the area only through guarded gates set up at strategic positions along the wall. One needed a permit to leave the ghetto. The authorities took a careful census of all Jews in the area; a Jewish police force was formed to maintain the 'peace' of the ghetto; the Judenrat, the Jewish community council, was given administrative responsibility. Generally speaking, the ghettos continued on a day-to-day basis in a peaceful atmosphere: life was difficult, but bearable.

## TRANSPORTATION

The next procedure is described in the following:

> A proclamation was made in the ghetto that a 'transport' (Umsiedling) was to take place and therefore the population (or a certain number of the population) was to assemble at a certain place (usually a railroad yard). In Holland and France, whole communities were arrested at one time and sent to temporary camps, from which they were eventually transferred to Death camps in Poland.[2]

Authorities argue as to whether or not, at this point, the people were aware that their final destination was a death camp. It seems likely that given the circumstances which surrounded this whole proceeding, and the chaos which must have taken place, very few, if any, were aware of their future. By-in-large, the people believed that either they were being taken to remote agricultural communities to be resettled again (as those in Warsaw were told) or that the purpose of the camps was "...originally, that the internees should survive and be transformed to new individuals, better suited to live under and co-operate with the new regime. (Bettelheim 1943)"[3]

Following the initial stage of imprisonment, ghettoization, the victims faced what for many would be their final 'relocation'--the transport to the camp.

> ...On the tracks, an endless train waited. Not passenger coaches but cattle cars, each filled to bursting with candidates for deportation...
> Protest was useless. It was our turn. The soldiers began to close in and push us. Like sheep we were driven and compelled to climb into an empty cattle car... Then the single door was rolled shut behind us. I do not remember whether we wept or

shouted. The train was under way.

Ninety-six persons had been thrust into our car, including many children who were squeezed in among the luggage... in a space that would have accomodated only eight horses. Yet this was not the worst.[4]

...Sanitary disposal was out of the question... A torrid sun heated the walls until the air became suffocating. The interior was almost completely black, for the daylight that filtered through the little window sufficed to light only that corner. After a while we decided it was better that way. The scene was becoming more and more unattractive.[5]

...Soon there were incidents and, later, serious quarrels. Thus, little by little, the atmosphere was poisoned... Soon the situation was intolerable. Men, women and children were struggling hysterically for every square inch.[6]

Three children were lying near the door. They looked hot and feverish. One of the doctors examined them and stood back agast. They were ill with scarlet fever![7]

It was impossible to isolate the youngsters. The only 'quarantine' we could enforce was to have those who were near the infected ones turn their backs.[8]

On the second day one of the leading merchants from Cluj suffered a heart attack. His son, also a doctor, knelt beside him. Without drugs he was powerless, and could only watch his father expire while the train rushed on.[9]

The cattle car had become an abbatoir. More and more prayers for the dead rose in the stifling atmosphere. But the S.S. would neither let us bury nor remove them. We had to live with our corpses around us. The dead, the parched, the famished and the mad must all travel together in the wooden geheuna.[10]

Then at the end of the seventh day, the death car halted. We had arrived.[11]

## ARRIVAL

Those prisoners who survived the transport had yet to

face what was for many, the most traumatic experience of all. Immediately upon arrival at the camp, the first selection took place. All Mothers with children and those judged unfit for work were sent to the infamous gas showers, while those who had been selected to live were separated from their families and friends. Because of the lack of awareness concerning the fate of loved ones, the prisoner had an intense feeling of isolation. His awareness was limited to the fact of his own isolation.

> Even though the individual prisoner--especially at the beginning of the extermination--was unaware of the fate which had befallen those of his family who had come in the same transport, the mere experience of the sudden and brutal isolation was no doubt of importance.[12]

The guards then stripped the remaining prisoners of all possessions, shaved their heads, issued prison uniforms with the yellow star-of-David, and tatooed their arms with indelible numbers. They were then taken to their barracks, the physical conditions of which were abominable.

> Nine out of ten prisoners had no bed in camp. The huts were four walls, partly without windows, without doors, the roofs were leaky, every raindrop that fell found its way in. No bed, just the remains of them, no stoves, nothing, no chairs, no benches, no light. In some of the huts there were 1500 people.[13]

This particular camp described was Belsen, but there can be no doubt that the living accomodations for most prisoners were unfit even for rodents whose presence in the camps was most unusual.

## LIFE IN THE CAMP

From the very beginning, life in the camp was next to intolerable.

> ...they were sometimes exposed to meaningless journeys often lasting two weeks on end, right up to the day when they were liberated by the advancing Allied troops. Even though the existing conditions were not everywhere exactly like those in Belsen, almost all the prisoners were tormented by hunger, disease, and ill-treatment, to an ever-increasing degree.[14]

This description merely begins to indicate the kind of life which each prisoner was personally called upon to face. One can see that the opportunity to work, to do something possibly constructive would be seen by the prisoners as a salvation, a respite from the dirt and filth which permeated the atmosphere of the camps.

Work became something much sought after. One could maintain a spark of integrity if he could perform a 'useful task', but even this was apportioned discriminately.

> Frequently the SS assigned more meaningful tasks (only) to old prisoners (i.e., those who had been in the camp for a longer period of time). This indicated that forcing nonsensical labor on the prisoners was a deliberate effort to speed their decline from self respecting adults to obedient children. There seems no doubt that the tasks they were given, as well as the maltreatment they had to endure, contributed to the disintegration of their self respect and made it impossible to see themselves and each other as fully adult persons anymore.[15]

## NUTRITION

The conditions of the prisoners did not result from their psychological reactions to the situation alone. The

living conditions bred diseases much worse. The quality and quantity of food the prisoners were given is significant. The statistics that will be presented are 'official amounts'. There is strong evidence that much of the food was "organized." (This is a euphemism for stolen or commandeered.) One example of this as well as why we are unable to count on the accuracy of the statistics should be given as it also serves to indicate the pernicious character of what occurred in the camps. The following account is told by Elie Cohen.

> In the concentration camp Neuengamme, Robert Darnau, in November 1944, 'found in his soup a human jaw.' When this was reported to the commander, 'investigation revealed that the kitchen Kapo and the crematory Kapo had agreed to sell the meat from the kitchens to civilians and feed the prisoners on corpses.'[16]

The 'official' calorie count for each prisoner in the concentration camp Amersfoort was 2,222.22. (This and subsequent calculations were based on the "Netherlands Food Products Tabulation" published in May, 1946.) At Auschwitz, the official amount was 11,314.6 calories per week. Those who worked were given an additional amount of bread and sausage which would make the weekly consumption 15,234.16 calories or 2,176.4 calories per day. 'Officially', there was an amount of food provided for minimal existence over a long period of time; however, reports from camp prisoners indicate that the total was much less, e.g., "for a long time during 1944 we had only 1750, and later only 1050 calories." Other reports suggest even less, as little as 533 calories per day. Authorities seem to indicate that the needs of the men in the camps were approximately 3000 calories or 50% more than

even the 'official amounts' indicate, consequently, producing malnutrition in epidemic proportions.

The effects of malnutrition were most visible. Cohen lists them as sunken eyes, projecting cheekbones, thin skin, skin pigmentations, edema. One doctor described his experience in Belsen four weeks after liberation. "The prisoners were so emaciated that he could not use his stethoscope, as it bridged the space between two ribs and could not be made to touch the skin between."[17]

This extreme malnutrition led to a general physical weakness. "...all the dispensable organ functions cease or are reduced to a minimum... the tendency of the body toward economization reveals itself in a preponderance of the vagotropic functions: bradycardia, hypotonia, hypothermia."[18] This condition also led to impotence with a 'disappearance of libido'. We shall discuss this effect in a following chapter.

> The majority of the prisoners suffered on the one hand from lack of food, and on the other hand from lack of sleep--a result of the plague of vermin caused by too many persons being thrown together in such close quarters. While undernourishment made the men apathetic, to some degree a result of vagotropia, chronic sleeplessness made them irritable. In addition to these factors, there was another--the absence of those two toxins of civilization which in normal life mitigate both apathy and irritability: caffein and tobacco.[19]

## DISEASE

Infections were 'unprecedented' according to numerous reports.[20] The prisoners developed scabies, impetigo,

furuncles, carbuncles, abcesses and erysipelas. They suffered from extreme frostbite. To illustrate the extreme importance starvation played, we should deal with another disease--pulmonary tuberculosis--whose effects reached as many as 33% of the camp prisoners. It was observed that

> ...clinically, during the most serious state of starvation tuberculosis becomes entirely subordinate. The famished body does not appear able to spare nutritive material, even for the tubercle bacilli, and for the time being behaves anergically. Not until adequate nourishment has brought about the convalescent state does pulmonary tuberculosis secondarily come into prominence.[21]

In other words, the effects of starvation were so great that other diseases were covered up for the time being.

Acute infectious diseases were also prominent in the camp: Scarlet fever, diptheria, meningitis and typhus. Many of these were hidden from the Germans because of what they might mean and eventually did come to mean. "A diagnosis of any of these diseases was... tantamount to a death sentence. Without even entering the room the camp physician would, as a rule, send these isolated patients to the gas chamber."[22]

Even general treatment of those prisoners with curable diseases was almost non-existent. Those prisoners who had the misfortune of being ill were given little if any treatment.

> For 2000 patients, in the winter of 1944-45, there was 1 liter of cough mixture, 20 aspirins, 20 pyramidon tablets, about 20 grams of activated carbon, almost 400 grams oak bark, and 20 tablets tannalbin. It reached the point where to fall ill meant certain death.[23]

We see this in the statistics from Buchenwald. From 1937

to 1945, 238,979 prisoners, both political and Jewish entered this camp; 33,462 died there. "These returns do not include those prisoners who were sent on death transports, nor those who were removed to other camps in very poor health, nor those who were executed."[24] Many people just died there.

## LIBERATION

For the survivors, the experience of maltreatment did not end with liberation from the concentration camps. Ironically, almost sadistically, most prisoners were moved from behind the barbed wires of the Nazi camps to the barbed wire of the Displaced Persons camps. There, the lives of the prisoners remained pre-determined by those in authority. From the survivors' perspective, liberation had not yet come. While the world argued as to the solution of the disposition of the Jews of Europe, they continued to live as prisoners. They had not yet 'arrived' on the world scene. It would be another three years--until 1948--that the world would free the Jews.

## CONCLUSION

Although we have been presented with the 'facts' of the treatment of the prisoners--the beatings, the work, the starvation, the lack of care for the sick and the deliberate murders--the description is really inadequate for us. First, these facts have no place in our world of experience. They

exist around a time-place foreign to most of us. They are, to a great extent, inconceivable. On the other hand, the reality of the facts in and of themselves must be brought into question. Perhaps as one survivor has said,

> We have no adequate descriptions of just what took place--since we have to allow for a considerable degree of distortion in the mentality of the viewer. To use an image from the theory of relativity, the standard of measurement applied to the deformed law was itself deformed.[25]

It is not our intention to objectively analyze the Germans' method of treatment of the prisoners, nor is it our intention to present the facts in order to determine guilt or probable cause of the behavior of the Nazis. This task we leave to the jurists and moralists of later generations. We are incapable of this for the time being. As one physician put it, "(We)... cannot even figure out now which had more impact--the daily beatings or the constant humiliation."[26]

For the prisoner, the conditions we have described in this chapter were the reality with which they were confronted. This was the prisoners' world of reality and, therefore, was significant in bringing about the psychological changes which occurred. It is the task of the remainder of this paper to describe and interpret the experience in light of the facts presented in this chapter.

## II. THE CAMP PERSONALITY

The agony of imprisonment, as described in the previous chapter, led to a particularly stressful situation for the prisoners.

> ...a psychic stress situation which, to a great extent, surpasses the individual's power of endurance, which totally destroys his social norms and values, and which deprives him of his belief in himself, without any event in a positive direction occurring to counteract this, leads to deep changes in his personality...[1]

As we read the personal accounts of the prisoners, we see that these changes did in fact occur and that there was a type of development, a staging, in that change. Since this progression was overwhelmingly typical among the survivors, it is conceivable that it was the ability to move successfully from one stage to the next that enabled the prisoners to survive the camp. It is important, therefore, that if we are to understand the effects of the camp on the prisoners, we attempt to describe the personality-system of the survivors as it developed. There appear to have been three stages of development. These can be described as the initial reaction to the camp, adaptation and, finally, resignation.

### INITIAL REACTION

The first stage in the development of the camp personality will be called "Initial Reaction". Frankl calls

this "reception into camp."[2] It occurred during the transportation and the arrival at the camp itself. The main expression of this fear was shock, a feeling of terror and numbness. During this stage, an order to move or fall in line fell on 'deaf ears'. The prisoners became petrified, with the result that many were shot there on the spot. The reality of the threat of execution because of this 'petrification' effect or lack of response, registered on the prisoner's ego. At the same time, his ego was unable to cope with the realization. This attack on the ego from two directions, simultaneously, led to a defective ego, i.e., the inability of the ego to function as the administrator and arbiter of behavior. The effect was a typical psychopathological phenomenon--acute depersonalization. Cohen describes this as "an estrangement from the surrounding world."[3] This was a direct result of the ambivalent reaction of the ego to the double stress it was feeling.

Bettelheim described this phenomenon of depersonalization in the following way: "...this torture is happening to my body, but not to me."[4] The whole experience was happening to 'him' as object rather than 'him' as subject.[5] Cohen describes a similar emotion.

> My reaction... was an apparent splitting of my personality. I felt as if I did not belong, as if the business did not concern me; as if 'I were looking at things through a peephole'; I felt untouched by any compassion either for the prisoner, who had probably been beaten to death, or for the incoming labor group.[6]

This inability to react led to a state called 'psychic

anesthesia' where new impressions had no effect.

> For most of the prisoners, the area of interest was very rapidly reduced to the most primitive form of self-preservation, narrowed down to the mere battle for existence, represented by a bowl of soup and a crust of bread. Neither the outer world, the course of the War, nor the fate of others appeared to have any real value or meaning in the daily life of the prisoners.[7]

This condition lasted from one day in unusual cases to a few months in extreme cases. It made resistance impossible, as we will discuss in Chapter IV. "A feeling of utter indifference swept the prisoners. They did not care whether the guards shot them... It was as if what happened did not 'really' happen to oneself."[8]

Activity or work had little meaning for the prisoner at this stage. Because of this, the Germans recruited prisoners who were still in the initial stage of development to work at the crematories and on the burial details. One victim of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, who experienced the same reaction to distress describes this emotion as he was involved in the clean-up operation.

> After a while they (the bodies) became just like objects or goods that we handled in a very businesslike way... Of course I didn't regard them simply as pieces of wood--they were dead bodies--but if we had been sentimental we couldn't have done the work... We had no emotions... Because of the succession of experiences I had been through I was temporarily without feeling... At times I went about the work with great energy, realizing that no one but myself could do it.[9]

This last discussion was presented to show two things; first is the extent, the depth of the shock of the victims, and, secondly, that the phenomenon was not unique to the concen-

tration camp, but is a typical reaction to extreme stress when one's ability to cope with that stress is overcome.

As a result of this reaction, the focus of behavior became "to safeguard his (the prisoner's) ego in such a way that, if he should regain liberty, he would be approximately the same person he was when deprived of liberty."[10] This occurred on an unconscious level to the extent that it was the 'safeguarding' or preserving of the ego that was of ultimate concern. In order to do this, the ego was suspended for the time being, thus, 'putting it out of the action'. The rationalization of this was to turn egotist, i.e., to argue that one needed to save himself first without regard for his fellow prisoner--when in actuality the inactivity was ineffective either for helping others or for saving himself. Yet, the behavior was necessary to preserve the ego even at the expense of the entire body.

The elements that seemed to determine the extent of this initial reaction were the "...psychological conditions of the victim, which means that the conception he had formed as to what would happen to him was the determining factor. If this conception conformed to reality, the initial reaction was not very violent..."[11] We see that there were a small number of prisoners who were acquainted with and prepared for what the future held and, therefore, were able to escape from the camp in the early stages of imprisonment when it was easiest to escape. If one let the realization of what was about to occur overwhelm him, he became impotent. We can

see, however, that awareness, the ability to overcome denial, was a successful tool in coping with the stressful situation.

The transition from the initial stage of behavior was one of jumpiness, 'paralysis of emotion', euphoria (a heightened sense of vitality) and the fright stupor as in the initial stage itself. To conclude this stage, we notice behavior which closely resembled that of 'mourning behavior'. By this time, the prisoner was aware of the function of the camps. The process of denial had concluded with the realization that he had been separated from his family, and he was actually mourning their loss. The problem then became one of realization and adaptation to the real situation.

Existentially, as the prisoner who remained alive was being forced by these circumstances to adapt, he was more involved in 'mourning' his own 'death', or his own circumstances. Adaptation awaited the completion of the grief-work involved in mourning. This period was, of course, a very personal one, as the grief-work varied in intensity so that one individual would recover more quickly than another. Too much time spent in mourning would be a sure ticket to destruction.

## ADAPTATION

Those aspects of the camps to which the prisoner had most difficulty adapting were the following:

1. the lack of personal freedom
2. ignorance as to the duration of imprisonment

3. impossibility of being alone
4. hunger
5. lack of sex
6. degradation
7. loss of name
8. lowering of one's spiritual standard
9. the 'anarchic power of accident'--chance
10. The importance of the present rather than the future.

Despite the difficulty, this stage was the most important phase in the life of the prisoner.

> When he had succeeded in adapting himself to concentration camp life he was an ex-greenhorn, he had settled down. Roughly this would take him a year; but only a small percentage of the prisoners reached this stage, which is not surprising, as abnormally heavy demands were made on them.[12]

To the question, "Who could best adapt?" there seems to be three answers.

The first was based on the length of imprisonment. "...the longer a prisoner was in camp, the greater his chance of survival."[13] Generally, this was based on luck or the ability to cope or adapt.

The second type of prisoner best suited for adaptation were those who had some sort of spiritual life, e.g., political, religious or intellectual, where this life was able to encompass the prisoner and create a goal to which he could direct his activities. The best example of this is the 'intellectual', Doctors and writers would fall under this category. Their intellectual exercises enabled them to place a psychological distance between them and the incredible stresses. The doctor-prisoners made their way, as quickly as possible, to the prison hospitals to obtain work and respite from camp life. Those fortunate enough to get work in the hospitals were able to

avoid many of the realities of what was going on around them. The writers were also able to escape into the world of paper, pencil and words--avoiding the realities of what was happening to their fellow prisoners. These pursuits functioned as a goal, something to strive for in the future, while putting aside the present for the time being. Unfortunately, this category of prisoner was the smallest. Most found themselves unable to think in terms of the future, something intellectual pursuits demand.

The third category of 'successful prisoner'--one able to adapt--was the type whose personality system was able to change, and change considerably at least for the time being. We might call this ADAPTABILITY TENDENCY. The most common form of this was a combination regressive-identification syndrome. This phenomenon was induced by the camp system. The entire camp procedure was an obvious attempt to reduce the prisoner to a dependent, regressive state. This was accomplished by entirely controlling the environment. A prisoner didn't eat, he was fed. Permission had to be given to urinate. But it was more than just rigid discipline, it was the way in which discipline was administered. Slaps, verbal abuse, and other 'childish punishments' were used. Shootings and beatings--these were for adults and psychologically could have lent themselves to adult mechanisms of coping. As the Germans learned to control behavior, the extreme methods of punishment became more infrequent. The prisoners were no longer treated as adults, even with respect

to punishments. This lent itself to a complete psychological deterioration--a regression to a state of utter dependency. Their self-images were ruined. There was really no alternative to boosting this self-image left to the prisoners except one, the one used by children who 'want to act grown-up'--identification with a father figure. As Cohen describes it, "If regression is taken into account, through which the prisoners were in a position of infantile dependence on the SS, the conclusion appears logical that only a very few of the prisoners escaped a more or less intense identification with the SS..."[14]

The overt expression of this will be discussed in Chapter IV because of its importance in maintaining the passivity of the prisoner.[15] We should, however, raise the question of how it was possible for the prisoners to identify with the SS for whom, one would think, they would only have contempt. A reference to Freud's libido theory helps to answer this. According to Freud, the Ego-Ideal (an ideal self) is built by identification with father and mother substitutes. If the need is great enough, and it must have been under camp conditions, one makes his images worthy of love. This was in no way intended as an expression of love directed externally, i.e., a love that would leave the confines of the individual psyche, rather it was a love introjected to satisfy the narcissism of the ego. The reality of the object as it exists outside the person is of little consequence, rather it is the image of the object as it is introjected for use

internally. "There is no explanation of objective goodness--or badness of an ideal. The only value of the ideal (which is in reality only a figment of the perceiver's mind) is to give pleasure by its realization (no matter how impossible this may be.)"[16]

The benefit derived from 'identification with the aggressor'--along with its value of keeping one passive and uninclined to striking out against the aggressor which would create the possibility of punishment--can help "...to overcome fears that might otherwise be paralizing, and thus give us time, courage, and the power of thought to adapt ourselves to a situation to which we might otherwise utterly succumb."[17]

It must be pointed out that in almost every case of identification with the SS, the identification was not complete and was not made with SS man, but rather with his aggressive behavior. In this way the pent-up emotions of the prisoners were vicariously discharged without any real threat to the individual prisoner. We find, therefore, the regressive-identification to be a safe and effective way of dealing with the stressful camp situation.

## RESIGNATION

The final stage of development was that of resignation. "In the stage of resignation the prisoner regarded concentration camp life as real life... The best thing was to accept reality dispassionately, in the simple awareness that one had got to live in the concentration camp for the time being."[18]

We can see this in the behavior of the old prisoners (those who had been in the camps for an extended period of time). The 'greenhorn' would use his money "...'to smuggle letters out of the camp or to receive communications without having them censored'. The old prisoners, on the other hand, employed their money 'for securing for themselves 'soft' jobs...'"[19]

Once a prisoner had reached this stage, he was overwhelmed with the feeling of alienation. "...he (the prisoner) began to feel alienated toward the world outside the barbed wire. Through the barbed wire he looked upon people and things outside as if they were not part of his world, or, rather, as if he were not part of their world, as if he had utterly lost touch with that world."[20] To a large extent, this feeling continued even after release from the camps while the world debated the fate of the survivors.

Most prisoners, of course, never reached this stage since the period of 'psychological maturation' necessary to reach this stage took about a year. Most prisoners in the death camps did not survive for that length of time. Those that did, however, and who reached this stage in effect 'bought the program'. They were involved in getting 'soft' jobs for themselves, in the prisoner bands, the underground libraries, and limited amounts of comradeship.

Resignation was possible because of the way the conscience works. First it is a matter of introjecting what is approved or disapproved. This was facilitated by the regressive-identification that took place in an earlier stage of

development. Moral insights then take the place of those things for which one has received approval. One no longer sees it as a matter of 'Authority' but in terms of 'Moral Principles'. For many prisoners, to act as a 'model prisoner' was a moral principle and it would have been wrong to act in any other way.

Psychologists have learned from this that

> The super ego, which is, as we know, among other things the introjection of the voices of the parents, teachers, and society, is no unchangeable quantity... and as to the prisoners, it has been shown that the super ego, that is the standards of the individual may, as it were, wither away and be replaced by other hitherto unknown or unacceptable standards...[21]

> We have observed that when a man is starving everything is subordinate to the gratification of the hunger drive. Every bodily function (including the sexual function) which is not essential for survival disappears...[22]

> Probably all prisoners, including therefore the neurotics among them, soon came to realize the relative insignificance of what once they had thought to be important. The ego which used to get excited about certain tendencies emerging from the id ceased to do so. As the ego began to realize that inside the concentration camp entirely different concerns mattered to it, the ego became more sensible and could control the tendencies of the id with little or no difficulty, so that there was no need for these to be repressed...[23]

> Another possibility was that neuroses in the concentration camps disappeared because to the prisoners their confinement assumed the significance of a punishment for their guilt feelings...neurotics recovered there...[24]

This last point is most significant. It demonstrates the extent of the resignation which occurred. The neuroses which resulted from guilt-feelings were abated. The neurotics accepted the SS punishment as deserved and it, therefore,

acted as payment of chronic guilt feelings.

## CONCLUSION

There are two things about which we should not be misled. First, the prisoner 'bought the program' only out of the necessity for survival--he did not enjoy it.

> ...'the mood of overwhelming gratitude turned into hate and its ever-present companion, fear. Free psychic energy finds expression only in this one drive, man is mastered by his aggressiveness... He projects his own aggressiveness onto his environment', in this case on his fellow refugees, the camp commander, Switzerland. Embitterment is infectious, and so 'we experience veritable tempests of hate and fear.'[25]

The prisoners remained hostile, angry throughtout their entire imprisonment. The only difference was that they were not given the opportunity, because of circumstances, to express this.

Secondly, for most prisoners, there was a lingering hope--for those who had lost hope, had by the third and final stage of development committed suicide, either by their own hand or by 'forcing' the hand of an SS guard. Hope was the necessary ingredient in adapting and resigning oneself to the camp conditions. It is inconceivable that one would have held out for any other reason.

It is apparent that one's coping ability is determined by his ability to adapt flexibly to the changing situation. Survival in the case of the concentration camps was not limited to one's psychological ability to adapt however. A prisoner's attitude toward death, the most striking fact with

which he was confronted was most significant in terms of survival. The following chapter will deal with the attitudes about death.

## III. THE PRISONER'S VIEW OF DEATH

"Do not go gentle into that goodnight
Old men should burn and rave at close
of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."
DYLAN THOMAS

How one lives is in large part determined by his feelings of death. For the prisoner in the concentration camp, "...(the) most striking psychological feature of this immediate experience was the sense of a sudden and absolute shift from normal existence to an overwhelming encounter with death."[1] This massive encounter with death affected the life the prisoner was to lead and was a significant factor in his ability to adapt. The main element involved with this encounter with death and that which had the greatest effect was its inconsistency. The fact that one was never sure when or how he would be killed made the normal coping devices inoperable.

> Death was the supreme ruler in Auschwitz, but side by side with death it was accident--the most outrageous, arbitrary haphazardness, incorporated in the changing moods of death's servants--that determined the destinies of the inmates.[2]

> In the words of Dr. Wolken... Everything changed almost from day to day. It depended on the officer in charge, on the roll-call leader, on the block leader, on their moods. 'Things could happen one day that were completely out of the question two days later... One and the same work detail could be either a death detail... or it could be a fairly pleasant affair.'[3]

As Anna Freud describes the effects of inconsistency, there seems to be a significant reverse corelation between the inconsistency level and the toleration level. It seems that a human being is able to cope with a stressful situation if he can count on that situation to remain at approximately the same level of repulsion. When the repulsive conditions are erratic, the person is unable to change his attitude sufficiently enough to adapt to it. Had the conditions been more stable, we probably could have seen a better adaptation to the camp conditions than was observable in the real camp situation.

In order that we understand the prisoner's reactions to death, we must understand the 'fear of death' so prevalent among men. Majorie Mitchell[4] describes the fear of dying as

1. the fear of an agonizing death
2. the fear of a sudden death.

The two elements indicated are pain and disruption. In the case of pain, death could be regarded as an end to the intolerable, painful situation. Death brings an end to the agony. In actuality, it is not the fear of death, but the fear of suffering which is involved, while death is looked upon as a positive conclusion to the suffering. This attitude was predominant in 19th century Christian philosophy. The following is from a Sunday school tract, entitled, "A Child's Guide to Holiness" (1819):

> Fear not, thou dying child, though life's day is drawing to a close, though the clock is quickly ticking out the few hours that remain to you of earth. Life on earth is misery compared to the joy that shall be yours in heaven.[5]

Until the 20th century, life was considered a 'vestibule' leading into a better world, heaven. This theme predominated in all major religions of the world, and was generally accepted by the people when the need for acceptance presented itself. For them life was precarious--death was all around. It was most unusual for a child to grow up without seeing a sibling or other close relative pass away. Because of the lack of hospital facilities most of these deaths occurred in the home. The pre-20th century child was therefore experienced in the throes and pangs of death. And life itself was hard and generally unrewarding. A man could work all his life, and at the end have nothing to show for it. These experiences caused a more positive attitude toward death than we see today. The 20th century is different.

> Death (has become)... a temporal matter. Like cancer or syphilis, it is a private disaster that we discuss only reluctantly with our physician. Moreover... those who are caught in the throes of death are isolated from their fellow human beings, while those who have succumbed to it are quickly hidden from view... Death, like a noxious disease, has become a taboo subject, and as such it is both the object of much disguise and denial as well as of raucous and macabre humor.[6]

Today medicines prolong life. Hospitals and 'old age' homes take care of the sick and the elderly so that very few deaths occur in the home. Death for most people has become a stranger. The 20th century also breeds an affluence which makes life good. The struggles and diseases of the past have been overcome by technology and medical advances. People look at life, not as the vestibule, but as the only real existence. Death is then looked upon as a loss, a

deprivation. Life 'couldn't be better.' (The advent of science and skepticism had led to a cynicism about life after death.) Death deprives one of the benefits of life--the major deprivation being love.

> In bringing up our children at home and in school there is one way of reducing... the fear of one's own death. We can diminish love... that the individual loses his identity. We can get rid of the family... We can discourage great friendships... underplay the emotions, dilute them in the community--there are thousands of ways of diminishing love. We can 'Sterilize mother's milk, spoon out the waters of comfort in kilograms, Let Creation's pulse keep Greenwich Time, Let Love be sterile.'[7]

Death then is a negative thing, a condition without love or value of any kind. It is the total deprivation.

The concentration camp transposed the 20th century man back into the 19th century reality of existence. Into the world without love, where death was typical, came a man unaccustomed to it. The reaction was traumatic, though varying. The reaction of rationalizing or denying death was impossible for the camp prisoner. The result was rather a high concern with death. "The type of neurotic constellation suggested by these findings is that of preoccupation and withdrawal into body systems, dependence, affective lability, and depression."[8] The effects go beyond the temporary 'neurotic' reaction however. One researcher, Harold Wolff (1960) attempted to explain the apparent premature ageing of catastrophe victims.

> Is there reason to infer that men who experience catastrophes of any kind, but who actually suffer no burns, direct effects of radiation or physical injury have shorter life spans than others?

> Do such people grow older than their actual age? Though definite answers to these questions await further statistical analysis, we do have precise information from our own records of the WW II and Korean action concerning the effect on life span and health of prolonged adverse and seriously threatening life experience. Of approximately 7000 United States prisoners of war captured by the North Koreans, about one-third died. Medical observers reported that the cause of death in many instances was ill-defined and was referred to by the prisoners as 'give-up-itis'. Death seemed to be the end result of infection, humiliation, despair, and the deprivation of human support and affection. The prisoner simply became apathetic, listless, neither ate nor drank, helped himself in no way, stared into space, and finally died.[9]

Generally speaking, the effects described by Wolff were based on a neutral or even positive attitude toward death which arose out of the camp situation. Cohen explains this neutrality: "The adaptation to concentration-camp life and the residing in the 'realm of death' cause death to lose its terror, for death has become normal."[10] A more positive outlook concerning death is expressed by one author who survived the camps.

> We feared the Germans with a dreadful paralyzing panic stronger than the fear of our own deaths. During the final liquidation of the Ghetto, a Jewish woman, on her knees, begged a Polish policeman, "Shoot me! Shoot me! I'm more afraid of the Germans than dying.[11]

It seems almost inconceivable, but death had lost its significance for these 20th century men.

> We knew we had nothing to lose except our so ridiculously naked lives.[12]

We even find in post-holocaust literature, e.g., Elie Wiesel, that prisoners felt a sense of pity for the Germans who had succumbed to the lowest form of animal behavior while

they (the Jews) proudly walked to their deaths maintaining their dignity as human beings. However romantic this might seem, the fact remains that the Jews were able to find some dignity in death.

In the preceding chapter, we discussed those prisoners who were best able to adapt to the camp situation, namely, those who survived the longest by chance, those who had a spiritual life, and finally, those whose personality-system lent itself to change so that each new situation could be coped with more readily and present little problem to the prisoner. We called this adaptability variable. In all three categories the individual's ability to cope with death was not a necessary condition, for these prisoners had for the most part escaped into a world of illusion. Death had become an event of little importance. There were prisoners, however, who were able to maintain a sense of reality even with respect to death. Some of these people survived. I believe the most significant rationalization for them was that, "...'whenever death comes one consolation is always the vast and brilliant company of those who have suffered the same fate.'"[13] Victor Frankl has said that the best didn't survive. The company of dead ones was indubitably a vast and auspicious assembly.

An attitude similar is that of "appropiate death." "...suffering may be reduced... by fostering as image of appropiate death."[14] Frankl develops his 'theology' on this notion by raising the question of whether the imminence of

death decreases the meaning of life. "On the contrary. For what would our lives be like if they were not finite in time, but infinite? If we were immortal, we could legitimately postpone every action forever."[15] For Frankl, it is this imminence of death that makes man responsible for what he will do in the next hour, how he will shape the next day. If human life were infinite, it could be changed post-facto and, therefore, any behavior or act would be permissible--but if life is irreversible, each act recorded permanently for history, man becomes responsible for each act and the immediacy, the importance and the sanctity of the moment is of primary concern for the individual. This is a philosophy of the survivor.

The one element which would at first glance appear to influence man's attitude about death is the religious. Many psychologists have attempted to explain the passive response of the prisoners as a reaction of pious Jews who believed in ressurection and life after death. Death as suffered by the prisoners was a martyrdom suffered for the sanctification of G-d's name which is rewarded in a future time-place. It acts as an existential reward and would seem to be an effective coping device. Studies have shown, however, that this is not operative in comparable situations.

> The interesting thing is that there appears to be little connection between belief and fear of death. While rituals may act therapeutically, the actual myth that lies behind them, whether it be of ressurrection or rebirth, does not seem to console nor to reduce the fear of death in children. In the American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Volume 34, No. 4, a study

> of the reactions of fifty-eight children between two and fourteen who had lost a sibling showed that although all these children felt an intense fear of death there was no evidence that religion consoled. Where children were told that 'G-d had taken away' the sibling, some even feared G-d as a murderer.[16]

The prisoner's attitude toward death, and therefore toward life was not comparable to our thinking. It was that of a previous milieu where death was conceived as a neutral and even a positive event in the individual's life. This, of course, reflects the attitudes of prisoners who lived in the camps for a long period of time. Life was a worthless commodity and death could be conceived as an aggressive act against the Nazis, since there was still the aspect of self-determination. Hope did exist but for a very uncertain future. The words of Dylan Thomas which prefaced this chapter are those of a 20th century militant for whom life is a valuable possession. In the reality of the camp, "to rage, rage against the dying of the light," was a wasteful expense of psychic energy. If we are to understand the prisoner's attitudes about death, we must objectively see how the camp environment could and did change what we might consider a typical loss-reaction into a neutral or even positive act. This attitude had significant effect on prisoner behavior as we will discuss in the following chapter.

## IV. AGGRESSION AND PASSIVITY

Having settled on an attitude about death, the prisoner then was confronted with the second most important decision--how he was to live or die. For most prisoners the decision seems to have been a self-determined response to the situation, i.e., he refused to leave it to fate. (Ironically, however, fate probably played the biggest role.) The prisoner made his decision and acted in such a way as to bring his decision to fruition. This is true whether his decision was to live or to die, for either of these were active expressions of the feelings of the prisoner given the circumstances. No prisoner who was physically conscious passively relied on another man's decision. To lie in bed, to refuse to work, to march to the grave reciting the Shema, to run into the electrified wires--all of these were positive acts, possibly aggressive acts of defiance against the environment. To understand this is a big step in understanding the shoah and the behavior of those who experienced it. The following excerpt is a good example:

> Once there came into the ghetto a certain Nazi from a province where the Jews are required to greet every Nazi soldier they encountered, removing their hats as they do... The 'little wise guys', the true lords of the street... found great amusement in actually obeying the Nazi and showing him great respect in a manner calculated to make a laughingstock out of the 'great lord' in the eyes of all the passersby. They ran up to greet him a hundred and one times, taking off their hats in his honor. They gathered in great numbers, with an artificial look of awe on their faces, and wouldn't stop taking off

> their hats... Riffraff gathered for the fun, and they all made a noisy demonstration in honor of the Nazi with resounding cheer.
> This was Jewish revenge![1]

Historians, psychologists, and Holocaust writers of the past have for the most part misunderstood the prisoner's behavior. For example, Itzhak Greenbaum, a leader of Polish Jewry during the pre-war period, indicted European Jewry with the following statement: "European Jewry left the historical stage without dignity."[2] This response has been typical by contemporary observers and now, a generation later, by those accustomed to a more aggressive and militant posture. First of all, we need to examine the comment and its implications. The suggestion is made that the inhabitants of the camp were realistically aware of what lay in store for them, i.e., they knew objectively what the function of the death camps were. It has been suggested however in a previous chapter that by-in-large this was not true. The comment also suggests that the choice they made was a conscious, deliberate, and rational choice. It implies that the prisoners chose one of several possible alternatives. What those alternatives were is not fully explained. It is not just a question, therefore, of 'character' and of 'rational judgment and choice' but also of a realistic situation in which options were available. What were those options? Armed resistance, active martyrdom, passive resistance, suicide? Of course, implicit in the statement is a moral judgment. The prisoners copped out, as it were, and for reasons of weakness or misplaced trust, failed to take realistic steps in self-defense.

Obviously, for an objective grasp of the problem we cannot deal with this question in its moralistic wording. It is not our intention to defend the prisoners because we cannot accept the statement as posed as a valid research task. Rather we would deal with issues which permit more objective consideration, apart from issues of blame or defense.

First of all, we need to consider the freedom of choice which may or may not have been psychologically possible for individuals living under such extreme conditions of stress. Secondly, we need to examine the options which camp dwellers could apprehend in their state of mind and given their access to information.

Before we begin, although we have discussed the camp conditions in our first chapter, it is appropriate that we reiterate our discussion by a concluding comment.

"...concentration-camp life revealed all the affects of the soul in unprecedented rawness."[3]

> Normal people do not know that anything is possible. Even if the accounts of eyewitnesses force their minds to accept, their bodies refuse to believe. The prisoners from the concentration camps know... They are divided from others by an experience which it is impossible to transmit.[4]

Given the apparent difficulty of sharing in the camp experience, it is possible to psychologically analyze the behavior in terms of the freedom of choice actually opened to the prisoner and what options he had--given the very limited choice.

## FREEDOM OF CHOICE

One of the oldest psychological postulates is the S——R formulation of behavior, i.e., given a specific stimulus (defined as "a part, or change in a part, of the environment") a relational response (defined as "a part, or change in a part, of behavior") will be forthcoming, and this response can be accurately predicted on the basis of previous responses to similar stimuli.[5] However, since in this case, we cannot fully comprehend the conditions of the camp prisoners, all we can state with assurance is that the environment, i.e., the stimulus, was violent and that it did affect behavior.

In keeping with this psychological postulate, Harold Wolff makes the following comment.

> Particular mention should be made of stimuli stemming from sudden and violent alterations in environment (author's italic) that in themselves have little noxious effect, but because they alter basic and established relations between the creature and his environment, engender stress and often evoke major reactions inappropriate...[6]

Eitinger, a psychoanalyst who has studied camp survivors also notes that

> ... a psychic stress situation which, to a great extent, surpasses the individual's power of endurance which totally destroys his social norms and values, and which deprives him of his belief in himself (as we will see, a common phenomenon among camp survivors) without any event in a positive direction occurring to counteract this, leads to deep changes in his personality, which in many cases, appear to be irreversible.[7]

The concentration camp experience undoubtably was a

"sudden and violent alteration in environment," as Wolfe describes and also the "psychic stress situation" Eitinger discusses. Thus we can assume that deep personality changes did occur and more important, that the behavior was "inappropriate." By inappropriate, we will mean beahvior which is functionally useless under the given conditions. One example, one not dealing with the camp experience, will help to clarify this notion of inappropriate response. We have, described below, a study done on the effects of the "Invasion from Mars" radio broadcast of 1938 which seemed to disorient thousands of Americans.

> If one assumed that destruction was inevitable, then certain limited behavior was possible: one could cry, make peace with one's maker, gather one's loved ones around and perish. If one attempted escape, one could run to the house of friends, speed away... or hide in some gas-proof, bomb-proof, out-of-the-way shelter. If one still believed that something or someone might repulse the enemy, one could appeal to G-d or seek protection from those who had protected one in the past. Objectively none of these modes of behavior was a direct attack on the problem at hand, nothing was done to remove the cause of the crisis. The behavior in a panic is characteristically undirected and from the point of view of the situation at hand, functionally useless.[8]

It will therefore be the primary contention of this chapter that direct aggression of the camp prisoners for the most part would have been psychologically impossible. It seems that the nature of man in particularly stressful situations is to, in some way, psychologically limit the amount of threat involved as we have seen develop in the personality-systems of the survivors rather than to effectively attempt a change in the stimulus or the conditions causing the behavior.

When this did occur, it was either in desperation or by chance. The last intention of the prisoner was to in any way help to "complete the task" of the aggressor by letting him determine the prisoner's destiny. The secondary contention of this chapter is that indirect aggression did not occur and that this response was violent fulfilling the needs of the prisoners as well as directing it away from a possibly threatening situation. This was a matter of the option of behavior the prisoner chose, and will be dealt with in that section.

This first hypothesis I believe to be most important. In simple terms, man under any condition, wishes to live.

> The prisoners' feelings could have been summed up as follows: 'What I do here or what is happening to me doesn't count at all; here, everything is permissible as long and insofar as it contributes to helping me survive in the camp.'[9]

The question of "dignity" is nonsensical. It would have been too costly psychologically for all pschic energy was needed for preservation.

> After one had learned how to live in the camps the chances for survival increased greatly... While one was never without fear for one's life the fact (remains) that several thousands of the prisoners liberated in 1945 had spent five and even ten years in the camps...[10]

It is, indeed, impossible to judge the morality of a phenomenon, psychologically found to be normative behavior. Perhaps Mr. Greenbaum would have been more proud if the prisoners had died fighting. But for the prisoners it would have been vain glory as well as impossible given the 'predetermined' nature of their treatment.

## OPTIONS OF BEHAVIOR

Dignity asserts itself in many forms. It appears that it did exist when it could in the camp situation, even if it helped the Nazi war effort. For example, it seems that some prisoners sought harder work if the end product was something useful. "They felt debased when forced to perform 'childish' and stupid labor, and preferred even harder work when it produced something that might be considered useful."[11] It was a psychologically profitable way of achieving pride though "inappropriate" for the situation. The prisoners could take pride in an SS boot well made, whereas breaking rocks was psychologically "useless."

The most influential factor then was the desire to live. This was the underpinning of any of the personality-systems that developed. "Every man was controlled by one thought only; to keep himself alive..."[12] The question now arises, "What methods, which of the options were used by the prisoners to protect themselves?" One that appears most obviously to have been employed as a defense mechanism was schizoidization, i.e., a polarization of mind and body as if the one individual had become two separate entities without regard for reality. Bruno Bettelheim "...feels that he was able to endure... because he convinced himself that these horrible and degrading experiences somehow did not happen to 'him' as a subject, but only to 'him' as an object."[13] Another expression typical of the experience is that, "this torture is happening to my body, but not to me."[14] For those

who reacted schizoidally, their 'goal' was similar to those who wished "merely to survive." The main problem had become "...to safeguard his (the prisoner's) ego in such a way, that, if he should regain liberty, he would be approximately (50% in this instance) the same person he was when deprived of liberty."[15] It was a capitulation of some degree to the situation, one in which those whose personality-system could not be altered, found impossible and were therefore overcome and destroyed by the situation.

The best way, it seems, to maintain self while enduring the experience of the camp was to deny complete involvement. For some this method was their salvation; however, schizoidization was not easily employed. One needed a tremendous amount of "inner strength" to maintain the dichotomy. For this reason, some prisoners developed in its stead psychic anaethesia or "psychological closure" completely denying their environment.

> A feeling of utter indifference swept the prisoners. They did not care whether the guards shot them... It was as if what happened did not 'really' happen to oneself (i.e., at all).[16]

In order to understand this group, we must remember two things: first, that "...people's attitudes toward death correspond to their attitudes toward life; how each person dies is determined by how he has lived."[17] For a large number of camp prisoners, life had become meaningless; therefore death, or how one died became a meaningless issue. To kill Germans was unimportant--the prisoners sought psychological homeostasis; whether in life or death didn't concern them. This phenomenon

will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Secondly, we should remember that, "Realization of their true situation might have helped them to save either the life they were going to lose anyway, or the lives of others. But that realization they could not afford." (italic mine)[18]

For some of those who survived the camp experience having employed psychological closure, there developed what has become commonly called "the concentration camp syndrome." "This is characterized by 'uniform asthenic and vegetative symptoms in close constellation with emotional disturbances as well as signs of intellectual deterioration, which together with a visible physical decline in many cases show an acceleration of the ageing process.'"[19]

The question arises why the prisoners would need such an extreme method of protection from their environment. Why were some prisoners able to cope with or to rationalize away part of the environment, while still maintaining some hold on reality? I have become convinced that the primary cause for total disengagement from reality was due to the prisoners' feelings of isolation and, yet, their need to remain in this condition in order that their area of interest and concern could be legimately shortened without the accompanying guilt. "What the majority held up as the central and most important reasons for their passivity was their feeling of 'complete isolation and feeling of being forgotten by the entire world...'"[20] The prisoners, though thrust into a communal setting were

separated immediately from their families and friends. They no longer had any reason to resist. For most of the prisoners their "...area of interest was very rapidly reduced to the most primitive (I assume this term is not judgmental.) form of self-preservation... Neither the outer world, the course of the War, nor the fate of others appeared to have any real value or meaning in the daily life of the prisoners. Everything seemed unreal, as in a nightmare."[21]

If, indeed, isolation was such an important factor, and since the prisoners were thrust into a communal setting, why did they not attempt to establish new relationships?

> It was indeed interesting that very few prisoners, and only those relatively new at camp, tried to work with their friends or with those living in their barracks. Most of them seemed to want as much variety of association as possible to avoid getting too emotionally involved.[22]

The prisoners then effected their own isolation. When man is stripped down to the most primitive form, Self is the most important consideration. To have established relationships would have been a threat to man's basic instinct in that it would have been at the expense of psychic energy which in this instance was no more intelligently employed on the maintenance of the Self-survival.

It was this need to avoid ambivalence of emotion which also restrained the prisoner from forming concerted efforts to fight his captor. To have joined an underground movement would have meant a psychological investment in the group, one the individual could hardly afford. Logically,

we could, of course, argue that such an organization could have in the long run saved many people. But, again, we must keep in mind that under stress situations, man cannot be expected to function "appropriately."

There are also several other psychological notions developed in the literature discussing the reasons for the prisoners apparent passivity. The first one we will discuss is the "fear of aggression."

> (The)...feeling of defeat does not imply they felt no strong hostility toward their oppressors. Weakness and submission are often charged with greater hostility than open counter-aggression... Within the oppressed who did not resist lay accumulating hostilities he was unable to discharge in action. Not even the mild relief of verbal aggression was open to him, because even that, he was afraid, would bring destruction by the SS.
>
> The more hostility accumulated, the more terrified the prisoner became that it might break through in an explosive act spelling destruction for him.[23]

The fear of explosive reaction worked on the individual's psyche in order to prevent him from doing anything rash. And it should also be remembered that aggression of any sort, no matter who the aggressor, had become frightening to the prisoner.

> To prevent this (counter-aggression), he (the prisoner) felt he must at all times remain convinced of the extremely dangerous character of the aggressor; in that way his own fear would restrain him more effectively. So for his own protection he invested the SS with those features most threatening to himself. These, in turn, increased his anxiety, frustation and hostility, and to keep them all under control, the SS had to be seen as even more murderous.[24]

The prisoners therefore would "create" monsters out of the SS

beyond the reality of the SS's behavior. This becomes apparent when we compare the "stories" told by the prisoners with the actual methods employed by the soldiers, most of which were threats rather than deeds themselves.

This process of exaggeration had a twin-response. As a result of the infantile regression imposed on the prisoners, they began to id identify with the SS.

> If regression is taken into account, through which the prisoners were in a position of infantile dependence on the SS, the conclusion appears logical that only a very few of the prisoners escaped a more or less intense identification with the SS.... 'By imitating the aggressor... (one) transforms himself from the person threatened into the person who makes the threat.'[25]

This identification became very intense for some, to the point where they would sew on pieces of the SS's uniform which had fallen off. Miss Bluhm ("How Did They Survive?", American Journal of Psychotherapy, Vol.II, No. 1, 1948, p.25.) describes this process as one of a paradoxical nature. "...survival through surrender; protection against the fear of the enemy--by becoming part of him..."[26]

While identifying with the SS because of their apparent power, the prisoners also came to invest the SS with superpower, i.e., they began to project upon them the role of superego (a product of identification). Since the SS did make the demands that functionally fit the role of parent-image, i.e., as prosecutors and judges, this process was quite natural. We must understand the psychological notion of the super-ego as not giving one the 'ought' but rather "...it gives us the 'musts' and the 'must-nots' with which the child

must comply, not the sense that we ought to obey."[27] Since the SS were projected into the role of Super-ego, obedience was naturally given.

> Parents and teachers cannot always be with the child. Hence nature provides the mind with an innate process of introjection or internalizing the commands and prohibitions of parents and teachers.[28]

Seeing the SS functioning in this role makes clear the notion that to have rebelled against the Nazis would have been an act of patricide if not deicide. Something no one would expect under any conditions.

Another attempt to understand the passivity concludes that the idea of death had become normal, and, therefore, no longer a frightening prospect. (It is inconceivable for me to believe this, yet I cannot fail to mention this theory. It will be discussed at length in the following chapter.)

> The adaptation to concentration-camp life and the residing in the 'realm of death' cause death to lose its terror, for death has become normal. This will also account for the quietness with which those prisoners who knew they were going to the gas chambers met their fate... and people as a rule don't resist the normal.[29]

This notion is connected with Freud's notion of Thanatos--i.e., that man, though consciously convinced of his immortality at the same time finds one of his "motive forces" the pursuit of death itself. Both of these notions I find to be too simplistic by themselves, too reductionistic to explain so complex a phenomenon.

There are two more theories, whose conclusions I will consider but reject in part at least as being too simplistic.

The first is passivity due to the fear of group punishment.

> Miss Adelsberger (Psychologishe Beobachtungen im Kontzentrationslager Auschwitz... Bund VI, 1947) may be right in saying that the victims did not revolt out of consideration for their fellow prisoners, because they knew that serious reprisals would be taken upon the latter by the SS.[30]

Bettelheim[31] also mentions this as a possible reason and gives evidence in terms of actual retaliation taken upon other prisoners for what a few individuals had done. (A favorite Nazi trick.) I believe, however, that this would suggest a bond or investment in the group, which as we have previously discussed, is unfounded with respect to a majority of the prisoners. Such a relationship with the group simply could not and did not exist.

The final notion we will discuss is under the heading of cultural or religious values.

> ...the Jews in Poland did not 'exercise their last freedom, trying to march against the SS, to kill some of them and to die as free men.' ...many of the investigated persons had considered this idea. But they also contended that there has been a Jewish religious tradition throughout the centuries, where 'dying as a man' means something quite different from what Western people usually understand by this expression. To die as a man, or as a Jew--for the religious Jews it is the same thing--means to die with the 'Shema' and the Holy Name of G-d on their lips, without resistance, without 'falling into the abyss of the aggressor, namely, to kill just as he does'.[32]

This notion of Bettelheim's is most attractive but again I must use the argument of simplicity. Though it may have been of some influence, it nevertheless fails to solve the total question. It is though more more attractive and convincing than the apparent rationalization of Victor Frankl.

For Dr. Frankl the "suffering" became a vehicle to achieve salvation.

> Whenever one is confronted with an inescapable, unavoidable situation, whenever one has to face a fate that cannot be changed, e.g., an incurable disease... just then is one given a last chance to actualize the highest value, to fulfill the deepest meaning, the meaning of suffering. For what matters above all is the attitude we take toward suffering, the attitude in which we take our suffering upon ourselves.[33]

The most one can say of this notion is that if it indeed "saved" Frankl during his imprisonment, then it was at least for one, a viable conclusion. It seems to me to be more of an afterthought capable of salvation only after release from the conditions in an "ivory tower" position of philosophizing an experience.

There is one more fact that must be discussed if we are to do justice to the topic. This is the fact that not all the prisoners were passive. Although I do not completely agree, the fact that a prisoner could state the following speaks for itself.

> There was a stubborn, unending, continuous battle to survive. In view of the unequal forces, it was a labor of Sisyphus. Jewish resistance was the resistance of a fish caught in a net, a mouse in a trap, an animal at bay. It is a pure myth that the Jews were merely 'passive', that they did not resist the Nazis who had decided on their destruction.[34]

Could such a man have been immobilized by fear? This man did resist and one cannot condemn the prisoners or suggest total passivity.

In another respect this prisoner may not have been

incorrect, for there is one important consideration yet to be made. Aggression is not necessarily an overt act committed against another person.

> ...(the) outlet for prisoner's aggression... was to direct it against the self. This was suggested by the camp situation in general and by innumeral SS devices all leading toward passive-masochistic attitudes.[35]

The severest form of introjected aggression is of course suicide. Although for many of us, suicide is considered the coward's way out, to the prisoner it was a different expression entirely, an aggressive option opened to each prisoner.

> Since the main goal of the SS was to do away with independence of action and the ability to make personal decision, even negative ways of achieving it were not neglected. The decision to remain alive or to die is probably a supreme example of self determination.[36]

For the prisoner the moment of death by his own hands could have been the proudest moment in his life. Given the conditions under which the prisoners lived, "appropriateness" must certainly be considered totally apart from our own response to our own conditions. To understand this may be all we are able to understand and all we have right to understand.

In conclusion, we can say that a moralistic judgement with respect to the prisoners' behavior is an affront and demonstrates a lack of understanding of the psychological possibilities, which confronted the prisoner. Given the notion that his freedom of choice was extremely limited and that there were psychologically few valid options of behavior open, the 'passivity' of the prisoners should indeed be considered valid and appropriate.

## V. THE CONDITIONS OF THE PRISONERS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING RELEASE

With the successful operations of the Allied Armies in Europe came the end of the war with Germany. But humiliation and fear did not cease to exist because of the reoccupation of Allied troops and the 'liberation'. Probably the most cruel aspects of the whole Holocaust experience--from the point of view of the survivors--were the post-war pogroms, especially those in Poland, the Displaced Persons Camps, and the realization of what had occurred.

> After the Hitler slaughter of millions of Jews before the eyes of the Polish people, one would have thought that even if their hatred for the Jews was not mollified they would at least desist from physical violence against them. But the appearance of Jews in the places liberated from the Germans enraged the Poles, and the Jews were given to understand that the Poles were not ready to tolerate them in their midst.
>
> ...The murder of the Jews by the Poles started even before the Red Army occupied any part of Poland. It increased immediately after liberation, involving pogroms and threats of murder in a few towns.[1]

This reaction was not limited to the East. There was a small group of countries (e.g., Italy, Denmark, France) where pre-war normalcy was restored. But for most of the other nations, the annihilation destroyed altogether the possibility of re-establishing the old patterns of integration. Those communities which did attempt to re-establish the pre-war structures have by-in-large failed for several reasons.

> ...these are orphaned communities struggling hard to maintain their heritage and identity, handicapped

> by the harrowing experience of the past and by small numbers... their numbers are probably insufficient to play the role of invigorators, let alone bearers of a new future... with few prospects for the future.[2]

The second tragedy of the post-concentration camp experience was the establishment of Displaced Persons Camps. For most of the Jewish prisoners, the 'liberation' from the German camps meant resettlement behind Allied barbed wire. They remained isolated from the rest of the world and imprisoned at the same time.

> We find the greatest difference after the liberation from the camps (between the Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners), when (for example) the Norwegian groups returned home to almost normal conditions of life, while the Israeli groups had lost their homes and contacts and were isolated in the truest sense of the word.[3]

For many of the prisoners, the D. P. camps were to remain their 'homes' until, in 1948, the U.N. acquiesced and established a homeland for them in Israel. The following figures show the percentages of those prisoners who remained in the D.P. camps. The categories of prisoners are those used by Eitinger in his study. They all refer to ex-prisoners who all immigrated to Israel. The 'psychotic' and the 'neurotic' groups have been so adjudged by Dr. Eitinger. The third category 'working' are those who exhibit no unusual behavior and have for the most part adapted well to Israeli life.

Duration of Internment in D.P. Camps

| | psychotic | neurotic | working |
|---|---|---|---|
| In camp until 1946 | 11.5 | 66.3 | 72.7 |
| until 1948 | 49.0 | 23.9 | 10.6 |
| not interned | 39.5 | 9.8 | 16.7 |

We can see that almost half of those listed as psychotic in Israel, remained in the D.P. camp until 1948 whereas only 10% of those of the working group remained until 1948. We can assume that for the prisoners, who were transferred from one camp to another form of 'camp', felt that a cruel hoax had been perpetrated. Surely, those listed as psychotic needed something more than the D.P. camps were able to provide.

> The reality confronting the individual after the liberation was therefore very painful, and apart from the comatically improved situation, it was almost worse than the dream from which they had just awoken. They became suddenly aware of the full weight of their isolation; the lack of purpose and meaning in their life was suddenly fully revealed.[4]

Finally, we have the confrontation of the survivor with the realization of what had occurred. Up until the liberation, many prisoners remained in the worlds of illusion they had secured around themselves. But liberation was a release from these--their withdrawals, their dependence on the 'spiritual' elements within themselves, and their regressive-identification states were lifted.

> For the majority, the awakening from the nightmare their internment had been was perhaps even more painful than the captivity itself. It was then that they first began to realize, although not yet fully--the whole emotional reaction took place much later--the actual meaning of the goodbyes on the railway ramp, on their first arrival at the camps.[5]

The organizations which participated in the D.P. camps e.g., UNRRA, JOINT, IRO and such organizations, by-in-large, were relatively effective. They felt the burden of resettling these people. The fact of the matter is that no nation was willing to accept its responsibility. The actions of the

United Nations in 1947, with its Israel resolution may have been an attempt to solve the 'Jewish refugee question' and, at the time, limit immigration to their own shores. Despite all of the good which came from the conclusion of the war, the prisoner still was not given the right to decide for himself, or to determine his own fate.

These conditions which we have mentioned were those which the prisoners in general had to face. Let us now discuss the physical conditions of the prisoner following release. Again we will use the categories Eitinger uses in his study, namely, the psychotic, the neurotic, and the working groups.

The first condition of importance which Eitinger lists as an 'effectuating condition of persecution and captivity' is that of the duration and captivity.

Duration of Captivity[6]

| | psychotic | neurotic | working |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-2 years | 72.2 | 67.3 | 54.6 |
| 2+ years | 27.8 | 32.7 | 45.4 |

This would seem to indicate, as we have already stated in a previous chapter, that the longer a prisoner was in a camp, the better his chances of survival both physically and mentally.

The second condition of importance is that of physical mistreatment. For example, Eitinger lists the following numbers of head injuries.

Physical Mistreatment[7]

| | psychotic | neurotic | working |
|---|---|---|---|
| head injuries | 20.1 | 30.4 | 10.6 |

This is born out in most other studies of camp survivors. "A surprising amount EEG foci were discovered after head injuries from blunt weapons more than 20 years ago."[8] The following is a description of what one finds while examining ex-prisoners.

> Old healed scars are frequently found in any imaginable area. The examiner must remain objective at the sight of multiple scars due to police dog bites or the lashing with whips on the bodies of female survivors.[9]

The next condition, which Eitinger feels was a major factor of the prisoner's psychological coping ability is that of the loss of weight.

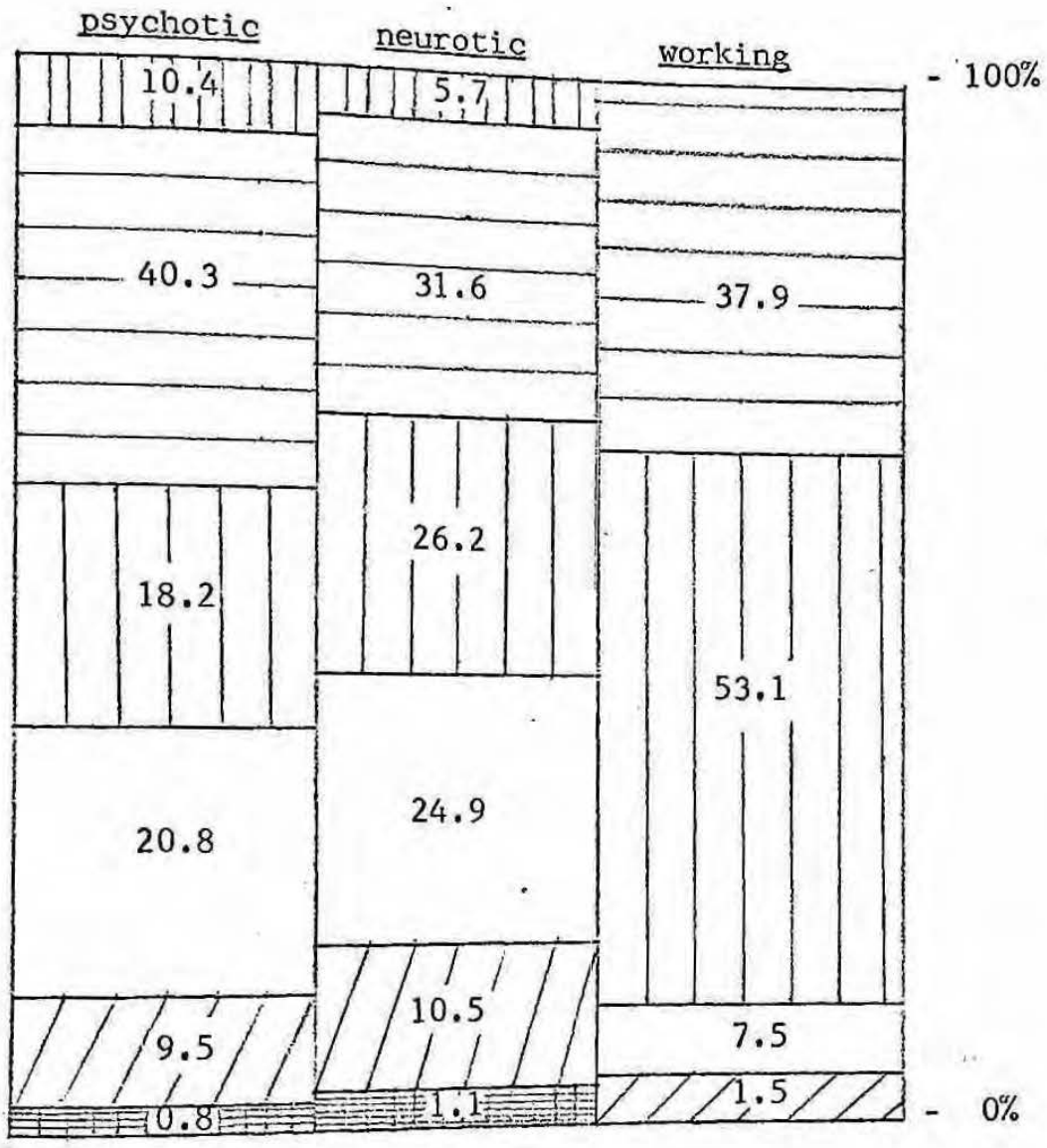
Loss of Weight[10]

| | psychotic | neurotic | working |
|---|---|---|---|
| 'living corpse' | 23.1 | 40.2 | 33.3 |
| uncertain | 35.5 | 0 | 0 |
| reasonable loss | 40.5 | 59.8 | 66.7 |

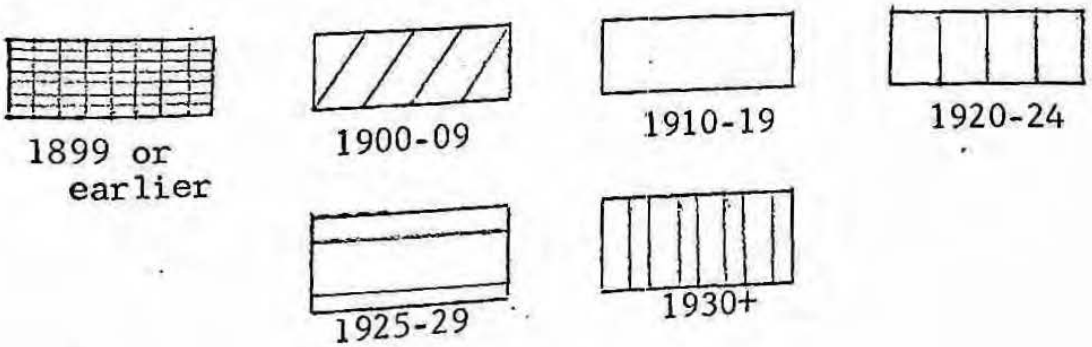
It is reasonable to assume that the psychotic group which is listed as 'uncertain' would more than likely fall into the 'living corpse' group, thus substantiating Eitinger's claim that weight loss and the ability to cope are related. We can also see that the physical conditions of the prisoners upon release live up to those described in the first chapter.

The age of the prisoners was also an important factor. We can observe from the following chart that about 50% of all the groups were born from 1910-1925 which means that in 1945, the mean age of the survivor was 27½ with the oldest of this group being 35 and the youngest 20.

Age




Year of Birth



Eitinger believes that this indicates that "... a less mature and developed personality would be regarded as a factor which reduces the possibility of enduring stress..."[11]

The final condition we will note is that of education.

Education[12]

| | psychotic | neurotic | working |
|---|---|---|---|
| elementary school (up to 7 years) | 70.2 | 66.5 | 64.4 |
| high school (7-12 years) | 22.1 | 25.9 | 27.9 |
| general certificate of education (13 years) | 4.9 | 6.5 | 4.6 |
| university | 2.8 | 1.1 | 3.1 |

Generally speaking, we see little relationship between education and adaptability. Age seems to have been much more closely correlated to adaptability.

It seems apparent that the physical conditions of the prisoners, along with the post-liberation tension, and irritability, there was a natural tendency toward various psychosomatic consequences. We believe this to be the case because of the large numbers of ulcers, migraines and colitis found among the prisoners; these are generally attributed to 'psychosomatic conversions' resulting from depression and rage. It would seem natural for the ex-prisoner.

> Hypochondriasis, for example, usually occurs in withdrawn people, who, with heightened preoccupation in their visceral sensations and diminished concern with the world, interpret events within them as portents of fatal illness.[13]

So as not to indict any prisoner concerning a physical

affliction by calling it psychosomatic, we must describe what psychologists have titled the Mutual Interaction Theory. "Heuristically speaking, symptoms are never exclusively organic or psychogenic but are caused, conditioned, and triggered off and are always related to both spheres of observation." [14] This is born out by a French study (Targowla 1950, 1954) [15] which notes the etiology of the concentration camp syndrome (asthenia) as an overtaxed and psychogenically damaged hypothalmus. Other tests indicated the etiology as meningo-encephalopathy and brain lesions.

What we do know is that with both the physical and the chronic psychological stress situations of the camp, it is natural that various somatic and psychosomatic responses did occur. The important fact that should be remembered is that the conditions following 'liberation' did very little to enhance the condition of the prisoners and that as a result of this, we still face neurotic and psychotic ex-prisoners not of their own making. Just as we cannot blame all neurotic responses on brain lesions, or somatic illnesses on adrenalemia (overactivity due to stress), the behavior and conditions of the concentration camp prisoners should not be blamed solely on the concentration camps. The conditions following release proved to be an incubation period, culminating in the emergence of traumas as severe as those experienced in the camps themselves. We should now turn to an analysis of the effects of these traumatizations.

## VI. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SURVIVOR BEHAVIOR

The period immediately following release from the concentration camp acted as an incubation period for anxiety symptoms. During this period the horror-drenched memories were temporarily repressed. This symptomless interval leads to the paradoxical withdrawal-of-stress panic, the panic that results after the threat is over while the defenses are no longer operating. Following the incubation period severe reaction occurred.

### DEPRESSION

> There is in the overwhelming majority an emotional tone of depression, representing practically all shades from an inability to smile, motor retardation, to panic and heavy crying. Suicidal preoccupations are frequent, suicide attempts rare. There is further the mourning syndrome, the survivor never ceases to mourn for the annihilated relatives.[1]

This delayed reaction is called melancholia. Its manifestation is similar to 'psychological closure' we discussed in Chapter IV. Just as it protected the prisoners from the realization of what was happening in the camps, it also protected them from realizing what had occurred since most camp memories had been repressed. Psychological closure, however, especially after release, could not be maintained. "...(it) would last sometimes for a few hours, and sometimes for days or even months and (finally) emerge into longer-term feelings of de-

pression and despair."[2] There are numerous studies which bear this out, e.g., Shival 1957-58, Winkler 1959, and the Kolle and Strauss studies. They all seem to indicate that

> ...whether conditions are favourable or unfavourable, the concentration camp survivors vary relatively little around their pessimistic future orientation. They are more rigid, the control population is more volatile. These investigations may indicate psychiatrically a (perhaps sub-clinical) chronic depressive state.[3]

As a result of this melancholic state, the prisoners exhibited a large number of related somatic and psychiatric symptoms. The following statistics are taken from Eitinger's study.

Somatic and Psychiatric Symptoms[4]

| | psychotic | neurotic | working |
|---|---|---|---|
| increased fatigability | 15.3 | 60.8 | 50 |
| disturbance of memory and concentration | 23.1 | 49.9 | 27.3 |
| dysphoria, bitterness | 10.5 | 40.2 | 16.6 |
| emotional instability | 28.9 | 67.3 | 38.4 |
| disturbances of sleep | 35.5 | 65.2 | 28.7 |
| feeling of insufficiency | | 36.9 | 18.1 |
| reduced initiative | | 46.7 | 27.3 |
| nervousness, irritability | 27.6 | 66.7 | 74.2 |
| vertigo | 18.2 | 31.5 | 28.7 |
| vegetative lability | 12.5 | 52.1 | 36.4 |
| headaches | 25.9 | 65.2 | 43.9 |
| anxiety | 35.5 | 59.7 | 28.7 |
| nightmares | 6.7 | 56.7 | 57.5 |
| depression | 24.9 | 59.7 | 28.7 |

It should also be noted that "... the Israeli neurotic group, which does not have one single positive memory to point to, cannot in any one case show a change in personality which goes in a more integrating, interhuman, constructive direction."[5]

## ISOLATION

The most prominent complaints during the state of depression were

1. difficulties with regard to 'feeling with others' (They had become 'harder'.),
2. a feeling of inferiority (Others expected more of them, but they were unable to meet their demands.),
3. nightmares (fixation on a traumatic experience).

The first two complaints stem from a general overwhelming feeling of isolation and loss. In reality we find that most prisoners had, in fact, been isolated from their families. Eitinger presents the following statistics. To the question, "What percentage had lost a majority of their closest relatives?" it was found that 84.6% of the psychotic group, 88.1% of the neurotic group and 88.7% of the working group had lost most of their relatives. To the question, "What percentage were totally isolated?" it was found that 80.6% of the psychotic group, 76.7% of the neurotic group and 75.7% of the working group were totally isolated. The significance of this isolation can be seen in the following set of statistics. It is in response to the question "How did

you survive?"

| | neurotic | working |
|---|---|---|
| 'mere chance' | 41.4 | 15.3 |
| 'was just lucky' | 18.4 | 19.6 |
| 'was with friends and relatives' | 14.1 | 54.6* |
| 'own efforts' | 13.1 | 7.5 |
| 'did not participate' | 1.0 | 3.0 |

We can readily see that the majority of those able to cope suggested that their ability was based on the fact that they had not been isolated from their families. This is suggested by the 54.6% of those in the working group who attributed their survival to the fact that they were 'with friends and relatives'. This association has shown itself to be similarly important in other catastrophies. The following is part of an interview with an Hiroshima victim.

> Of course... those who are settled in their families remember the incident. But on the whole they are much better off and feel better... their attitude is, 'shoganai' (it can't be helped). "It is useless to look back on old memories,' they keep saying... those without families on the other hand keep remembering everything... they curse the whole world--including what happened in the past and what is happening now. Some of them even say, 'I hope that atomic bombs will be dropped again and then the world will suffer the same way I am suffering now.'[6]

Another aspect of the prisoners' isolation was the reaction of the world toward them. We have already discussed the unwillingness of the nations to absorb the Jewish refugees.[7] There also seems operative an attitude of discrimination regarding catastrophe victims. One Hiroshima victim describes

this phenomenon.

> I don't like people to use that word (hibakusha) ...Of course there are those who, through being considered hibakusha want to receive special coddling... But I like to stand up as an individual... I don't like this special view of us... Usually when people refer to us as atomic bomb maidens is a way of discrimination... It is a way of abandoning us...[8]

This discrimination along with the reality of isolation, caused by the deaths of so many, added to the depressive states exhibited by the ex-prisoners. The expressions of the depressive states were a 'hard' feeling and one of inferiority.

The third complaint--nightmares--were the unconscious attempts to bring the realization of what had occurred into the conscious. By-in-large, the prisoners found this difficult and still find it difficult to acknowledge the reality of the camps. This is demonstrated by the 56+% who still suffer from nightmares (See chart on page 62.). The reality is apparently under constant repression.

## SOMATIZATION

There is one more manifestation of the extreme depression. Studies have shown that there is a relationship between post-camp neurosis, as it is sometimes called, and the expected life span of the ex-prisoner. Just as in the camps we found operative a kind of 'give-up-itis', so too do we find this phenomenon following any stress situation. The following is from a study by Harold Wolff (1960).

> Six years after liberation, the fate of those that survived the Japanese prison experience

> was investigated. In the first place the total number of deaths... was more than twice the expected incidence for a similar group of persons not so exposed... Moreover, the causes of death included many diseases not directly related to confinement or starvation. Twice the expected number died of heart disease, more than twice the expected number of cancer, more than four times the expected number of diseases of the gastrointestinal tract. Twice the expected number died from suicide--and most striking of all three times the expected number died as a result of accident...[9]

## GUILT

Upon reading the studies done on the concentration camp survivors, there is an element that seems to stand out and indicate a conclusion. This is the fact that in spite of all the negative aspects of depression created by the feelings of isolation and the numerous somatic and psychiatric symptoms caused by the condition, there seems to be an element of self-indulgent masochism. It seems that the prisoners needed, for some reason, to suffer. It is my conclusion that the reason for this was an attempt to deal with a distorted sense of grief caused by <u>survivor guilt</u>. This conclusion is based on the fact that the behavior exhibited by the survivors was a morbid grief reaction.

> ... distortion of normal grief may well be a prelude to a morbid grief reaction which Lindemann and others have documented, and which may run the gamut of response from such psychosomatic conditions as asthma, ulcerative colitis, and rheumatoid arthritis to antisocial behavior and possibly even psychosis.[10]

In a normal grief situation, 'grief work' or the emancipation

from the bondage to the deceased, readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing, and the formation of new relationships occur. In many survivor cases, there is a resistance to this.

> Lindemann noted considerable resistance on the part of his patients to accept the discomfort and distress of bereavement. The patients chose instead, in many instances, to avoid the intense pain connected with the grief experience and to avoid also the expression of emotion necessary for it.[11]

This lack of desire to cope and, therefore, the inability to cope effectively with the traumatization of grief was enhanced by survivor guilt. Survivor guilt is the expression of strong feelings of guilt over the fact that one has remained alive while others perished. It occurs when there seems to be no rationale for fate's choice.

The statistics of those who suffer from survivor guilt are staggering. One study examines 99 camp survivors.

> Many but not all suffered from survivor guilt. Sixty-seven survivors (34 men and 33 women) admitted to survivor guilt along with severe depressions. Thirty-three (19 men and 14 women) deny it, but suffer from depressions nevertheless.[12]

The study goes on to indicate that, "survivor guilt... is being considered to be the dynamic driving force behind most depressions."[13] The author explains this by adding to the above statistics.

> Among these (the 33 who deny survivor guilt) are the psychotics. They gave statements such as, 'I did everything I could to save my parents.' or 'There was nothing I could do.' Such statements, of course, must not be taken as absolute truth, and a special study of such denial seems indicated, since all of the non-psychotics who deny it continue at this time to suffer from nightmares, the

> contents of which deal with their perished close relatives... Somatizations are frequent: headaches, gastrointestinal and skeletal manifestations without organic basis, are frequently encountered in this order.[14]

Because of the intensity of the guilt felt by the survivors and the role it plays in survivor psychology, we should now turn to a discussion of guilt as a general phenomenon. There were apparently three components of guilt exhibited by the survivors: psychological guilt, moral guilt, and collective guilt. Each of these plays an important role in any assessment of survivor behavior.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL GUILT

Before beginning this section, we should recall the discussion on Ego-Ideal. Identification with the SS occurred, and the image was introjected. Simultaneously, the commands and prohibitions of the Ego-Ideal were internalized. This process leads to the development of what Freud termed the Super-Ego, i.e., a system of beliefs, prohibitions and behavior patterns which have been internalized from without the individual and have become an integral part of an individual's psyche. In a stress-situation, especially one of such great magnitude as we are involved, the Ego is threatened to such a great extent that it is rendered impotent. When this happens, the mind is then in a polar-flux, with the Id and the Super-Ego vying for control. While this is occurring, the natural condition of the body, that of homeostasis or equilibrium of the physical and mental elements is being sought. The coping device used

in reaction to the imbalance was identification with the SS. By identifying and introjecting the SS-image, the prisoner was able to "control his own impulses" effectively from within. The prisoner then could release any aggressive tendency through the image of the SS but at the same time be protected from any such overt behavior by internalizing the commands and prohibitions of the SS.

As long as there were rigid rules, the prisoner felt a childish sense of safety and security in the environment. Just as in the relationship of the child and, possibly even moreso, in the case of the prisoner, an ambivalence arises with respect to the love-hate syndrome. No matter how much one needs to be dependent, part of an individual craves for freedom. It has been explained in this manner:

> When a prohibition or a command is introjected, it is not assimilated; it lies over against the integrated part of the personality without modifying it, like a foreign body. Not only so but it tends to act autonomously, to determine behaviour, thought and emotion with modification by reason or experience.[15]

Although this image may be a bit dramatic, we can readily see the inner tension resulting from the introjection of ideals from without. It is this tension, the love-hate syndrome, which lends itself easily to guilt. As the hate emotions conjure up negative feelings toward the loved image, the love seeks to anesthetize the opposite emotion by creating guilt feelings perhaps in an unconscious effort at self-punishment since in most cases the Ego-Ideal is far from the reality of the object per se.

The second aspect of psychological guilt we find among

survivors is a reaction to the strong identification with the dead. We attribute this to the structure of the family in the Judeo-European culture where an intense, dependent relationship existed between family members. Death of one or more members was viewed as extreme deprivation where the survivor was impotent to cope alone with the viccisitudes because of inexperience due to past dependency.

> What has been mentioned before about the importance of the family in an Eastern Jewish community goes to show that the members of this community will feel even more effected, if that is possible, by this disaster than members of other communities.[16]

The reaction of one involved in an intense relationship with another while he is alive is continued after death. The Japanese had similar familial-relationships. The bombing of Hiroshima therefore precipitated reaction similar to those of the concentration camp survivors.

> The hibakusha identity, then, in a significant symbolic sense, becomes an identity of the dead. Created partly by the particularly intense Japanese capacity for identification, and partly by the special quality of guilt over surviving, it takes shape through the following inner sequence: I almost died; I should have died; I did die, or at least am not really alive; or if I am alive it is impure of me to be so; and anything I do which affirms life is also impure and an insult to the dead, who alone are pure.[17]

It is apparent that psychological guilt is a reaction to lost love which results from an anxiety about the loss. Freud's view of anxiety which changed considerably over the years, is significant as it relates to guilt. From a psychological approach he came to see anxiety as a psychological phenomenon and as an antecedent of repression, a kind of warning signal. "...Anxiety was always 'a reaction to danger',

a response to a threat--the threat of losing the loved object."[18] Guilt became "...little more than (this) anxiety with a special quality."[19]

We can see from our discussion that all cases of psychological guilt are inextricably bound up with the emotion of love. There seems to be in all love relationships a kind of guilt when, for any reason, the love-object is lost. We can only speculate as to the reason for this guilt. We are aware of the proximity of emotion between hate and love. There is exhibited in love-relationships, periods of extreme hostility which one could call 'hate'. It is possible that with the loss of a loved one, a time traditionally given to remembering only the good on the part of the deceased, the ambivalent emotions on the part of the living give rise to severe guilt for the past feelings of hate. These feelings are now looked upon as acts of unfaithfulness toward the dead.

## MORAL GUILT

McKenzie begins his discussion of ethics with the fact that,

> ...we believe that there is the existence of a large body of beliefs and convictions to the effect that there are certain kinds of acts that ought to be done, and certain kinds of things that ought to be brought into existence...
>
> That surely implies that if we violate what ought to be done, or fail to bring into existence when we have the opportunity, we are guilty.[20]

Moral guilt implies the unfulfillmant of the internalized commands of the Super-Ego. It is, therefore, not bound

up with the emotion of love as psychological guilt was, rather it comes from the internalization of the failure to accomplish the tasks one has set for himself. This sense of guilt is based on obedience and the need for punishment. Many ethical philosophers agree that this need is endemic in human nature. The fact that punishment or negative reinforcement is so effective indicates that it is generally accepted as deserved. There must be a realization of blameworthiness. The guilt stems from the attempt to indoctrinate the individual so that he may enter the ethical community as a 'responsible person'. The rules as they are laid down are internalized, as we saw in the initial process of psychological guilt. In the case of moral guilt, however, it is the internalized rules which are taken as absolutes by the individuals. When failure to live up to the expectations occurs we have moral guilt.

There are further aspects to this form of guilt.

> Ethical guilt... includes far more than 'some betrayal of what I take to be my duty'. I may have guilty emotions such as malice; I may have evil sentiments, evil dispositions, evil motives. To the degree that I allow such to govern me to that extent I am guilty and evil.[21]

For the concentration camp prisoner, the behavior exhibited was, of necessity, one of 'malice', 'evil sentiments', 'evil dispositions', and 'evil motives'. The realization of what had occurred notonly included the behavior of the SS, but also his own with resulting guilt.

Moral guilt was not limited to those who experienced the Holocaust. Along with the need to be punished is the need to punish. This need was strongly felt by the world at large

following the Holocaust--which led to pre-trial guilt. The world wanted to punish someone for what had happened. It was for this reason that those involved in the objective adjudication of what happened tried desperately to overcome the aspects of pre-trial guilt.

> The court, under the guidance of the able and calm presiding judge Hans Hofmeyer (presiding judge at the Auschwitz trial), tried hard to exclude all political issues--'Political guilt, moral and ethical guilt, were not the subject of its concern.'--[22]

## COLLECTIVE GUILT

Guilt also arose as a by-product of Nazi treatment of the prisoners. Their methods created a sense of prisoner self-responsibility and accountability. This was especially true with "group punishment," i.e., an individual's behavior would bring retaliation on the group as a whole. Despite individual attempts to overtly dismiss any "group responsibility", this method of punishment inevitably created a kind of group-conscious individual who could not react irresponsibly toward the group. There were, indeed, strong unconscious bonds between the individual and the group as well as between individuals. As one looks back at the Holocaust, he sees it as the destruction of the Jews, not individual Jews, but <u>the Jews</u>, the group for which there were strong psychological bonds. The group was destroyed while the individual remained alive. Thus the guilt was for the six million who died rather than for particular individuals.

Tillich opposes the view of man having a responsibility

to the group and the group to the individual.

> 'The individual is not guilty of crimes performed by members of his group if he himself did not commit them. The citizens of a city are not guilty of the crimes commited in their city (contrary to Deuteronomy 21:1-10) but they are guilty as participants in the destiny of man as a whole, and in the destiny of their city in particular; for their acts in which freedom was united with destiny have contributed to the destiny in which they participate. They are guilty, not of committing crimes of which their group is accused but of contributing to the destiny in which these crimes were commited. In the indirect sense, even the victims of tyranny in a nation are guilty of this tyranny.'[23]

The concluding statement points up the absurdity of his argument. To condemn the rock for having been struck is like kicking the table after stubbing a toe on it. It was, however, the sentiment which many survivors felt and was therefore a strong motivating factor of the guilt-emotion.

## CONCLUSION

Survivors have been attacked, e.g., by Paul Tillich, Bruno Bettelheim, John M$^{c}$Kenzie, etc., on the basis that they had no reason to feel the intensity of guilt evident among survivors. They conclude that the guilt-feelings were subjective or unrealistic, in the sense that there was no reality stimulus which precipitated the guilt response. There were, however, objective cases of guilt that should not be dismissed for they are all part of the survivors' experiences. For example, the case of a woman who with her younger sister and her own one-year-old daughter was deported to Auschwitz.

> During the transport, the mother was taken ill and the younger sister looked after the baby. On arrival

> at the camp, the sister and the child were put into the long line which was sent to the gas-chambers, while the patient 'an able-bodied woman with no children', came to the camp and survived. During the numerous interviews... this experience was--naturally enough--the core of her self-reproach. It is in accordance with clinical pyschiatric experience that a person cannot bear, and work inspite of, a trauma of this kind as a matter of course, and that she, in her retrospective comments, tried to find excuses while expressing the most serious self-reproach at the time.[24]

Agreeing that there were objective causes for survivor guilt, there is another element of considerable importance. This is the fact that there exists in 'reality', two kinds of 'guilt', realistic, which entails a sense of factual responsibility, and subjective, which is non-specific yet as effective and significant for an individual as realistic guilt is. The important factor for consideration is not the reality of the guilt, but the experiencing of it. "... guilt is neither a criminal, moral nor a theological dogma but a lived experience."[25] In any scientific work, one must proceed with as objective an approach as possible. We can, therefore, only relate the guilt-emotion without placing it within any value system. A description of the phenomenon must be sufficient.

# VII. HOLOCAUST THEOLOGY

The survivors and those who would be spokesmen for the survivors--contemporary theologians--felt the need to relate the Holocaust experience to some pattern of meaning. They had to make some kind of sense of the whole experience. This cognitive response, this need for finding meaning is as much a part of the response to trauma as is physical ailments, psychosomatic and psychological reactions. In this chapter we are concerned not with the experience in terms of bodies or personality systems but with the ways people coped with the Holocaust as a threat or problem of the meaningfulness of life and history and their places in it following a Holocaust experience.

For many, the answer was silence. For over a decade, there was only the silence. The facts were too numbing. The necessity to respond to the challenge, however, was increasing. The Holocaust in retrospect took on more and more significance for the future. It was seen as a challenge to intellectualism, to humanism, and to nationalism, the processes which the Nazis had employed to reach their ideological conclusions. It was a challenge to all mankind, but especially to the Jew. It has been said that "A Judaism which survived at the price of ignoring Auschwitz would not deserve to survive."[1]

The survivors forced by their circumstances took up the challenge first. The philosophers and theologians followed suit. The Holocaust theologies seem to fall into the follow-

ing four categories:

1. return to the traditional G-d concept
2. salvation through suffering
3. G-d is dead
4. nationialism--secularism.

These four, although they have been in one form or another present in Jewish systems, now seem to typify most of the post-Holocaust thinking. It is the purpose of this chapter to deal with these four 'theologies'. There is one observation that can be made at the outset. The only consistent aspect of each individual's theological stance is its inconsistency. It is for this reason that one may find an individual discussed in two or even more of the sub-categories.

## TRADITIONAL G-D CONCEPT

In Holocaust literature we find the following discussion.

> ... Gregor asks a Hassidic rebbe, 'What do you make of Auschwitz?' The rebbe answers, 'Auschwitz proves that nothing has changed, that the primeval war goes on. Man is capable of love and hate, murder and sacrifice. He is Abraham and Isaac together. G-d himself hasn't changed.' Gregor angrily queries, 'After what happened to us, how can you believe in G-d?' The rebbe answers, 'How can you not believe in G-d after what has happened?'[2]

For some of the survivors, it is impossible to conceive of a Holocaust without G-d.

In the camps themselves, the traditional G-d concept was more prevelant. The reason for this, at that particular point, was to give meaning to that moment of death while it was occurring.

> (Some) believed that when the enemy came for us, we should be dressed in our prayer shawls and phylacteries, pouring over the holy books, all our thoughts concentrated on G-d. In that state of religious exaltation, we should simply ignore all Nazi orders with contempt and defiance; resistance, violence, only desecrated the majesty of martyrdom in sanctification of the Lord's name. [3]

Following liberation, we find that among those prisoners who had some positive experiences in the camps, there was a feeling that they had changed for the better. "A characteristic example...is <u>case 23</u>, who informed us that his belief in human beings is greater than ever after his captivity. He met good people also in camp, 'and if this is possible even under such conditions, <u>then one must believe</u>...' (italic mine)"[4] To believe that G-d was not somehow or someway involved would deny whatever good that did exist within the camps. For these people, that good is all that they are able to hang on to.

Among this group are people who have attempted to adjudge G-d guilty for what happened but in so doing, showed how dependent and vulnerable man is--and how much he is in need of a god. Elie Wiesel belongs in this category.

> I want to blaspheme, and I can't quite manage it. I go up against Him, I shake my fist, I froth with rage, but its still a way of telling Him that He's there, that He exists, that He's never the same twice, that denial itself is an offering to His grandeur.[5]

A traditional god-concept resulted from the Holocaust which demonstrated the behavior of 'ungodly people.' The exact meaning of the phrase 'ungodly behavior' refers to the fact that Nazi behavior was the result of the 'superman' image of the German. For the Nazi, the Germans and the State were the su-

preme arbiters of morality. Man's freedom was limited by his responsibility to the Nazi state and to Hitler. Traditional theology, on the contrary, is based on the premise that there are moral laws that are suprahuman and supranatural. G-d's law is the law of the universe. (This concept must be based on the traditional concept of the creator G-d.)

> Man's freedom and man's responsibility exist independently. But, in the final analysis, man cannot be responsible to himself alone. Behind his conscience stands an extra-human authority.[6]

On the other hand, if indeed the universe is governed by G-d's law rather than an arbitrary human law, how is it that the Holocaust was permitted to occur? In response to this the traditionalists add:

> We cannot begin to question the 'purpose' of the universe. Purpose is transcendent to the extent that it is always external to whatever 'possesses' it. We can at best grasp the meaning of the universe in the form of a 'concept of limits'. We might call this meaning an overmeaning, using the word to convey the idea that the meaning of the whole is no longer comprehensible and goes beyond the comprehensible... our minds require that it is to our minds unfathomable--a contradiction which can only be surmounted by faith.[7]

This type of thinking seems most prevalent among those survivors who returned to the traditional god-concept. Its personal expression is described in the following: "'I suffered because I was a Jew; I was saved by a miracle; I am not about to give up my belief even if I do not understand the reason for the persecution...'"[8] For them faith wins out.

## SALVATION THROUGH SUFFERING: FRANKL

As in the case of the traditional god-concept, the concept of finding salvation through suffering is an attempt to find meaning in the Holocaust. It was put under a seperate category because its nature is not completely compatible with traditional Jewish concepts. Although there is indicated in Rabbinic sources (e.g., Berachot), the notion that suffering can lead to salvation and derives from G-d's love of man, it is not the positive catalyst through which salvation need be achieved as in Frankl's thinking. This seems more like a Christian enterprise.

> What the Christian theologian must explain, if he can, is not only why there is evil and suffering in the world, which G-d has created and sustains and directs with his power,[9] but why these ills are not wholly worthless.

Frankl begins his theology with the concept that no act remains unaccounted for. For the individual who suffers, there are two alternatives, vegetate or turn the experience into one of inner triumph. "One could make a victory of those experiences... or one could ignore the challenge and simply vegetate, as did a majority of the prisoners."[10]

The theology that Frankl advocates is one which is dependent on the situation and is, therefore, post facto. There seems to be little preparation for the achievement of salvation. After the moment of suffering, the decision is made as to the significance the suffering will have in the future.

> Whenever one is confronted with an inescapable, unavoidable situation, whenever on has to face a fate

> that cannot be changed, e.g., an incureable disease... just then is one given a last chance to actualize the highest value, to fulfill the deepest meaning, the meaning of suffering. For what matters above all is the attitude we take toward suffering, the attitude in which we take our suffering upon ourselves.[11]

The notion of salvation through suffering, and that which is also applicable to the traditional god-concept, is Victor Frankl's notion about the 'three wills', the will-to-pleasure, the will-to-power, and the will-to-meaning. The will-to-pleasure is similar to Freud's libido. The will-to-power is a political drive about which men like Nietszche have spoken. Although both of these drives were apparent in much of the prisoners' behavior, there seems to have been operative a third drive, developed as a response to what Frankl calls existential frustation. This refers to the spiritual side of man which is so often overlooked by psychologist and philosopher alike. It seems that the will-to-meaning is of great concern to the survivors today and, therefore, the conclusions of the man who was instrumental in bringing the notion to light deserves a place among post-Holocaust theologians.

## G-D IS DEAD

Originally, death-of-G-d theology was a development of rational, scientific thought.

> Modern science has demythologized the world of fact, thus disposing of the need for a G-d-hypothesis; and modern philosophy--it is linguistic empiricism, mostly Oxford-inspired--has reduced the meaning of the world G-d, as employed by the believer, to a mere expression of emotion. The believer imagines that the assertion

> 'G-d exists,' although not necessarily demonstrable, nevertheless refers to an objective truth. Philosophy disposes of this illusion. The believer's statement is not 'about the world,' but merely about his own attitude toward the world.[12]

Although the concluding sentence--"The believer's statement is... merely about his own attitude toward the world"--is applicable to post-Holocaust theology, the emphasis on the rational and the philosophic is not. One needs no longer proofs of creation to show that a miraculous creation did not in fact occur. Post-Holocaust 'death' theology is based on the inability to find meaning in the suffering and death (unlike the previous theology discussed).

> ...the issue in the forefront (Death of G-d theology) ...was not the challenge of a scientific age but the age-old problem of suffering. It was this issue more than any other which seemed to result in an inability to affirm the traditional images of G-d.[13]

To affirm the kind of G-d, who by the fact of his existence had some part in the destruction, would be impossible. Bertrand Russell expresses this impossibility of G-d's ambiguity. "'Why does G-d let the cat kill the baby bird?' 'I cannot believe in a Creator. If I did I would have to admit that he is an exceedingly cruel one.'"[14]

For many of the survivors, the experience takes on a much greater significance than something which happened in the past and is, therefore, only of historical significance. "For survivors seem not only to have experienced... but to have imbibed it and incorporated it into their beings, including all of its elements of horror, evil, and particularly of death."[15] Eitinger's findings concerning the 'neurotic group' show how

significant this 'incorporation' was.

> All of them (the Israeli neurotic group) had given up any form of religious faith and their reason was always the same. 'If such things are allowed to happen, then there cannot be any Almighty G-d.' None of this group had received any positive memories or strengthening of faith in G-d or their fellow man through their captivity.[16]

The effects of 'incorporation' were not only psychological but also existential. The individual responded negatively with respect to mankind and the universe. A sense of purposelessness had developed.

> ... this sense of purposeless death suggests... a vast breakdown of faith in the larger human matrix supporting each individual life, and therefore a loss of faith (or trust) in the structure of existence. This is partly due to the original exposure to death and destruction on such an extraordinary scale, an 'end-of-the-world' experience resembling the actualization of the wildest psychotic delusion; partly due to shame and guilt patterns which, initiated during the experience itself, turned into longer-lasting preoccupations with human selfishness; and partly due to the persisting sense of having encountered an ultimate form of man-made destruction.[17]

It is in the existential realm where men like Rubenstein find whatever light is possible.

> We are free as no men before us have ever been. Having lost everything, we have nothing further to lose and no further fear of loss. Our existence has in truth been a being-unto-death. We have passed beyond all illusion and hope. We have learned in the crisis that we are totally and nakedly alone, that we could expect neither support nor succor from G-d or from our fellow creatures... We have lost all hope and faith. We have lost all possibility of disappointment. Expecting absolutely nothing from G-d or man, we rejoice in whatever we receive... Yet we would not exchange it, nor would we deny it, for when nothing is asked for, nothing is hoped for, nothing is expected; all that we receive is truly grace.[18]

The death-of-G-d theology is characteristically negative. It is the result of an intense feeling of rejection by G-d and

by the world in general. At first glance, it may seem similar to the child's response to his parents, "I wish you were dead." It probably is of much more fundamental and existential significance for the 'accusor' than for those who hear the child-like comment.

## NATIONALISM--SECULARISM

Nationalism--Secularism is a response to the negativism of the previous theology. It too is an attempt to find meaning in the experience.

> The Jewish atheist may, however, fail to see that it is precisely the ultimate hopelessness and gratuity of our human situation which calls forth our strongest need for religious community. If all we have is one another, then assuredly we need one another more than ever. (Italic mine)[19]

The 'religious community' Rubenstein speaks about is in no way comparable with the religious ghetto experience of the Middle Ages. The reference here is to a Judeo-secular state, one of mutual concerns. These concerns stem from the feelings of rejection and alienation previously discussed.

> Exile expresses theologically much of the same reality which underlies the concept of alienation in contemporary social science... At the level of Jewish-Christian relations, I progressively gave up real hope that the Jew could ever feel entirely at home in the gentile world.[20]

Nationalism then becomes a method of Jewish identification, the basis of which could be political, as it is for Hannah Arendt, ritualistic as it is for the Mizrachi, or historico-cultural as it is for Richard Rubenstein. Whichever is the case, the effect is the same. The citizen is given

a people with whom he can identify and find a renewed sense of pride which had been lost in the death camps. The survivor is now able to participate in and enjoy life as any other human. His negativism is soon lost.

> With the closing of the circle the Jew needs no longer to be, as Jew, a stranger to art, life, creative passion, or his own body. Hopefully old guilts and resentments will dissolve in the fullness of a life devoid of 'unlived lives', for the first time in many millenia.[21]

Nationalism gives them a strength of character, as the prototype Kibbutznik is seen, unwilling to accept an image in any way lower. It is a rejection of inferiority that was indicative of the pre-1948 image of the Jew. They can claim, "Verily, I have often laughed at the weaklings who thought themselves good because they had no claws."[22]

The survivor has now, in Bonhoeffer's words 'come of age'. "... he no longer expects G-d to intervene miraculously to deliver him from difficult situations. Instead he looks upon the various questions and problems of life as his own task and responsibility."[23] The emphasis on man's responsibility without any notion of grace makes 'successful' nationalism co-extensive with secularism. To rely on something or someone other than themselves would have proven fatal for Israel. It was in the acceptance of their individual and collective responsibility that brought Zionism, the dream of Theodore Herzl, to fruition.

## CONCLUSION

Post-Holocaust theology is an attempt to deal with a

reality which for the first time had been so dramatically and traumatically brought home. Man is capable of and finds pleasure in the destruction of his fellowman. The four 'theologies' that resulted can be categorized as attempts to respond to and/or find meaning despite the reality. For most survivors who successfully traversed the Holocaust experience, one of the four positions discussed in this chapter has given them new hope, and an ability to deal with their memories. The question still remains as to the significance the Holocaust will have for Jews who did not experience the Holocaust--those yet unborn.

## EPILOGUE

I have been asked several times, now, what the major effects of the Holocaust have been. I believe that one could say, that it was a major turning point both psychologically and historically. Psychologically, the impact the Holocaust had on its survivors, as we have discussed, is indelibly recorded. But it not only created new lives for these individuals, it gave the impetus for new attitudes and life-styles--those more militant and communally oriented. The Jew today is more actively concerned with the fate of his fellow Jews all over the world. Historically, a case could be made that the Jews always maintained such a position. But it should also be pointed out that the welfare of one European Jewish community was very much dependent on the others. It was, to a great extent, this dependency that gave rise to that concern. Today, there seems to be a feeling of K'lal Yisroel, a world community of Jews whose fates, though not necessarily dependent on each other, are nontheless intertwined with mutual concern. Jews are responding militantly to the oppression of fellow Jews the world over.

Secondly, we see the effects of the Holocaust in the historico-political realm. As a political consequence of the Holocaust, the United Nations General Assembly, on November29, 1947, passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. This action granted, for the first

time in 2000 years, the natural right of the Jew to be the master of his own fate, like all other nations, in his own sovereign state. Jews now sit with and react with the other great nations of the world as an equal partner. And more important, the individual Jews accept the State of Israel as their heritage, a symbol to which they can identify.

As long as the Jewish people continue with their newly acquired attitudes and roles within the world community, as long as they refuse to become apathetic following Israel's military, scientific and cultural successes, as long as the Jews continue to grow using the historical perspectives gleaned from their unique historical experiences, a holocaust will remain an event of the past, one to be remembered but never repeated.

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