MECHANISMS OF MORAL DISENGAGEMENT IN TERRORISM

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(References not included)

The exercise of self-sanction plays a central role in the regulation of inhumane conduct. In the course of socialization, moral standards are adopted that serve as guides and deterrents for conduct. Once internalized control has developed, people regulate their actions by the sanctions they apply to themselves. They do things that give them self-satisfaction and a sense of self-worth. They refrain from behaving in ways that violate their moral standards because it will bring self-condemnation. Self-sanctions thus keep conduct in line with internal standards.

But moral standards do not function as fixed internal regulators of conduct. Self-regulatory mechanisms do not operate unless they are activated, and there are many psychological processes by which moral reactions can be disengaged from inhumane conduct (Bandura, 1986). Selective activation and disengagement of internal control permits different types of conduct with the same moral standards. Figure 1 shows the points in the self-regulatory process at which internal moral control can be disengaged from destructive conduct. Self-sanctions can be disengaged by reconstruing conduct as serving moral purposes, obscuring personal agency in detrimental activities, disregarding or misrepresenting the injurious consequences of one's actions, and blaming and dehumanizing the victims. The way in which these moral disengagement practices operate in the execution of inhumanities is analyzed in considerable detail in later sections of this chapter.

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These psychosocial mechanisms of moral disengagement have been examined most extensively in political and military violence. This limited focus tends to convey the impression that selective disengagement of moral self-sanctions occurs only under extraordinary circumstances. Quite the contrary. Such mechanisms operate in everyday situations in which decent people routinely perform activities that further their interests but have injurious human effects. Self- exonerations are needed to eliminate self-prohibitions and self- devaluation. This chapter analyzes how the mechanisms of moral disengagement function in terrorist operations. Terrorism is usually defined as a strategy of violence designed to promote desired outcomes by instilling fear in the public at large (Bassiouni, 1980). Public intimidation is a key element that distinguishes terrorist violence from other forms of violence. Unlike the customary violence in which victims are personally targeted, in terrorism the victims are incidental to the terrorists' intended objectives and are used simply as a way to provoke social conditions designed to further their broader aims. Third-party violence is especially socially terrorizing when the victimization is generalized to the civilian population and is unpredictable, thereby instilling a widespread sense of personal vulnerability. We will return to this issue later when we consider the properties of terrorist acts that make them terrorizing. The term terrorism is often applied to violent acts that dissident groups direct surreptitiously at officials of regimes to force social or political changes. So defined, terrorism becomes indistinguishable from straightforward political violence. Particularized threats are certainly intimidating to the martial and political figures who are personally targeted for assassination and create some apprehension over destabilizing societal effects, but such threats do not necessarily terrify the general public as long as ordinary civilians are not targeted as the objects of victimization. As will be shown later, terrorist tactics relying on public intimidation can serve other purposes as well as a political weapon.

From a psychological standpoint, third-party violence directed at innocent people is a much more horrific undertaking than political violence in which political figures are personally targeted. It is easier to get individuals who harbor strong grievances to kill hated political officials or to abduct advisors and consular staffs of foreign nations that support oppressive regimes. However, to cold-bloodedly slaughter innocent women and children in buses, in department stores, and in airports requires more powerful psychological machinations of moral disengagement. Intensive psychological training in moral disengagement is needed to create the capacity to kill innocent human beings as a way of toppling rulers or regimes, or accomplishing other political goals.

Moral Justification

One set of disengagement practices operates on the construal of the behavior itself. People do not ordinarily engage in reprehensible conduct until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions. What is culpable can be made honorable through cognitive reconstrual. In this process, destructive conduct is made personally and socially acceptable by portraying it in the service of moral purposes. People then act on a moral imperative.

Radical shifts in destructive behavior through moral justification is most strikingly revealed in military conduct. People who have been socialized to deplore killing as morally condemnable can be transformed rapidly into skilled combatants, who may feel little compunction and even a sense of pride in taking human life. Moral reconstrual of killing is dramatically illustrated in the case of Sergeant York, one of the phenomenal fighters in the history of modern warfare (Skeyhill, 1928). Because of his deep religious convictions, he registered as a conscientious objector, but his numerous appeals were denied. At camp, his battalion commander quoted chapter and verse from the Bible to persuade him that under appropriate conditions it was Christian to fight and kill. A marathon mountainside prayer finally convinced him that he could serve both God and country by becoming a dedicated fighter.

The conversion of socialized people into dedicated combatants is achieved not by altering their personality structures, aggressive drives, or moral standards. Rather, it is accomplished by cognitively restructuring the moral value of killing, so that it can be done free from self-censuring restraints (Kelman, 1973; Sanford & Comstock, 1971). Through moral sanction of violent means, people see themselves as fighting ruthless oppressors who have an unquenchable appetite for conquest, protecting their cherished values and way of life, preserving world peace, saving humanity from subjugation to an evil ideology, and honoring their country's international commitments. The task of making violence morally defensible is facilitated when nonviolent options are judged to have been ineffective, and utilitarian justifications portray the suffering caused by violent counterattacks as greatly outweighed by the human suffering inflicted by the foe.

Over the years, much reprehensible and destructive conduct has been perpetrated by ordinary, decent people in the name of religious principles, righteous ideologies, and nationalistic imperatives. Throughout history countless people have suffered at the hands of self-righteous crusaders bent on stamping out what they consider evil. Rapoport and Alexander (1982) document the lengthy blood-stained history of holy terror wrought by religious justifications. Acting on moral or ideological imperatives reflects a conscious offense mechanism not an unconscious defense mechanism.

Although moral cognitive restructuring can be easily used to support self-serving and destructive purposes, it can also serve militant action aimed at changing inhumane social conditions. By appealing to morality, social reformers are able to use coercive, and even violent, tactics to force social change. Vigorous disputes arise over the morality of aggressive action directed against institutional practices. Powerholders often resist, by forcible means if necessary, making needed social changes that jeopardize their own self-interests. Such tactics provoke social activism. Challengers consider their militant actions to be morally justifiable because they serve to eradicate harmful social practices. Powerholders condemn violent means as unjustified and unnecessary because nonviolent means exist to effect social change. They tend to view resorts to violence as efforts to coerce changes that lack popular support. Finally, they may argue that terrorist acts are condemnable because they violate civilized standards of conduct. Anarchy would flourish in a climate in which individuals considered violent tactics acceptable whenever they disliked particular social practices or policies.

Challengers refute such moral arguments by appealing to what they regard as a higher level of morality, derived from communal concerns. They see their constituencies as comprising all people, both at home and abroad, who are victimized either directly or indirectly by injurious social practices. Challengers argue that, when many people benefit from a system that is deleterious to disfavored segments of the society, the harmful social practices secure widespread public support. From the challengers' perspective, they are acting under a moral imperative to stop the maltreatment of people who have no way of modifying injurious social policies because they are either outside the system that victimizes them, or they lack the social power to effect changes from within by peaceable means. They regard militant action as the only recourse available to them.

Clearly, adversaries can easily marshal moral reasons for the use of aggressive actions for social control or for social change. When viewed from divergent perspectives, violent acts are different things to different people. In conflicts of power, one person's violence is another person's selfless benevolence. It is often proclaimed that one group's criminal terroristic activity is another group's liberation movement fought by heroic freedom fighters. This is why moral appeals against violence usually fall on deaf ears. Adversaries sanctify their own militant actions but condemn those of their antagonists as barbarity masquerading behind a mask of outrageous moral reasoning.

Moral Justification of Counterterrorist Measures

So far, the discussion has centered mainly on how terrorists invoke moral principles to justify human atrocities. Moral justification is also brought into play in selecting counterterrorist measures. This poses more troublesome problems for democratic societies than for totalitarian ones. Totalitarian regimes have fewer constraints against using institutional power to control media coverage of terrorist events, to restrict individual rights, to sacrifice individuals for the benefit of the state rather than make concessions to terrorists, and to combat threats with lethal means. Terrorists can wield greater power over nations that place high value on human life and are thereby constrained in the ways they can act. Hostage-taking has become a common terrorist strategy for wielding control over governments. If nations make the release of hostages a dominant national concern they place themselves in a highly manipulable position. Tightly concealed captivity thwarts rescue action. Heightened national attention along with an inability to free hostages independently conveys a sense of weakness and invests terrorists with

considerable importance and coercive power to extract concessions. Overreactions in which nations render themselves hostage to a small band of terrorists inspires and invites further terrorist acts. Hostage taking is stripped of functional value if it is treated as a criminal act that gains terrorists neither any coercive concessionary power nor much media attention.

Democratic societies face the dilemma of how to morally justify countermeasures that will stop terrorists' atrocities without violating the societies' own fundamental principles and standards of civilized conduct (Carmichael, 1982). One can delimit a set of critical conditions under which violent counterattacks are morally justified. It is generally considered legitimate to resort to violent defense in response to grave threats that inflict extensive human suffering or that endanger the very survival of the society. But the criterion of "grave threat," while fine in principle, is slippery in specific application. Like most human judgments, gauging the gravity of threats involves some subjectivity. Moreover, violence is often used as a weapon against threats of lesser magnitude on the grounds that, if left unchecked, they will escalate in severity to the point where they will eventually extract a high toll on human liberties and suffering. Gauging potential gravity involves even greater subjectivity and fallibility of judgment than does assessment of present danger. Construal of gravity prescribes choice of options, but it is also often true that choice of violent options shapes construal of gravity. Thus, projected grave dangers to the society are commonly invoked in order to morally justify violent means that are used to squelch limited present threats.

It is hard to find any inherent moral rightness in violent acts designed to kill assailants or to deter them from future assaults but that inevitably risk the lives of some innocent people as well. Because of many uncertain factors, the toll that counterterrorist assaults will take on innocent life is neither easily controllable nor accurately calculable in advance. To sacrifice innocent lives in the process of punishing terrorists raises fundamental moral problems. Democratic societies that happen to kill some innocent people in the process of counterterrorist actions find themselves in the vexing predicament of violating the values of their society in defense of those values. Therefore, the use of violent countermeasures is typically justified on utilitarian grounds--that is, in terms of the benefits to humanity and the social order that curbing terrorist attacks will bring. On the assumption that fighting terror with terror will achieve a deterrent effect, it is argued that retaliatory assaults will reduce the total amount of human suffering. As Carmichael (1982) notes, utilitarian justifications place few constraints on violent countermeasures because, in the utilitarian calculus, sacrificing the lives of some innocent persons can be greatly outweighed by the halt to repeated massacres and the perpetual terrorizing of entire populations.

Public Intimidation and Judgments of Retaliatory Violence

There are several features of terrorist acts that give power to a few incidents to incite widespread public fear which vastly exceeds the objective threat. The first such feature is their unpredictability. One cannot predict when or where a terrorist act will occur. When people are threatened by those they know, their fears are circumscribed because they can judge when they are safe and when they are at risk. In contrast, violent acts in which assailants pick victims and places unpredictably instill the strongest phobic fear because it makes everyone continually vulnerable (Heath, 1984). The second feature is the gravity of the consequences. Terrorist acts maim and kill. People are unwilling to risk such threats even though the chance of being victimized by a terrorist attack is extremely low. Indeed, domestic crime takes an infinitely

heavier toll on human life day in and day out than do the sporadic terrorist acts. But domestic crime arouses much less public fear because most homicides involve acquaintances. The incidence rates of terrorist acts, of course, increase substantially if the definition of terrorism is expanded to include state violence in which tyrannical regimes terrorize their own people.

A third feature of terrorist acts that render them so terrorizing is the sense of uncontrollability that they instill. People feel they cannot exercise any control over whether or not they might be victimized. Perceived self-inefficacy in coping with potential threats activates fear and self-protective courses of action (Bandura, 1986). The risk of being maimed or killed from driving an automobile is infinitely higher than falling victim to a terrorist act. But people fear terrorists more than their cars because they believe they can exercise personal control over the chance of injury by the care with which they drive. The combination of unpredictability, gravity, and perceived self-inefficacy is especially intimidating and socially constraining.

The fourth feature is the high centralization and interdependency of essential service systems in modern day life. When people were widely dispersed in small communities, the consequences of a violent act affected mainly the persons toward whom the behavior was directed. In urbanized life the welfare of entire populations depends upon functional communications, transportation and power systems and safe water and food supplies. Since these service activities are controlled from centralized sources they are highly vulnerable to disruption or destruction. A single destructive act that is easy to perform and that requires no elaborate apparatus can instantly frighten or harm a vast number of people. Thus, for example, poisoning a few imported Israeli oranges aroused widespread alarm in the importing nations. Drugstore terrorism--the poisoning of a few packages of patent medicine--struck fear in an entire population and forced elaborate safeguards in packaging. People shun countries and airlines that have been the object of terrorist attacks. Airline hijacking and development of sophisticated explosive devices have imposed escalating financial burdens on societies by requiring costly electronic surveillance and bomb detection systems. In short, the actual number of terrorist acts may be relatively few, but the fear of terrorism affects the lives of vast populations.

Efforts to reduce societal vulnerabilities with better counterterrorist technologies beget better terrorist tactics and devices. A security officer characterized such escalating adaptations well when he remarked that, "For every 10 foot wall you erect, terrorists will build an 11 foot ladder." Technological advances are producing highly sophisticated terrorizing devices that increase societal vulnerability to attack. Supportive nations and former intelligence operatives who have become terrorism entrepreneurs, aided by international networks of former military officers, government officials and weapons merchants, readily supply the world's terrorists with the most advanced lethal tools.

In coping with problems of terrorism, societies are faced with a dual task. The first is how to reduce terrorist acts. The second is how to combat the fear of terrorism. Since the number of terrorist acts is small, the widespread public fear and the intrusive and costly security countermeasures pose the more serious problems. Utilitarian justifications can readily win the support of a frightened public for violent counterterrorist measures. A frightened and angered populous does not spend much time agonizing over the morality of lethal modes of self-defense. Should any concern arise over the taking of innocent lives, it can be assuaged by stripping the victims of their innocence by blaming them for not controlling the terrorists in their midst. The perturbing appearance of national impotence in the face of terrorist acts creates additional social pressures on targeted nations to strike back powerfully.

Extreme counterterrorist reactions may produce effects that are worse than the terrorist acts themselves. Widespread retaliatory death and destruction may advance the political cause of terrorists by arousing a backlash of sympathy for innocent victims and moral condemnation of the brutal nature of the counterreactions. To fight terror with terror often spawns new terrorists and provides new justifications for violence that are more likely to escalate terrorism than to diminish it. Indeed, some terrorist activities are designed precisely to provoke curtailment of personal liberties and other domestic repressive measures that might breed public disaffection with the system. Extreme countermeasures can, thus, play into the hands of terrorists.

3Euphemistic Labeling

Language shapes thought patterns on which people base many of their actions. Activities can take on a very different appearance depending on what they are called. Euphemistic language thus provides a convenient device for masking reprehensible activities or even conferring a respectable status upon them. Through convoluted verbiage, destructive conduct is made benign and those who engage in it are relieved of a sense of personal agency. Laboratory studies reveal the disinhibitory power of euphemistic language (Diener, Dineen, Endresen, Beaman, & Fraser, 1975). Adults behave much more aggressively when given opportunities to assault a person if assaultive acts are given a sanitized sportive label than if they are called aggression.

In an insightful analysis of the language of nonresponsibility, Gambino (1973) identifies the different varieties of euphemisms. One form, palliative expressions, is widely used to make the reprehensible respectable. Through the power of hygienic words, even killing a human being loses much of its repugnancy. Soldiers "waste" people rather than kill them, intelligence operatives "terminate (them) with extreme prejudice" (Safire, 1979). When mercenaries speak of "fulfilling a contract," murder is transformed by admirable words into the honorable discharge of duty. Terrorists label themselves as "freedom fighters." Bombing attacks become "clean, surgical strikes," invoking imagery of the restorative handicrafts of the operating room, and the civilians they kill are linguistically converted to "collateral damage" (Hilgartner, Bell, & O'Connor, 1982). Sanitizing euphemisms, of course, perform heavy duty in less loathsome but unpleasant activities that people are called upon to do from time to time.

The agentless passive form serves as a linguistic device for creating the appearance that culpable acts are the work of nameless forces, rather than people (Bolinger, 1982). It is as though people are moved mechanically but are not really the agents of their own acts. Gambino further documents how the specialized jargon of a legitimate enterprise can be misused to lend an aura of respectability to an illegitimate one. Deadly activities are framed as "game plans," and the perpetrators become "team players" calling for the qualities and behavior befitting the best sportsmen. The disinhibitory power of language can be boosted further by colorful metaphors that change the nature of culpable activities.

Advantageous Comparison

Whenever events occur or are presented contiguously, the first one colors how the second one is perceived and judged. By exploiting the contrast principle, moral judgments of conduct can be influenced by the expedient structuring of what it is compared against. Self-deplored acts can be made to appear righteous by contrasting them with flagrant inhumanities. The more outrageous the comparison practices, the more likely it is that one's own destructive conduct will appear trifling or even benevolent. Thus, terrorists minimize their slayings as the

only defensive weapon they have to curb the widespread cruelties inflicted on their people. In the eyes of their supporters, risky attacks directed at the apparatus of oppression are acts of selflessness and martyrdom. Those who are the objects of terrorist attacks, in turn, characterize their retaliatory violence as trifling, or even laudable, by comparing them with carnage and terror perpetrated by terrorists. In social conflicts, injurious behavior usually escalates, with each side lauding its own behavior but condemning that of its adversaries as heinous.

Advantageous comparisons are also drawn from history to justify violence. Advocates of terrorist tactics are quick to note that the democracies of England, France, and the United States were born of violence against oppressive rule. A former director of the CIA effectively deflected, by advantageous comparison, embarrassing questions about the morality and legality of CIA-directed covert operations designed to overthrow an authoritarian regime. He explained that French covert operations and military supplies greatly aided the overthrow of oppressive British rule during the War of Independence, thereby creating the modern model of democracy for other subjugated people to emulate.

Social comparison is similarly used to show that the social labeling of acts as terrorism depends more on the ideological allegiances of the labelers than on the acts themselves. Airline hijackings were applauded as heroic deeds when East Europeans and Cubans initiated this practice, but condemned as terrorist acts when the airlines of Western nations and friendly countries were commandeered. The degree of psychopathology ascribed to hijackers varied depending on the direction of the rerouted flights. Moral condemnations of politically motivated terrorism are easily blunted by social comparison because, in international contests for political power, it is hard to find nations that categorically condemn terrorism. Rather, they usually back some terrorists and oppose others.

Cognitive restructuring of behavior through moral justifications and palliative characterizations is the most effective psychological mechanism for promoting destructive conduct. This is because moral restructuring not only eliminates self-deterrents but engages self-approval in the service of destructive exploits. What was once morally condemnable becomes a source of self-valuation. After destructive means become invested with high moral purpose, functionaries work hard to become proficient at them and take pride in their destructive accomplishments.

Moral Justifications and the Media

The mass media, especially television, provide the best access to the public because of its strong drawing power. For this reason, television is increasingly used as the principal vehicle of social and moral justifications of goals and actions. Struggles to legitimize and gain support for one's causes, and to discredit those of one's foes, are now waged more and more through the electronic media (Ball-Rokeach, 1972).

Terrorists try to exercise influence over targeted officials or nations through intimidation of the public and arousal of sympathy for the social and political causes they espouse. Without widespread publicity, terrorist acts can achieve neither of these effects. Terrorists, therefore, coerce access to the media in order to publicize their grievances to the international community. They use television as the main instrument for gaining sympathy and supportive action for their plight by presenting themselves as risking their lives for the welfare of a victimized constituency whose legitimate grievances are ignored. The media, in turn, come under heavy fire from targeted officials who regard granting terrorists a worldwide forum as aiding terrorist causes.

Security forces do not like media personnel tracking their conduct and broadcasting tactical information that terrorists can put to good use, and interposing themselves as intermediaries in risky negotiation situations. Social pressures mount to curtail media coverage of terrorist events, especially while they are in progress (Bassiouni, 1981).

Displacement of Responsibility

Another set of dissociative practices operates by obscuring or distorting the relationship between actions and the effects they cause. People behave in injurious ways they normally repudiate if a legitimate authority accepts responsibility for the consequences of their conduct (Diener et al., 1975; Milgram, 1974). Under conditions of displaced responsibility, people view their actions as springing from the dictates of authorities rather than from their own volition. Since they are not the actual agent of their actions, they are spared self-prohibiting reactions. In terrorism sponsored by states or governments in exile, functionaries view themselves as patriots fulfilling nationalistic duties rather than as free-lancing criminals. Displacement of responsibility not only weakens restraints over one's own detrimental actions but diminishes social concern over the well-being of those mistreated by others (Tilker, 1970).

Exemption from self-devaluation for heinous deeds has been most gruesomely revealed in socially sanctioned mass executions. Nazi prison commandants and their staffs divested themselves of personal responsibility for their unprecedented inhumanities (Andrus, 1969). They were simply carrying out orders. Impersonal obedience to horrific orders was similarly evident in military atrocities, such as the My Lai massacre (Kelman, 1973). In an effort to deter institutionally sanctioned atrocities, the Nuremberg Accords declared that obedience to inhumane orders, even from the highest authorities, does not relieve subordinates of the responsibility of their actions. However, since victors are disinclined to try themselves as criminals, such decrees have limited deterrence without an international judiciary system empowered to impose penalties on victors and losers alike.

In studies of the disengagement of self-sanctions through the displacement of responsibility, authorities explicitly authorize those who play the role of functionaries to carry out injurious actions and hold themselves fully accountable for the harm caused by those actions. However, in the sanctioning practices of everyday life, responsibility for detrimental conduct is rarely assumed so explicitly, since only obtuse authorities would leave themselves accusable of authorizing heinous acts. Actual authorities are concerned not only with adverse social consequences to themselves should the courses of action they advocate miscarry, but with the loss of self-regard for sanctioning human atrocities in ways that leave blood on their hands. Therefore, authorities usually invite and support detrimental conduct in insidious ways that minimize personal responsibility for what is happening.

In this volume, Kramer describes the great lengths to which Shi'ite clerics go to produce moral justifications for violent acts that seem to breach Islamic law, such as suicidal bombings and hostage-taking. These efforts are designed not only to persuade themselves of the morality of their actions but to preserve their integrity in the eyes of other nations. The religious code permits neither suicide nor the terrorizing of innocent people. On the one hand, the clerics justify such acts by invoking situational imperatives and utilitarian reasons, namely that tyrannical circumstances drive oppressed people to resort to unconventional means in order to route aggressors who wield massive destructive power. On the other hand, they reconstrue terrorist acts as conventional means in which dying in a suicidal bombing for a moral cause is no

different than dying at the hands of an enemy soldier. Hostages simply get relabelled as spies. When the linguistic solution defies credibility, personal moral responsibility is disengaged by construing terroristic acts as dictated by their foe's tyranny. Because of the shaky moral logic and disputable reconstruals, clerics sanction terrorism by indirection, they vindicate successful ventures retrospectively, and they disclaim endorsing terroristic operations beforehand.

States sponsor terrorist operations through disguised, roundabout routes that make it difficult to pin the blame on them. Moreover, the intended purpose of sanctioned destructiveness is usually linguistically disguised so that neither issuers nor perpetrators regard the activity as censurable. When culpable practices gain public attention, they are officially dismissed as only isolated incidents arising through misunderstanding of what, in fact, had been authorized. Efforts are made to limit the blame to subordinates, who are portrayed as misguided or overzealous.

A number of social factors affect the ease with which responsibility for one's actions can be surrendered to others. High justification and social consensus about the morality of an enterprise aid in the relinquishment of personal control. The legitimacy of the authorizers is another important determinant. The higher the authorities, the more legitimacy, respect, and coercive power they command, and the more amenable are people to defer to them. Modeled disobedience, which challenges the legitimacy of the activities, if not the authorizers themselves, reduces the willingness of observers to carry out the actions called for by the orders of a superior (Meeus & Raaijmakers, 1986; Milgram, 1974; Powers & Geen, 1972). It is difficult to continue to disown personal agency in the face of evident harm that results directly from one's actions. People are, therefore, less willing to obey authoritarian orders to carry out injurious behavior when they see firsthand how they are hurting others (Milgram, 1974; Tilker, 1970).

Obedient functionaries do not cast off all responsibility for their behavior as though they were mindless extensions of others. If this were the case, they would do nothing unless told to. In fact, they tend to be conscientious and self-directed in the performance of their duties. It requires a strong sense of responsibility to be a good functionary. In situations involving obedience to authority, people carry out orders partly to honor the obligations they have undertaken (Mantell & Panzarella, 1976). One must, therefore, distinguish between two levels of responsibility--duty to one's superiors and accountability for the effects of one's actions. The self system operates most efficiently in the service of authority when followers assume personal responsibility for being dutiful executors while relinquishing personal responsibility for the harm caused by their behavior. Followers who disowned responsibility without being bound by a sense of duty would be quite unreliable.

Displacement of responsibility also operates in situations in which hostages are taken. Terrorists warn officials of targeted nations that if they take retaliatory action they will be held accountable for the lives of the hostages. At different steps in negotiations for their release, terrorists continue to displace the responsibility for the safety of hostages on the reactions of the national officials. If the captivity drags on, terrorists blame the suffering and injuries they inflict on their hostages on the officials for failing to make what they regard as warranted concessions to right social wrongs.

Diffusion of Responsibility

The deterrent power of self-sanctions is weakened when the link between conduct and its consequences is obscured by diffusing responsibility for culpable behavior. This is achieved in several ways. Responsibility can be diffused by the division of labor. Most enterprises require

the services of many people, each performing fragmentary jobs that seem harmless in themselves. The fractional contribution is easily isolated from the eventual function, especially when participants exercise little personal judgment in carrying out a subfunction that is related by remote, complex links to the end result. After activities become routinized into programmed subfunctions, attention shifts from the import of what one is doing to the details of one's fractional job (Kelman, 1973).

Group decision-making is another common bureaucratic practice that enables otherwise considerate people to behave inhumanely, because no single individual feels responsible for policies arrived at collectively. Where everyone is responsible no one is really responsible. Social organizations go to great lengths to devise sophisticated mechanisms for obscuring responsibility for decisions that will affect others adversely. Collective action is still another diffusion expedient for weakening self-restraints. Any harm done by a group can always be ascribed, in large part, to the behavior of other members. People, therefore, act more harshly when responsibility is obfuscated by a collective instrumentality than when they hold themselves personally accountable for what they do (Bandura, Underwood, & Fromson, 1975; Diener, 1977; Zimbardo, 1969).

Disregard or Distortion of Consequences

Additional ways of weakening self-deterring reactions operate through disregard or misrepresentation of the consequences of action. When people choose to pursue activities harmful to others for personal gain, or because of social inducements, they avoid facing the harm they cause or they minimize it. They readily recall prior information given to them about the potential benefits of the behavior, but are less able to remember its harmful effects (Brock & Buss, 1962, 1964). People are especially prone to minimize injurious effects when they act alone and, thus, cannot easily escape responsibility (Mynatt & Herman, 1975). In addition to selective inattention and cognitive distortion of effects, the misrepresentation may involve active efforts to discredit evidence of the harm they cause. As long as the detrimental results of one's conduct are ignored, minimized, distorted, or disbelieved, there is little reason for self-censure to be activated.

It is relatively easy to hurt others when their suffering is not visible and when causal actions are physically and temporally remote from their effects. Our death technologies have become highly lethal and depersonalized. Mechanized weapons systems and explosive devices, which can cause mass death by destructive forces unleashed remotely, illustrates such depersonalized action. Even high personal responsibility is a weak restrainer when aggressors do not know the harm they inflict on their victims (Tilker, 1970). In contrast, when people can see and hear the suffering they cause, vicariously aroused distress and self-censure serve as self-restraining influences. For example, in his studies of commanded aggression, Milgram (1974) obtained diminishing obedience as the victims' pain became more evident and personalized.

Most organizations involve hierarchical chains of command in which superiors formulate plans and intermediaries transmit them to executors, who then carry them out. The further removed individuals are from the end results, the weaker is the restraining power of the foreseeable destructive effects. Kilham and Mann (1974) set forth the view that the disengagement of personal control is easiest for the intermediaries in a hierarchical system--they neither bear responsibility for major decisions nor are they a party to their execution. In performing the transmitter role they model dutiful behavior and further legitimize their superiors

and their social policies and practices. Consistent with these speculations, intermediaries are much more obedient to destructive commands than are those who have to carry them out and face the results (Kilham & Mann, 1974).

Diverse Functions and Consequences of Terrorism

The term terrorism is most commonly applied to surreptitious acts of violence in which dissidents attack a state by victimizing citizens. However, like other forms of coercive and aggressive conduct, terroristic violence involves varied targets and serves diverse functions. Variation in purpose alters the readiness with which causal responsibility is acknowledged and how the consequences of terrorist acts are represented. Terrorism directed by states at their own people are designed to eliminate internal opposition and squelch peaceful dissent and social activism against the ruling cliques who use force to keep themselves in power. The punitive consequences for challenging the regime are publicized in order to deter potential oppositionists but the mechanisms and brutality of tyranny are concealed. State-sponsored transnational terrorism seeks political gains through surreptitious underwriting of terrorist operations performed by surrogate groups. The sponsors go to great lengths to distance themselves publicly from the pernicious operations and the havoc they wreak. However, the public appearance of noninvolvement in transnational terrorism is difficult to pull off for states that provide the training sites and sanctuaries for known terrorist groups.

Politically motivated terrorism carried out against a state in the name of liberation movements is designed to gain widespread media dissemination of grievances. Terrorists, therefore, actively seek publicity for their cause in the effort to enlist popular support for the social or political changes they desire. They often attempt to minimize, or deflect attention from, the harm inflicted by their terrorist acts by centering attention on the inhumanities perpetrated on their compatriots by the state. Some terrorist violence is carried out by self-appointed crusaders who act on behalf of oppressed people with whom they identify. They are motivated, in large part, by ideological imperatives and mutual reward of their efforts by fellow members. Their tactics are often calculated to expose the weaknesses of powerholders and to provoke them to foolish actions and repressive security measures. Such counterreactions will presumably create widespread public disaffection and outrage, discredit the powerholders' own leadership, and thus help bring about their own downfall and the regime over which they preside. Such groups readily take responsibility for their terrorist acts. Their eye is on the radicalization of the "consciousness of the masses" rather than on the carnage inflicted on those victimized by their actions. Shared fervent belief sustains terrorist activities. It is worth observing that the power of belief to sustain a program of political activism offering little hope of quick successes operates in virtually all groups seeking to effect social change and is not peculiar to terroristic groups that have little prospect of inciting the intended popular uprising (Bandura, 1986). Were social reformers to be entirely realistic about the prospects of transforming social systems during their operative period they would either forego the endeavor or fall easy victim to despair.

A fair amount of terrorism is performed for financial gain legitimized on political grounds. Executives of foreign corporations, and advisors of powerful and wealthy nations are favorite targets of terrorist acts. The particular victims are depersonalized as merely the symbols of imperialism. People are more troubled by self-reprimands for inflicting human suffering than for extracting money from prosperous, faceless corporations. Moral self-sanctions are, therefore, more easily disengaged from destructive conduct directed at a despised system than at a person.

Lucrative ransom and extortion payments make this form of terrorism a profitable operation. Another tactic of terror that quickly spreads when it pays off involves the abduction of foreign advisors and diplomats in order to force release of jailed "political prisoners" (Bandura, 1973). It is a highly efficacious weapon for dissident groups as long as governments are willing to negotiate. In the eyes of the abductors, this is a political bargaining tool rather than an act of terrorism, especially if they gain release of their jailed compatriots without having inflicted physical injury on their captives.

Some individuals are motivated by bizarre and malevolent beliefs to commit acts that terrorize the public. Such idiosyncratically motivated acts are illustrated in recent incidents of drugstore terrorism, in which isolated individuals indiscriminately took the lives of several people by lacing bottles of patent medicine with poison. Once the idea of such an act is planted in the public consciousness, it is not uncommon for new variants of death threats involving food substances to appear. Through the influence of modeling, terrorist acts that were originally politically motivated may be adopted by individuals for their own idiosyncratic purposes (Bandura, 1973). The rapid spread of airline hijacking internationally is illustrative of this modeling process.

As previously noted, the task of psychologically circumscribing and sanitizing destructive effects presents special problems for democratic societies when they resort to violent counterterrorist actions that inescapably take the lives of some innocent people. Counterattackers try to minimize the brutal aspects of such assaults by depicting them as "surgical strikes" that wipe out only terrorists and their sanctuaries. The targets of violent retaliation try to arouse worldwide condemnation of such attacks through graphic media portrayals of the carnage inflicted on women and children.

Some nations pursue the policy that terrorist acts will be promptly answered with massive deathly retaliation, whatever the costs might be, on the grounds that this is the price one must pay to check terrorism. Opponents of such policies argue that overkill countermeasures only fuel greater terrorism by creating more terrorists and increasing public sympathy for the causes that drive them to terroristic violence. Vigorous verbal battles are fought over immediate results and long-range effects of such violent countermeasures.

Dehumanization

The final set of disengagement practices operates on the targets of violent acts. The strength of self-censuring reactions to injurious conduct partly depends on how the perpetrator views the people toward whom the harmful behavior is directed. To perceive another as human enhances empathetic or vicarious reactions through perceived similarity (Bandura, 1988). The joys and suffering of similar persons are more vicariously arousing than are those of strangers or of individuals who have been divested of human qualities. Personalizing the injurious effects experienced by others also makes their suffering much more salient. As a result, it is difficult to mistreat humanized persons without risking self-condemnation.

Self-sanctions against cruel conduct can be disengaged or blunted by divesting people of human qualities. Once dehumanized, they are no longer viewed as persons with feelings, hopes, and concerns but as subhuman objects. They are portrayed as mindless "savages," "gooks," "satanic fiends," and the like. Subhumans are regarded as insensitive to maltreatment and capable of being influenced only by harsh methods. If dispossessing antagonists of humanness does not blunt self-reproof, it can be eliminated by attributing bestial qualities to them. It is

easier to brutalize victims, for example, when they are referred to as "worms" (Gibson & Haritos-Fatouros, 1986).

Studies of interpersonal aggression give vivid testimony to the self-disinhibitory power of dehumanization (Bandura, Underwood, & Fromson, 1975). Dehumanized individuals are treated much more punitively than those who have been invested with human qualities. When punitiveness fails to achieve results, this is taken as further evidence of the unworthiness of dehumanized persons, thus justifying their even greater maltreatment. Dehumanization fosters different self-exonerative patterns of thought. People seldom condemn punitive conduct and they create justifications for it when they are directing their aggression at persons who have been deprived of their humanness. By contrast, people strongly disapprove of punitive actions, and rarely excuse them when they are directed at persons depicted in humanized terms.

Under certain conditions, the exercise of institutional power changes the users in ways that are conducive to dehumanization. This happens most often when persons in positions of authority have coercive power over others and adequate safeguards for constraining the behavior of powerholders are lacking. Powerholders come to devalue those over whom they wield control (Kipnis, 1974). In a simulated prison experiment (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973), even college students, who had been randomly chosen to serve as either inmates or guards given unilateral power, began to treat their charges in degrading, tyrannical ways as guards. Thus, role assignment that authorizes use of coercive power overrode personal characteristics in promoting punitive conduct. Systematic tests of relative influences similarly show that social influences conducive to punitiveness exert considerably greater sway over aggressive conduct than do people's personal characteristics (Larsen, Coleman, Forbes, & Johnson, 1972).

The overall findings from research on the different mechanisms of moral disengagement corroborate the historical chronicle of human atrocities: It requires conducive social conditions rather than monstrous people to produce heinous deeds. Given appropriate social conditions, decent, ordinary people can be led to do extraordinarily cruel things.

Power of Humanization

Psychological research tends to focus extensively on how easy it is to bring out the worst in people through dehumanization and other self-exonerative means. The sensational negative findings receive the greatest attention. Thus, for example, the aspect of Milgram's research on obedient aggression that is most widely cited is the evidence that good people can be talked into performing cruel deeds. However, to get people to carry out punitive acts, the overseer had to be physically present, repeatedly ordering them to act cruelly as they voiced their concerns and objections. Orders to escalate punitiveness to more intense levels are largely ignored or subverted when remotely issued by verbal command. As Helm and Morelli (1979) note, this is hardly an example of blind obedience triggered by an authoritative mandate. Moreover, what is rarely noted is the equally striking evidence that most people steadfastly refuse to behave punitively, even in response to strong authoritarian commands, if the situation is personalized by having them see the victim or requiring them to inflict pain directly rather than remotely.

The emphasis on obedient aggression is understandable considering the prevalence and harmfulness of people's inhumanities to one another. However, of considerable theoretical and social significance is the power of humanization to counteract cruel conduct. Studies examining this process reveal that, even under conditions that weaken self-deterrents, it is difficult for

individuals to behave cruelly toward others when they are humanized or even personalized a bit (Bandura, Underwood, & Fromson, 1975).

The moderating influence of humanization is strikingly revealed in situations involving great threat of violence. Most abductors find it difficult to harm their hostages after they have gotten to know them personally. Calm, patient negotiations with captors, therefore, increase the likelihood that captives will survive the ordeal. With growing acquaintance, it becomes increasingly difficult to take a human life cold-bloodedly. Humanization, of course, is a two-way process. Captives may also develop some sympathy for their captors as they get to know them. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is sometimes called into question in analyses of terrorism by identifying it with the Stockholm Syndrome. In the incident that spawned this "syndrome," people who were held hostage for six days by bank robbers began to sympathize with their criminal captors and sided with them against the police (Lang, 1974). This hostage incident included several features that are conducive to the development of an affinity with one's captors. The hostages were under extended siege by a horde of police seeking opportunities to shoot the robbers, depriving the group of food and other necessities to force their surrender, and poking holes in walls to gas the robbers into submission. The captors often acted as the hostages' protectors against the frightening maneuvers by the police. The refusal by the police to make concessions angered the hostages, who began to blame the police for their terrifying plight ("It is the police who are keeping me from my children.")

As previously noted, construal of events is strongly colored by contrast effects. The chief captor in the bank-robbery case aroused strong feelings of gratitude in his captives by coupling brutalizing threats with seeming acts of considerateness. For example, he informed one of the hostages that he would forego his plan to kill him to force police concessions, but instead would shoot him in the leg and have him pretend that he had been killed. This hostage expressed a strong sense of gratitude even long after the ordeal was over ("How kind that he would shoot only my leg.") Another hostage was similarly overcome with gratitude over her captor's considerateness of her claustrophobic dread of sleeping in the bank vault. The "benevolent" gesture that won him good will consisted of placing a rope around her neck and letting her out of the vault on a 30 foot leash ("He was very kind to allow me to leave the vault.") The captors often consoled their captives when they were distraught, comforted them when they were physically miserable, and personalized themselves by empathetic self-disclosures of their own human longings and feelings. The contrasting treatment led the hostages to perceive the police as the inhumane ones ("I remember thinking, why can't the police be considerate like that").

Whether captivity produces sympathy for captors is determined by several factors--the extent to which captors personalize themselves and their plight, show some compassion toward their captives, portray the hostages' country as disregarding their welfare or jeopardizing their very lives by reckless countermeasures, and act as their protectors. Ideological terrorists are more likely to harass, browbeat and degrade their hostages than to console them. Therefore, people who are subjected to terrifying political captivity rarely ally themselves with their abductors. But this does not mean that hostages never develop any sympathy for their captors' cause or plight, or that personalization never moderates captors' cruelty toward the people they hold hostage. Linking an important psychological phenomenon to an example of questionable similarity, such as the Stockholm set of reactions, runs the risk of dismissing the aggression-restraining power of humanization.

Attribution of Blame

Imputing blame to one's antagonists is still another expedient that can serve self-exonerative purposes. One's own violent conduct is viewed as compelled by forcible provocation. Self-vindication is easily achievable by terrorists when legitimate grievances of maltreatment are willfully disregarded by powerholders so that terrorist activities are construed as acts of self-protection or desperation. Oppressive and inhumane social conditions and thwarted political efforts breed terrorists who often see foreign government complicity in their plight through support of the regime that they see as victimizing them. Those who become radicalized carry out terrorist acts against the regime as well as the implicated foreign nations. Violent countermeasures are readily resorted to in efforts to control terrorist activities when the social conditions breeding discontent and violent protest are firmly entrenched in political systems that obstruct legitimate efforts at change. It is much easier to attack violent protests than to change the sociopolitical conditions that fuel them. In such skirmishes, one person's victim is another person's victimizer.

Destructive interactions usually involve a series of reciprocally escalative actions, in which the antagonists are rarely faultless. One can always select from the chain of events an instance of the adversary's defensive behavior and view it as the original instigation. Injurious conduct thus becomes a justifiable defensive reaction to belligerent provocations. Those who are victimized are not entirely faultless because, by their behavior, they contribute partly to their own plight. Victims can, therefore, be blamed for bringing suffering on themselves. Self-exoneration is similarly achievable by viewing one's destructive conduct as forced by circumstances rather than as a personal decision. By blaming others or circumstances, not only are one's own actions excusable but one can even feel self- righteous in the process.

Terrorist acts that take a heavy toll on civilian lives create special personal pressures to lay blame elsewhere. IRA guerrillas planted a large bomb that killed and maimed many family members attending a war memorial ceremony in a town square (San Francisco, 1987). The guerrillas promptly ascribed the blame for the civilian massacre to the British army for having detonated the bomb prematurely with an electronic scanning device. The government denounced the "pathetic attempt to transfer blame" because no scanning equipment was in use at the time.

Observers of victimization can be disinhibited in much the same way as perpetrators are by the tendency to infer culpability from misfortune. Seeing victims suffer maltreatment for which they are held partially responsible leads observers to derogate them (Lerner & Miller, 1978). The devaluation and indignation aroused by ascribed culpability, in turn, provides moral justification for even greater maltreatment. That attribution of blame can give rise to devaluation and moral justification illustrates how the various disengagement mechanisms are often interrelated and work together in weakening internal control.

Gradualistic Moral Disengagment

The aforementioned disengagement devices will not instantaneously transform a considerate person into a ruthless one who purposely goes out to kill other human beings. Terrorist behavior evolves through extensive training in moral disengagement and terrorist prowess rather than emerging full blown. The path to terrorism can be shaped by fortuitous factors as well as by the conjoint influence of personal predilections and social inducements (Bandura, 1982). Development of the capability to kill is usually achieved through an

evolvement process, in which recruits may not fully recognize the transformation they are undergoing (Bandura, 1986; Franks & Powers, 1970; Gibson & Haritos-Fatouros, 1986). The disinhibitory training is usually conducted within a communal milieu of intense interpersonal influences insulated from mainstream social life. The recruits become deeply immersed in the ideology and role performances of the group. Initially, they are prompted to perform unpleasant acts that they can tolerate without much self-censure. Gradually, their discomfort and self-reproof are weakened to ever higher levels of ruthlessness through repeated performance and through repeated exposure to aggressive modeling by more experienced associates. The various disengagement practices form an integral part of the training. Eventually, acts originally regarded as abhorrent can be performed callously. Escalative self-disinhibition is accelerated if violent courses of action are presented as serving a moral imperative, and the targeted people are divested of human qualities (Bandura, Underwood, & Fromson, 1975). The training not only instills the moral rightness and importance of the cause for militant action. It also creates a sense of eliteness and provides the social rewards of solidarity and group esteem for excelling in terrorist exploits.

Sprinzak, in this volume, traces the gradual evolvement of one terrorist group, the Weathermen. The process of radicalization begins with opposition to particular officials and social policies; grows to increasing estrangement from, and eventual rejection of, the whole system, a process fueled by disillusionment, embittering failures, and hostile confrontations with authorities and police; and culminates in terroristic efforts to destroy the system and its dehumanized rulers. To inculcate the revolutionary morality and eliminate any residual self-censure and revulsion over ruthless behavior, the Weathermen created small, isolated collectives where they eradicated their "bourgeois morality" with a vengeance (Franks & Powers, 1970).

The preceding analyses have been concerned mainly with how disengagement mechanisms operate in removing moral impediments to terrorist violence and in combatting terrorism by violent means. These same mechanisms are also heavily enlisted by terrorist entrepreneurs, who supply militant states with the lethal tools to terrorize their own people or to equip the terrorist groups they sponsor. Frank Terpil, who became a terrorist entrepreneur after he fell from grace at the CIA, provides vivid testimony to these psychological mechanisms (Schorr, 1982).

Terpil shrouded his clandestine death operations in the euphemisms of a legitimate business fulfilling "consumer needs" under the appellation, Intercontinental Technology. To spare himself any self-censure for contributing to human atrocities, he actively avoided knowledge of the purposes to which his weaponry would be put. ("I don't ever want to know that.") When asked if he was ever haunted by any thoughts about the human suffering his deathly wares might cause, he explained that banishing thoughts of injurious consequences frees one's actions from restraints of conscience ("If I really thought about the consequences all the time, I certainly wouldn't have been in this business...you have to blank it off.") Efforts to probe for any signs of self- reproach brought self-exonerative comparisons. When queried concerning any qualms he might have felt about supplying torture equipment and tactical advice to Idi Amin, Terpil countered with the view that the employees at Dow Chemical were not beset with guilt over the havoc wreaked on the Vietnamese population by the napalm they produced ("I'm sure that the people from Dow Chemical didn't think of the consequences of selling napalm. If they did, they wouldn't be working at the factory. I doubt very much if they'd feel any more responsible for the ultimate use than I did for my equipment.") When pressed about the atrocities committed at Amin's "State Research Bureau" torture chambers, Terpil reiterated his

depersonalized stance ("I do not get wrapped up emotionally with the country. I regard myself basically as neutral and commercial.") To give legitimacy to his "private practice" he claimed that he aided British and American operations abroad as well.

The merchandising of terrorism is not accomplished by a few individuals. It requires a worldwide network of reputable, high-level operators who, by fractionation of function, perspective, and responsibility, amass arsenals of destruction, find places to store them, procure export and import licenses from different countries, obtain spurious end-user certificates that conceal the true destination of the shipments, and ship the arsenals around via circuitous itineraries. The cogs in this multifaceted network include weapons manufacturers, former government officials who have the useful political ties, ex- military and intelligence officers who provide valuable skills and contacts, weapons merchants, and shippers. By fractionating the enterprise, most of the participants see themselves as decent, legitimate practitioners of their own particular trade rather than as parties to a death operation.

Moral Disengagement and Self-Deception

The issue arises as to whether disengagement of self-censure involves self-deception. Because of the incompatibility of being simultaneously a deceiver and the one deceived, literal self- deception cannot exist (Bok, 1980; Champlin, 1977; Haight, 1980). It is logically impossible to deceive oneself into believing something, while simultaneously knowing it to be false. Efforts to resolve the paradox of how one can be the agent and the object of deception at the same time have met with little success (Bandura, 1986). These attempts usually involve creating split selves and rendering one of them unconscious. The split-self conceptions fail to specify how a conscious self can lie to an unconscious self without some awareness of what the other self believes. The deceiving self has to be aware of what the deceived self believes in order to know what kind of deceptions to concoct. Different levels of awareness are sometimes proposed as another possible solution to the paradox. It is said that "deep down" people really know what they believe. Reacquainting the split selves only reinstates the paradox of how one can be a deceiver and the one deceived at the same time. People, of course, often misconstrue events, they lead themselves astray by their biases and misbeliefs, and they act uninformedly. However, to be misdirected by one's beliefs or ignorance does not mean that one is lying to oneself.

Self-deception is often invoked when people choose to ignore possibly countervailing evidence. It could be argued that they must believe its validity in order to avoid it, because otherwise they would not know what to shun. This is not necessarily so. Staunch believers often choose not to waste their time scrutinizing opposing arguments or evidence because they are already convinced of their fallacy. When confronted with evidence that disputes their beliefs, they question its credibility, dismiss its relevance, or twist it to fit their views. However, if the evidence is compellingly persuasive, they alter their original beliefs to accommodate the discrepant evidence.

People may harbor some doubts concerning their beliefs but avoid seeking certain evidence because they have an inkling that the evidence might disconfirm what they wish to believe. Indeed, they may engage in all kinds of maneuvers, both in thought and in action, to avoid finding out the actual state of affairs. Suspecting something is not the same as knowing it to be true. Inklings can always be discounted as possibly being ill-founded. As long as one does not find out the truth, what one believes is not personally known to be false. Both Haight (1980)

and Fingarette (1969) give considerable attention to processes whereby people avoid painful or incriminating truth by either not taking actions that would reveal the truth or not spelling out fully what they are doing or undergoing that would make it known. They act in ways that keep themselves intentionally uninformed. They do not go looking for evidence of their culpability or the harmful effects of their actions. Obvious questions that would reveal unwelcome information remain unasked so they do not find out what they do not want to know. Implicit agreements and social arrangements are created that leave the foreseeable unforeseen and the knowable unknown.

In addition to contending with their own self-censure, people are concerned about how they appear in the eyes of others when they engage in conduct that is morally suspect. This adds a social evaluative factor to the process. Haight (1980) argues that, in much of what is called self-deception, persons are aware of the reality they are trying to deny, but they create the public appearance that they are deceiving themselves. Others are thus left uncertain about how to judge and treat persons who seem to be sincerely deluding themselves in efforts to avoid an unpleasant truth. The public pretense is designed to head off social reproof. When people are caught up in the same painful predicament, the result may be a great deal of collective public pretense.

The mechanisms of moral disengagement involve cognitive and social machinations but not literal self-deception. In moral justification, for example, people may be misled by those they trust into believing that violent means are morally right because the means will check the human suffering of tyranny. The persuasive depictions of the perils and benefits may be accurate, exaggerated, or just pious rhetoric masking less honorable purposes. The same persuasory process applies to weakening of self-censure by dehumanizing and blaming adversaries. In the rhetoric of conflict, opinion shapers ascribe to their foes irrationalities, barbarities, and culpabilities that color public beliefs (Ivie, 1980). In these different instances, those who have been persuaded are not lying to themselves. The misleaders and the misled are different persons. When the misleaders are themselves operating under erroneous beliefs, the views they voice are not intentional deceptions. They seek to persuade others into believing what they themselves believe. In social deception, public declarations by others may belie their private beliefs, which are concealed from those being deceived.

In reduction of self-censure by ignoring, minimizing, or misconstruing the injurious effects of their actions, people lack the evidence to disbelieve what they already believe. The issue of self-dishonesty does not arise as long as one remains uninformed or misinformed about the outcomes of one's actions. When moral disengagement is promoted by diffused and displaced responsibility, functionaries carry out the orders of superiors and often perform only a small subfunction of the enterprise. Such arrangements enable people to think of themselves merely as subordinate instruments, rather than as agents, of the entire enterprise. If they regard themselves as minor cogs in the intricate social machinery, they have little reason to believe otherwise concerning their initiatory power. This is not to say that disengagement of self-censure operates flawlessly. If serious disbeliefs arise, especially at the point of moral justification, people cannot get themselves to behave inhumanely. If they do, they pay the price of self-contempt.

Concluding Remarks

The massive threats to human welfare stem mainly from deliberate acts of principle rather than from unrestrained acts of impulse. It is the principled resort to destructiveness that is

of greatest social concern but ironically is the most ignored in psychological analyses of human violence. Given the existence of so many psychological devices for disengagement of moral control, societies cannot rely entirely on individuals, however righteous their standards, to provide safeguards against destructive ventures. Civilized conduct requires, in addition to humane personal codes, social systems that uphold compassionate behavior and renounce cruelty. Monolithic political systems that exercise concentrated control over the major vehicles of social influence can wield greater justificatory power than pluralistic systems that represent diverse perspectives, interests and concerns. Political diversity and toleration of public expression of skepticism create conditions that allow the emergence of challenges to suspect moral appeals. If societies are to function more humanely, they must establish effective social safeguards against the misuse of institutional justificatory power for exploitive and destructive purposes.