Asylums

Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates

ERVING GOFFMAN

A DOUBLEDAY ANCHOR ORIGINAL
ERVING GOFFMAN was born in Canada in 1922. He received his B.A. from the University of Toronto in 1945 and then studied at the University of Chicago, receiving his M.A. in 1949 and his Ph.D. in 1953. For a year he lived on one of the smaller of the Shetland Isles while he gathered material for a dissertation on that community, and later he served as a visiting scientist at the National Institute of Mental Health in Washington. Mr. Goffman is the author of several articles and book reviews which have appeared in such periodicals as Psychiatry and the American Journal of Sociology. He is the author of The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (A 174) and is a member of the Sociology Department of the University of California at Berkeley.
The Anchor Books edition is the first publication of *Asylums*

Anchor Books edition: 1961

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface
Introduction
On the Characteristics of Total Institutions
The Moral Career of the Mental Patient
The Underlife of a Public Institution: A Study of Ways of Making Out in a Mental Hospital
The Medical Model and Mental Hospitalization: Some Notes on the Vicissitudes of the Tinkering Trades

 ix
xiii
1
125
171
321
From Autumn 1954 to the end of 1957 I was a visiting member of the Laboratory of Socio-environmental Studies of the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, Maryland. During those three years I did some brief studies of ward behavior in the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center. In 1955-56 I did a year's field work at St. Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, D.C., a federal institution of somewhat over 7000 inmates that draws three quarters of its patients from the District of Columbia. Later additional time for writing up the material was made possible by an NIMH grant, M-4111(A), and through participation in the Center for the Integration of Social Science Theory at the University of California at Berkeley.

My immediate object in doing field work at St. Elizabeths was to try to learn about the social world of the hospital inmate, as this world is subjectively experienced by him. I started out in the role of an assistant to the athletic director, when pressed avowing to be a student of recreation and community life, and I passed the day with patients, avoiding sociable contact with the staff and the carrying of a key. I did not sleep in the wards, and the top hospital management knew what my aims were.

It was then and still is my belief that any group of persons—prisoners, primitives, pilots, or patients—de-
velop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, rea-
sonable, and normal once you get close to it, and that a
good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit
oneself in the company of the members to the daily round
of petty contingencies to which they are subject.

The limits, of both my method and my application of
it, are obvious: I did not allow myself to be committed
even nominally, and had I done so my range of move-
ments and roles, and hence my data, would have been
restricted even more than they were. Desiring to obtain
ethnographic detail regarding selected aspects of patient
social life, I did not employ usual kinds of measurements
and controls. I assumed that the role and time required
to gather statistical evidence for a few statements would
preclude my gathering data on the tissue and fabric of
patient life. My method has other limits, too. The world
view of a group functions to sustain its members and ex-
pectedly provides them with a self-justifying definition
of their own situation and a prejudiced view of non-
members, in this case, doctors, nurses, attendants, and
relatives. To describe the patient’s situation faithfully is
necessarily to present a partisan view. (For this last bias
I partly excuse myself by arguing that the imbalance is
at least on the right side of the scale, since almost all
professional literature on mental patients is written from
the point of view of the psychiatrist, and he, socially
speaking, is on the other side.) Further, I want to warn
that my view is probably too much that of a middle-class
male; perhaps I suffered vicariously about conditions
that lower-class patients handled with little pain. Finally,
unlike some patients, I came to the hospital with no great
respect for the discipline of psychiatry nor for agencies
content with its current practice.

I would like to acknowledge in a special way the sup-
port I was given by the sponsoring agencies. Permission
to study St. Elizabeths was negotiated through the then
First Assistant Physician, the late Dr. Jay Hoffman.
He agreed that the hospital would expect pre-publication criticism rights but exert no final censorship or clearance privileges, these being lodged in NIMH in Bethesda. He agreed to the understanding that no observation made about any identified staff person or inmate would be reported to him or to anyone else, and that as an observer I was not obliged to interfere in any way whatsoever with what I could observe going on. He agreed to open any door in the hospital to me, and throughout the study did so when asked with a courtesy, speed, and effectiveness that I will never forget. Later, when the Superintendent of the hospital, Dr. Winifred Overholser, reviewed drafts of my papers, he made helpful corrections regarding some outright errors of fact, along with a useful suggestion that my point of view and method be made explicit. During the study, the Laboratory of Socio-environmental Studies, then headed by its originating director, John Clausen, provided me salary, secretarial help, collegial criticism, and encouragement to look at the hospital with sociology in mind, not junior psychiatry. The clearance rights possessed by the Laboratory and its parent body, NIMH, were exercised, the only consequence I am aware of being that on one occasion I was asked to consider a substitute for one or two impolite adjectives.

The point I want to make is that this freedom and opportunity to engage in pure research was afforded me in regard to a government agency, through the financial support of another government agency, both of which were required to operate in the presumably delicate atmosphere of Washington, and this was done at a time when some universities in this country, the traditional bastions of free enquiry, would have put more restrictions on my efforts. For this I must thank the open- and fair-mindedness of psychiatrists and social scientists in government.

Erving Goffman
Berkeley, California, 1961
A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life. Prisons serve as a clear example, providing we appreciate that what is prison-like about prisons is found in institutions whose members have broken no laws. This volume deals with total institutions in general and one example, mental hospitals, in particular. The main focus is on the world of the inmate, not the world of the staff. A chief concern is to develop a sociological version of the structure of the self.

Each of the four essays in this book was written to stand by itself, the first two having been separately published. All were intended to focus on the same issue—the inmate’s situation. Some repetition is therefore involved. On the other hand, each paper approaches the central issue from a different vantage point, each introduction drawing upon a different source in sociology and having little relation to the other papers.

This method of presenting material may be irksome to the reader, but it allows me to pursue the main theme of each paper analytically and comparatively past the point that would be allowable in chapters of an integrated book. I plead the state of our discipline. I think
that at present, if sociological concepts are to be treated with affection, each must be traced back to where it best applies, followed from there wherever it seems to lead, and pressed to disclose the rest of its family. Better, perhaps, different coats to clothe the children well than a single splendid tent in which they all shiver.

The first paper, "On the Characteristics of Total Institutions," is a general examination of social life in these establishments, drawing heavily on two examples that feature involuntary membership—mental hospitals and prisons. There the themes developed in detail in the remaining papers are stated and their place in the broader whole suggested. The second paper, "The Moral Career of the Mental Patient," considers the initial effects of institutionalization on the social relationships the individual possessed before he became an inmate. The third paper, "The Underlife of a Public Institution," is concerned with the attachment the inmate is expected to manifest to his iron home and, in detail, with the way in which inmates can introduce some distance between themselves and these expectations. The final paper, "The Medical Model and Mental Hospitalization," turns attention back to the professional staffs to consider, in the case of mental hospitals, the role of the medical perspective in presenting to the inmate the facts of his situation.
ON THE CHARACTERISTICS
OF TOTAL INSTITUTIONS¹

¹ A shorter version of this paper appears in the Symposium on Preventive and Social Psychiatry, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Washington, D.C. (15-17 April 1957), pp. 43-84. The present version is reprinted from The Prison, edited by Donald R. Cressey, copyright © 1961 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
INTRODUCTION

I

Social establishments—institutions in the everyday sense of that term—are places such as rooms, suites of rooms, buildings, or plants in which activity of a particular kind regularly goes on. In sociology we do not have a very apt way of classifying them. Some establishments, like Grand Central Station, are open to anyone who is decently behaved; others, like the Union League Club of New York or the laboratories at Los Alamos, are felt to be somewhat snippy about who is let in. Some, like shops and post offices, have a few fixed members who provide a service and a continuous flow of members who receive it. Others, like homes and factories, involve a less changing set of participants. Some institutions provide the place for activities from which the individual is felt to draw his social status, however enjoyable or lax these pursuits may be; other institutions, in contrast, provide a place for associations felt to be elective and unserious, calling for a contribution of time left over from more serious demands. In this book another category of institutions is singled out and claimed as a natural and fruitful one because its members appear to have so much in common—so much, in fact, that to learn about one of these institutions we would be well advised to look at the others.
II

Every institution captures something of the time and interest of its members and provides something of a world for them; in brief, every institution has encompassing tendencies. When we review the different institutions in our Western society, we find some that are encompassing to a degree discontinuously greater than the ones next in line. Their encompassing or total character is symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests, or moors. These establishments I am calling total institutions, and it is their general characteristics I want to explore.²

The total institutions of our society can be listed in five rough groupings. First, there are institutions established to care for persons felt to be both incapable and harmless; these are the homes for the blind, the aged, the orphaned, and the indigent. Second, there are places established to care for persons felt to be both incapable of looking after themselves and a threat to the community, albeit an unintended one: TB sanitariums, mental hospitals, and leprosaria. A third type of total institution is organized to protect the community against what are felt

² The category of total institutions has been pointed out from time to time in the sociological literature under a variety of names, and some of the characteristics of the class have been suggested, most notably perhaps in Howard Rowland’s neglected paper, “Segregated Communities and Mental Health,” in \textit{Mental Health Publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science}, No. 9, edited by F. R. Moulton, 1939. A preliminary statement of the present paper is reported in \textit{Group Processes}, Transactions of the Third (1956) Conference, edited by Bertram Schaffner (New York: Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, 1957). The term “total” has also been used in its present context in Amitai Etzioni, “The Organizational Structure of ‘Closed’ Educational Institutions in Israel,” \textit{Harvard Educational Review}, XXVII (1957), p. 115.
to be intentional dangers to it, with the welfare of the persons thus sequestered not the immediate issue: jails, penitentiaries, P.O.W. camps, and concentration camps. Fourth, there are institutions purportedly established the better to pursue some worklike task and justifying themselves only on these instrumental grounds: army barracks, ships, boarding schools, work camps, colonial compounds, and large mansions from the point of view of those who live in the servants' quarters. Finally, there are those establishments designed as retreats from the world even while often serving also as training stations for the religious; examples are abbeys, monasteries, convents, and other cloisters. This classification of total institutions is not neat, exhaustive, nor of immediate analytical use, but it does provide a purely denotative definition of the category as a concrete starting point. By anchoring the initial definition of total institutions in this way, I hope to be able to discuss the general characteristics of the type without becoming tautological.

Before I attempt to extract a general profile from this list of establishments, I would like to mention one conceptual problem: none of the elements I will describe seems peculiar to total institutions, and none seems to be shared by every one of them; what is distinctive about total institutions is that each exhibits to an intense degree many items in this family of attributes. In speaking of "common characteristics," I will be using this phrase in a way that is restricted but I think logically defensible. At the same time this permits using the method of ideal types, establishing common features with the hope of highlighting significant differences later.

III

A basic social arrangement in modern society is that the individual tends to sleep, play, and work in different
places, with different co-participants, under different authorities, and without an over-all rational plan. The central feature of total institutions can be described as a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating these three spheres of life. First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of the member's daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third, all phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading at a prearranged time into the next, the whole sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials. Finally, the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution.

Individually, these features are found in places other than total institutions. For example, our large commercial, industrial, and educational establishments are increasingly providing cafeterias and free-time recreation for their members; use of these extended facilities remains voluntary in many particulars, however, and special care is taken to see that the ordinary line of authority does not extend to them. Similarly, housewives or farm families may have all their major spheres of life within the same fenced-in area, but these persons are not collectively regimented and do not march through the day's activities in the immediate company of a batch of similar others.

The handling of many human needs by the bureaucratic organization of whole blocks of people—whether or not this is a necessary or effective means of social organization in the circumstances—is the key fact of total institutions. From this follow certain important implications.

When persons are moved in blocks, they can be super-
vised by personnel whose chief activity is not guidance or periodic inspection (as in many employer-employee relations) but rather surveillance—a seeing to it that everyone does what he has been clearly told is required of him, under conditions where one person's infraction is likely to stand out in relief against the visible, constantly examined compliance of the others. Which comes first, the large blocks of managed people, or the small supervisory staff, is not here at issue; the point is that each is made for the other.

In total institutions there is a basic split between a large managed group, conveniently called inmates, and a small supervisory staff. Inmates typically live in the institution and have restricted contact with the world outside the walls; staff often operate on an eight-hour day and are socially integrated into the outside world. Each grouping tends to conceive of the other in terms of narrow hostile stereotypes, staff often seeing inmates as bitter, secretive, and untrustworthy, while inmates often see staff as condescending, highhanded, and mean. Staff tends to feel superior and righteous; inmates tend, in some ways at least, to feel inferior, weak, blameworthy, and guilty.

Social mobility between the two strata is grossly restricted; social distance is typically great and often formally prescribed. Even talk across the boundaries may

———

3 The binary character of total institutions was pointed out to me by Gregory Bateson, and has been noted in the literature. See, for example, Lloyd E. Ohlin, Sociology and the Field of Corrections (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1958), pp. 14, 20. In those situations where staff are also required to live in, we may expect staff to feel they are suffering special hardships and to have brought home to them a status dependency on life on the inside which they did not expect. See Jane Cassels Record, “The Marine Radioman's Struggle for Status,” American Journal of Sociology, LXII (1957), p. 359.

be conducted in a special tone of voice, as illustrated in a fictionalized record of an actual sojourn in a mental hospital:

“I tell you what,” said Miss Hart when they were crossing the dayroom. “You do everything Miss Davis says. Don’t think about it, just do it. You’ll get along all right.”

As soon as she heard the name Virginia knew what was terrible about Ward One. Miss Davis. “Is she the head nurse?”

“And how,” muttered Miss Hart. And then she raised her voice. The nurses had a way of acting as if the patients were unable to hear anything that was not shouted. Frequently they said things in normal voices that the ladies were not supposed to hear; if they had not been nurses you would have said they frequently talked to themselves. “A most competent and efficient person, Miss Davis,” announced Miss Hart.⁵

Although some communication between inmates and the staff guarding them is necessary, one of the guard’s functions is the control of communication from inmates to higher staff levels. A student of mental hospitals provides an illustration:

Since many of the patients are anxious to see the doctor on his rounds, the attendants must act as mediators between the patients and the physician if the latter is not to be swamped. On Ward 30, it seemed to be generally true that patients without physical symptoms who fell into the two lower privilege groups were almost never permitted to talk to the physician unless Dr. Baker himself asked for them. The persevering, nagging delusional group—

who were termed "worry warts," "nuisances," "bird dogs," in the attendants' slang—often tried to break through the attendant-mediator but were always quite summarily dealt with when they tried.\(^6\)

Just as talk across the boundary is restricted, so, too, is the passage of information, especially information about the staff's plans for inmates. Characteristically, the inmate is excluded from knowledge of the decisions taken regarding his fate. Whether the official grounds are military, as in concealing travel destination from enlisted men, or medical, as in concealing diagnosis, plan of treatment, and approximate length of stay from tuberculosis patients,\(^7\) such exclusion gives staff a special basis of distance from and control over inmates.

All these restrictions of contact presumably help to maintain the antagonistic stereotypes.\(^8\) Two different social and cultural worlds develop, jogging alongside each other with points of official contact but little mutual penetration. Significantly, the institutional plant and name come to be identified by both staff and inmates as somehow belonging to staff, so that when either grouping refers to the views or interests of "the institution," by implication they are referring (as I shall also) to the views and concerns of the staff.

The staff-inmate split is one major implication of the bureaucratic management of large blocks of persons; a second pertains to work.


\(^7\) A very full case report on this matter is provided in a chapter titled "Information and the Control of Treatment," in Julius A. Roth's forthcoming monograph on the tuberculosis hospital. His work promises to be a model study of a total institution. Preliminary statements may be found in his articles, "What is an Activity?" *Etc.*, XIV (Autumn 1956), pp. 54-56, and "Ritual and Magic in the Control of Contagion," *American Sociological Review*, XXII (1957), pp. 310-14.

\(^8\) Suggested in Ohlin, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
In the ordinary arrangements of living in our society, the authority of the work place stops with the worker’s receipt of a money payment; the spending of this in a domestic and recreational setting is the worker’s private affair and constitutes a mechanism through which the authority of the work place is kept within strict bounds. But to say that inmates of total institutions have their full day scheduled for them is to say that all their essential needs will have to be planned for. Whatever the incentive given for work, then, this incentive will not have the structural significance it has on the outside. There will have to be different motives for work and different attitudes toward it. This is a basic adjustment required of the inmates and of those who must induce them to work.

Sometimes so little work is required that inmates, often untrained in leisurely pursuits, suffer extremes of boredom. Work that is required may be carried on at a very slow pace and may be geared into a system of minor, often ceremonial, payments, such as the weekly tobacco ration and the Christmas presents that lead some mental patients to stay on their jobs. In other cases, of course, more than a full day’s hard labor is required, induced not by reward but by threat of physical punishment. In some total institutions, such as logging camps and merchant ships, the practice of forced saving postpones the usual relation to the world that money can buy; all needs are organized by the institution and payment is given only when a work season is over and the men leave the premises. In some institutions there is a kind of slavery, with the inmate’s full time placed at the convenience of staff; here the inmate’s sense of self and sense of possession can become alienated from his work capacity. T. E. Lawrence gives an illustration in his record of service in an R.A.F. training depot:
The six-weeks men we meet on fatigues shock our moral sense by their easy-going. "You're silly — , you rookies, to sweat yourselves" they say. Is it our new keenness, or a relic of civility in us? For by the R.A.F. we shall be paid all the twenty-four hours a day, at three halfpence an hour; paid to work, paid to eat, paid to sleep: always those halfpence are adding up. Impossible, therefore, to dignify a job by doing it well. It must take as much time as it can for afterwards there is not a fireside waiting, but another job.\(^9\)

Whether there is too much work or too little, the individual who was work-oriented on the outside tends to become demoralized by the work system of the total institution. An example of such demoralization is the practice in state mental hospitals of "bumming" or "working someone for" a nickel or dime to spend in the canteen. Persons do this—often with some defiance—who on the outside would consider such actions beneath their self-respect. (Staff members, interpreting this begging pattern in terms of their own civilian orientation to earning, tend to see it as a symptom of mental illness and one further bit of evidence that inmates really are unwell.)

There is an incompatibility, then, between total institutions and the basic work-payment structure of our society. Total institutions are also incompatible with another crucial element of our society, the family. Family life is sometimes contrasted with solitary living, but in fact the more pertinent contrast is with batch living, for those who eat and sleep at work, with a group of fellow workers, can hardly sustain a meaningful domestic existence.\(^10\) Conversely, maintaining families off the grounds often permits staff members to remain integrated with


The outside community and to escape the encompassing tendency of the total institution.

Whether a particular total institution acts as a good or bad force in civil society, force it will have, and this will in part depend on the suppression of a whole circle of actual or potential households. Conversely, the formation of households provides a structural guarantee that total institutions will not be without resistance. The incompatibility of these two forms of social organization should tell us something about the wider social functions of them both.

The total institution is a social hybrid, part residential community, part formal organization; therein lies its special sociological interest. There are other reasons for being interested in these establishments, too. In our society, they are the forcing houses for changing persons; each is a natural experiment on what can be done to the self.

Some of the key features of total institutions have been suggested. I want now to consider these establishments from two perspectives: first, the inmate world; then the staff world. Finally, I want to say something about contacts between the two.

**THE INMATE WORLD**

I

It is characteristic of inmates that they come to the institution with a “presenting culture” (to modify a psychiatric phrase) derived from a “home world”—a way of life and a round of activities taken for granted until the point of admission to the institution. (There is reason, then, to
exclude orphanages and foundling homes from the list of total institutions, except in so far as the orphan comes to be socialized into the outside world by some process of cultural osmosis even while this world is being systematically denied him.) Whatever the stability of the recruit's personal organization, it was part of a wider framework lodged in his civil environment—a round of experience that confirmed a tolerable conception of self and allowed for a set of defensive maneuvers, exercised at his own discretion, for coping with conflicts, discrediting, and failures.

Now it appears that total institutions do not substitute their own unique culture for something already formed; we deal with something more restricted than acculturation or assimilation. If cultural change does occur, it has to do, perhaps, with the removal of certain behavior opportunities and with failure to keep pace with recent social changes on the outside. Thus, if the inmate's stay is long, what has been called "disculturation" may occur—that is, an "untraining" which renders him temporarily incapable of managing certain features of daily life on the outside, if and when he gets back to it.

The full meaning for the inmate of being "in" or "on the inside" does not exist apart from the special meaning to him of "getting out" or "getting on the outside." In this sense, total institutions do not really look for cultural victory. They create and sustain a particular kind of tension between the home world and the institutional world and use this persistent tension as strategic leverage in the management of men.

11 A term employed by Robert Sommer, "Patients who grow old in a mental hospital," Geriatrics, XIV (1959), pp. 586-87. The term "desocialization," sometimes used in this context, would seem to be too strong, implying loss of fundamental capacities to communicate and co-operate.
II

The recruit comes into the establishment with a conception of himself made possible by certain stable social arrangements in his home world. Upon entrance, he is immediately stripped of the support provided by these arrangements. In the accurate language of some of our oldest total institutions, he begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self. His self is systematically, if often unintentionally, mortified. He begins some radical shifts in his moral career, a career composed of the progressive changes that occur in the beliefs that he has concerning himself and significant others.

The processes by which a person's self is mortified are fairly standard in total institutions;\textsuperscript{12} analysis of these processes can help us to see the arrangements that ordinary establishments must guarantee if members are to preserve their civilian selves.

The barrier that total institutions place between the inmate and the wider world marks the first curtailment of self. In civil life, the sequential scheduling of the individual's roles, both in the life cycle and in the repeated daily round, ensures that no one role he plays will block his performance and ties in another. In total institutions, in contrast, membership automatically disrupts role scheduling, since the inmate's separation from the wider world lasts around the clock and may continue for years. Role dispossession therefore occurs. In many total institutions the privilege of having visitors or of visiting away from the establishment is completely withheld at first, ensuring a deep initial break with past roles and an

\textsuperscript{12} An example of the description of these processes may be found in Gresham M. Sykes, \textit{The Society of Captives} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), ch. iv, “The Pains of Imprisonment,” pp. 63-83.
appreciation of role dispossession. A report on cadet life in a military academy provides an illustration:

This clean break with the past must be achieved in a relatively short period. For two months, therefore, the swab is not allowed to leave the base or to engage in social intercourse with non-cadets. This complete isolation helps to produce a unified group of swabs, rather than a heterogeneous collection of persons of high and low status. Uniforms are issued on the first day, and discussions of wealth and family background are taboo. Although the pay of the cadet is very low, he is not permitted to receive money from home. The role of the cadet must supersede other roles the individual has been accustomed to play. There are few clues left which will reveal social status in the outside world.¹³

I might add that when entrance is voluntary, the recruit has already partially withdrawn from his home world; what is cleanly severed by the institution is something that had already started to decay.

Although some roles can be re-established by the inmate if and when he returns to the world, it is plain that other losses are irrevocable and may be painfully experienced as such. It may not be possible to make up, at a later phase of the life cycle, the time not now spent in educational or job advancement, in courting, or in rearing one's children. A legal aspect of this permanent dis-

possession is found in the concept of "civil death": prison inmates may face not only a temporary loss of the rights to will money and write checks, to contest divorce or adoption proceedings, and to vote but may have some of these rights permanently abrogated.\textsuperscript{14}

The inmate, then, finds certain roles are lost to him by virtue of the barrier that separates him from the outside world. The process of entrance typically brings other kinds of loss and mortification as well. We very generally find staff employing what are called admission procedures, such as taking a life history, photographing, weighing, fingerprinting, assigning numbers, searching, listing personal possessions for storage, undressing, bathing, disinfecting, haircutting, issuing institutional clothing, instructing as to rules, and assigning to quarters.\textsuperscript{15} Admission procedures might better be called "trimming" or "programming" because in thus being squared away the new arrival allows himself to be shaped and coded into an object that can be fed into the administrative machinery of the establishment, to be worked on smoothly by routine operations. Many of these procedures depend upon attributes such as weight or fingerprints that the individual possesses merely because he is a member of the largest and most abstract of social categories, that of human being. Action taken on the basis of such attributes necessarily ignores most of his previous bases of self-identification.

Because a total institution deals with so many aspects

\textsuperscript{14} A useful review in the case of American prisons may be found in Paul W. Tappan, "The Legal Rights of Prisoners," \textit{The Annals}, CCXCI\textsuperscript{II} (May 1954), pp. 99-111.

of its inmates' lives, with the consequent complex squaring away at admission, there is a special need to obtain initial co-operativeness from the recruit. Staff often feel that a recruit's readiness to be appropriately deferential in his initial face-to-face encounters with them is a sign that he will take the role of the routinely pliant inmate. The occasion on which staff members first tell the inmate of his deference obligations may be structured to challenge the inmate to balk or to hold his peace forever. Thus these initial moments of socialization may involve an "obedience test" and even a will-breaking contest: an inmate who shows defiance receives immediate visible punishment, which increases until he openly "cries uncle" and humbles himself.

An engaging illustration is provided by Brendan Behan in reviewing his contest with two warders upon his admission to Walton prison:

"And 'old up your 'ead, when I speak to you."
"'Old up your 'ead, when Mr. Whitbread speaks to you," said Mr. Holmes.

I looked round at Charlie. His eyes met mine and he quickly lowered them to the ground.
"What are you looking round at, Behan? Look at me."

I looked at Mr. Whitbread. "I am looking at you," I said.
"You are looking at Mr. Whitbread—what?" said Mr. Holmes.
"I am looking at Mr. Whitbread."

Mr. Holmes looked gravely at Mr. Whitbread, drew back his open hand, and struck me on the face, held me with his other hand and struck me again.

My head spun and burned and pained and I wondered would it happen again. I forgot and felt an-
other smack, and forgot, and another, and moved, and was held by a steadying, almost kindly hand, and another, and my sight was a vision of red and white and pity-coloured flashes.

"You are looking at Mr. Whitbread—what, Behan?"

I gulped and got together my voice and tried again till I got it out. "I, sir, please, sir, I am looking at you, I mean, I am looking at Mr. Whitbread, sir."  

Admission procedures and obedience tests may be elaborated into a form of initiation that has been called "the welcome," where staff or inmates, or both, go out of their way to give the recruit a clear notion of his plight. As part of this rite of passage he may be called by a term such as "fish" or "swab," which tells him that he is merely an inmate, and, what is more, that he has a special low status even in this low group.

The admission procedure can be characterized as a leaving off and a taking on, with the midpoint marked by physical nakedness. Leaving off of course entails a dis­possession of property, important because persons invest self feelings in their possessions. Perhaps the most significant of these possessions is not physical at all, one's full name; whatever one is thereafter called, loss of one's name can be a great curtailment of the self. 


Once the inmate is stripped of his possessions, at least some replacements must be made by the establishment, but these take the form of standard issue, uniform in character and uniformly distributed. These substitute possessions are clearly marked as really belonging to the institution and in some cases are recalled at regular intervals to be, as it were, disinfected of identifications. With objects that can be used up—for example, pencils—the inmate may be required to return the remnants before obtaining a reissue.\textsuperscript{19} Failure to provide inmates with individual lockers and periodic searches and confiscations of accumulated personal property\textsuperscript{20} reinforce property dispossession. Religious orders have appreciated the implications for self of such separation from belongings. Inmates may be required to change their cells once a year so as not to become attached to them. The Benedictine Rule is explicit:

For their bedding let a mattress, a blanket, a coverlet, and a pillow suffice. These beds must be frequently inspected by the Abbot, because of private property which may be found therein. If anyone be discovered to have what he has not received from the Abbot, let him be most severely punished. And in order that this vice of private ownership may be completely rooted out, let all things that are necessary be supplied by the Abbot: that is, cowl, tunic, stockings, shoes, girdle, knife, pen, needle, handkerchief, and tablets; so that all plea of necessity may be taken away. And let the Abbot always consider that passage in the Acts of the Apostles: “Distribution was made to each according as anyone had need.”\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Dendrickson and Thomas, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 83-84, also \textit{The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict}, Ch. 55.
\textsuperscript{20} Kogon, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict}, Ch. 55.
One set of the individual's possessions has a special relation to self. The individual ordinarily expects to exert some control over the guise in which he appears before others. For this he needs cosmetic and clothing supplies, tools for applying, arranging, and repairing them, and an accessible, secure place to store these supplies and tools—in short, the individual will need an "identity kit" for the management of his personal front. He will also need access to decoration specialists such as barbers and clothiers.

On admission to a total institution, however, the individual is likely to be stripped of his usual appearance and of the equipment and services by which he maintains it, thus suffering a personal defacement. Clothing, combs, needle and thread, cosmetics, towels, soap, shaving sets, bathing facilities—all these may be taken away or denied him, although some may be kept in inaccessible storage, to be returned if and when he leaves. In the words of St. Benedict's Holy Rule:

Then forthwith he shall, there in the oratory, be divested of his own garments with which he is clothed and be clad in those of the monastery. Those garments of which he is divested shall be placed in the wardrobe, there to be kept, so that if, perchance, he should ever be persuaded by the devil to leave the monastery (which God forbid), he may be stripped of the monastic habit and cast forth.22

As suggested, the institutional issue provided as a substitute for what has been taken away is typically of a "coarse" variety, ill-suited, often old, and the same for large categories of inmates. The impact of this substitution is described in a report on imprisoned prostitutes:

First, there is the shower officer who forces them to undress, takes their own clothes away, sees to it

22 The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict, Ch. 58.
that they take showers and get their prison clothes—
one pair of black oxfords with cuban heels, two pairs
of much-mended ankle socks, three cotton dresses,
two cotton slips, two pairs of panties, and a couple
of bras. Practically all the bras are flat and useless.
No corsets or girdles are issued.

There is not a sadder sight than some of the obese
prisoners who, if nothing else, have been managing
to keep themselves looking decent on the outside,
confronted by the first sight of themselves in prison
issue.23

In addition to personal defacement that comes from
being stripped of one’s identity kit, there is personal
disfigurement that comes from direct and permanent
mutilations of the body such as brands or loss of limbs.
Although this mortification of the self by way of the body
is found in few total institutions, still, loss of a sense of
personal safety is common and provides a basis for
anxieties about disfigurement. Beatings, shock therapy,
or, in mental hospitals, surgery—whatever the intent of
staff in providing these services for some inmates—may
lead many inmates to feel that they are in an environ-
ment that does not guarantee their physical integrity.

At admission, loss of identity equipment can prevent
the individual from presenting his usual image of himself
to others. After admission, the image of himself he pre-
sents is attacked in another way. Given the expressive
idiom of a particular civil society, certain movements,
postures, and stances will convey lowly images of the
individual and be avoided as demeaning. Any regulation,
command, or task that forces the individual to adopt

23 John M. Murtagh and Sara Harris, Cast the First Stone
hospitals see, for example, Kerkhoff, op. cit., p. 10. Ward, op.
cit., p. 60, makes the reasonable suggestion that men in our
society suffer less defacement in total institutions than do
women.
these movements or postures may mortify his self. In total institutions, such physical indignities abound. In mental hospitals, for example, patients may be forced to eat all food with a spoon. In military prisons, inmates may be required to stand at attention whenever an officer enters the compound. In religious institutions, there are such classic gestures of penance as the kissing of feet, and the posture recommended to an erring monk that he

... lie prostrate at the door of the oratory in silence; and thus, with his face to the ground and his body prone, let him cast himself at the feet of all as they go forth from the oratory.

In some penal institutions we find the humiliation of bending over to receive a birching. Just as the individual can be required to hold his body in a humiliating pose, so he may have to provide humiliating verbal responses. An important instance of this is the forced deference pattern of total institutions; inmates are often required to punctuate their social interaction with staff by verbal acts of deference, such as saying "sir." Another instance is the necessity to beg, importune, or humbly ask for little things such as a light for a cigarette, a drink of water, or permission to use the telephone.

Corresponding to the indignities of speech and action required of the inmate are the indignities of treatment

24 Johnson and Dodds, op. cit., p. 15; for a prison version see Alfred Hassler, Diary of a Self-Made Convict (Chicago: Regnery, 1954), p. 33.
27 The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict, Ch. 44.
28 Dendrickson and Thomas, op. cit., p. 76.
others accord him. The standard examples here are verbal or gestural profanations: staff or fellow inmates call the individual obscene names, curse him, point out his negative attributes, tease him, or talk about him or his fellow inmates as if he were not present.

Whatever the form or the source of these various indignities, the individual has to engage in activity whose symbolic implications are incompatible with his conception of self. A more diffuse example of this kind of mortification occurs when the individual is required to undertake a daily round of life that he considers alien to him—to take on a disidentifying role. In prisons, denial of heterosexual opportunities can induce fear of losing one's masculinity.\textsuperscript{29} In military establishments, the patently useless make-work forced on fatigue details can make men feel their time and effort are worthless.\textsuperscript{30} In religious institutions there are special arrangements to ensure that all inmates take a turn performing the more menial aspects of the servant role.\textsuperscript{31} An extreme is the concentration-camp practice requiring prisoners to administer whippings to other prisoners.\textsuperscript{32}

There is another form of mortification in total institutions; beginning with admission a kind of contaminative exposure occurs. On the outside, the individual can hold objects of self-feeling—such as his body, his immediate actions, his thoughts, and some of his possessions—clear of contact with alien and contaminating things. But in total institutions these territories of the self are violated; the boundary that the individual places between his being and the environment is invaded and the embodiments of self profaned.

There is, first, a violation of one's informational preserve regarding self. During admission, facts about the

\textsuperscript{29} Sykes, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 70-72.
\textsuperscript{30} For example, Lawrence, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 34-35.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict}, Ch. 35.
\textsuperscript{32} Kogon, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 102.
inmate’s social statuses and past behavior—especially discreditable facts—are collected and recorded in a dossier available to staff. Later, in so far as the establishment officially expects to alter the self-regulating inner tendencies of the inmate, there may be group or individual confession—psychiatric, political, military, or religious, according to the type of institution. On these occasions the inmate has to expose facts and feelings about self to new kinds of audiences. The most spectacular examples of such exposure come to us from Communist confession camps and from the culpa sessions that form part of the routine of Catholic religious institutions. The dynamics of the process have been explicitly considered by those engaged in so-called milieu therapy.

New audiences not only learn discreditable facts about oneself that are ordinarily concealed but are also in a position to perceive some of these facts directly. Prisoners and mental patients cannot prevent their visitors from seeing them in humiliating circumstances. Another example is the shoulder patch of ethnic identification worn by concentration-camp inmates. Medical and security examinations often expose the inmate physically, sometimes to persons of both sexes; a similar exposure follows from collective sleeping arrangements and doorless toilets. An extreme here, perhaps, is the situation of a self-destructive mental patient who is stripped naked for what is felt to be his own protection and placed in a constantly lit seclusion room, into whose Judas window any person passing on the ward can peer. In general, of

33 Hulme, op. cit., pp. 48-51.
34 Wider communities in Western society, of course, have employed this technique too, in the form of public floggings and public hangings, the pillory and stocks. Functionally correlated with the public emphasis on mortifications in total institutions is the commonly found strict ruling that staff is not to be humiliated by staff in the presence of inmates.
35 Kogon, op. cit., pp. 41-42.
36 Behan, op. cit., p. 23.
course, the inmate is never fully alone; he is always within sight and often earshot of someone, if only his fellow inmates.\textsuperscript{37} Prison cages with bars for walls fully realize such exposure.

Perhaps the most obvious type of contaminative exposure is the directly physical kind—the besmearing and defiling of the body or of other objects closely identified with the self. Sometimes this involves a breakdown of the usual environmental arrangements for insulating oneself from one's own source of contamination, as in having to empty one's own slopes\textsuperscript{38} or having to subject one's evacuation to regimentation, as reported from Chinese political prisons:

An aspect of their isolation regimen which is especially onerous to Western prisoners is the arrangement for the elimination of urine and feces. The "slop jar" that is usually present in Russian cells is often absent in China. It is a Chinese custom to allow defection and urination only at one or two specified times each day—usually in the morning after breakfast. The prisoner is hustled from his cell by a guard, double-timed down a long corridor, and given approximately two minutes to squat over an open Chinese latrine and attend to all his wants. The haste and the public scrutiny are especially difficult for women to tolerate. If the prisoners cannot complete their action in about two minutes, they are abruptly dragged away and back to their cells.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} For example, Kogon, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 128; Hassler, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 16. For the situation in a religious institution, see Hulme, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 48. She also describes a lack of aural privacy since thin cotton hangings are used as the only door closing off the individual sleeping cells (p. 20).

\textsuperscript{38} Heckstall-Smith, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 21; Dendrickson and Thomas, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 53.

A very common form of physical contamination is reflected in complaints about unclean food, messy quarters, soiled towels, shoes and clothing impregnated with previous users' sweat, toilets without seats, and dirty bath facilities. Orwell's comments on his boarding school may be taken as illustrative:

For example, there were the pewter bowls out of which we had our porridge. They had overhanging rims, and under the rims there were accumulations of sour porridge, which could be flaked off in long strips. The porridge itself, too, contained more lumps, hairs and unexplained black things than one would have thought possible, unless someone were putting them there on purpose. It was never safe to start on that porridge without investigating it first. And there was the slimy water of the plunge bath—it was twelve or fifteen feet long, the whole school was supposed to go into it every morning, and I doubt whether the water was changed at all frequently—and the always-damp towels with their cheesy smell: . . . And the sweaty smell of the changing-room with its greasy basins, and, giving on this, the row of filthy, dilapidated lavatories, which had no fastenings of any kind on the doors, so that whenever you were sitting there someone was sure to come crashing in. It is not easy for me to think of my school days without seeming to breathe in a whiff of something cold and evil-smelling—a sort of compound of sweaty stockings, dirty towels, fecal


40 For example, Johnson and Dodds, op. cit., p. 75; Heckstall-Smith, op. cit., p. 15.
smells blowing along corridors, forks with old food between the prongs, neck-of-mutton stew, and the banging doors of the lavatories and the echoing chamberpots in the dormitories.\textsuperscript{41}

There are still other sources of physical contamination, as an interviewee suggests in describing a concentration-camp hospital:

We were lying two in each bed. And it was very unpleasant. For example, if a man died he would not be removed before twenty-four hours had elapsed because the block trusty wanted, of course, to get the bread ration and the soup which was allotted to this person. For this reason the dead person would be reported dead twenty-four hours later so that his ration would still be allotted. And so we had to lie all that time in bed together with the dead person.\textsuperscript{42}

We were on the middle level. And that was a very gruesome situation, especially at night. First of all, the dead men were badly emaciated and they looked terrible. In most cases they would soil themselves at the moment of death and that was not a very esthetic event. I saw such cases very frequently in the lager, in the sick people's barracks. People who died from phlegmonous, suppurative wounds, with their beds overflowing with pus would be lying together with somebody whose illness was possibly more benign, who had possibly just a small wound which now would become infected.\textsuperscript{43}

The contamination of lying near the dying has also been

\textsuperscript{41} George Orwell, "Such, Such Were the Joys," \textit{Partisan Review}, XIX (September-October 1952), p. 523.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 50.
cited in mental-hospital reports, and surgical contamination has been cited in prison documents:

Surgical instruments and bandages in the dressing-room lie exposed to the air and dust. George, attending for the treatment, by a medical orderly, of a boil on his neck, had it lanced with a scalpel that had been used a moment before on a man's foot, and had not been sterilised in the meantime.

Finally, in some total institutions the inmate is obliged to take oral or intravenous medications, whether desired or not, and to eat his food, however unpalatable. When an inmate refuses to eat, there may be forcible contamination of his innards by "forced feeding."

I have suggested that the inmate undergoes mortification of the self by contaminative exposure of a physical kind, but this must be amplified: when the agency of contamination is another human being, the inmate is in addition contaminated by forced interpersonal contact and, in consequence, a forced social relationship. (Similarly, when the inmate loses control over who observes him in his predicament or knows about his past, he is being contaminated by a forced relationship to these people—for it is through such perception and knowledge that relations are expressed.)

The model for interpersonal contamination in our society is presumably rape; although sexual molestation certainly occurs in total institutions, there are many other less dramatic examples. Upon admission, one's on-person possessions are pawed and fingered by an official as he itemizes and prepares them for storage. The inmate himself may be frisked and searched to the extent—often reported in the literature—of a rectal examination.

44 Johnson and Dodds, op. cit., p. 16.
45 Dendrickson and Thomas, op. cit., p. 122.
46 For example, Lowell Naeve, A Field of Broken Stones (Glen Gardner, New Jersey: Libertarian Press, 1950), p. 17;
Later in his stay he may be required to undergo searchings of his person and of his sleeping quarters, either routinely or when trouble arises. In all these cases it is the searcher as well as the search that penetrates the private reserve of the individual and violates the territories of his self. Even routine inspections can have this effect, as Lawrence suggests:

In the old days men had weekly to strip off boots and socks, and expose their feet for an officer's inspection. An ex-boy'd kick you in the mouth, as you bent down to look. So with the bath-rolls, a certificate from your N.C.O. that you'd had a bath during the week. One bath! And with the kit inspections, and room inspections, and equipment inspections, all excuses for the dogmatists among the officers to blunder, and for the nosy-parkers to make beasts of themselves. Oh, you require the gentlest touch to interfere with a poor man's person, and not give offence.  

Further, the practice of mixing age, ethnic, and racial groups in prisons and mental hospitals can lead an inmate to feel he is being contaminated by contact with undesirable fellow inmates. A public-school prisoner, describing his admission to prison, provides an example:

Another warder came up with a pair of handcuffs and coupled me to the little Jew, who moaned softly to himself in Yiddish.  

Suddenly, the awful thought occurred to me that I might have to share a cell with the little Jew and I was seized with panic. The thought obsessed me to the exclusion of all else.  

---

47 Lawrence, op. cit., p. 196.  
49 Ibid., p. 17.
Obviously, group living will necessitate mutual contact and exposure among inmates. At the extreme, as in cells for Chinese political prisoners, mutual contact may be very great:

At some stage in his imprisonment the prisoner can expect to find himself placed in a cell with about eight other prisoners. If he was initially isolated and interrogated, this may be shortly after his first "confession" is accepted; but many prisoners are placed in group cells from the outset of their imprisonment. The cell is usually barren, and scarcely large enough to hold the group it contains. There may be a sleeping platform, but all of the prisoners sleep on the floor; and when all lie down, every inch of floor space may be taken up. The atmosphere is extremely intimate. Privacy is entirely nonexistent. Lawrence provides a military illustration in discussing his difficulties in merging with fellow airmen in the barracks hut:

You see, I cannot play at anything with anyone: and a native shyness shuts me out from their freemasonry of — and blinding, pinching, borrowing, and talking dirty: this despite my sympathy for the abandon of functional frankness in which they wallow. Inevitably, in our crowded lodging, we must communicate just those physical modesties which polite life keeps veiled. Sexual activity's a naive boast, and any abnormalities of appetite or organ are curiously displayed. The Powers encourage this behaviour. All latrines in camp have lost their doors. "Make the little — sleep and — and eat together," grinned old Jock Mackay, senior instructor, "and we'll have 'em drilling together, naturally."

50 Hinkle and Wolff, op. cit., p. 156.
51 Lawrence, op. cit., p. 91.
One routine instance of this contaminative contact is the naming system for inmates. Staff and fellow inmates automatically assume the right to employ an intimate form of address or a truncated formal one; for a middle-class person, at least, this denies the right to hold oneself off from others through a formal style of address.\textsuperscript{52} When the individual has to eat food he considers alien and polluted, this contamination sometimes derives from other persons' connection with the food, as is nicely illustrated in the penance of "begging soup" practiced in some nunneries:

\ldots she placed her pottery bowl on the left of the Mother Superior, knelt, clasped her hands and waited until two spoonfuls of soup had been put into her beggar's bowl, then on to the next oldest and the next, until the bowl was filled. \ldots When at last her bowl was filled, she returned to her place and swallowed the soup, as she knew she must, down to the last drop. She tried not to think how it had been tossed into her bowl from a dozen other bowls that had already been eaten from. \ldots\textsuperscript{53}

Another kind of contaminative exposure brings an outsider into contact with the individual's close relationship to significant others. For example, an inmate may have his personal mail read and censored, and even made fun of to his face.\textsuperscript{54} Another example is the enforced public character of visits, as reports from prisons suggest:

But what a sadistic kind of arrangement they have for these visits! One hour a month—or two half-hours—in a big room with perhaps a score of other couples, with guards prowling about to make sure you exchange neither the plans nor the implements of escape! We met across a six-foot-wide table,

\textsuperscript{52} For example, see Hassler, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{53} Hulme, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 52-53.
\textsuperscript{54} Dendrickson and Thomas, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 128.
down the middle of which a sort of bundling-board six inches high presumably prevents even our germs from intermingling. We were permitted one sanitary handshake at the beginning of the visit and one at the end; for the rest of the time we could only sit and look at each other while we called across that vast expanse! \(^55\)

Visits take place in a room by the main gate. There is a wooden table, at one side of which sits the prisoner and at the other side his visitors. The warder sits at the head; he hears every word that is spoken, watches every gesture and nuance of expression. There is no privacy at all—and this when a man is meeting his wife whom he may not have seen for years. Nor is any contact allowed between prisoner and visitor, and, of course, no articles are allowed to change hands. \(^56\)

A more thoroughgoing version of this type of contaminative exposure occurs, as already implied, in institutionally arranged confessions. When a significant other must be denounced, and especially when this other is physically present, confession of the relationship to outsiders can mean an intense contamination of the relationship and, through this, of the self. A description of practices in a nunnery provides an illustration:

The bravest of the emotionally vulnerable were the sisters who stood up together in the culpa and proclaimed each other—for having gone out of their way to be near to one another, or perhaps for having talked together in recreation in a way that excluded others. Their tormented but clearly spoken disclosures of a nascent affinity gave it the coup de grâce which they themselves might not have been able to do, for the entire community would hence-


\(^{56}\) Dendrickson and Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
forth see to it that these two would be kept far apart. The pair would be helped to detach themselves from one of those spontaneous personal attachments which often sprang to life in the body of the community as unexpectedly as wildflowers appeared, now and again, in the formal geometric patterns of the cloister gardens.  

A parallel example can be found in mental hospitals devoted to intensive milieu therapy, where patient pairs conducting an affair may be obliged to discuss their relationship during group meetings.

In total institutions, exposure of one's relationships can occur in even more drastic forms, for there may be occasions when an individual witnesses a physical assault upon someone to whom he has ties and suffers the permanent mortification of having (and being known to have) taken no action. Thus we learn of a mental hospital:

This knowledge [of shock therapy] is based on the fact that some of the patients in Ward 30 have assisted the shock team in the administration of therapy to patients, holding them down, and helping to strap them in bed, or watching them after they have quieted. The administration of shock on the ward is often carried out in full sight of a group of interested onlookers. The patient's convulsions often resemble those of an accident victim in death agony and are accompanied by choking gasps and at times by a foaming overflow of saliva from the mouth. The patient slowly recovers without memory of the occurrence, but he has served the others as a frightful spectacle of what may be done to them.

Melville's report on flogging aboard a nineteenth-century man-of-war provides another example:

57 Hulme, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
58 Belknap, op. cit., p. 194.
However much you may desire to absent yourself from the scene that ensues, yet behold it you must; or, at least, stand near it you must; for the regulations enjoin the attendance of almost the entire ship's company, from the corpulent captain himself to the smallest boy who strikes the bell.\(^{59}\)

And the inevitableness of his own presence at the scene: the strong arm that drags him in view of the scourge, and holds him there till all is over: forcing upon his loathing eye and soul the sufferings and groans of men who have familiarly consorted with him, eaten with him, battled out watches with him—men of his own type and badge—all this conveys a terrible hint of the omnipotent authority under which he lives.\(^{60}\)

Lawrence offers a military example:

Tonight's crash of the stick on the hut door at roll call was terrific; and the door slammed back nearly off its hinges. Into the light strode Baker, V.C., a corporal who assumed great licence in the camp because of his war decoration. He marched down my side of the hut, checking the beds. Little Nobby, taken by surprise, had one boot on and another off. Corporal Baker stopped. "What's the matter with YOU?" "I was knocking out a nail which hurts my foot." "Put your boot on at once. Your name?" He passed on to the end door and there whirled round, snorting, "Clarke." Nobby properly cried, "Corporal" and limped down the alley at a run (we must always run when called) to bring up stiffly at attention before him. A pause, and then curtly, "Get back to your bed."

Still the Corporal waited and so must we, lined up by our beds. Again, sharply, "Clarke." The performance was repeated, over and over, while the four files of us looked on, bound fast by shame and discipline. We were men, and a man over there was degrading himself and his species, in degrading another. Baker was lusting for trouble and hoped to provoke one of us into some act or word on which to base a charge. 61

The extreme of this kind of experiential mortification is found, of course, in the concentration-camp literature:

A Jew from Breslau named Silbermann had to stand by idly as SS Sergeant Hoppe brutally tortured his brother to death. Silbermann went mad at the sight, and late at night he precipitated a panic with his frantic cries that the barracks was on fire. 62

III

I have considered some of the more elementary and direct assaults upon the self—various forms of disfigurement and defilement through which the symbolic meaning of events in the inmate's immediate presence dramatically fails to corroborate his prior conception of self. I would now like to consider a source of mortification that is less direct in its effect, with a significance for the individual that is less easy to assess: a disruption of the usual relationship between the individual actor and his acts.

The first disruption to consider here is "looping": an agency that creates a defensive response on the part of the inmate takes this very response as the target of its

61 Lawrence, op. cit., p. 62.
next attack. The individual finds that his protective response to an assault upon self is collapsed into the situation; he cannot defend himself in the usual way by establishing distance between the mortifying situation and himself.

Deference patterns in total institutions provide one illustration of the looping effect. In civil society, when an individual must accept circumstances and commands that affront his conception of self, he is allowed a margin of face-saving reactive expression—sullenness, failure to offer usual signs of deference, *sotto voce* profaning asides, or fugitive expressions of contempt, irony, and derision. Compliance, then, is likely to be associated with an expressed attitude to it that is not itself subject to the same degree of pressure for compliance. Although such self-protective expressive response to humiliating demands does occur in total institutions, the staff may directly penalize inmates for such activity, citing sullenness or insolence explicitly as grounds for further punishment. Thus, in describing the contamination of self resulting from having to drink soup from the beggar's bowl, Kathryn Hulme says of her subject that she

... blanked out from her facial expression the revolt that rose up in her fastidious soul as she drank her dregs. One look of rebellion, she knew, would be enough to invite a repetition of the awful abasement which she was sure she could never go through again, not even for the sake of the Blessed Lord Himself.63

The desegregating process in total institutions creates other instances of looping. In the normal course of affairs in civil society, audience and role segregation keep one's avowals and implicit claims regarding self made in one physical scene of activity from being tested against con-

63 Hulme, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
duct in other settings. In total institutions spheres of life are desegregated, so that an inmate's conduct in one scene of activity is thrown up to him by staff as a comment and check upon his conduct in another context. A mental patient's effort to present himself in a well-oriented, unantagonistic manner during a diagnostic or treatment conference may be directly embarrassed by evidence introduced concerning his apathy during recreation or the bitter comments he made in a letter to a sibling—a letter which the recipient has forwarded to the hospital administrator, to be added to the patient's dossier and brought along to the conference.

Psychiatric establishments of the advanced type provide excellent illustrations of the looping process, since in them didactic feedback may be erected into a basic therapeutic doctrine. A "permissive" atmosphere is felt to encourage the inmate to "project" or "act out" his typical difficulties in living, which can then be brought to his attention during group-therapy sessions.

Through the process of looping, then, the inmate's reaction to his own situation is collapsed back into this situation itself, and he is not allowed to retain the usual segregation of these phases of action. A second assault upon the inmate's status as an actor may now be cited, one that has been loosely described under the categories of regimentation and tyrannization.

In civil society, by the time the individual is an adult he has incorporated socially acceptable standards for the performance of most of his activity, so that the issue of

64 In civil society, crimes and certain other forms of deviance affect the way in which the offender is received in all areas of life, but this breakdown of spheres applies mainly to offenders, not to the bulk of the population that does not offend in these ways or offends without being caught.

65 A clear statement may be found in R. Rapoport and E. Skellem, "Some Therapeutic Functions of Administrative Disturbance," Administrative Science Quarterly, II (1957), pp. 84-85.
the correctness of his action arises only at certain points, as when his productivity is judged. Beyond this, he is allowed to go at his own pace.\textsuperscript{66} He need not constantly look over his shoulder to see if criticism or other sanctions are coming. In addition, many actions will be defined as matters of personal taste, with choice from a range of possibilities specifically allowed. For much activity the judgment and action of authority are held off and one is on one's own. Under such circumstances, one can with over-all profit schedule one's activities to fit into one another—a kind of "personal economy of action," as when an individual postpones eating for a few minutes in order to finish a task, or lays aside a task a little early in order to join a friend for dinner. In a total institution, however, minute segments of a person's line of activity may be subjected to regulations and judgments by staff; the inmate's life is penetrated by constant sanctioning interaction from above, especially during the initial period of stay before the inmate accepts the regulations unthinkingly. Each specification robs the individual of an opportunity to balance his needs and objectives in a personally efficient way and opens up his line of action to sanctions. The autonomy of the act itself is violated.

Although this process of social control is in effect in all organized society, we tend to forget how detailed and closely restrictive it can become in total institutions. The routine reported for one jail for youthful offenders provides a striking example:

At 5:30 we were wakened and had to jump out of bed and stand at attention. When the guard

\textsuperscript{66} The span of time over which an employee works at his own discretion without supervision can in fact be taken as a measure of his pay and status in an organization. See Elliott Jaques, \textit{The Measurement of Responsibility: A Study of Work, Payment, and Individual Capacity} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956). And just as "time-span of responsibility" is an index of position, so a long span of freedom from inspection is a reward of position.
shouted "One!" you removed your night shirt; at "Two!" you folded it; at "Three!" you made your bed. (Only two minutes to make the bed in a difficult and complicated manner.) All the while three monitors would shout at us: "Hurry it up!" and "Make it snappy!"

We also dressed by numbers: shirts on at "One!"; pants at "Two!"; socks at "Three!"; shoes at "Four!" Any noise, like dropping a shoe or even scraping it along the floor, was enough to send you to the line.

. . . Once downstairs everyone faced the wall at strict attention, hands at side, thumbs even with trouser seams, head up, shoulders back, stomach in, heels together, eyes straight ahead, no scratching or putting hands to face or head, no moving even the fingers. 67

A jail for adults provides another example:

The silence system was enforced. No talking outside the cell, at meals or at work.

No pictures were allowed in the cell. No gazing about at meals. Bread crusts were allowed to be left only on the left side of the plate. Inmates were required to stand at attention, cap in hand, until any official, visitor or guard moved beyond sight. 68

And a concentration camp:

In the barracks a wealth of new and confusing impressions overwhelmed the prisoners. Making up beds was a particular source of SS chicanery. Shapeless and matted straw pallets had to be made as even as a board, the pattern of the sheets parallel to the edges, head bolsters set up at right angles. . . . 69

69 Kogon, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
... the SS seized on the most trifling offenses as occasions for punishment: keeping hands in pockets in cold weather; turning up the coat collar in rain or wind; missing buttons; the tiniest tear or speck of dirt on the clothing; unshined shoes ... ; shoes that were too well shined—indicating that the wearer was shirking work; failure to salute, including so-called "sloppy posture"; ... The slightest deviation in dressing ranks and files, or arranging the prisoners in the order of size, or any swaying, coughing, sneezing—any of these might provoke a savage outburst from the SS.70

From the military comes an example of the specifications possible in kit laying:

Now the tunic, so folded that the belt made it a straight edge. Covering it, the breeches, squared to the exact area of the tunic, with four concertina-folds facing forward. Towels were doubled once, twice, thrice, and flanked the blue tower. In front of the blue sat a rectangular cardigan. To each side a rolled puttee. Shirts were packed and laid in pairs like flannel bricks. Before them, pants. Between them, neat balls of socks, wedged in. Our holdalls were stretched wide, with knife, fork, spoon, razor, comb, toothbrush, lather brush, button-stick, in that order, ranged across them.71

Similarly, an ex-nun is reported as having to learn to keep her hands still72 and hidden and to accept the fact that only six specified items were permitted in one's pockets.73

70 Ibid., pp. 99-100.
72 Hulme, op. cit., p. 3.
73 Ibid., p. 39.
An ex-mental patient speaks of the humiliation of being doled out limited toilet paper at each request.74

As suggested earlier, one of the most telling ways in which one's economy of action can be disrupted is the obligation to request permission or supplies for minor activities that one can execute on one's own on the outside, such as smoking, shaving, going to the toilet, telephoning, spending money, or mailing letters. This obligation not only puts the individual in a submissive or suppliant role "unnatural" for an adult but also opens up his line of action to interceptions by staff. Instead of having his request immediately and automatically granted, the inmate may be teased, denied, questioned at length, not noticed, or, as an ex-mental patient suggests, merely put off:

Probably anyone who has never been in a similarly helpless position cannot realize the humiliation to anyone able bodied yet lacking authority to do the simplest offices for herself of having to beg repeatedly for even such small necessities as clean linen or a light for her cigarette from nurses who constantly brush her aside with, "I'll give it to you in a minute, dear", and go off leaving her unsupplied. Even the canteen staff seemed to share the opinion that civility was wasted upon lunatics, and would keep a patient waiting indefinitely, while they gossiped with their friends.75

I have suggested that authority in total institutions is directed to a multitude of items of conduct—dress, deportment, manners—that constantly occur and constantly come up for judgment. The inmate cannot easily escape from the press of judgmental officials and from the enveloping tissue of constraint. A total institution is like a finishing school, but one that has many refinements and

74 Ward, op. cit., p. 23.
75 Johnson and Dodds, op. cit., p. 39.
is little refined. I would like to comment on two aspects of this tendency toward a multiplication of actively enforced rulings.

First, these rulings are often geared in with an obligation to perform the regulated activity in unison with blocks of fellow inmates. This is what is sometimes called regimentation.

Second, these diffuse rulings occur in an authority system of the echelon kind: any member of the staff class has certain rights to discipline any member of the inmate class, thereby markedly increasing the probability of sanction. (This arrangement, it may be noted, is similar to the one that gives any adult in some small American towns certain rights to correct any child not in the immediate presence of his parents and to demand small services from him.) On the outside, the adult in our society is typically under the authority of a single immediate superior in connection with his work, or the authority of one spouse in connection with domestic duties; the only echelon authority he must face—the police—is typically not constantly or relevantly present, except perhaps in the case of traffic-law enforcement.

Given echelon authority and regulations that are diffuse, novel, and strictly enforced, we may expect inmates, especially new ones, to live with chronic anxiety about breaking the rules and the consequence of breaking them—physical injury or death in a concentration camp, being "washed out" in an officer's training school, or demotion in a mental hospital:

Yet, even in the apparent liberty and friendliness of an "open" ward, I still found a background of threats that made me feel something between a prisoner and a pauper. The smallest offence, from a nervous symptom to displeasing a sister personally, was met by the suggestion of removing the offender to a closed ward. The idea of a return to "J" ward,
if I did not eat my food, was brandished at me so constantly that it became an obsession and even such meals as I was able to swallow disagreed with me physically, while other patients were impelled to do unnecessary or uncongenial work by a similar fear.\(^76\)

In total institutions staying out of trouble is likely to require persistent conscious effort. The inmate may forego certain levels of sociability with his fellows to avoid possible incidents.

IV

In concluding this description of the processes of mortification, three general issues must be raised.

First, total institutions disrupt or defile precisely those actions that in civil society have the role of attesting to the actor and those in his presence that he has some command over his world—that he is a person with "adult" self-determination, autonomy, and freedom of action. A failure to retain this kind of adult executive competency, or at least the symbols of it, can produce in the inmate the terror of feeling radically demoted in the age-grading system.\(^77\)

A margin of self-selected expressive behavior—whether of antagonism, affection, or unconcern—is one symbol of self-determination. This evidence of one's autonomy is weakened by such specific obligations as having to write one letter home a week, or having to refrain from expressing sullenness. It is further weakened when this margin of behavior is used as evidence concerning the state of one's psychiatric, religious, or political conscience.

\(^{76}\) Johnson and Dodds, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

\(^{77}\) Cf. Sykes, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-76, "The Deprivation of Autonomy."
There are certain bodily comforts significant to the individual that tend to be lost upon entrance into a total institution—for example, a soft bed or quietness at night. Loss of this set of comforts is apt to reflect a loss of self-determination, too, for the individual tends to ensure these comforts the moment he has resources to expend.

Loss of self-determination seems to have been ceremonialized in concentration camps; thus we have atrocity tales of prisoners being forced to roll in the mud, stand on their heads in the snow, work at ludicrously useless tasks, swear at themselves, or, in the case of Jewish prisoners, sing anti-Semitic songs. A milder version is found in mental hospitals where attendants have been reported forcing a patient who wanted a cigarette to say “pretty please” or jump up for it. In all such cases the inmate is made to display a giving up of his will. Less ceremonialized, but just as extreme, is the embarrassment to one’s autonomy that comes from being locked in a ward, placed in a tight wet pack, or tied in a camisole, and thereby denied the liberty of making small justifiable movements.

Another clear-cut expression of personal inefficacy in total institutions is found in inmates’ use of speech. One implication of using words to convey decisions about action is that the recipient of an order is seen as capable of receiving a message and acting under his own power

78 Hulme, op. cit., p. 18; Orwell, op. cit., p. 521.
79 Hassler, op. cit., p. 78; Johnson and Dodds, op. cit., p. 17.
80 This is one source of mortification that civilians practise on themselves during camping vacations, perhaps on the assumption that a new sense of self can be obtained by voluntarily foregoing some of one’s previous self-impregnated comforts.
81 Kogon, op. cit., p. 66.
82 Ibid., p. 61.
83 Ibid., p. 78.
to complete the suggestion or command. Executing the act himself, he can sustain some vestige of the notion that he is self-determining. Responding to the question in his own words, he can sustain the notion that he is somebody to be considered, however slightly. And since it is only words that pass between himself and the others, he succeeds in retaining at least physical distance from them, however unpalatable the command or statement.

The inmate in a total institution can find himself denied even this kind of protective distance and self-action. Especially in mental hospitals and political training prisons, the statements he makes may be discounted as mere symptoms, with staff giving attention to non-verbal aspects of his reply. Often he is considered to be of insufficient ritual status to be given even minor greetings, let alone listened to. Or the inmate may find that a kind of rhetorical use of language occurs: questions such as, “Have you washed yet?” or, “Have you got both socks on?” may be accompanied by simultaneous searching by the staff which physically discloses the facts, making these verbal questions superfluous. And instead of being told to move in a particular direction at a particular rate, he may find himself pushed along by the guard, or pulled (in the case of overalled mental patients), or frog-marched. And finally, as will be discussed later, the inmate may find that a dual language exists, with the disciplinary facts of his life given a translated ideal phrasing by the staff that mocks the normal use of language.

The second general consideration is the rationale that is employed for assaults upon the self. This issue tends to place total institutions and their inmates into three different groupings.


85 For an example of this non-person treatment, see Johnson and Dodds, op. cit., p. 122.
In religious institutions the implications environmental arrangements have for the self are explicitly recognized:

That is the meaning of the contemplative life, and the sense of all the apparently meaningless little rules and observances and fasts and obediences and penances and humiliations and labors that go to make up the routine of existence in a contemplative monastery: they all serve to remind us of what we are and Who God is—that we may get sick of the sight of ourselves and turn to Him: and in the end, we will find Him in ourselves, in our own purified natures which have become the mirror of His tremendous Goodness and of His endless love. . . .

The inmates, as well as the staff, actively seek out these curtailments of the self, so that mortification is complemented by self-mortification, restrictions by renunciations, beatings by self-flagellations, inquisition by confession. Because religious establishments are explicitly concerned with the processes of mortification, they have a special value for the student.

In concentration camps and, to a lesser extent, prisons, some mortifications seem to be arranged solely or mainly for their mortifying power, as when a prisoner is urinated on, but here the inmate does not embrace and facilitate his own destruction of self.

In many of the remaining total institutions, mortifications are officially rationalized on other grounds, such as sanitation (in connection with latrine duty), responsibility for life (in connection with forced feeding), combat capacity (in connection with Army rules for personal appearance), "security" (in connection with restrictive prison regulations).

In total institutions of all three varieties, however, the various rationales for mortifying the self are very often merely rationalizations, generated by efforts to manage

88 Merton, op. cit., p. 372.
the daily activity of a large number of persons in a restricted space with a small expenditure of resources. Further, curtailments of the self occur in all three, even where the inmate is willing and the management has ideal concerns for his well-being.

Two issues have been considered: the inmate's sense of personal inefficacy and the relation of his own desires to the ideal interests of the establishment. The connection between these two issues is variable. Persons can voluntarily elect to enter a total institution and cease thereafter, to their regret, to be able to make such important decisions. In other cases, notably the religious, inmates may begin with and sustain a willful desire to be stripped and cleansed of personal will. Total institutions are fateful for the inmate's civilian self, although the attachment of the inmate to this civilian self can vary considerably.

The processes of mortification I have been considering have to do with the implications for self that persons oriented to a particular expressive idiom might draw from an individual's appearance, conduct, and general situation. In this context I want to consider a third and final issue: the relation between this symbolic-interaction framework for considering the fate of the self and the conventional psycho-physiological one centered around the concept of stress.

The basic facts about self in this report are phrased in a sociological perspective, always leading back to a description of the institutional arrangements which delineate the personal prerogatives of a member. Of course, a psychological assumption is also implied; cognitive processes are invariably involved, for the social arrangements must be "read" by the individual and others for the image of himself that they imply. But, as I have argued, the relation of this cognitive process to other psychological processes is quite variable; according to the general expressive idiom of our society, having one's
head shaved is easily perceived as a curtailment of the self, but while this mortification may enrage a mental patient, it may please a monk.

Mortification or curtailment of the self is very likely to involve acute psychological stress for the individual, but for an individual sick with his world or guilt-ridden in it mortification may bring psychological relief. Further, the psychological stress often created by assaults on the self can also be produced by matters not perceived as related to the territories of the self—such as loss of sleep, insufficient food, or protracted decision-making. So, too, a high level of anxiety, or the unavailability of fantasy materials such as movies and books, may greatly increase the psychological effect of a violation of the self's boundaries, but in themselves these facilitating factors have nothing to do with the mortification of the self. Empirically, then, the study of stress and of encroachments on the self will often be tied together, but, analytically, two different frameworks are involved.

V

While the process of mortification goes on, the inmate begins to receive formal and informal instruction in what will here be called the privilege system. In so far as the inmate's attachment to his civilian self has been shaken by the stripping processes of the institution, it is largely the privilege system that provides a framework for personal reorganization. Three basic elements of the system may be mentioned.

First, there are the "house rules," a relatively explicit and formal set of prescriptions and proscriptions that lays out the main requirements of inmate conduct. These rules spell out the austere round of life of the inmate. Admission procedures, which strip the recruit of his past
supports, can be seen as the institution’s way of getting him ready to start living by house rules.

Secondly, against this stark background, a small number of clearly defined rewards or privileges are held out in exchange for obedience to staff in action and spirit. It is important to see that many of these potential gratifications are carved out of the flow of support that the inmate had previously taken for granted. On the outside, for example, the inmate probably could unthinkingly decide how he wanted his coffee, whether to light a cigarette, or when to talk; on the inside, such rights may become problematic. Held up to the inmate as possibilities, these few recapturings seem to have a reintegrative effect, re-establishing relationships with the whole lost world and assuaging withdrawal symptoms from it and from one’s lost self. The inmate’s attention, especially at first, comes to be fixed on these supplies and obsessed with them. He can spend the day, like a fanatic, in devoted thoughts about the possibility of acquiring these gratifications or in contemplation of the approaching hour at which they are scheduled to be granted. Melville’s report on navy life contains a typical example:

In the American Navy the law allows one gill of spirits per day to every seaman. In two portions, it is served out just previous to breakfast and dinner. At the roll of the drum, the sailors assemble round a large tub, or cask, filled with the liquid; and, as their names are called off by a midshipman, they step up and regale themselves from a little tin measure called a “tot.” No high-liver helping himself to Tokay off a well-polished sideboard smacks his lips with more mighty satisfaction than the sailor does over his tot. To many of them, indeed, the thought of their daily tots forms a perpetual perspective of ravishing landscapes, indefinitely receding in the distance. It is their great “prospect in life.”
Take away their grog, and life possesses no further charms for them.\textsuperscript{87}

It is one of the most common punishments for very trivial offences in the Navy, to “stop” a seaman’s grog for a day or a week. And as most seamen so cling to their grog, the loss of it is generally deemed by them a very serious penalty. You will sometimes hear them say, “I would rather have my wind stopped than my grog!”\textsuperscript{88}

The building of a world around these minor privileges is perhaps the most important feature of inmate culture, and yet it is something that cannot easily be appreciated by an outsider, even one who has previously lived through the experience himself. This concern with privileges sometimes leads to generous sharing; it almost always leads to a willingness to beg for such things as cigarettes, candy, and newspapers. Understandably, inmate conversation often revolves around a “release binge fantasy,” namely, a recital of what one will do during leave or upon release from the institution. This fantasy is related to a feeling that civilians do not appreciate how wonderful their life is.\textsuperscript{89}

The third element in the privilege system is punishments; these are designated as the consequence of breaking the rules. One set of these punishments consists of the temporary or permanent withdrawal of privileges or the abrogation of the right to try to earn them. In general, the punishments meted out in total institutions are more

\textsuperscript{87} Melville, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 62-63.


\textsuperscript{89} Interestingly enough, there is sometimes a corresponding pre-entrance binge, during which the inmate-to-be indulges in activity he feels will soon be quite unavailable to him. For an example regarding nuns, see Hulme, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 7.
severe than anything encountered by the inmate in his home world. In any case, conditions in which a few easily controlled privileges are so important are the same conditions in which their withdrawal has a terrible significance.

There are some special features of the privilege system which should be noted.

First, punishments and privileges are themselves modes of organization peculiar to total institutions. Whatever their severity, punishments are largely known in the inmate's home world as something applied to animals and children; this conditioning, behavioristic model is not widely applied to adults, since failure to maintain required standards typically leads to indirect disadvantageous consequences and not to specific immediate punishment at all. And privileges in the total institution, it should be emphasized, are not the same as perquisites, indulgences, or values, but merely the absence of deprivations one ordinarily expects not to have to sustain. The very notions of punishments and privileges are not ones that are cut from civilian cloth.

Second, the question of release from the total institution is elaborated into the privilege system. Some acts become known as ones that mean an increase, or no decrease, in length of stay, while others become known as means for shortening the sentence.

Third, punishments and privileges come to be geared into a residential work system. Places to work and places to sleep become clearly defined as places where certain kinds and levels of privilege obtain, and inmates are shifted very frequently and visibly from one place to another as the administrative device for giving them the punishment or reward their co-operativeness warrants. The inmates are moved, the system is not. We can therefore expect some spatial specialization, with one ward or

hut acquiring the reputation of a punishment place for especially recalcitrant inmates, while certain guard assignments become recognized as punishments for staff.

The privilege system consists of a relatively few components, put together with some rational intent, and clearly proclaimed to the participants. The over-all consequence is that co-operativeness is obtained from persons who often have cause to be unco-operative. An illustration of this model universe may be taken from a recent study of a state mental hospital:

The authority of the attendant in the operation of his control system is backed up by both positive and negative power. This power is an essential element in his control of the ward. He can give the patient privileges, and he can punish the patient. The privileges consist of having the best job, better rooms and beds, minor luxuries like coffee on the ward, a little more privacy than the average patient, going outside the ward without supervision, having more access than the average patient to the attendant's companionship or to professional personnel like the physicians, and enjoying such intangible but vital things as being treated with personal kindness and respect.

The punishments which can be applied by the

91 As a qualification it has been argued that in some cases this system is either not very effective or not much relied upon. In some prisons, the rewards that are carved out of usual expectations are granted upon entrance, and little official betterment of position is apparently possible—the only change in status possible involving a loss of privileges (Sykes, op. cit., pp. 51-52). It has been further argued that if the inmate is stripped of enough, then instead of cherishing what remains he can come to see little remaining difference between this and complete expropriation, and so cease to be subject to the power of staff to motivate him to obedience, especially when disobedience may bring prestige among the inmate group (ibid.).
ward attendant are suspension of all privileges, psychological mistreatment, such as ridicule, vicious ribbing, moderate and sometimes severe corporal punishment, or the threat of such punishment, locking up the patient in an isolated room, denial or distortion of access to the professional personnel, threatening to put, or putting, the patient on the list for electroshock therapy, transfer of the patient to undesirable wards, and regular assignment of the patient to unpleasant tasks such as cleaning up after the soilers. 92

A parallel may be found in British prisons in which the "four-stage system" is employed, with an increase at each stage of payment for labor, "association" time with other prisoners, access to newspapers, group eating, and recreation periods. 93

Associated with the privilege system are certain processes important in the life of total institutions.

An "institutional lingo" develops through which inmates describe the events that are crucial in their particular world. The staff, especially its lower levels, will know this language, too, and use it when talking to inmates, reverting to more standardized speech when talking to superiors and outsiders. Along with a lingo, inmates acquire knowledge of the various ranks and officials, an accumulation of lore about the establishment, and some comparative information about life in other similar total institutions.

Furthermore, the staff and inmates will be clearly aware of what, in mental hospitals, prisons, and barracks, is called "messing up." Messing up involves a complex process of engaging in forbidden activity (including sometimes an effort at escape), getting caught, and re-

92 Belknap, op. cit., p. 164.
93 For example, Dendrickson and Thomas, op. cit., pp. 99-100.
ceiving something like full punishment. There is usually an alteration in privilege status, categorized by a phrase such as “getting busted.” Typical infractions involved in messing up are: fights, drunkenness, attempted suicide, failure at examinations, gambling, insubordination, homosexuality, improper leave-taking, and participation in collective riots. Although these infractions are typically ascribed to the offender’s cussedness, villainy, or “sickness,” they do in fact constitute a vocabulary of institutionalized actions, but a limited one, so that the same messing up may occur for quite different reasons. Inmates and staff may tacitly agree, for example, that a given messing up is a way for inmates to show resentment against a situation felt to be unjust in terms of the informal agreements between staff and inmates,94 or a way of postponing release without having to admit to one’s fellow inmates that one does not really want to go. Whatever the meaning imputed to them, messings up have some important social functions for the institution. They tend to limit rigidities which would occur were seniority the only means of mobility in the privilege system; further, demotion through messing up brings old-time inmates into contact with new inmates in unprivileged positions, assuring a flow of information concerning the system and the people in it.

In total institutions there will also be a system of what might be called secondary adjustments, namely, practices that do not directly challenge staff but allow inmates to obtain forbidden satisfactions or to obtain permitted ones by forbidden means. These practices are variously referred to as “the angles,” “knowing the ropes,” “conniving,” “gimmicks,” “deals,” or “ins.” Such adaptations apparently reach their finest flower in prisons, but of

characteristics of total institutions

Other total institutions are overrun with them, too. Secondary adjustments provide the inmate with important evidence that he is still his own man, with some control of his environment; sometimes a secondary adjustment becomes almost a kind of lodgment for the self, a *churinga* in which the soul is felt to reside.

We can predict from the presence of secondary adjustments that the inmate group will have evolved some kind of code and some means of informal social control to prevent one inmate from informing staff about the secondary adjustments of another. On the same ground, we can expect that one dimension of social typing of and among inmates will be this question of security, leading to definitions of persons as "squealers," "finks," "rats," or "stoolies" on one hand, and "right guys" on the other. When new inmates can play a role in the system of secondary adjustments, as by providing new faction members or new sexual objects, then their "welcome" may indeed be a sequence of initial indulgences and enticements instead of exaggerated deprivations. Because of secondary adjustments we also find "kitchen strata," a kind of rudimentary, largely informal stratification of inmates on the basis of differential access to disposable illicit commodities; again, too, we find social typing to

---


96 See, for example, Melville's extended description of the fight his fellow seamen put up to prevent the clipping of their beards, the clipping being in accordance with full navy regulations. Melville, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-47.


98 See, for example, Ida Ann Harper, "The Role of the 'Fringer' in a State Prison for Women," *Social Forces*, XXXI (1952), pp. 53-60.
designate the powerful persons in the informal market system.99

While the privilege system seems to provide the chief framework within which reassembly of the self takes place, there are other factors that characteristically lead by different routes in the same general direction. Relief from economic and social responsibilities—much touted as part of the therapy of mental hospitals—is one, although in many cases it seems that the disorganizing effect of this moratorium is more significant than its organizing effect. More important as a reorganizing influence is the fraternalization process, through which socially distant persons find themselves developing mutual support and common counter-mores in opposition to a system that has forced them into intimacy and into a single, equalitarian community of fate.100 The new recruit frequently starts out with something like the staff's popular misconceptions of the character of the inmates; he comes to find that most of his fellows have all the properties of ordinary, occasionally decent human beings worthy of sympathy and support. The offenses that inmates are known to have committed on the outside cease to provide an effective means for judging their personal qualities—a lesson that conscientious objectors, for example, seem to have learned in prison.101 Further, if the inmates are persons who are accused of having com-

99 For concentration camps, see the discussion of "prominents" throughout Cohen, op. cit.; for mental hospitals, see Belknap, op. cit., p. 189; for prisons, see the discussion of "Politicians" in Donald Clemmer, The Prison Community (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1940), pp. 277-79 and 298-309; also Hayner and Ash, op. cit., p. 367; and Caldwell, op. cit., pp. 651-53.

100 For the version of this inmate solidarity to be found in military academies, see Dornbusch, op. cit., p. 318.

101 See Hassler, op. cit., pp. 74, 117. In mental hospitals, of course, the patient's antagonism to staff obtains one of its supports from the discovery that, like himself, many other patients are more like ordinary persons than like anything else.
mitted a crime of some kind against society, then the new inmate, even though sometimes in fact quite guiltless, may come to share both the guilty feelings of his fellows and their well-elaborated defenses against these feelings. A sense of common injustice and a sense of bitterness against the outside world tend to develop, marking an important movement in the inmate's moral career. This response to felt guilt and massive deprivation is most clearly illustrated, perhaps, in prison life:

By their reasoning, after an offender has been subjected to unfair or excessive punishment and treatment more degrading than that prescribed by law, he comes to justify his act which he could not have justified when he committed it. He decides to "get even" for his unjust treatment in prison and take reprisals through further crime at the first opportunity. *With that decision he becomes a criminal.*

An imprisoned conscientious objector provides a similar statement from his own experience:

A point I want to record here is the curious difficulty I have in feeling innocent, myself. I find it very easy to accept the notion that I am paying for the same kind of misdeeds as those charged to the other men in here, and I must remind myself from time to time that a government that actually believes in freedom of conscience should not put men in prison for practicing it. Consequently, what indignation I feel toward prison practices is not the indignation of the persecuted innocent or the

---

102 Richard McCleery, *The Strange Journey*, University of North Carolina Extension Bulletin, XXXII (1953), p. 24. (Italics in the original.) There is a suggestion in Brewster Smith (Stouffer; *op. cit.*) that with the decision that officer training camp has "earned" him rights over enlisted men, the officer trainee becomes an officer. The pain suffered in camp can be used as a justification for the pleasures of command.
martyr, but of the guilty who feels his punishment to be beyond his deserts and *inflicted by those who are not themselves free of guilt.* This latter point is one that all the inmates feel strongly, and is the source of the deep cynicism that pervades the prison.  

A more general statement may be taken from two other students of the same kind of total institution:

In many ways, the inmate social system may be viewed as providing a way of life which enables the inmate to avoid the devastating psychological effects of internalizing and converting social rejection into self-rejection. In effect, it permits the inmate to reject his rejectors rather than himself.  

Here of course is one irony of a somewhat therapeutic and permissive policy—the inmate becomes less able to protect his ego by directing hostility to external targets.  

There is one secondary adjustment that very clearly reflects the fraternization process and the rejection of the staff, namely, collective teasing. Although the punishment-reward system can deal with individual infractions that are identifiable as to source, inmate solidarity may be strong enough to support brief gestures of anonymous or mass defiance. Examples are: slogan shouting, booing, tray thumping, mass food rejection, and minor sabotage. These actions tend to take the form of “rise-

---

103 Hassler, *op. cit.*, p. 97. (Italics in the original.)  
105 This issue is incisively treated in *ibid.*, p. 95.  
106 Cantine and Rainer, *op. cit.*, p. 59; see also Norman, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.  
getting”: a warder, guard, or attendant—or even the staff as a whole—is teased, mocked, or accorded other forms of minor abuse until he loses some measure of self-control and engages in ineffective counteraction.

In addition to fraternalization among all inmates there is likely to be bond formation of a more differentiating kind. Sometimes special solidarities extend throughout a physically closed region, such as a ward or cottage, whose inhabitants perceive they are being administered as a single unit, and hence have a lively sense of common fate. Lawrence provides an illustrative statement concerning air force “administered groups”:

There lies a golden mist of laughter—even if silly laughter—over our hut. Shake together fifty-odd fellows, strangers of every class, in a close room for twenty days: subject them to a new and arbitrary discipline: weary them with dirty, senseless, uncalled for yet arduous fatigues . . . but there has not been a sharp word between any two of us. Such liberality of body and spirit, such active vigour, cleanliness and good temper would hardly have persisted save in the conditions of a common servitude.109

And of course still smaller units are found, too: cliques; more or less stable sexual ties; and, most importantly perhaps, “buddy formation,” whereby a pair of inmates come to be recognized by other inmates as “buddies” or “mates” and come to rely on each other for a wide range of assistance and emotional support.110 Although these friendship pairs may be given quasi-official recognition, as when a bosun on board ship arranges for buddies to take a watch together,111 deep involvement in the rela-

109 Lawrence, op. cit., p. 59. (Ellipsis dots in the original.)

110 For example, Heckstall-Smith, op. cit., p. 30. Behan, op. cit., provides much material throughout on the buddy or mate relation.

111 S. A. Richardson, The Social Organization of British and United States Merchant Ships. (Unpublished monograph,
tionship may also meet with a kind of institutional incest taboo functioning to prevent dyads from creating their own world in the institution. In fact, in some total institutions, the staff feel that solidarity among sets of inmates can provide the base for concerted activity forbidden by the rules, and the staff may consciously try to hinder primary group formation.

VI

Although there are solidarizing tendencies such as fraternalization and clique formation, they are limited. Constraints which place inmates in a position to sympathize and communicate with each other do not necessarily lead to high group morale and solidarity. In some concentration camps and prisoner-of-war installations the inmate cannot rely on his fellows, who may steal from him, assault him, and squeal on him, leading to what some students have referred to as anomie. A full statement of this theme may be found in D. Cressey and W. Krassowski, “Inmate Organization and Anomie in American Prisons and Soviet Labor Camps,” Social Problems, V (Winter 1957-58), pp. 217-30.

In mental hospitals, dyads and triads may keep secrets from the authorities, but anything known to a whole ward of patients is likely to get to the ear of the attendant. (In prisons, of course, inmate organization has sometimes been strong enough to run strikes and short-lived insurrections; in prisoner-of-war camps, it has sometimes been possible to organize sections of the prisoners to operate escape channels; in concentration camps there have been periods of thoroughgoing underground organiza-

available at The New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1954, p. 17.)

112 See, for example, P. R. Reid, Escape from Colditz (New York: Berkley Publishing Corp., 1956).
tion; and on ships there have been mutinies; but these concerted actions seem to be the exception, not the rule.) But though there is usually little group loyalty in total institutions, the expectation that group loyalty should prevail forms part of the inmate culture and underlies the hostility accorded those who break inmate solidarity.

The privilege system and the mortifying processes that have been discussed represent the conditions to which the inmate must adapt. These conditions allow for different individualistic ways of meeting them, apart from any effort at collective subversive action. The same inmate will employ different personal lines of adaptation at different phases in his moral career and may even alternate among different tacks at the same time.

First, there is the tack of "situational withdrawal." The inmate withdraws apparent attention from everything except events immediately around his body and sees these in a perspective not employed by others present. This drastic curtailment of involvement in interactional events is best known, of course, in mental hospitals, under the title of "regression." Aspects of "prison psychosis" or going "stir simple" represent the same adjustment, as do some forms of "acute depersonalization" described in concentration camps and "tankeritis" apparently found among confirmed merchant mariners. I do not think it is known whether this line of adaptation forms a single continuum of varying degrees of withdrawal or whether there are standard plateaus of disinvolvment. Given the pressures apparently required to dislodge an inmate from this status, as well as the cur-

115 For an early treatment, see P. Nitsche and K. Wilmanns, The History of Prison Psychosis, Nervous and Mental Disease Monograph Series No. 13 (1912).
116 Richardson, op. cit., p. 42.
rently limited facilities for doing so, this line of adaptation is often effectively irreversible.

Secondly, there is the “intransigent line”: the inmate intentionally challenges the institution by flagrantly refusing to co-operate with staff.\(^{117}\) The result is a constantly communicated intransigency and sometimes high individual morale. Many large mental hospitals, for example, have wards where this spirit prevails. Sustained rejection of a total institution often requires sustained orientation to its formal organization, and hence, paradoxically, a deep kind of involvement in the establishment. Similarly, when staff take the line that the intransigent inmate must be broken (as they sometimes do in the case of hospital psychiatrists prescribing electroshock\(^{118}\) or military tribunals prescribing the stockade), then the institution shows as much special devotion to the rebel as he has shown to it. Finally, although some prisoners of war have been known to take a staunchly intransigent stance throughout their incarceration, intransigence is typically a temporary and initial phase of reaction, with the inmate shifting to situational withdrawal or some other line of adaptation.

A third standard alignment in the institutional world is “colonization”: the sampling of the outside world provided by the establishment is taken by the inmate as the whole, and a stable, relatively contented existence is built up out of the maximum satisfactions procurable within the institution.\(^{119}\) Experience of the outside world is used as a point of reference to demonstrate the desirability of life on the inside, and the usual tension between the two worlds is markedly reduced, thwarting the moti-

\(^{117}\) See, for example, the discussion of “The Resisters,” in Schein, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 166-67.

\(^{118}\) Bellman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 192.

\(^{119}\) In the case of mental hospitals, those who take this line are sometimes called “institutional cures” or are said to suffer from “hospitalitis.”
vational scheme based upon this felt discrepancy which I described as peculiar to total institutions. Characteristically, the individual who too obviously takes this line may be accused by his fellow inmates of "having found a home" or of "never having had it so good." The staff itself may become vaguely embarrassed by this use that is being made of the institution, sensing that the benign possibilities in the situation are somehow being misused. Colonizers may feel obliged to deny their satisfaction with the institution, if only to sustain the counter-mores supporting inmate solidarity. They may find it necessary to mess up just prior to their slated discharge to provide themselves with an apparently involuntary basis for continued incarceration. Significantly, the staff who try to make life in total institutions more bearable must face the possibility that doing so may increase the attractiveness and likelihood of colonization.

A fourth mode of adaptation to the setting of a total institution is that of "conversion": the inmate appears to take over the official or staff view of himself and tries to act out the role of the perfect inmate. While the colonized inmate builds as much of a free community for himself as possible by using the limited facilities available, the convert takes a more disciplined, moralistic, monochromatic line, presenting himself as someone whose institutional enthusiasm is always at the disposal of the staff. In Chinese P.O.W. camps, we find Americans who became "Pros" and fully espoused the Communist view of the world. In army barracks there are enlisted men who give the impression that they are always "sucking around" and always "bucking for promotion." In prisons there are "square johns." In German concentration camps, a long-time prisoner sometimes came to adapt the vocabulary, recreation, posture, expressions of aggression, and clothing style of the Gestapo, execut-

ing the role of straw boss with military strictness. Some mental hospitals have the distinction of providing two quite different conversion possibilities—one for the new admission, who can see the light after an appropriate inner struggle and adopt the psychiatric view of himself, and another for the chronic patient, who adopts the manner and dress of attendants while helping them to manage the other patients, employing a stringency sometimes excelling that of the attendants themselves. And of course in officer training camps we find trainees who quickly become “G.I.,” espousing a torment of themselves that they will soon be able to inflict on others.

Here is a significant way in which total institutions differ: many, like progressive mental hospitals, merchant ships, TB sanitariums, and brainwashing camps, offer the inmate an opportunity to live up to a model of conduct that is at once ideal and staff-sponsored—a model felt by its advocates to be in the best interests of the very persons to whom it is applied; other total institutions, like some concentration camps and some prisons, do not officially sponsor an ideal that the inmate is expected to incorporate.

The alignments that have been mentioned represent coherent courses to pursue, but few inmates seem to pursue any one of them very far. In most total institutions, most inmates take the tack of what some of them call “playing it cool.” This involves a somewhat opportunistic combination of secondary adjustments, conversion, colonization, and loyalty to the inmate group, so that the inmate will have a maximum chance, in the particular circumstances, of eventually getting out physi-


122 Brewster Smith (Stouffer, op. cit.), p. 390.
cally and psychologically undamaged. Typically, the inmate when with fellow inmates will support the counter-mores and conceal from them how tractably he acts when alone with the staff. Inmates who play it cool subordinate contacts with their fellows to the higher claim of "keeping out of trouble"; they tend to volunteer for nothing; and they may learn to cut their ties to the outside world just enough to give cultural reality to the world inside but not enough to lead to colonization.

I have suggested some of the lines of adaptation that inmates can take to the pressures present in total institutions. Each tack represents a way of managing the tension between the home world and the institutional world. Sometimes, however, the home world of the inmate has been, in fact, such as to immunize him against the bleak world on the inside, and for these persons no particular scheme of adaptation need be carried very far. Some lower-class mental-hospital patients who have lived all their previous lives in orphanages, reformatories, and jails tend to see the hospital as just another total institution, to which they can apply the adaptive techniques learned and perfected in similar institutions. For these


124 This two-facedness is very commonly found in total institutions. In the state mental hospital studied by the writer, even the few elite patients selected for individual psychotherapy, and hence in the best position to espouse the psychiatric approach to self, tended to present their favorable view of psychotherapy only to the members of their intimate cliques. For a report on the way in which army prisoners concealed from fellow offenders their interest in "restoration" to the Army, see the comments by Richard Cloward in Session Four of New Perspectives for Research on Juvenile Delinquency, eds. Helen L. Witmer and Ruth Kotinsky, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, Children's Bureau Publication No. 356 (1956), especially p. 90.
persons, playing it cool does not represent a shift in their moral career but an alignment that is already second nature. Similarly, Shetland youths recruited into the British merchant service are apparently not much threatened by the cramped, arduous life on board, because island life is even more stunted; they make uncomplaining sailors because from their point of view they have little to complain about.

Something similar in effect to immunization is achieved by inmates who have special compensations inside the institution or special means of being impervious to its assaults. In the early period of German concentration camps, criminals apparently derived compensative satisfaction from living with middle-class political prisoners.\textsuperscript{125} Similarly, the middle-class vocabulary of group psychotherapy and the classless ideology of “psychodynamics” give to some socially ambitious and socially frustrated lower-class mental patients the closest contact with the polite world that they have ever had. Strong religious and political convictions have served to insulate the true believer against the assaults of a total institution. Failure to speak the staff’s language may make the staff give up its efforts at reformation, freeing the non-speaker from certain pressures.\textsuperscript{126}

VII

I would now like to consider some of the dominant themes of inmate culture.

First, in many total institutions a peculiar kind and level of self-concern is engendered. The low position of

\textsuperscript{125} Bettelheim, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 425.

\textsuperscript{126} Thus, Schein, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 165 fn., suggests that the Chinese gave up on Puerto Ricans and other non-English-speaking prisoners of war and allowed them to work out a viable routine of menial chores.
inmates relative to their station on the outside, established initially through the stripping processes, creates a milieu of personal failure in which one's fall from grace is continuously pressed home. In response, the inmate tends to develop a story, a line, a sad tale—a kind of lamentation and apologia—which he constantly tells to his fellows as a means of accounting for his present low estate. In consequence, the inmate's self may become even more a focus of his conversation and concern than it does on the outside, leading to much self-pity. Although the staff constantly discredit these stories, inmate audiences tend to be tactful, suppressing at least some of the disbelief and boredom engendered by these recitations. Thus, an ex-prisoner writes:

Even more impressive is the almost universal delicacy when it comes to inquiring into another man's misdeeds, and the refusal to determine one's relations with another convict on the basis of his record.

Similarly, in American state mental hospitals, inmate etiquette allows one patient to ask another what ward and service he is on, and how long he has been in the hospital; but questions about why the other is in are not quickly asked, and, when asked, the biased version almost inevitably given tends to be accepted.

Second, among inmates in many total institutions there is a strong feeling that time spent in the establishment is time wasted or destroyed or taken from one's life; it is time that must be written off; it is something that must be "done" or "marked" or "put in" or "pulled." In prisons and mental hospitals, a general statement of how well one is adapting to the institution may be phrased in

127 For prison examples, see Hassler, op. cit., p. 18; Heckstall-Smith, op. cit., pp. 29-30.
terms of how one is doing time, whether easily or hard.\textsuperscript{129} This time is something its doers have bracketed off for constant conscious consideration in a way not quite found on the outside. As a result, the inmate tends to feel that for the duration of his required stay—his sentence—he has been totally exiled from living.\textsuperscript{130} It is in this context that we can appreciate something of the demoralizing influence of an indefinite sentence or a very long one.\textsuperscript{131}

However harsh the conditions of life in total institutions, harshness alone cannot account for this sense of life wasted; we must rather look to the social disconnections caused by entrance and to the failure (usually) to acquire within the institution gains that can be transferred to outside life—gains such as money earned, or marital relations formed, or certified training received. One of the virtues of the doctrine that insane asylums are treatment hospitals for sick people is that inmates who have given up three or four years of their life to this kind of exile can try to convince themselves they have been busily working on their cure and that, once cured, the time spent getting cured will have been a reasonable and profitable investment.

This sense of dead and heavy-hanging time probably explains the premium placed on what might be called removal activities, namely, voluntary unserious pursuits which are sufficiently engrossing and exciting to lift the

\textsuperscript{129} Much material on the conception of time in total institutions may be found in Maurice L. Farber, "Suffering and Time Perspective of the Prisoner," Part IV, Authority and Frustration, by Kurt Lewin, \textit{et al.}, Studies in Topological and Vector Psychology III, University of Iowa Studies in Child Welfare, Vol. XX (1944).

\textsuperscript{130} The best description that I know of this feeling of not living is Freud's paper, "Mourning and Melancholia," where the state is said to come about as a consequence of losing a loved object. See \textit{Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud} (London: Hogarth Press, 1925), Vol. IV, pp. 152-70.

\textsuperscript{131} See, for example, Cohen, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 128.
participant out of himself, making him oblivious for the
time being to his actual situation. If the ordinary activi-
ties in total institutions can be said to torture time, these
activities mercifully kill it.

Some removal activities are collective, such as field
games, dances, orchestra or band playing, choral singing,
lectures, art classes or woodworking classes, and card
playing; some are individual but rely on public materials,
such as reading and solitary TV watching. No doubt
private fantasy ought to be included, too, as Clemmer
suggests in his description of the prisoner’s “reverie-
plus.” Some of these activities may be officially
sponsored by staff; some, not officially sponsored, will
constitute secondary adjustments—for example, gambling,
homosexuality, or “highs” and “jags” achieved with in-
dustrial alcohol, nutmeg, or ginger. Whether officially
sponsored or not, whenever any of these removal activi-
ties become too engrossing or too continuous, the staff
is likely to object—as they often do, for example, to liquor,
sex, and gambling—since in their eyes the institution, not
some other kind of social entity enclosed within the in-
stitution, must possess the inmate.

Every total institution can be seen as a kind of dead
sea in which little islands of vivid, encapturing activity
appear. Such activity can help the individual withstand
the psychological stress usually engendered by assaults

132 A good prison illustration is provided by Norman, op.
cit., p. 71.
133 See, for example, the fine description by Behan, op. cit.,
pp. 72-75, of the delights of reading in bed in one’s cell, and
the consequent precaution of rationing one’s reading supply.
134 Such activity is, of course, not restricted to total insti-
tutions. Thus, we find the classic case of the bored and weary
housewife who “takes a few minutes for herself” to “put her
feet up,” removing herself from home by reading the morning
paper over a cup of coffee and a cigarette.
135 Clemmer, op. cit., pp. 244-47.
136 Cantine and Rainer, op. cit., pp. 59-60, provide an
element.
upon the self. Yet it is precisely in the insufficiency of these activities that an important deprivational effect of total institutions can be found. In civil society, an individual pushed to the wall in one of his social roles usually has an opportunity to crawl into some protected place where he can indulge in commercialized fantasy—movies, TV, radio, reading—or employ "relievers" like cigarettes or drink. In total institutions, especially right after admission, these materials may be too little available. At a time when these resting points are most needed, they may be most difficult to obtain.¹⁸⁷

VIII

In this discussion of the inmate world, I have commented on the mortification processes, the reorganizing influences, the lines of responses inmates take, and the cultural milieu that develops. I would like to add a concluding comment on the processes that generally occur if and when the inmate is released and sent back into the wider society.

Although inmates do plan release binges and may keep an hourly count of the time until their release date, those about to be released very often become anxious at the thought, and, as suggested, some mess up or re-enlist to avoid the issue. The inmate's anxiety about release often seems to take the form of a question put to himself and his friends: "Can I make it on the outside?" This question brackets all of civil life as something to have conceptions and concerns about. What for outsiders is

¹⁸⁷ For example, Cantine and Rainer, op. cit., p. 59, quoting James Peck:
"I missed the drinks even more than the women and a number of guys agreed with me. When you get the blues on the outside you can always kill them with a couple of drinks. But in jail you just have to wait until the blues wear off and that may take a long while."
usually an unperceived ground for perceived figures is for the inmate a figure on a larger ground. Perhaps such a perspective is demoralizing, providing one reason why ex-inmates often think about the possibility of "going back in" and one reason why an appreciable number do return.

Total institutions frequently claim to be concerned with rehabilitation, that is, with resetting the inmate's self-regulatory mechanisms so that after he leaves he will maintain the standards of the establishment of his own accord. (The staff is expected to be properly self-regulating upon first coming to the total institution, sharing with members of other kinds of establishments the ideal of needing merely to learn procedure.) In fact, this claim of change is seldom realized, and, even when permanent alteration occurs, the changes are often not of the kind intended by the staff. Except in some religious institutions, neither the stripping processes nor the reorganizing processes seem to have a lasting effect, partly because of the availability of secondary adjustments, the presence of counter-mores, and the tendency for inmates to combine all strategies and play it cool.

Of course, immediately upon release the inmate is likely to be marvelously alive to the liberties and pleasures of civil status that civilians ordinarily do not see as events at all—the sharp smell of fresh air, talking when you want to, using a whole match to light a cigarette, having a solitary snack at a table set for only four people. A mental patient, back at the hospital after a weekend visit home, describes her experience to a circle of closely listening friends:

I got up in the morning, and I went into the kitchen, and I fixed coffee; it was wonderful. And in the

138 Important evidence for this comes from our knowledge of the readjustment of repatriated "brainwashed" prisoners of war. See Hinkle and Wolff, op. cit., p. 174.
139 Lawrence, op. cit., p. 48.
evening we had a couple of beers and went and had chili; it was terrific, really delicious. I didn’t forget one minute that I was free.\(^\text{140}\)

And yet it seems that shortly after release the ex-inmate forgets a great deal of what life was like on the inside and once again begins to take for granted the privileges around which life in the institution was organized. The sense of injustice, bitterness, and alienation, so typically engendered by the inmate’s experience and so commonly marking a stage in his moral career, seems to weaken upon graduation.

But what the ex-inmate does retain of his institutional experience tells us important things about total institutions. Very often, entrance means for the recruit that he has taken on what might be called a proactive status: not only is his social position within the walls radically different from what it was on the outside but, as he comes to learn, if and when he gets out, his social position on the outside will never again be quite what it was prior to entrance. Where the proactive status is a relatively favorable one, as it is for those who graduate from officers’ training schools, elite boarding schools, ranking monasteries, etc., then jubilant official reunions, announcing pride in one’s “school,” can be expected. When the proactive status is unfavorable, as it is for those who graduate from prisons or mental hospitals, we can employ the term “stigmatization” and expect that the ex-inmate may make an effort to conceal his past and try to “pass.”

As one student has implied,\(^\text{141}\) an important kind of leverage possessed by the staff is their power to give the kind of discharge that reduces stigmatization. Army prison officials can hold out the possibility of the inmate’s being restored to active duty and, potentially, an honorable discharge; mental-hospital administrators can hold

\(^{140}\) Writer’s field notes.

\(^{141}\) Cloward, op. cit., pp. 80-83.
out the possibility of a "clean bill of health" (discharged as cured) and also personal recommendations. Here we have one reason why inmates, when with staff, sometimes affect enthusiasm for what the institution is doing for them.

We can now return to a consideration of release anxiety. One explanation offered for it is that the individual is unwilling or too "sick" to reassume the responsibility from which the total institution freed him. My own experience in the study of one type of total institution, mental hospitals, tends to minimize this factor. A factor likely to be more important is disculturation, the loss or failure to acquire some of the habits currently required in the wider society. Another is stigmatization. When the individual has taken on a low proactive status by becoming an inmate, he finds a cool reception in the wider world—and is likely to experience this at a moment, hard even for those without his stigma, when he must apply to someone for a job and a place to live. Furthermore, release is likely to come just when the inmate has finally learned the ropes on the inside and won privileges that he has painfully learned are very important. In brief, he may find that release means moving from the top of a small world to the bottom of a large one. In addition, when the inmate returns to the free community, he may leave with some limits on his freedom. Some concentration camps required the inmate to sign a release, attesting that he had been treated fairly; he was warned of the consequences of telling tales out of school.142 In some mental hospitals an inmate being prepared for discharge is interviewed a final time to discover whether or not he harbors resentment against the institution and those who arranged his entrance into it, and he is warned against causing trouble to the latter. Further, the departing inmate must often promise to seek help should he again find himself "getting sick" or "getting into trouble."

142 Cohen, op. cit., p. 7; Kogon, op. cit., p. 72.
Often the ex-mental patient learns his kin and employer have been advised to get in touch with the authorities should trouble arise again. For the man who leaves prison, there may be formal parole, with the obligation to report regularly and to keep away from the circles from which he originally entered the institution.

THE STAFF WORLD

I

Many total institutions, most of the time, seem to function merely as storage dumps for inmates, but, as previously suggested, they usually present themselves to the public as rational organizations designed consciously, through and through, as effective machines for producing a few officially avowed and officially approved ends. It was also suggested that one frequent official objective is the reformation of inmates in the direction of some ideal standard. This contradiction, between what the institution does and what its officials must say it does, forms the basic context of the staff's daily activity.

Within this context, perhaps the first thing to say about the staff is that their work, and hence their world, have uniquely to do with people. This people-work is not quite like personnel work or the work of those involved in service relationships; the staff, after all, have objects and products to work upon, not services, but these objects and products are people.

As material upon which to work, people can take on somewhat the same characteristics as inanimate objects. Surgeons prefer to operate on slender patients rather than fat ones, because with fat ones instruments get slippery, and there are the extra layers to cut through. Morticians in mental hospitals sometimes favor thin fe-
males over fat men, because heavy "stiffs" are difficult to move and male stiffs must be dressed in jackets that are hard to pull over stiffened arms and fingers. Also, mismanagement of either animate or inanimate objects may leave telltale marks for supervisors to see. And just as an article being processed through an industrial plant must be followed by a paper shadow showing what has been done by whom, what is to be done, and who last had responsibility for it, so a human object, moving, say, through a mental-hospital system, must be followed by a chain of informative receipts detailing what has been done to and by the patient and who had most recent responsibility for him. Even the presence or absence of a particular patient at a given meal or for a given night may have to be recorded, so that cost accounting can be maintained and appropriate adjustments rendered in billing. In the inmate's career from admission suite to burial plot, many different kinds of staff will add their official note to his case file as he temporarily passes under their jurisdiction, and long after he has died physically his marked remains will survive as an actionable entity in the hospital's bureaucratic system.

Given the physiological characteristics of the human organism, it is obvious that certain requirements must be met if any continued use is to be made of people. But this, of course, is the case with inanimate objects, too; the temperature of any storehouse must be regulated, regardless of whether people or things are stored. Also, just as tin mines, paint factories, or chemical plants may involve special work hazards for employees, there are (staffs believe, at least) special dangers in some kinds of people-work. In mental hospitals, the staffs believe that patients may strike out "for no reason" and injure an official; some attendants feel that prolonged exposure to mental patients can have a contagious effect. In TB sanitaria and in leprosaria, the staff feel they are being specially exposed to dangerous diseases.
While there are these similarities between people-work and object-work, the crucial determinants of the work world of the staff derive from the unique aspects of people as material to work upon.

Persons are almost always considered to be ends in themselves, according to the broad moral principles of a total institution's environing society. Almost always, then, we find that some *technically* unnecessary standards of handling must be maintained with human materials. This maintenance of what we call humane standards comes to be defined as part of the "responsibility" of the institution and presumably is one of the things the institution guarantees the inmate in exchange for his liberty. Prison officials are obliged to thwart the suicidal efforts of a prisoner and to give him full medical attention, even if this might require postponing his execution. Something similar has been reported in German concentration camps, where inmates were sometimes given medical attention although shortly destined for the gas chamber.

A second special contingency in the work world of the staff is that inmates typically have statuses and relationships in the outside world that must be taken into consideration. This is, of course, related to the previously mentioned fact that the institution must respect some of the rights of inmates *qua* persons. Even with a committed mental patient, whose civil rights are largely taken from him, a large amount of paper work will be involved. Of course, the rights that are denied a mental patient are usually transferred to a relation, a committee, or the superintendent of the hospital itself, who then becomes the legal person whose authorization must be obtained for the many matters originating outside the institution: social-security benefits, income taxes, upkeep of properties, insurance payments, old-age pensions, stock dividends, dental bills, legal obligations incurred prior to commitment, permission to release psychiatric case records to insurance companies or attorneys, permission for
special visits from persons other than next of kin, etc. All of these issues have to be dealt with by the institution, even if only to pass the decisions on to those legally empowered to make them.

The staff are reminded of their obligations in these matters of standards and rights not only by their own internal superordinates but also by various watchdog agencies in the wider society and often by the kin of inmates. The material of their work can itself play this role. Some attendants in mental hospitals prefer to work on regressed wards because patients there tend to make fewer time-consuming requests than do patients on better wards who are in good contact. There are even phrases employed by the staff, such as the navy term "sea lawyer," for denoting an inmate who demands treatment "by the book." Kin as critics present a special problem because, while inmates can be educated about the price they will pay for making demands on their own behalf, relations receive less tutoring in this regard and rush in with requests for inmates that inmates would blush to make for themselves.

The multiplicity of ways in which inmates must be considered ends in themselves, and the large number of inmates, forces upon the staff some of the classic dilemmas that must be faced by those who govern men. Since a total institution functions somewhat as a state, its staff suffers somewhat from the tribulations that beset governors.

In the case of any single inmate, the assurance that certain standards will be maintained in his own interests may require sacrifice of other standards; implied in this is a difficult weighing of ends. For example, if a suicidal inmate is to be kept alive, the staff may feel it necessary to keep him under constant surveillance or even tied to a chair in a small locked room. If a mental patient is to be kept from tearing at grossly irritated sores and repeating time and again a cycle of curing and disorder,
the staff may feel it necessary to curtail the freedom of his hands. A patient who refuses to eat may have to be humiliated by forced feeding. If inmates of TB sanitarium are to be given an opportunity to recover, freedom of recreation must be curtailed.\textsuperscript{148}

The standards of treatment that one inmate has a right to expect may conflict, of course, with the standards desired by another, giving rise to another set of governmental problems. Thus, in mental hospitals, if the grounds gate is to be kept open out of respect for those with town parole, then some other patients who otherwise could have been trusted on the grounds may have to be kept on locked wards. And if a canteen and mailbox are to be freely available to those on the grounds, then patients on a strict diet, or those who write threatening and obscene letters, will have to be denied liberty of the grounds.

The obligation of the staff to maintain certain humane standards of treatment for inmates presents problems in itself, but a further set of characteristic problems is found in the constant conflict between humane standards on one hand and institutional efficiency on the other. I will cite only one example. The personal possessions of an individual are an important part of the materials out of which he builds a self, but as an inmate the ease with which he can be managed by staff is likely to increase with the degree to which he is dispossessed. The remarkable efficiency with which a mental-hospital ward can adjust to a daily shift in number of resident patients is related to the fact that the comers and leavers do not come or leave with any properties but themselves and do not have any right to choose where they will be located. Further, the efficiency with which the clothes of these patients can be kept clean and fresh is related to the fact that everyone's soiled clothing can be indiscriminately placed in one bundle, and laundered\textsuperscript{148} Roth, "What Is an Activity," \textit{op. cit.}
clothing can be redistributed not according to ownership but according to approximate size. Similarly, the quickest assurance that patients going on the grounds will be warmly dressed is to march them past a pile of the ward's allotment of coats, allowing no choice as to whether to wear one or which to wear, and requiring them for the same purposes of health to give up claim to these collectivized garments on returning to the ward. The very structure of a garment can be determined by the interests of efficiency, not self-enhancement, as the following trade advertisement suggests:

CHEERY, STURDY! SNAP-FASTENED BUILT-IN PANTY
All-in-one garment, designed and tested by institutions for mental and retarded patients. Inhibits the exposure impulse, resists tearing. Slips on over head. No brassiere or other undergarment needed. Snap-fasteners at crotch aid toilet training. Pleasing patterns or 2-tones with round, V or square neckline. Needs no ironing.\textsuperscript{144}

Just as personal possessions may interfere with the smooth running of an institutional operation and be removed for this reason, so parts of the body may conflict with efficient management and the conflict may be resolved in favor of efficiency. If the heads of inmates are to be kept clean, and the possessor easily categorized, then a complete head shave is efficacious, despite the damage this does to appearance. On similar grounds, some mental hospitals have found it useful to extract the teeth of "biters," give hysterectomies to promiscuous female patients, and perform lobotomies on chronic fighters. Flogging as a form of punishment on men-of-war expressed the same issue between organizational and humane interests:

One of the arguments advanced by officers of the

\textsuperscript{144} Advertisement in \textit{Mental Hospitals}, VI (1955), p. 20.
Navy in favour of corporal punishment is this: it can be inflicted in a moment; it consumes no valuable time; and when the prisoner's shirt is put on, that is the last of it. Whereas, if another punishment were substituted, it would probably occasion a great waste of time and trouble, besides thereby begetting in the sailor an undue idea of his importance.\textsuperscript{145}

I have suggested that people-work differs from other kinds of work because of the tangle of statuses and relationships that each inmate brings with him to the institution and because of the humane standards that must be maintained with respect to him. Another difference occurs when inmates have rights to visit off the grounds, for then the mischief they may do in civil society becomes something for which the institution has some responsibility. Given this responsibility, it is understandable that many total institutions tend to view off-grounds leave unfavorably. Still another type of difference between people-work and other kinds, and perhaps the most important difference of all, is that by the exercise of threat, reward, or persuasion, human objects can be given instructions and relied upon to carry them out on their own. The span of time during which these objects can be trusted to carry out planned actions without supervision will of course vary a great deal, but, as the social organization of back wards in mental hospitals teaches us, even in the limiting case of catatonic schizophrenics a considerable amount of such reliance is possible. Only the most complicated electronic equipment shares this capacity.

While human materials can never be as refractory as inanimate ones, their very capacity to perceive and follow out the plans of staff ensures that they can hinder the staff more effectively than inanimate objects can, for inanimate objects cannot purposely and intelligently

\textsuperscript{145} Melville, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 139.
thwart our plans (although we may momentarily react to them as if they had this capacity). Hence in prisons and on "better" wards of mental hospitals guards have to be ready for organized efforts at escape and must constantly deal with attempts to bait them, "frame" them, and otherwise get them into trouble; the guard's consequent anxiety is not alleviated by knowledge that the inmate may do these things merely to gain self-respect or to relieve boredom. Even an old, weak mental patient has tremendous power in this regard; for example, by the simple expedient of locking his thumbs in his trouser pockets he can remarkably frustrate the efforts of an attendant to undress him. This is one reason why the staff tend to conceal decisions taken regarding the fate of inmates, for were the inmate to know the worst of what was planned for him, he might purposely and openly obstruct the smooth realization of his fate—thus, for example, mental patients being prepared for shock treatment may be told kindly tales and sometimes kept from seeing the room in which they will be treated.

A third general way in which human materials differ from other kinds, and hence present unique problems, is that however distant the staff tries to stay from these materials, such materials can become objects of fellow feeling and even affection. There is always the danger that an inmate will appear human; if what are felt to be hardships must be inflicted on the inmate, then sympathetic staff will suffer. (This, after all, is one rationale officers give for keeping social distance from enlisted men.) And, on the other hand, if an inmate breaks a rule, the staff's conceiving of him as a human being may increase their sense that injury has been done to their moral world: expecting a "reasonable" response from a

reasonable creature, the staff may feel incensed, affronted, and challenged when the inmate does not conduct himself properly.

The capacity of inmates to become objects of staff's sympathetic concern is linked to what might be called an involvement cycle that is sometimes recorded in total institutions. Starting at a point of social distance from inmates, a point from which massive deprivation and institutional trouble cannot easily be seen, the staff person finds he has no reason to refrain from building up a warm involvement in some inmates. This involvement, however, brings the staff member into a position to be hurt by what inmates do and what they suffer, and also brings him to a position from which he is likely to threaten the distant stand from inmates taken by his fellow staff members. In response, the sympathizing staff member may feel he has been "burnt" and retreat into paper work, committee work, or other staff-enclosed routines. Once removed from the dangers of inmate contact, he may gradually cease to feel he has reason to be wary, and then the cycle of contact and withdrawal may be repeated again.

When we combine the fact that the staff are obliged to maintain certain standards of humane treatment for inmates with the fact that they may come to view inmates as reasonable, responsible creatures who are fitting objects for emotional involvement, we have the context for some of the quite special difficulties of people-work. In mental hospitals, there always seem to be some patients who dramatically act against their own obvious self-interest: they drink water they have themselves first polluted; they overstuff on Thanksgiving and Christmas, so that on these days there are bound to be a few ruptured ulcers and clogged esophagi; they rush headfirst against the wall; they tear out their own sutures after a minor operation; they flush down the toilet false teeth, without which they cannot eat and which take months to
obtain; or they smash eyeglasses, without which they cannot see. In an effort to frustrate these visibly self-destructive acts, staff members may find themselves forced to manhandle these patients, creating an image of themselves as harsh and coercive just at the moment when they are attempting to prevent someone from doing to himself what they feel no human being should do to anyone. At such times, understandably, it is extremely difficult for the staff to keep their own emotions in control.

II

The special requirements of people-work establish the day's job for staff; the job itself is carried out in a special moral climate. The staff is charged with meeting the hostility and demands of the inmates, and what it has to meet the inmates with, in general, is the rational perspective espoused by the institution. We must therefore look at these perspectives.

The avowed goals of total institutions are not great in number: accomplishment of some economic goal; education and training; medical or psychiatric treatment; religious purification; protection of the wider community from pollution; and, as a student of prisons suggests, . . . "incapacitation, retribution, deterrence and reformation." . . . It is widely appreciated that total institutions typically fall considerably short of their official aims. It is less well appreciated that each of these official goals or charters seems admirably suited to provide a key to meaning—a language of explanation that the staff, and sometimes the inmates, can bring to every crevice of action in the institution. Thus, a medical frame of refer-

ence is not merely a perspective through which a decision concerning dosage can be determined and made meaningful; it is a perspective ready to account for all manner of decisions, such as the hours when hospital meals are served or the manner in which hospital linen is folded. Each official goal lets loose a doctrine, with its own inquisitors and its own martyrs, and within institutions there seems to be no natural check on the licence of easy interpretation that results. Every institution must not only make some effort to realize its official aims but must also be protected, somehow, from the tyranny of a diffuse pursuit of them, lest the exercise of authority be turned into a witch hunt. The phantom of "security" in prisons and the staff actions justified in its name are instances of these dangers. Paradoxically, then, while total institutions seem the least intellectual of places, it is nevertheless here, at least recently, that concern about words and verbalized perspectives has come to play a central and often feverish role.

The interpretative scheme of the total institution automatically begins to operate as soon as the inmate enters, the staff having the notion that entrance is *prima facie* evidence that one must be the kind of person the institution was set up to handle. A man in a political prison must be traitorous; a man in a prison must be a lawbreaker; a man in a mental hospital must be sick. If not traitorous, criminal, or sick, why else would he be there?

This automatic identification of the inmate is not merely name-calling; it is at the center of a basic means of social control. An illustration is provided in an early community study of a mental hospital:

The chief aim of this attendant culture is to bring about the control of patients—a control which must be maintained irrespective of patient welfare. This aim is sharply illuminated with respect to expressed desires or requests of patients. All such desires and
requests, no matter how reasonable, how calmly expressed, or how politely stated, are regarded as evidence of mental disorder. Normality is never recognized by the attendant in a milieu where abnormality is the normal expectancy. Even though most of these behavioral manifestations are reported to the doctors, they, in most cases, merely support the judgments of the attendants. In this way, the doctors themselves help to perpetuate the notion that the essential feature of dealing with mental patients is in their control.\textsuperscript{148}

When inmates are allowed to have face-to-face contact with staff, the contact will often take the form of "gripes" or requests on the part of the inmate and justification for the prevailing restrictive treatment on the part of staff; such, for example, is the general structure of staff-patient interaction in mental hospitals. Having to control inmates and to defend the institution in the name of its avowed aims, the staff resort to the kind of all-embracing identification of the inmates that will make this possible. The staff problem here is to find a crime that will fit the punishment.

Further, the privileges and punishments the staff mete out are often phrased in a language that reflects the legitimated objectives of the institution, as when solitary confinement in prisons is called "constructive meditation." Inmates or low-level staff will have the special job of translating these ideological phrasings into the simple language of the privilege system, and vice versa. Belknap's discussion of what happens when a mental patient breaks a rule and is punished provides an illustration:

such as "disturbed" or "excited," and presented by
the attendant to the physician as a medical status
report. The doctor must then officially revoke or
modify the patient's privileges on the ward or work
out a transfer to another ward where the patient
has to begin all over to work up from the lowest
group. A "good" doctor in the attendants' culture
is one who does not raise too many questions about
these translated medical terms.149

The institutional perspective is also applied to actions
not clearly or usually subject to discipline. Thus Orwell
reports that in his boarding school bedwetting was seen
as a sign of "dirtiness" and wickedness,150 and that a
similar perspective applied to disorders even more clearly
physical.

I had defective bronchial tubes and a lesion in one
lung which was not discovered till many years later.
Hence I not only had a chronic cough, but running
was a torment to me. In those days however,
"wheeziness," or "chestiness," as it was called, was
either diagnosed as imagination or was looked on
as essentially a moral disorder, caused by overeating."You wheeze like a concertina," Sim [the head-
master] would say disapprovingly as he stood
behind my chair; "You're perpetually stuffing your-
self with food, that's why."151

Chinese "thought reform" camps are claimed to have
carried this interpretative process to the extreme, trans-
lating the innocuous daily events of the prisoner's past
into symptoms of counterrevolutionary action.152

Although there is a psychiatric view of mental disorder

149 Belknap, op. cit., p. 170.
151 Ibid., p. 521.
152 See, for example, R. Lifton, "'Thought Reform' of
Western Civilians in Chinese Communist Prisons," Psychiatry,
XIX (1956), especially pp. 182-84.
and an environmental view of crime and counterrevolutionary activity, both freeing the offender from moral responsibility for his offense, total institutions can little afford this particular kind of determinism. Inmates must be caused to self-direct themselves in a manageable way, and, for this to be promoted, both desired and undesired conduct must be defined as springing from the personal will and character of the individual inmate himself, and defined as something he can himself do something about. In short, each institutional perspective contains a personal morality, and in each total institution we can see in miniature the development of something akin to a functionalist version of moral life.

The translation of inmate behavior into moralistic terms suited to the institution's avowed perspective will necessarily contain some broad presuppositions as to the character of human beings. Given the inmates of whom they have charge, and the processing that must be done to them, the staff tend to evolve what may be thought of as a theory of human nature. As an implicit part of institutional perspective, this theory rationalizes activity, provides a subtle means of maintaining social distance from inmates and a stereotyped view of them, and justifies the treatment accorded them. Typically, the theory covers the "good" and "bad" possibilities of inmate conduct, the forms that messing up takes, the instructional value of privileges and punishments, and the "essential" difference between staff and inmates. In

158 I derive this from Everett C. Hughes' review of Leopold von Wiese's Spätlese, in the American Journal of Sociology, LXI (1955), p. 182. A similar area is covered under the current anthropological term "ethnopsychology," except that the unit to which it applies is a culture, not an institution. It should be added that inmates, too, acquire a theory of human nature, partly taking over the one employed by staff and partly developing a countering one of their own. In this connection see in McCleery, op. cit., pp. 14-15, the very interesting description of the concept of "rat" as evolved by prisoners.
armies, officers will have a theory about the relation between discipline and the obedience of men under fire, the qualities proper to men, the "breaking point" of men, and the difference between mental sickness and malingerling. And they will be trained into a particular conception of their own natures, as one ex-Guardsman suggests in listing the moral qualities expected of officers:

While much of the training was inevitably designed to promote physical fitness, there was nevertheless a strongly held belief that an Officer, whether fit or not, should always have so much in the way of pride (or "guts") that he would never admit to physical inadequacy until he dropped dead or unconscious. This belief, a very significant one, was mystical both in its nature and intensity. During a crippling exercise at the end of the course two or three Officers fell out complaining of blisters or other mild indispositions. The Chief Instructor, himself a civilized and self-indulgent man, denounced them in round terms. An Officer, he said, simply could not and did not fall out. Will-power, if nothing else, should keep him going for ever. It was all a matter of "guts." There was an unspoken implication that, since other ranks could and did fall out, even though they were often physically tougher, the Officer belonged to a superior caste. I found it an accepted belief among Officers later on that they could perform physical feats or endure physical discomforts without it being in the least necessary for them to train or prepare for such things in the manner required of the private soldier. Officers, for example, just did not do P.T.: they did not need it; they were Officers and would endure to the very end, had they stepped straight on to the field from a sanatorium or a brothel.154

In prisons, we find a current conflict between the psychiatric and the moral-weakness theories of crime. In convents, we find theories about the ways in which the spirit can be weak and strong and the ways in which its defects can be combated. Mental hospitals stand out here because the staff pointedly establish themselves as specialists in the knowledge of human nature, who diagnose and prescribe on the basis of this intelligence. Hence in the standard psychiatric textbooks there are chapters on “psychodynamics” and “psychopathology” which provide charmingly explicit formulations of the “nature” of human nature.\textsuperscript{155}

An important part of the theory of human nature in many total institutions is the belief that if the new inmate can be made to show extreme deference to staff immediately upon arrival, he will thereafter be manageable—that in submitting to these initial demands, his “resistance” or “spirit” is somehow broken. (This is one reason for the will-breaking ceremonies and welcome practices discussed earlier.) Of course, if inmates adhere to the same theory of human nature, then staff views of character will be confirmed. Recent studies of the conduct of American army personnel taken prisoner in the Korean War provide an example. In America there is a current belief that once a man is brought to the “breaking point” he will thereafter be unable to show any resistance at all. Apparently this view of human nature, reinforced by training injunctions about the danger of any weakening at all, led some prisoners to give up all

\textsuperscript{155} The engulfing character of an institution’s theory of human nature is currently nicely expressed in progressive psychiatric establishments. The theories originally developed to deal with inmates are there being applied more and more to the staff as well, so that low-level staff must do its penance in group psychotherapy and high-level staff in individual psychoanalysis. There is even some movement to bring in consulting sociological therapists for the institution as a whole.
resistance once they had made a minor admission. 156

A theory of human nature is of course only one aspect of the interpretative scheme offered by a total institution. A further area covered by institutional perspectives is work. Since on the outside work is ordinarily done for pay, profit, or prestige, the withdrawal of these motives means a withdrawal of certain interpretations of action and calls for new interpretations. In mental hospitals there are what are officially known as "industrial therapy" and "work therapy"; patients are put to tasks, typically mean ones, such as raking leaves, waiting on table, working in the laundry, and washing floors. Although the nature of these tasks derives from the working needs of the establishment, the claim presented to the patient is that these tasks will help him to relearn to live in society and that his capacity and willingness to handle them will be taken as diagnostic evidence of improvement. 157 The patient may himself perceive work in this light. A similar process of redefining the meaning of work is found in religious institutions, as the comments of a Poor Clare suggest:

This is another of the marvels of living in obedience. No one is ever doing anything more important than you are, if you are obeying. A broom, a pen, a needle

156 See the useful paper by Albert Biderman, "Social-Psychological Needs and 'Involuntary' Behavior as Illustrated by Compliance in Interrogation," Sociometry, XXIII (1960), pp. 120-47.

157 It would be quite wrong to view these "therapies" too cynically. Work such as that in a laundry or shoe-repair shop has its own rhythm and is managed often by individuals more closely connected with their trade than with the hospital; hence, very often, time spent at these tasks is much more pleasant than time spent on a dark, silent ward. Further, the notion of putting patients to "useful" work seems so captivating a possibility in our society, that operations such as shoe-repair shops or mattress-making shops may come to be maintained, at least for a time, at an actual cost to the institution.
are all the same to God. The obedience of the hand that plies them and the love in the heart of the nun who holds them are what make an eternal difference to God, to the nuns, and to all the world.\footnote{Sister Mary Francis, P.C., \textit{A Right to be Merry} (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), p. 108.}

People in the world are forced to obey manmade laws and workaday restrictions. Contemplative nuns freely elect to obey a monastic Rule inspired by God. The girl pounding her typewriter may be pounding for nothing but dollars' sake and wishing she could stop. The Poor Clare sweeping the monastic cloisters is doing it for God's sake and prefers sweeping, at that particular hour, to any other occupation in the world.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 99. The application of an alternate meaning to poverty is of course a basic strategy in the religious life. Ideals of Spartan simplicity have also been used by radical political and military groups; currently, beatniks impute a special meaning to a show of poverty.}

Although heavily institutionalized motives such as profit or economy may be obsessively pursued in commercial establishments,\footnote{A good representation of this interpretative spread and thickness is given in Bernard Malamud's novel about management problems in a small grocery store: \textit{The Assistant} (New York: New American Library, 1958).} these motives, and the implied frames of reference, may nevertheless function to restrain other types of interpretation. When the usual rationales of the wider society cannot be invoked, however, the field becomes dangerously open to all kinds of interpretative flights and excesses and, in consequence, to new kinds of tyranny.

I would like to add a final point about institutional perspectives. The management of inmates is typically rationalized in terms of the ideal aims or functions of the establishment, which entail humane technical services. Professionals are usually hired to perform these services,
if only to save management the necessity of sending the
inmates out of the institution for servicing, it being
unwise "for the monks to go abroad, for this is not at all
healthful for their souls." 161 Professionals joining the
establishment on this basis are likely to become dissatis­
fied, feeling that they cannot here properly practise their
calling and are being used as "captives" to add profes­
sional sanction to the privilege system. This seems to be
a classic cry. 162 In many mental hospitals there is a record
of disgruntled psychiatrists asserting they are leaving so
that they can do psychotherapy. Often a special psychi­
atric service, such as group psychotherapy, psychodrama,
or art therapy, is introduced with great support from
higher hospital management; then slowly interest is
transferred elsewhere, and the professional in charge
finds that gradually his job has been changed into a
species of public relations work—his therapy given only
token support except when visitors come to the institu­
tion and higher management is concerned to show how
modern and complete the facilities are.

Professionals, of course, are not the only staff grouping
in a somewhat difficult relation to the official goals of the
establishment. Those members of staff who are in con­
tinuous contact with inmates may feel that they, too, are
being set a contradictory task, having to coerce inmates
into obedience while at the same time giving the im­
pression that humane standards are being maintained
and the rational goals of the institution realized.

161 The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict, Ch. 66.
162 For example, Harvey Powelson and Reinhard B. Ben­
dix, "Psychiatry in Prison," Psychiatry, XIV (1951), pp. 73­
86, and Waldo W. Burchard, "Role Conflicts of Military
528-35.
I have described total institutions from the point of view of inmates and, briefly, from the point of view of staff. Each point of view has as a crucial element an image of the other grouping. Although there is this image-of-the-other, it is seldom of the kind that leads to sympathetic identification—except perhaps on the part of those inmates, previously described, who take a trusty role and seriously "identify with the aggressor." When unusual intimacies and relationships do occur across the staff-inmate line, we know that involvement cycles may follow and all kinds of awkward reverberations are likely to occur, with a subversion of authority and social distance that again gives one the impression of an incest taboo operating within total institutions.

In addition to illicit or questionable "personal" ties that cross the staff-inmate line, a second irregular type of contact between staff and inmate occurs. Staff, unlike inmates, hold some aspects of their life separate from the institution—even though these may be located on or near the grounds. At the same time it is understood that inmates' work time is of little value to inmates themselves and is subject to the discretion of staff. Under these circumstances role segregation seems difficult to maintain, and inmates find themselves performing menial personal services for staff—such as gardening, house-painting, house-cleaning, and baby-sitting. Because these services are not part of the official frame of reference of the institution, the staff are forced to give some consideration

to their servants and are unable to maintain the usual distance from them. The ordinary restrictions of institutional life make inmates usually quite happy to break through staff-inmate alignments in this manner. Lawrence provides a military example:

The Sergeant Major set an example of misuse, when he led the last fatigue man in the rank to his wife's house, and had him black the grate and mind the children, while she shopped. "Gave me a slab of jam-tart, she did," boasted Garner, lightly forgiving the crying infant because of the belly-full he'd won.\textsuperscript{164}

In addition to these incidental ways of crossing the line, every total institution seems to develop a set of institutionalized practices—whether spontaneously or by imitation—through which staff and inmates come close enough together to get a somewhat favorable image of the other and to identify sympathetically with the other's situation. These practices express unity, solidarity, and joint commitment to the institution rather than differences between the two levels.

In form these institutionalized get-togethers are characterized by a release from the formalities and the task orientation that govern inmate-staff contacts and by a softening of the usual chain of command. Often participation is relatively voluntary. Given the usual roles, these activities represent "role releases";\textsuperscript{165} of course, given the pervasive effect of inmate-staff distance, any

\textsuperscript{164} Lawrence, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 40. For a concentration-camp version, see Kogon, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 84-86. As a qualification it should be added that in some total institutions, notably ships, these personal services may be legitimated as part of the proper duties of one of the ratings; the same is true of the role of batman in the British Army. But in these exceptions the staff may have little life that is not official.

\textsuperscript{165} This term was suggested by Everett C. Hughes and is employed in an unpublished paper, "Social Control and Institutional Catharsis," by Joseph Gusfield.
alteration in the direction of expressing solidarity automatically represents a role release. It is possible to speculate on the many functions of these comings together, but the explanations seem far less impressive than the singular way in which these practices keep cropping up in every kind of total institution and in what would seem to be the poorest possible soil. One is led to feel that there must be very good reasons for these practices, even if they seem difficult to find.

One of the most common forms of institutional ceremony is the house organ—typically a weekly newspaper or a monthly magazine. Usually all the contributors are recruited from within inmate ranks, resulting in a kind of mock hierarchy, while supervision and censorship are provided by a member of the staff who is relatively congenial to the inmates yet reliably loyal to his fellow officials. The printed content is such as to draw a circle around the institution and to give the accent of public reality to the world within.

Two kinds of material that appear in the house organ may be mentioned. First, there is “local news.” This includes reports about recent institutional ceremonies, as well as reference to “personal” events, such as birthdays, promotions, trips, and deaths, occurring to members of the institution, especially high-placed or well-known members of the staff. This content is of a congratulatory or condolence-offering character, presumably expressing for the whole institution its sympathetic concern for the lives of the individual members. Here is an interesting aspect of role segregation: since the institutionally relevant roles of a member (e.g., doctor) tend to set him off against whole categories of other members (e.g., attendants and patients), these roles cannot be used as a vehicle for expressing institutional solidarity; instead, use tends to be made of non-relevant roles, especially those such as parent and spouse that are imaginable, if not possible, for all categories.
Second, there is material that can reflect an editorial view. This includes: news from the outside world bearing on the social and legal status of inmates and ex-inmates, accompanied by appropriate comment; original essays, short stories, and poetry; editorials. The writing is done by inmates but expresses the official view of the functions of the institution, the staff’s theory of human nature, an idealized version of inmate-staff relationships, and the stance an ideal convert ought to take—in short, it presents the institutional line.

The house organ, however, survives in the delicacy of a nice balance. The staff allows itself to be interviewed, written about, and read about by inmates, thus coming under some slight control of the writers and readers; at the same time, inmates are given an opportunity to show that they are high enough on the human scale to handle the official language and the official line with educated competence. Contributors, on the other hand, guarantee to follow the official ideology, presenting it for inmates by inmates. Interestingly enough, inmates who make this compact with the staff often do not cease to affirm the counter-mores. They introduce whatever open criticism of the institution the censors will permit; they add to this by means of oblique or veiled writing, or pointed cartoons; and, among their cronies, they may take a cynical view of their contribution, claiming that they write because it provides a “soft” job setting or a good means of earning release recommendations.

Although house organs have been customary for some time, it is only recently that a somewhat similar form of role release has appeared in total institutions; I refer here to the several forms of “self-government” and “group therapy.” Typically, the inmates speak the lines and a congenial member of the staff performs the super-

188 The scholarly legal petitions, written by inmates, which circulate in many prisons and mental hospitals, seem to serve the same function.
vision. Again, a kind of compact between inmates and staff is found. The inmates are given the privilege of spending some time in a relatively "unstructured" or equalitarian milieu, and even the right to voice complaints. In return they are expected to become less loyal to the counter-mores and more receptive to the ideal-for-self that the staff defines for them.

Inmate use of the official staff language and staff philosophy in discussing or publishing gripes is a mixed blessing for the staff. Inmates can manipulate the staff's own rationalization of the institution and through this threaten the social distance between the two groupings. Hence in mental hospitals we find the engaging phenomenon of the staff using stereotyped psychiatric terminology in talking to each other or to patients but chiding patients for being "intellectualistic" and for avoiding the issues when they use this language, too. Perhaps the distinctive thing about this group-therapy form of institutional role release is that academically oriented professionals are interested in it, so that there already is more literature on this aspect of total institutions than on most other aspects combined.

A somewhat different type of institutional ceremony is found in the annual party (sometimes held more than once a year) at which staff and inmates "mix" through standard forms of sociability such as eating together, party games, or dancing. At such times staff and inmates will have the licence to "take liberties" across the caste line, and social reachings may be expressed through sexual ones. In some cases this liberty may be extended

167 Of course, the "office party" found in establishments not of the total kind have similar dynamics, and were the first no doubt to give rise to comment. See, for example, Gusfield, op. cit. The best reports on these events are still to be found in fiction. See, for example, Nigel Balchin's description of a factory party in Private Interests (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1953), pp. 47-71; Angus Wilson's description of a hotel staff-guest party in his short story "Saturnalia" in The Wrong Set
to the point of ritual role reversal, during which staff wait table for inmates and perform other menial services for them. 168

Often linked with the annual party in total institutions is the Christmas celebration. Once a year inmates will decorate the establishment with easily removable decorations partly supplied by the staff, in this way banishing from the living quarters what an extra-special meal will then banish from the table. Small gifts and indulgences will be distributed among the inmates; some work duties will be canceled; visitor time may be increased and restrictions on leave-taking decreased. In general, the rigors of institutional life for the inmates will be relaxed for a day. A British prison version may be cited:

The authorities did their best to cheer us. On Christmas morning we sat down to a breakfast of cornflakes, sausages, bacon, beans, fried bread, margarine and bread and marmalade. At midday we were given roast pork, Christmas pudding and coffee, and at supper, mince pies and coffee, instead of the nightly mug of cocoa.

The halls were decorated with paper streamers, balloons and bells, and each had its Christmas tree. There were extra cinema shows in the gymnasium. Two of the officers each presented me with a cigar. I was allowed to send and receive some greetings telegrams, and for the first time since I had been in prison, I had enough cigarettes to smoke. 169


169 Heckstall-Smith, op. cit., p. 199. See also McCreery in Hassler, op. cit., p. 157. For holiday licence in a mental hospital, see Kerkhoff, op. cit., pp. 185, 256. The same on a man-of-war is presented by Melville, op. cit., pp. 95-96.
In America, at Easter, the Fourth of July, Halloween, and Thanksgiving, a watered-down version of the Christmas celebration may occur.

An interesting institutional ceremony, often connected with the annual party and the Christmas celebration, is the institutional theatrical.\footnote{See, for example, the prison version in Norman, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 69-70.} Typically the players are inmates and the directors of the production are staff, but sometimes “mixed” casts are found. The writers are usually members of the institution, whether staff or inmate, and hence the production can be full of local references, imparting through the private use of this public form a special sense of the reality of events internal to the institution. Very frequently the offering will consist of satirical skits that lampoon well-known members of the institution, especially high-placed staff members.\footnote{For an example of prisoners lampooning guards and the prison governor, see Dendrickson and Thomas, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 110-11.}

If, as is frequent, the inmate community is one-sexed, then some of the players are likely to perform in the costume and burlesqued role of members of the other sex. Limits of licence are often tested, the humor being a little more broad than some members of the staff would like to see tolerated. Melville, in commenting on the relaxation of discipline during and immediately after a theatrical on board ship, has the following to say:

And here White Jacket must moralise a bit. The unwonted spectacle of the row of gun-room officers mingling with \textit{the people} in applauding a mere seaman like Jack Chase filled me at the time with the most pleasurable emotions. It is a sweet thing, thought I, to see these officers confess a human brotherhood with us, after all; a sweet thing to mark their cordial appreciation of the many merits of my matchless Jack. Ah! they are noble fellows all round,
and I do not know but I have wronged them sometimes in my thoughts. \(^{172}\)

In addition to satirical sketches, there may be dramatic presentations recounting the bad historical past of similar total institutions, as a contrast to the presumably better present. \(^{173}\) The audience for the production will pointedly contain both inmates and staff, although often ecologically segregated, and in some cases outsiders, too, may be permitted to come.

The fact that the institutional theatrical is sometimes presented before an outside audience no doubt provides inmates and staff with a contrasting background against which to sense their unity. Other kinds of institutional ceremony fulfill this function, too, often more directly. Increasingly there is the practice of the annual open house, during which the relatives of members, or even the public at large, may be invited to inspect the premises. They can then see for themselves that high humane standards are being maintained. At such times staff and inmates tend to be on visibly good terms with

\(^{172}\) Melville, *op. cit.*, p. 101. (Italics in the original.) Melville then proceeds to comment bitterly that soon after this role release the officers seemed to have a capacity to “ship their quarter-deck faces,” reverting fully to their usual strictness. See also Kerkhoff, *op. cit.*, p. 229, and Heckstall-Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-99.

\(^{173}\) Neither the “before” nor the “after” need have much relation to the facts, since each version is meant to clarify a situation, not to measure it, and in any case the “past” may be slyly presented because of its similarity to the present. I have seen mental patients from good wards give a well-advertised, public stage performance of conditions which presumably used to prevail in backward mental hospitals. Victorian costumes were used. The audience consisted of psychiatrically enlightened well-wishers from the environing city. A few buildings away from where the audience sat, equally bad conditions could be observed in the flesh. In some cases, the performers knew their roles well because they had played them.
one another, the usual price for which is some tempering of ordinary stringencies.

Open house is a possibility and a likely success because it occurs in the context of an "institutional display." Sometimes this display or front is directed to an internal audience, most likely high staff members, as an ex-mental patient illustrates:

Breakfast over, some of the patients dressed and left the ward, reappearing shortly afterwards armed with mops and brushes with which they began, in a queer mechanical way, to clean the floors; like robots that had just been wound up. This sudden activity surprised me. The probationers rushed about bringing bright new rugs to spread on the polished boards. As if by magic, one or two lockers made a belated appearance and the flowers of mid-summer blossomed unexpectedly around. The ward was unrecognizable, so different did it seem. I wondered if the doctors ever saw it in its usual bareness, and was equally surprised when, after their visit, all this glory departed as swiftly as it had appeared.174

In the main, institutional display seems to be addressed to visitors. Sometimes the focus of concern is the visit to a particular inmate by a particular outsider. Often outsiders have not been initiated into hospital ways and, as suggested earlier, can make embarrassing demands. Here the inmate himself may play an important role in the institution's presentation. A physician-student of mental hospitals provides an example:

The situation can be clarified by asking what happened when such a patient received a visitor. First the visitor was announced by telephone from the central office of the hospital. Then the patient

174 Johnson and Dodds, op. cit., p. 92.
concerned was taken out of restraint, bathed, and dressed. When ready for display the patient was taken to a “visiting room” from which the ward could not be seen. If too intelligent to be trusted the patient was never left alone with the visitor. In spite of such precaution, however, suspicions were sometimes aroused, and it then became the duty of all the ward attendants to keep the situation under control.¹⁷⁵

The visiting room in some total institutions is important here. Both décor and conduct in these places are typically much closer to outside standards than are those that prevail in the inmate’s actual living quarters. The view of inmates that outsiders get thus helps to decrease the pressure these outsiders might otherwise bring to bear on the institution. It is a melancholy human fact that after a time all three parties— inmate, visitor, and staff—realize that the visiting room presents a dressed-up view, realize that the other parties realize this, too, and yet all tacitly agree to continue the fiction.

Institutional display may also be directed to visitors in general, giving them an “appropriate” image of the establishment—this image being calculated to allay their vague dread about involuntary establishments. In the guise of being shown all, the visitors are of course likely to be shown only the more prepossessing, co-operative inmates and the more prepossessing parts of the establishment.¹⁷⁶ In large mental hospitals, modern treatment such as psychodrama or dance therapy may come to play a special role in this regard, as already suggested, with the therapist and his crew of regular patients developing the kind of capacity to perform before strangers that comes from constant experience. Furthermore, a small

¹⁷⁶ For a prison example, see Cantine and Rainer, op. cit., p. 62.
group of pet inmates may for years handle the task of escorting visitors around the institution's Potemkin village. Visitors can easily take the loyalty and social skills of these receptionists as a sample of the character of the entire inmate group. The right of staff to limit, inspect, and censor outgoing mail, and the frequent rule against writing anything negative about the institution, helps to maintain the visitors' view of the establishment—and also alienate inmates from those on the outside to whom they cannot write frankly. Often the physical remoteness of the establishment from the homes of the inmates' kin functions not only to conceal "conditions" on the inside but also to transform a family visit into something of a festive excursion, for which it will be feasible for the staff to make ample preparation.

It is possible, of course, for a visitor to be an official one, part of the institutional connection between the highest staff officer and an agency responsible for controlling a whole class of institutions; then we can expect the preparation of a display to be especially elaborate. An example from British prison life (in the writer's prison lingo) may be cited:

Every now and a gain this nick like all other nicks in the country, would get a visit from the commissioneer. Now this is a very big day in the life of screws and the governors, the day before he is due to arrive they start haveing a big clean up, all the floors are scrubed and the brasses are polished, also the recesses are give a good clean out. The exersize yard is swept and the flower beds are weeded and we are told to make sure our peters are clean and tiedy.

At last the great day is here. The Commisioner usualy wears a black over coat and black Antoney Edden hat even in the summer., he also quite often carrys an umbreler. I don't realy know why they make such a fuss of him as all he does is come and
have lunch with the governor have a little look around the nick get in his big car and drive off again. Some times he comes round just as we are being fed, and may pick on some one and say. “What’s the food like? any complaints?”

You look at the governor and the chief in turn (for they are his constant companions while he is in the nick) you then answer. “No complaints; sir.”

Whatever such visits do for everyday standards, they do seem to serve as a reminder to everyone in the establishment that the institution is not completely a world of its own but bears some connection, bureaucratic and subordinated, to structures in the wider world. Institutional display, whatever its audience, can also convey to inmates that they are connected with what is the best institution of its kind. Inmates seem surprisingly ready to believe this of their institution. Through such a belief, of course, they can feel they have a status in the wider world, even though through the very condition that exiles them from it.

The development of institutional display teaches us something in general about the symbolization process. First, the displayed part of the institution is likely to be the new, up-to-date part of the institution, which will change as new practices or equipment are added. Thus, when a new ward building is commissioned for use in a mental hospital, the staff of the previously “new” building may relax in the knowledge that their role as model staff persons and official greeters has been passed along to someone else. Second, display certainly need not be connected with frankly ceremonial aspects of the institution, such as flower beds and starched curtains, but often stresses utilitarian objects such as the latest kitchen equipment, or an elaborate surgical suite; in fact the display function of such equipment may be part of the

177 Norman, op. cit., p. 103.
reason for acquiring it. Finally, each item of display will necessarily have substantive implications; although these can hardly equal the impression the item creates as display, they can none the less be significant. The display of photographs in the lobbies of total establishments, showing the cycle of activities the ideal inmate goes through with the ideal staff, often has extremely little to do with the facts of institutional life, but at least a few inmates spent a pleasant morning posing for the pictures. The inmate-painted mural that prisons, mental hospitals, and other establishments pridefully display in a conspicuous place is not evidence that inmates as a whole were encouraged in art work, or felt creatively inspired in the setting, but it does provide evidence that at least one inmate was allowed to throw himself into his work.\footnote{An exemplary case of an inmate exploiting the public relations value of his hobby is the ornithological laboratory assembled by prisoner Robert Stroud at Leavenworth (see Gaddis, \textit{op. cit.}). As one might expect, artist inmates have sometimes refused to co-operate, declining to accept liberty to paint in exchange for producing something that could be used by staff as evidence of the over-all character of the establishment. See Naeve, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 51-55.} The food served on inspection and open-house days can provide at least a day's respite from the usual fare.\footnote{For example, Cantine and Rainer, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 61; Dendrickson and Thomas, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 70.} The favorable view of the establishment conveyed in the house organ and the theatricals carries at least some validity in terms of the round of life of the small fraction of inmates who participate in fabricating these ceremonies. And a prize admission building containing several comfortable admission wards can provide visitors with an impression that is correct for an appreciable fraction of the inmate population.

It might be added that the dynamics of appearance involve more than simple contrast between display and reality. In many total institutions punishments are meted
out that are not legitimated by the rulings. These penalties are typically administered in a closed cell or some other place away from the attention of most of the inmates and most of the staff. Although these actions may not be frequent, they do tend to occur in a structured way, as a known or hinted consequence of certain types of transgression. These events are to the daily round in the institution what the daily round is to the display put on for outsiders, and all three aspects of reality—that which is concealed from inmates, that which is revealed to inmates, and that which is shown to visitors—must be considered together, three closely connected and differently functioning parts of a whole.

I have suggested that individual visits, open house, and inspections allow outsiders to see that everything is all right on the inside. Some other institutional practices offer the same opportunity. For example, there is an interesting arrangement between total institutions and stage performers who are amateurs or ex-professionals. The institution provides a stage and guarantees an appreciative audience; the performers contribute a free show. There can be such a compelling need of each for the services of the other that the relationship may pass beyond the matter of personal taste and become almost symbiotic.180 In any case, while the members of the

180 We appreciate how needful total institutions are of entertainment charity, but we tend to be less aware of how desperately non-professional entertainers need audiences for whom to be charitable. For example, the mental hospital I studied apparently had the only stage in the vicinity large enough for all the members of a particular dancing school to perform on at once. Some of the parents of the students did not particularly like coming onto the hospital grounds, but if the school was to have any ensemble numbers, the hospital stage had to be used. In addition, fee-paying parents expected their child to appear in the annual school show, regardless of how much training the child had had, or even in fact whether she was old enough to absorb training. Some numbers in the show, then, required an extremely indulgent audience. Pa-
institution are watching the performers, the performers can see that staff-inmate relations are sufficiently harmonious for staff and patients to assemble together for what looks like a voluntary evening of unregimented recreation.

Institutional ceremonies that occur through such media as the house organ, group meetings, open house, and charitable performances presumably fulfill latent social functions; some of these seem particularly clear in another kind of institutional ceremony, intermural sports. The inside team tends to be a group of all-stars chosen by intramural contest among all inmates. By competing well with outsiders, the all-stars take roles that palpably fall outside the stereotype of what an inmate is—since team sport requires such qualities as intelligence, skill, perseverance, co-operativeness, and even honor—and these roles are taken right in the teeth of outsiders and staff observers. In addition, the outsider team, and any supporters it manages to bring into the grounds, are forced to see that there are natural places on the inside where natural things go on. In exchange for being allowed to demonstrate these things about themselves, inmates through their intermural team convey some things about the institution. In pursuing what is defined as an uncoercible endeavor, the inmate team demonstrates to outsiders and observing inmates that the staff, in this setting at least, are not tyrannical, and that a team of inmates is ready to take on the role of representing the whole institution and allowed to do so. By vocal support of the home team, both staff and inmates can supply this, since most patients in the audience are marched to the auditorium under the discipline of an attendant; once there, they will watch anything under the same discipline, since infraction of rules may lead to cancellation of the privilege of leaving the ward on such occasions. The same kind of desperate bond ties the hospital audience to a group of mild office workers who belong to a bell-ringing choir.
mates show a mutual and similar involvement in the institutional entity.\textsuperscript{181} Incidentally, staff may not only coach these inmate teams but also participate on them occasionally, opening themselves up for the period of the game to the remarkable forgetfulness of social differences that can be generated in sports. Where intramural sports are not held, intramural competition may be substituted, with visitors coming in from the outside as a kind of symbolic team to watch, referee, and present the prizes.\textsuperscript{182}

Sunday services and Sunday amusements are sometimes set in opposition to each other; in total institutions this can partly be understood in terms of an unnecessary duplication of function. Like sports events and charity performances, a religious service is a time when the unity of staff and inmates can be demonstrated by showing that in certain non-relevant roles both are members of the same audience vis-à-vis the same outside performer.

In all instances of unified ceremonial life that I have mentioned, staff are likely to play more than a supervisory role. Often a high-ranking officer attends as a symbol of management and (it is hoped) of the whole establishment. He dresses well, is moved by the occasion, and gives smiles, speeches, and handshakes. He dedicates new buildings on the grounds, gives his blessing to new equipment, judges contests, and hands out awards. When acting in this capacity, his interaction with inmates will take a special benign form; inmates are likely to show embarrassment and respect, and he is likely to display an avuncular interest in them. One of the functions of inmates who are well known within the institution is to provide ranking members of staff with subjects whom they know enough about to use as reciprocals for

\textsuperscript{181} See, for example, the comments on prison sports by Behan, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 327-29.

\textsuperscript{182} For a prison example, see Norman, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 119-20.
the avuncular role. In our very large and benevolently oriented mental hospitals, executive officers may be required to spend a good portion of their time putting in an appearance at these ceremonial occasions, providing us with some of the last occasions in modern society in which to observe a lord-of-the-manor role. The gentry aspects of these ceremonies, incidentally, should not be taken lightly, since the model for some of them seems to derive from the “annual fete” which joined the tenants, servants, and masters associated with a “great house” in competitive flower shows, sports, and even dances with “mixing” of some kind.183

Some final comments should be added about these institutional ceremonies. They tend to occur with well-spaced periodicity and to give rise to some social excitement. All the groupings in the establishment join in, regardless of rank or position—but are given a place that expresses their position. These ceremonial practices are well suited to a Durkheimian analysis: a society dangerously split into inmates and staff can through these ceremonies hold itself together. The content of these ceremonies supports this same kind of functionalist interpretation. For example, there is often a hint or a splash of rebellion in the role that inmates take in these ceremonies. Whether through a sly article, a satirical sketch, or overfamiliarity during a dance, the subordinate in some way profanes the superordinate. Here we can follow Max Gluckman’s analysis and argue that the very toleration of this skittishness is a sign of the strength of the establishment state.

183 For a recent statement, complete with a report of skits put on by servants in mockery of masters, see, M. Astor, “Childhood at Cliveden,” Encounter, XIII (September 1959), pp. 27-28. Fetes involving a whole village and sets of local gentry are, of course, described in many English novels, for example, L. P. Hartley’s The Go-Between. A good fictional treatment is Alan Sillitoe’s The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner.
Hence to act the conflicts, whether directly or by inversion or in other symbolical forms, emphasizes the social cohesion within which the conflicts exist.\textsuperscript{184}

To act out one's rebellion before the authorities at a time when this is legitimate is to exchange conspiracy for expression.

But a simple functionalist analysis of institutional rituals is not wholly convincing, except in the effect that apparently results occasionally from group therapy. In many cases it is a nice question whether these role releases create any staff-inmate solidarity at all. Staff typically complain to each other of their boredom with these ceremonies and their obligation to participate because of their own \textit{noblesse oblige} or, worse still, because of that of their superiors. Inmates often participate because, wherever the ceremony is held, they will be more comfortable and less restricted there than where they otherwise would be. Further, inmates sometimes participate to gain the eye of staff and to earn an early release. A total institution perhaps needs collective ceremonies because it is something more than a formal organization; but its ceremonies are often pious and flat, perhaps because it is something less than a community.

Whatever a ceremony offers the members of a total institution, it offers something appreciable to students of these organizations. In temporarily modifying the usual relation between staff and inmate, ceremony demonstrates that the difference in character between the two groupings is not inevitable and unalterable. However flat (and however functional), ceremony does mark a putting aside and even a reversal of the usual social drama, and so reminds us that what was put aside has a dramaturgical, not a material character. Intransigence, collective teasing of staff, and personal involvements that

cross the staff-inmate line all similarly suggest the social reality in a total institution is precarious. I think we should not be surprised by these weaknesses in the staging of grim social distance but rather wonder that more flaws do not appear.

Starting with aims, regulations, offices, and roles, establishments of any kind seem to end up by adding depth and color to these arrangements. Duties and economic rewards are allocated, but so, at the same time, are character and being. In total establishments the self-defining aspects of office seem to be carried to an extreme. In becoming a member, one becomes thought of as possessing certain essential traits and qualities of character; moreover, these traits will differ radically, depending on whether one has joined staff or inmates.

The role of staff and the role of inmate cover every aspect of life. But these fully rounded characterizations must be played by civilians already deeply trained in other roles and other possibilities of relationship. The more the institution encourages the assumption that staff and inmate are of profoundly different human types (as, for example, by rules prohibiting informal social intercourse across the staff-inmate line) and the more profound the drama of difference between staff and inmate, the more incompatible the show becomes with the civilian repertoire of the players, and the more vulnerable to it.

There are grounds, then, for claiming that one of the main accomplishments of total institutions is staging a difference between two constructed categories of persons—a difference in social quality and moral character, a difference in perceptions of self and other. Thus every social arrangement in a mental hospital seems to point to the profound difference between a staff doctor and a mental patient; in a prison, between an official and a convict; and in military units (especially élite ones), between officers and men. Here, surely, is a magnificent
social achievement, even though the similarity of the players, to which institutional ceremonies attest, can be expected to create some staging problems and therefore some personal strain.

I would like to mention one symptom of these staging problems. In total institutions we characteristically obtain identity anecdotes. Inmates tell of times they were mistaken for staff members and carried off the misidentification for a while, or of times they mistook a staff member for an inmate; staff persons similarly recount times when they were mistaken for inmates. We find identity joking, when a member of one group briefly acts like a member of the other, or briefly treats a co-member as someone of the other category, for the avowed purpose of amusement. Annual skits satirizing staff are one source of this joking; uneventful moments of horseplay during the day are another. And we also find identity scandals, a dwelling on cases where a person started out as a member of the staff, was disgraced in some way, and became a member of the inmate group in the same (or same kind of) institution. I assume these identity concerns point to the difficulty of sustaining a drama of difference between persons who could in many cases reverse roles and play on the other side. (In fact, these persons do engage in playful role reversal.) It is not clear what problems these ceremonies solve, but it is clear what problems they point to.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

I

I have considered total institutions in terms of a single basic articulation: inmates and staff. Having done this,
I am in a position to ask what this view leaves out and what it distorts.

In a closer study of total institutions it would be important to ask about the typical differentiation of role that occurs within each of the two main groups, and to ask about the institutional function of these more specialized positions. Some of these special roles have been mentioned in discussing special institutional tasks: someone on the staff will have to be the official representative of the institution in the councils of the wider society and will have to develop a non-institutional polish in order to do this effectively; someone on staff will have to deal with visitors and other connections of the inmates; someone will have to offer professional services; and someone will have to spend time in relatively close contact with inmates. Someone may even have to provide a personal symbol of the institution for the inmates—a symbol on which they may project many different kinds of emotion. A close treatment of total institutions should give systematic attention to these intracategory differences.

There are two aspects of intragroup role differentiation that I would like to consider here, both having to do with the dynamics of the lowest level of staff. One special characteristic of this group is that they are likely


186 The dynamics of this process are outlined in Freud’s well-known Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego. For one application, see Etzioni, op. cit., p. 123. There are other such targets of projection, for example, the team mascot, and perhaps they should all be considered together.
to be the long-term employees and hence the tradition carriers, while higher staff, and even inmates, may have a high rate of turnover. In addition, it is this group that must personally present the demands of the institution to the inmates. They can come, then, to deflect the hate of inmates from higher staff persons and make it feasible, should an inmate break through to contact with a higher staff person, for this person to grant avuncular kindness and even dispensations. These acts of clemency are possible simply because, like all uncles, higher staff do not have the immediate task of disciplining inmates, and their contacts with inmates are so few that this leniency does not disrupt general discipline. I think that inmates very generally obtain some sense of security from the feeling, however illusory, that although most staff persons are bad, the man at the top is really good—but perhaps merely hoodwinked by those under him. (An expression of this appears in popular stories and movies involving police: the bottom levels may be sadistic, prejudiced, or corrupt, but the man at the top of the organization is "O.K.") This is a nice example of what Everett Hughes refers to as "the moral division of labor," for here a difference in the task performed by the individual clearly entails a difference in the moral attributes imputed to him.

The second aspect of role differentiation among staff that I want to consider has to do with deference patterns. In civil society the interpersonal rituals that persons accord one another while in each other’s immediate physical presence have a crucial component of official spontaneity. The giver is obliged to perform the ritual in an uncalculated, immediate, unthinking fashion if it

187 See, for example, Belknap, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
is to be a valid expression of his presumed regard for the recipient, else how could these acts "express" inward feelings? The giver can manage this because he learned the quite standardized deference rituals of his society so early in his life that by adult years they are second nature. Now since the deference the giver shows a recipient is supposed to be a direct and free expression, the recipient can hardly demand proper deference should it not be forthcoming. Action can be coerced, but a coerced show of feeling is only a show. An affronted recipient can take action against the person who is insufficiently deferential but typically must disguise the specific reason for this corrective action. Only children, presumably, can be openly sanctioned by the recipient for showing improper deference; this is one sign that we hold children to be not-yet-persons.

It seems characteristic of every establishment, and especially of total institutions, that some forms of deference will be specific to it, with inmates as givers and staff as recipients. For this to occur, those who are to receive spontaneous expressions of regard must be the very ones to teach the forms and enforce them. It follows that in total institutions one crucial difference from civil life is that deference is placed on a formal footing, with specific demands being made and specific negative sanctions accorded for infractions; not only will acts be required, but also the outward show of inward feelings. Expressed attitudes such as insolence will be explicitly penalized.

Staff partially protect themselves from this altered relation to deference by some standard devices. First, to the degree that the inmates are defined as not-fully-adults, staff need not feel a loss of self-respect by coercing deference from their charges. Second, we sometimes find, especially in the military, the notion that it is the uniform, not the man, that is saluted (so that the man is not demanding deference for himself); linked with this we find the notion that "it does not matter what you feel
as long as you don't show it." Third, the lowest level of staff can perform the training, leaving the higher levels free to receive personally uncoerced grants of deference. As Gregory Bateson suggests:

Essentially, the function of the middle member is to instruct and discipline the third member in the forms of behavior which he should adopt in his contacts with the first. The nurse teaches the child how to behave towards its parents, just as the N.C.O. teaches and disciplines the private in how he should behave towards officers.189

I have commented on some intragroup differences. Just as neither the staff nor the inmate group is homogeneous, so a simple division between staff and inmate groups can sometimes conceal important facts. In some establishments the trusty or straw boss of inmate rank is not too far away in function and prerogatives from the lowest staff level, the guards; sometimes, in fact, the highest man in the lower stratum has more power and authority than the lowest man in the higher stratum.190 Further, there are some establishments that oblige all members to share some basic deprivations, a kind of collective hardship ceremony that might be considered (in its effects) along with the annual Christmas party and other institutional ceremonies. Good examples are recorded in the literature on nunneries:

Every member of the community including the Superior General was housed here regardless of age, rank or function. Choir nuns, artists, doctors of

190 See, for example, the discussion of the bosun's role in Richardson, op. cit., pp. 15-18. The regimental and battalion sergeant major compared to the platoon lieutenant provides another example.
medicine and the humanities, cooks, laundresses, shoemaker nuns and the peasant sisters who worked the truck gardens lived in those boxlike cells, each one identical in form and content, in arrangement of bed, table and chair and thrice-folded coverlets over each chair.\textsuperscript{191}

St. Clare has legislated that the abbess and vicaress are to conform to the common life in all things. So, how much more the others! St. Clare’s idea of the prerogatives of a superior was entirely novel in her century. A Poor Clare abbess boasts neither staff nor train. She wears no pectoral cross, but the same little wedding-ring ($2.50 net) as her daughters. Our abbess is currently resplendent in a large patch across the front of her habit. It was put there by her own hands, the same hands that quarter and de-worm apples with the best of them, the same hands that wield a dish towel like a professional.\textsuperscript{192}

For some nunneries, then, the notion of a staff-inmate division is not fruitful; one apparently finds, rather, a single collegial group, internally stratified in terms of a single finely graded rank order. Further, in total institutions such as boarding schools, it may be useful to add to the strata of teachers and students a third one, the housekeeping staff.

Total institutions vary considerably in the amount of role differentiation found within the staff and the in-

\textsuperscript{191} Hulme, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{192} Francis, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 179-80. The rule in Anglo-American military tradition that officers should undergo all the risks they set their men and be concerned for the food and comforts of their men before their own during battle provides a subtle variation on these hardship ceremonies; by showing more concern for their men than for themselves, officers can at the same time reinforce ties with their men and maintain distance.
mate groupings, and in the clarity of the line between the two strata. There are other important differences that have been only incidentally mentioned; one of these I would like to consider further here.

Recruits enter total institutions in different spirits. At one extreme we find the quite involuntary entrance of those who are sentenced to prison, committed to a mental hospital, or pressed into the crew of a ship. It is perhaps in such circumstances that staff's version of the ideal inmate has least chance of taking hold. At the other extreme, we find religious institutions that deal only with those who feel they have gotten the call and, of these volunteers, take only those who seem to be the most suitable and the most serious in their intentions. (Presumably some officer training camps and some political training schools qualify here, too.) In such cases, conversion seems already to have taken place, and it only remains to show the neophyte along what lines he can best discipline himself. Midway between these two extremes we find institutions, like the Army in regard to conscripts, where inmates are required to serve but are given much opportunity to feel that this service is a justifiable one required in their own ultimate interests. Obviously, significant differences in tone will appear in total institutions, depending on whether recruitment is voluntary, semi-voluntary, or involuntary.

Along with the variable of mode of recruitment there is another variable—the degree to which a self-regulating change in the inmate is explicitly striven for by staff. In custodial and work institutions, presumably, the inmate need only comply with action standards; the spirit and inward feeling with which he goes about his assignment would not seem to be an official concern. In brainwashing camps, religious establishments, and institutions for intensive psychotherapy, the inmate's private feelings are presumably at issue. Mere compliance with work rulings would not here seem to be enough, and the inmate's
incorporation of staff standards is an active aim as well as an incidental consequence.

Another dimension of variation among total institutions is what might be called their permeability, that is, the degree to which the social standards maintained within the institution and the social standards maintained in the environing society have influenced each other, the consequence being to minimize differences. This issue, incidentally, gives us an opportunity to consider some of the dynamic relations between a total institution and the wider society that supports it or tolerates it.

In examining the admission procedures of total institutions, one tends to be struck by the impermeable aspects of the establishment, since the stripping and leveling processes which occur at this time directly cut across the various social distinctions with which the recruits enter. St. Benedict's advice to the abbot tends to be followed:

Let him make no distinction of persons in the monastery. Let not one be loved more than another, unless he be found to excel in good works or in obedience. Let not one of noble birth be raised above him who was formerly a slave, unless some other reasonable cause intervene.\footnote{193}{The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict, Ch. 2.}

As cited earlier, the military cadet finds that discussions "of wealth and family background are taboo," and that, "although the pay of the cadet is very low, he is not permitted to receive money from home."\footnote{194}{Dornbusch, op. cit., p. 317. A famous case of this kind of echelon leveling is found in the fagging system in British public schools.} Even the age-grading system of the wider society may be stopped at the gates, as illustrated, in the extreme, in some religious institutions:

Gabrielle moved to the place that would ever be hers, third in the line of forty postulants. She was
third oldest in the group because she had been third to register on that day less than a week ago when the Order had opened its doors to new entrants. From that moment, her chronological age had ceased and the only age she would henceforth have, her age in the religious life, had started.¹⁹⁵

(Milder examples of the same process can be seen in Air Forces and university science departments, where, during periods of national crisis, very young men may be tolerated in very high ranks.) And just as age dates may be suppressed, so, in some quite radical total institutions, the names of members may be changed upon entrance, the better (presumably) to symbolize a break with the past and an embracing of the life of the establishment.

Some impermeability in an establishment seems necessary if morale and stability are to be maintained. It is by suppressing external social distinctions that a total institution can build up an orientation to its own scheme of honor. Thus, the few mental patients of high socio-economic status in a state mental hospital can provide everyone with assurance that there is a distinctive mental-patient role, that the institution is not merely a disposal station for some oddments from the lower classes, and that the fate of the inmate is not one he suffers merely because of his general social background; the same can be said of the role of “toffs” in British prisons and nuns of noble lineage in French convents. Further, if the institution has a militant mission, as do some religious, military, and political units, then a partial reversal on the inside of external status arrangements can act as a constant reminder of the difference and enmity between the institution and its environing society. It should be noted that in thus suppressing externally

¹⁹⁵ Hulme, op. cit., pp. 22-23. The Benedictine view of dis-aging may be found in The Holy Rule of Saint Benedict, Ch. 63.
valid differences, the harshest total institution may be the most democratic; and, in fact, the inmate's assurance of being treated no worse than any other of his fellows can be a source of support as well as a deprivation.\textsuperscript{196}

But there are some limits to the value of impermeability for these institutions.

I have already described the role of representative that topmost members of staff may be obliged to perform. If they are to move with grace and effectiveness in the wider community, then it may be advantageous for them to be recruited from the same small social grouping as leaders of other social units in the wider society. Further, if staff persons are uniformly recruited from a stratum in the wider society that has a firmly legitimated higher ranking than the stratum from which inmates are uniformly recruited, then the cleavage in the wider society will presumably lend support and stability to the rule of the staff. The military in Britain up to the First World War seem to have illustrated this, with all ranks speaking in "common" accents and all officers speaking public school English derived from what was called "a good education." So, too, since the crafts, trades, and professions of those who become inmates are often required within the institution, staff will understandably allow and even encourage some role carry-over.\textsuperscript{197}

The permeability of a total institution can have, then,

\textsuperscript{196} Here of course is a drawback to the medical management of mental hospitals that would tailor treatment specifically to individual diagnosis.

\textsuperscript{197} This holds even in concentration camps. See, for example, Cohen, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 154. St. Benedict (Ch. 57) sagely notes the danger of this practice:

"Should there be craftsmen in the monastery, let them exercise their crafts with all humility and reverence, if the Abbot so command. But if one of them grow proud because of the knowledge of his craft, in that he seem to confer some benefit on the monastery, let such a one be taken away from this craft and not practice it again, unless perchance, after he has humbled himself, the Abbot may bid him resume it."
a variable consequence for its internal workings and cohesion. This is nicely illustrated by the precarious position of the lowest staff level. If the institution is appreciably permeable to the wider community, then these staff members may have the same, or even lower, social origins as the inmates. Sharing the culture of the inmates’ home world, they can serve as a natural communication channel between high staff and inmates (albeit a channel that is often blocked to upward communication). But, on the same ground, they will have difficulty maintaining social distance from their charges. As a student of prisons has recently argued, this may merely complicate the warder’s role, further opening him up to inmate derision and to inmate expectation that he will be decent, reasonable, and corruptible.

Whatever the utilities and disutilities of impermeability, and regardless of how radical and militant a total institution appears to be, there will always be some limits to its reshuffling tendencies and some use made of social distinctions already established in the environing society, if only so the institution can conduct necessary affairs with this society and be tolerated by it. There does not seem to be a total institution in Western society which provides batch living completely independent of sex; and ones like convents that appear to be impervious to socio-economic gradings in fact tend to apportion domestic roles to converts of rural peasant background, just as the inmate garbage crews in our prize integrated mental hospitals tend to be wholly Negro. Similarly, in some British boarding schools it is found that boys of

---

198 Sykes, Corruption of Authority. See also Cantine and Rainer, op. cit., pp. 96-97.
199 It seems to be true that within any given establishment the topmost and bottom-most roles tend to be relatively permeable to wider community standards, while the impermeable tendencies seem to be focused in the middle ranges of the institution’s hierarchy.
noble lineage may be allowed extra infractions of the house rules.200

One of the most interesting differences among total institutions is to be found in the social fate of their graduates. Typically, these become geographically dispersed; the difference is found in the degree to which structural ties are maintained in spite of this distance. At one end of the scale are the year's graduates of a particular Benedictine abbey, who not only keep in touch informally but find that for the rest of their lives their occupation and geographical location have been determined by their original membership. At the same end of the scale are ex-cons whose stays in prison orient them to the calling and to the nationwide underworld community that will comprise their lives thereafter. At the other end of the scale, we find enlisted men from the same barracks who melt into private life immediately upon demobilization and even refrain from congregating for regimental reunions. Here, too, are ex-mental patients who studiously avoid all persons and events that might connect them with the hospital. Midway between these extremes we find "old-boy" systems in private schools and graduate universities, which function as optional communities for the distribution of life chances among sets of fellow graduates.

II

I have defined total institutions denotatively by listing them and then have tried to suggest some of their common characteristics. We now have a sizable literature on these establishments and should be in a position to supplant mere suggestions with a solid framework bearing on the anatomy and functioning of this kind of social animal. Certainly the similarities obtrude so glaringly

200 Orwell, op. cit., pp. 510, 525.