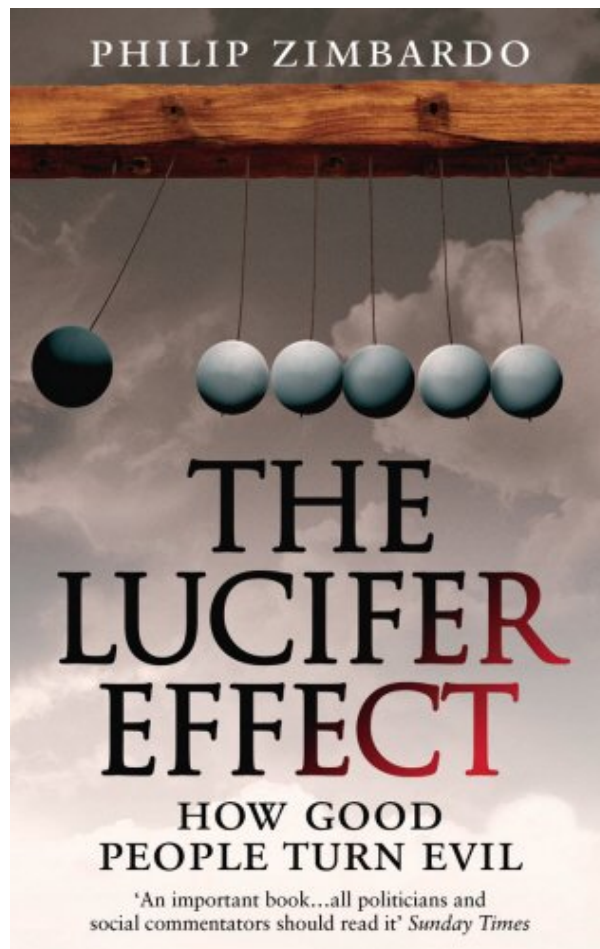


**THE LUCIFER EFFECT: HOW GOOD
PEOPLE TURN EVIL BY PHILIP G.
ZIMBARDO**



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PHILIP ZIMBARDO



THE LUCIFER EFFECT

HOW GOOD
PEOPLE TURN EVIL

'An important book...all politicians and
social commentators should read it' *Sunday Times*

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From Publishers Weekly

Psychologist Zimbardo masterminded the famous Stanford Prison Experiment, in which college students randomly assigned to be guards or inmates found themselves enacting sadistic abuse or abject submissiveness. In this penetrating investigation, he revisits—at great length and with much hand-wringing—the SPE study and applies it to historical examples of injustice and atrocity, especially the Abu Ghraib outrages by the U.S. military. His troubling finding is that almost anyone, given the right "situational" influences, can be made to abandon moral scruples and cooperate in violence and oppression. (He tacks on a feel-good chapter about "the banality of heroism," with tips on how to resist malign situational pressures.) The author, who was an expert defense witness at the court-martial of an Abu Ghraib guard, argues against focusing on the dispositions of perpetrators of abuse; he insists that we blame the situation and the "system" that constructed it, and mounts an extended indictment of the architects of the Abu Ghraib system, including President Bush. Combining a dense but readable and often engrossing exposition of social psychology research with an impassioned moral seriousness, Zimbardo challenges readers to look beyond glib denunciations of evil-doers and ponder our collective responsibility for the world's ills. 23 photos. (Apr. 3)

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From Booklist

Social psychologist Zimbardo is best known as the father of the 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment, which used a simulated prison populated with student volunteers to illustrate the extent to which identity is situated within a social setting; student volunteers randomly chosen to play guards became cruel and authoritarian, while those playing inmates became rebellious and depressed. With this book, Zimbardo couples a thorough narrative of the Stanford Prison Experiment with an analysis of the social dynamics of the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, arguing that the "experimental dehumanization" of the former is instructive in understanding the abusive conduct of guards at the latter. This comparison, which is the book's core insight, is embedded in a sprawling discussion about situational influences that cobbles together a discussion of the psychology of evil, a strong criticism of the Bush administration, and a chapter celebrating heroism and calling for greater social bravery. This account's Abu Ghraib focus will generate demand. Brendan Driscoll

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Review

"Zimbardo challenges [listeners] to look beyond glib denunciations of evil-doers and ponder our collective responsibility for the world's ills." ---Publishers Weekly

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THE LUCIFER EFFECT: HOW GOOD PEOPLE TURN EVIL BY PHILIP G. ZIMBARDO PDF

What makes good people do bad things? How can moral people be seduced to act immorally? Where is the line separating good from evil, and who is in danger of crossing it? Renowned social psychologist Philip Zimbardo has the answers, and in *The Lucifer Effect* he explains how—and the myriad reasons why—we are all susceptible to the lure of "the dark side." Drawing on examples from history as well as his own trailblazing research, Zimbardo details how situational forces and group dynamics can work in concert to make monsters out of decent men and women. Zimbardo is perhaps best known as the creator of the Stanford Prison Experiment. Here, for the first time and in detail, he tells the full story of this landmark study, in which a group of college-student volunteers was randomly divided into guards and inmates and then placed in a mock prison environment. Within a week the study was abandoned, as ordinary college students were transformed into either brutal, sadistic guards or emotionally broken prisoners. By illuminating the psychological causes behind such disturbing metamorphoses, Zimbardo enables us to better understand a variety of harrowing phenomena, from corporate malfeasance to organized genocide to how once upstanding American soldiers came to abuse and torture Iraqi detainees in Abu Ghraib. He replaces the long-held notion of the "bad apple" with the "bad barrel"—the idea that the social setting and the system contaminate the individual, rather than the other way around. This is a book that dares to hold a mirror up to mankind, showing us that we might not be who we think we are. While forcing us to reexamine what we are capable of doing when caught up in the crucible of behavioral dynamics, though, Zimbardo also offers hope. We are capable of resisting evil, he argues, and can even teach ourselves to act heroically. Like Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and Steven Pinker's *The Blank Slate*, *The Lucifer Effect* is a shocking, engrossing study that will change the way we view human behavior.

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Features

- Rider

From Publishers Weekly

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"situational" influences, can be made to abandon moral scruples and cooperate in violence and oppression. (He tacks on a feel-good chapter about "the banality of heroism," with tips on how to resist malign situational pressures.) The author, who was an expert defense witness at the court-martial of an Abu Ghraib guard, argues against focusing on the dispositions of perpetrators of abuse; he insists that we blame the situation and the "system" that constructed it, and mounts an extended indictment of the architects of the Abu Ghraib system, including President Bush. Combining a dense but readable and often engrossing exposition of social psychology research with an impassioned moral seriousness, Zimbardo challenges readers to look beyond glib denunciations of evil-doers and ponder our collective responsibility for the world's ills. 23 photos. (Apr. 3)

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Most helpful customer reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Difficult topic, author remains objective.

By Paul W.

Part of coursework. It came across as somewhat rationalizing what really is unacceptable behavior whether by groups or the individuals within. The theory seems to rest largely on the phenomena of groupthink or mob mentality as a possible cause of abusive/inhumane acts within structured environments; in my opinion. The Stanford Prison Experiment seems to further develop upon what was demonstrated in Asch Conformity Exp. and Milgram experiments. The nature/nurture argument continues to be up for debate in society as a whole, I think it may help explore that topic with some objectivity. The Stanford Prison Experiment does shed some light on what may possibly influence people to commit possibly unthinkable acts outside generally acceptable cultural and social norms (cruelty). There is a point as in Pavlov, Milgram, and Stanford Prison experiment(s) where ethical boundaries are blurred in the name of greater understanding of human behavior and that may be open for debate in this case as well as it was stopped. I bought this one used, and was from a 2007 printing, there were references and a few chapters updated to reflect and analyze current events. I assume the newest edition may be edited and updated beyond as well.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Read this if you wish to preserve your humanity...

By Stephanie L. Empey

This book, and another by Gabor Mate (In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts) should be mandatory reading for

any and all with decision-making authority in the judicial system - particularly judges and prosecutors in the juvenile court system! For any person in a position of authority really, not just those in the legal system.

So many lives are derailed or ruined because those with the power to surveil, label, control, and incarcerate are so fully under the spell of dispositional explanations of behavior, because they cannot fathom how situational pressures they themselves are not immune to can overwhelm and undue character, and because they stubbornly insist on remaining ignorant of their own vulnerability to, and complicity in creating and maintaining, a system that conceives of and legitimizes situations that lead ordinarily good people down the path to evil.

Because I am convinced of the dangers inherent in relying on exclusively dispositional explanations for human behavior, because I am convinced that a great deal of unnecessary suffering can be attributed to this fallacious reasoning about causes, and because Dr. Zimbardo's book is such a compelling and captivating read, I teach *The Lucifer Effect* in my Introduction to Ethics course as a foil for traditional views of evil acts as arising strictly from a defective character (a failure to cultivate virtues of character or the absence of a good will, for instance).

It is not, as Zimbardo insists, that character does not matter, but rather that situations do. And dramatically so. Acknowledging this does not make ethics irrelevant and it does not doom human beings to a kind of situational determinism. Instead, accepting the role situations play in our conduct, for better and worse, is the necessary first step in the process of building characters that, while never immune to situational evil, are highly resistant to it. It is also the precursor to redesigning social institutions (systems) that construct situations which nurture and promote kindness, helpfulness, courage, and empathy to replace those which currently foster their opposites.

I strongly recommend this book to anyone who is troubled by the amount of misery and violence in societies worldwide, to those whose lives touch and shape the lives of children, prisoners, soldiers - oh, heck, for anyone who is not living in complete isolation from systems, situations, and other people. Basically, everyone should read this book!

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent exploration of good and evil

By Harold Eberhart

Excellent exploration of good and evil, especially for those who cannot imagine they could ever do something generally seen as "evil." This book provides historical and multicultural evidence that that masses can generally be persuaded with ideology, language, and crisis to join in unbelievable crimes against humanity.

Perhaps more importantly though, this book explores the structures, attitudes, mechanisms, and loci of power which encourage people to forget their higher selves and commit a wide range of atrocities. By utilizing that knowledge you can begin to disarm systems such as schools, law enforcement, and corporate mentalities that lead to the abuse and murder of other human beings in the name of what is "right."

This book serves as an excellent jumping board to explore our own mental colonization.

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