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BRUNO BETTELHEIM AND THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

CHRISTIAN FLECK AND ALBERT MÜLLER¹

Just imagine, Wiesel, that you were arriving in New York, and the people asked you, “How was it in those German concentration camps? What did they do to you?” [. . .] You would tell the truth to the people in America. That’s right. And you know what would happen, Wiesel? [. . .] They wouldn’t believe you. They’d say you were crazy. Might even put you into a madhouse.

SS-Rottenführer Merz speaking to Simon Wiesenthal, September, 1944²

The paper analyzes the circumstances under which Bruno Bettelheim’s (1903–1990) well-known paper, “Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations” (1943) came to be written and discusses its central arguments. The authors compare Bettelheim’s analysis of the Nazi concentration camps with the interpretations of other authors, particularly those who had experienced the camps themselves, and identify areas of divergence. They also note the later modifications Bettelheim introduced in his own theories on occasions when the original article was reprinted or revised. In conclusion, we investigate the ways in which Bettelheim’s analysis of the camps has been received and cited by later scholars.

1. INTRODUCTION

Given Bettelheim’s international reputation and the early date of his first publication on concentration camps, our paper also represents a marginal note to the history of the study of concentration camps by social scientists. To offer an original alternative interpretation of the concentration camps lies beyond the scope of the paper. It does not address Bettelheim’s total scholarly output, his work as a therapist, or his biography as such. It appears advisable for various reasons to note this limitation (which is motivated by more than merely the authors’ lack of competence in these areas), even though Bettelheim himself repeatedly tried to link his work on concentration camps with his work as a psychologist and psychoanalyst.³

Like many other scholars who studied the Nazi concentration camps,⁴ Bettelheim had been imprisoned in such camps himself: He is thus simultaneously a victim, an eyewitness, and an analyst of the camps.⁵ To a greater degree than his counterparts, Bettelheim regarded his work on the camps as rooted in his own experiences and his efforts to deal with these memories intellectually.⁶ The paradox noted by Pollak appears central for our purpose: theories on concentration camps and survival are “the only ones whose validity rests chiefly, if not entirely, on the personal experience of their authors.”⁷ A discussion of the conditions Bettelheim experienced in the camps and the conclusions he drew from them is therefore central to any assessment of how he explained “behavior in extreme situations” and represents more than the mere assemblage of fragments that might be included in a full intellectual biography.

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Despite the considerable literature on the topic and a body of eye-witness accounts that is still growing, research on the problem of Nazi concentration camps is far from concluded. Repeated revisions have proven necessary, as well as a search for new perspectives. Development of such perspectives first requires critical study and analysis of existing patterns of interpretation. If Bettelheim's work is subject to criticism in the following study, it should thus not be misunderstood as a form of "Bettelheim bashing,"⁸ but rather as a serious attempt to explore his approach to the problem of concentration camps, considering the differences between concentration camps and extermination camps, the assessment of the varying conditions in the camps during consecutive periods of the system of the camps, and the role Jewishness plays in his thinking, as an attempt to re-open discussion on it.

2. BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Bruno Bettelheim grew up in an upper middle class, assimilated Jewish family in Vienna.⁹ All evidence suggests that his childhood and youth were typical for a member of his social class.¹⁰ This included his attendance at a *Realgymnasium* as well as participation in youth groups with a leftist orientation and early contact with one of the major intellectual currents that arose in Vienna around the turn of the century, namely psychoanalysis.¹¹

Bettelheim was 14 when he first heard about psychoanalysis from Otto Fenichel, his elder by a few years.¹² During his years at university he came into contact with other members of the psychoanalytic movement and underwent analysis himself with Richard Sterba. Bettelheim became a kind of collaborator of Sterba's when Bettelheim and his wife took an autistic child into their home.¹³

Bettelheim studied philosophy and psychology at the University of Vienna.¹⁴ His studies do not appear to have been influenced by psychoanalytic interests. He received his doctoral degree on February 4, 1938, with a thesis on aesthetics (reviewed and accepted by Robert Reininger and Karl Bühler). In his dissertation¹⁵ Bettelheim cited only one psychoanalyst, Ernst Kris, and that was in reference to a paper Kris had written on the theory of art. The unusual length of Bettelheim's university studies is no doubt connected with the business he inherited from his father, a lumber company that also operated a saw mill.¹⁶ This allowed him to pursue his intellectual interests as long as he desired, without needing to prepare for a professional career.¹⁷

The course of Bettelheim's life was nonetheless affected by the political climate of the First Republic in Austria. One turning point occurred with the suspension of the democratic parliamentary system and introduction of an authoritarian constitution in 1933, and another with Hitler's acquisition of the country in March of 1938. The latter event not only interrupted Bettelheim's intellectual career, but also had far-reaching consequences for his private life.¹⁸

Immediately after declaration of the *Anschluss*, Bettelheim and his wife left Vienna, only to be turned back at the Czechoslovak and Hungarian borders. On the following day the couple attempted to depart again by train. Mrs. Bettelheim was permitted to leave the country, but Bettelheim's passport was confiscated, and the police ordered him to remain in Vienna. During the next few days the police searched his apartment. He was interrogated at length, but afterwards released. Some three or four weeks later he was re-arrested, questioned closely about his political activities, and once again released. Two weeks after this he was arrested yet again and told that this time it was on instructions from Gestapo headquarters in Berlin. He spent three days in prison and was then transferred to the concentration camp at Dachau. It was early May, 1938.¹⁹

Bettelheim's statement to the Nuremberg tribunal contains a reference to his political views at that time: He identified himself as a member of the Social Democratic Party, which had taken a stand in favor of Austrian independence.²⁰ Ernst Federn recalls that Bettelheim was active in an illegal organization that opposed the post-1933 authoritarian Austrian government.²¹ One indication that the Nazis took a particular interest in Bettelheim is the fact that they went to the length of revoking his academic degree;²² it should be kept in mind, however, that this was done to a number of people who were released from concentration camps and then stripped of their citizenship.

The sources to which we have had access offer no information on the grounds for Bettelheim's arrest and subsequent deportation to a concentration camp. Several interpretations are possible, but in this particular case they remain based on speculation. It could be that his name appeared on one of the lists of political enemies of the pre-1938 authoritarian government, and that this led to his arrest.²³ Perhaps he was the victim of specific denunciation by someone at the family business. Conceivably he was arrested as a stand-in for other relatives, such as his grandfather Richard Bettelheim, who was an officer of the Rothschild Bank.²⁴ And, finally, he may have been picked up in one of the many random raids and street sweeps.

2.1 The Role of His Jewish Heritage in Bettelheim's Text

One thing is certain: Bettelheim was not sent to a concentration camp solely because he was a Jew (i.e., a member of a group suffering increasing discrimination and attacks).

Nowhere in his writings does Bettelheim ascribe his arrest and following detention in a camp exclusively to his identity as a Jew. He informs the reader only that he was "there,"²⁵ "approximately a year in Dachau and Buchenwald, the two largest camps for political prisoners at that time."²⁶ Both here and elsewhere he is vague about the reason for his arrest, which is implied but never explicitly stated, and he does not report the color of the triangular "badge" he had to wear in the camps (see below).

Rather than continuing to speculate on what led to Bettelheim's internment, we find it more illuminating to note that a shift of accent occurs over the years in his depiction of Jewish prisoners. Whereas the two early accounts (1943 and 1946) contain almost no references to the specific role of Jewish prisoners in the camps, Bettelheim places greater emphasis on the persecution of Jews in the texts written (or revised) at a later date. The shift is particularly noticeable in the different rankings assigned to Jews in his lists of the major categories of concentration camp inmates (see Table 1).

The references to the social class of the various prisoner types stem from the melding of two separate analyses made in 1943. It would be superfluous to pursue here the question of how accurate the various rankings of inmate groups are in objective terms; Bettelheim himself noted that his 1960 account "draws on the observations of others which have become available in the meantime."²⁷

In general it can be said that Bettelheim places greater stress on the role of Jewish concentration camp inmates in his later works, and that retrospectively he characterized himself more clearly as a Jewish prisoner: "My affirmative sense of Jewish identity became especially important to me, and possibly even life-preserving, in the face of the abuse and mistreatment I suffered in German concentration camps because I was a Jew."²⁸

The shift in accent is not easily explained, for Bettelheim provides no information on the subject. It may be that his original identification of himself as a political prisoner (in his statement for the Nuremberg trials) appeared inopportune later on, when the rise of McCarthyism had placed a stigma on left-wing and liberal opinions.²⁹ It is equally possible,

Table 1
Inmate Groups: Rankings Bettelheim's Different Accounts

"Individual and Mass Behavior" (1943)	<i>Informed Heart</i> (1960)
1 political prisoners, mostly members of the German Social Democratic and Communist Parties	1 <i>non-Jewish</i> political prisoners, mainly Social Democrats and Communists (most of them working class, but some members of the middle class); some members of the nobility who had offered resistance to Hitler
2 "Work-shy" individuals, i.e., those who refused to take jobs assigned to them by the government, or who had changed jobs to get higher wages, complained about low wages, etc.	2 asocial or "work-shy" persons interned because they had complained about work conditions or low pay, because they had had no regular job, etc. (working class)
3 former members of the French Foreign Legion and spies	3 <i>Jewish</i> political prisoners (mostly middle class)
4 Jehovah's Witnesses (<i>Bibelforscher</i>) and other conscientious objectors	4 members of the French Foreign Legion, Jehovah's Witnesses and other conscientious objections (in the majority middle class)
5 <i>Jewish</i> prisoners, arrested either for political reasons or for offenses against the Nazi racial laws	5 "professional criminals," work-shy <i>Jewish</i> prisoners, and some members of Nazi organizations such as supporters of Roehm (exclusively or chiefly working class)
6 criminals	6 <i>Jewish</i> offenders against the racial laws; individuals from whom the Nazis wanted money or on whom someone wanted to take revenge (members of all classes).
7 members of other proscribed groups, e.g., homosexuals, supporters of Roehm; and small numbers of individuals from whom the Nazis wanted to extort money or on whom some high Nazi official wanted to take personal revenge.	

Note: Rankings and italics added.

however, that Bettelheim did not begin to discover how much his Jewish identity meant to him until after the Holocaust, when he had emigrated to the United States. We cannot determine which interpretation comes closer to the truth, but only point out that Bettelheim identified his own position differently over the course of time.³⁰ Finally the possibility should also be taken into consideration that repeated or successive attempts to come to terms with traumatic experiences can lead to different outcomes at different times.

Nevertheless, regardless of which combination of causes is responsible for this shift, it should be borne in mind that in the spring of 1938 people were not as a rule sent to Dachau solely because they were Jewish; they also had to belong to at least one additional category of persons subject to persecution and detention.³¹ (That Bruno Bettelheim was, according to the common knowledge about the camp system, classified as a "Jewish" and "political prisoner" during his detention and compelled to wear the double badge of political and Jewish prisoner does not alter this fact.) At this time Dachau³² was predominantly a camp for *political* opponents of the Nazi regime, some of them prominent, where the tradition of the early Nazi terror from the 1933 days was carried on. This was later succeeded by new strategies such as death through overwork, starvation, disease, and mass murder (by firing squad, poison gas, or injection).³³

After Dachau Bettelheim spent several months in Buchenwald, a concentration camp that originally resembled Dachau in character; inmates were confronted with particularly harsh conditions in the years 1938–1939, however, because Buchenwald was still under

construction, had severe infrastructure problems, and the inmate hierarchy there was (still) dominated by the “professional criminals.”³⁴

While Bettelheim was thus a prisoner at Buchenwald during one of the worst periods on this camp’s history, he was still relatively “lucky” in comparison to many other inmates: As he himself wrote, he owed his release in April, 1939, to influential friends in the United States, who had persuaded the State Department to support their efforts. Bettelheim was able to emigrate to the United States. By November of the same year he had already been appointed to a post at the University of Chicago, where—apart from two years as an associate professor of psychology at Rockford College (Illinois)—he remained until his retirement in 1973.³⁵

The current historical picture of concentration camps makes the idea of release seem quite strange, since the commonsense impression of the camps is naturally dominated by their later function as sites of the mass murder of Jews, “gypsies,” and others.³⁶ But it was also possible for prisoners to be released, particularly if they belonged to the category of “political” (and, sometimes, “professional criminals”), even though such cases were infrequent and certainly never predictable.³⁷ Before the war the figures show that Jewish prisoners were also released from concentration camps at statistically significant levels.³⁸ It was part of the design that prisoners were usually taken completely by surprise by the announcement of their impending release, whereas others who were convinced they would be set free, because of efforts they knew were being undertaken on their behalf, were frequently disappointed.³⁹

We do not know whether Bettelheim’s release came as a surprise to him, but this seems quite probable.⁴⁰ His academic career in the United States must be regarded as just as unusual and a case of particular good luck, when comparing his rapid success with the often long-lasting acculturation problems of other emigrés. His training did not make it seem likely that he would be able to establish himself quickly; both the fact that his doctorate was in philosophy instead of psychology and his relatively low status among psychoanalysts (because he had no medical degree) reduced his prospects. Clearly, however, his experiences with the autistic child of an American family from elite social circles helped to smooth the way to his recognition as a child psychologist.⁴¹

All this suggests that Bettelheim’s case may be typical with regard to both the reason for his detention in the period immediately following the *Anschluss* and his individual experience of life in the camps. (This naturally applies for particular camps and dates, not necessarily for later periods or other camps, especially those where the extermination of masses of Jews occurred.) His successful scholarly career after his emigration was anything but typical, however.

2.2 *Publication History*

Immediately following his release and emigration in 1939, Bettelheim wrote down his recollections of the period he had spent in detention; but, for almost three years,⁴² he could not make up his mind to take the next step and interpret the data. A long time afterwards⁴³ he said he had been motivated to write a scholarly article on his experiences in the camps because people refused to believe his reports and attributed his claims to hatred of the Nazis or delusions of persecution. (This probably occurred during the years 1940–1941). According to his own later interpretation, he therefore resolved “to publish a scholarly and objective analysis of the personality changes brought about by experiencing camp life.”⁴⁴

This article was finally completed in 1942 and submitted to various psychiatric and psychoanalytic journals for publication. It was universally rejected; the arguments made

against publication differed, but all of them were inappropriate.⁴⁵ Ultimately the piece appeared in October, 1943, in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, then under the editorship of Gordon W. Allport, together with an article by Curt Bondy, an emigré professor of psychology from Hamburg who had also spent time in a concentration camp.⁴⁶

A short time later, in August, 1944, Bettelheim's article—which was, we should recall, his first scholarly publication as sole author⁴⁷ (because his dissertation had never been published) and first piece of independent scholarship since his emigration—was reprinted for the first time: Dwight MacDonald included an abbreviated version in the journal *Politics*.⁴⁸ It was the first of several reprints, for although this article did not exactly make its unknown author famous over night, it did presumably make his name familiar in professional and interested lay circles. Bettelheim himself re-used, reworked, and reprinted the essay on a number of later occasions. The sheer number of different appearances makes it advisable to reconstruct the article's publication history first, before we proceed to a discussion of alterations in its contents.

As already mentioned, the article appears first in 1943 and next in 1944 with a different title and shortened by about one-fourth of its length through the omission of entire paragraphs, but without other changes in style or content. Much of the declaration made to the Allied authorities in 1945⁴⁹ restates the contents of the 1943 article. It contains approximately two-thirds of the original text, which is, however, not shortened through omission of whole paragraphs but condensed. The declaration also has added to it the brief biographical statement cited above.

In 1947 the paper was included in a collection of essays entitled *Readings in Social Psychology*, edited by the committee on instruction of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, under the leadership of Theodore M. Newcomb and Eugene L. Hartley. For this occasion Bettelheim “prepared [it] from material more fully reported”⁵⁰ in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. All three editions of *Readings of Social Psychology* (1947, 1952, 1958) contain Bettelheim's condensation of the 1943 article, corresponding to approximately one-third of the original text.

Finally, Bettelheim reworked the material in chapters four and five of his book *The Informed Heart* (1960) and included the paper, virtually unaltered from the version of 1943, in the collection *Surviving and Other Essays* of 1979. Both these last books were published in several editions in a number of languages.⁵¹ The sheer number of different publications indicates clearly that the article reached a great many readers. As we shall show, it also succeeded in affecting their thinking.

2.3 Research in a Concentration Camp?

One way to approach “Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations” is to understand the framework and proportions of Bettelheim's analysis in terms of the topics he covers and the amount of space devoted to each (Table 2).

The amount of space taken up by the section on methods of data collection is probably connected with the fact, mentioned above, that the article had been rejected by other journals because of its alleged empirical shortcomings. We assume that Bettelheim attempted to overcome such objections as he revised the text.⁵² Since at that time—in contrast to the current view—the status of eyewitness was considered an insufficient basis for “serious” scholarship,⁵³ Bettelheim had only two options in responding to this type of criticism: He could either argue against the reigning conventions of “pure” research, or he could try to create the impression that he had carried on research inside the concentration camp itself, to the extent that conditions there allowed. Choosing the first option would have turned his account into a

Table 2
Topics of the 1943 Paper

Topics	%
Aim of the study and summary of results	12
Methods of data collection	11
Shock of arrest and internment	25
Adaptation to situation in camps	11
Differences between old and new prisoners	20
Regression to infantile modes of behavior	20

technical discussion of research methods, however, something in which he had understandably little interest.

In the original text of 1943 Bettelheim places great emphasis on his own research activities, but admits that to assert he was motivated to collect his material because of its great “sociological and psychological interest . . . would constitute a flagrant example of *logification* [sic] *post eventum*.”⁵⁴ The claim that Bettelheim later *reconstructed* his activities during his concentration camp internment as having been research is therefore not entirely without foundation: “But he [i.e., Bettelheim] did not study his behavior, and that of his fellow prisoners, in order to add to pure scientific research. The study . . . was a mechanism developed by him *ad hoc* in order that he might have at least some intellectual interests. . . . His observing and collecting of data should rather be considered as a particular type of defense.”⁵⁵

In the course of reconstructing his original spur-of-the-moment decision to undertake research activity, Bettelheim names several research techniques, saying that he made observations, collected data and interviewed his fellow prisoners. His results are based on introspection⁵⁶ and discussions of the behavior of others whom he could observe directly. It was not possible, however, to give “a comprehensive picture of all types of behavior.”⁵⁷ Finally, Bettelheim’s awareness of the limits of his “objectivity”—besides his role as investigator, he was also a member of the group under observation and sharing its experiences, which could not help but arouse the strongest emotion—is connected, at least implicitly, with his remark that he secured the collaboration of other observers. Two of his fellow prisoners were “trained,” and “interested enough to participate in his investigation”; they “spoke to several hundred prisoners.” Bettelheim gives the number of prisoners “he came to know personally” as at least 1,500. He and his collaborators exchanged “reports” on their “findings” concerning this “adequate sampling”⁵⁸ and discussed “theories” on a daily basis—namely during “the morning count of prisoners”; “These discussions proved very helpful in clarifying mistakes due to taking a one-sided viewpoint.”⁵⁹ In a footnote Bettelheim identifies one of the “participants” in the study as Alfred Fischer; he refrained from revealing the identity of the other, Ernst Federn, because in 1943 Federn was still a prisoner at Buchenwald.⁶⁰ Before we take a closer look at the group of researchers, mention should be made of the description of his activities Bettelheim gave in his sworn deposition. Here he places even more emphasis on the aspect of research, noting that his internment “afforded an opportunity to conduct investigations, collect data and make certain observations concerning the effect on the personality and behavior of individuals who have spent several years in such institutions.”⁶¹ On this occasion Bettelheim once again mentions the spontaneous nature of his decision to undertake this work, but adds, “I am convinced that I would have been unable to make these observations without the strict and continuous self-observation which my years of psycho-analytical training taught me.”⁶²

It is also the researcher—and not the highly educated prisoner seeking to make sense of his own experiences⁶³—whom we hear speaking in other formulations. In one passage of his testimony Bettelheim states, “I was able to contact and interview prisoners,” just as if he had been an outsider and not a fellow inmate. Correspondingly the sworn statement also lacks the passages cited above referring to the circumstances that made objectivity so difficult; instead Bettelheim writes: “I was thus afforded an opportunity of interviewing all different groups and in this way secured an adequate sampling.”⁶⁴

In another context, when Bettelheim recounts an episode that occurred at Buchenwald, he suggests that a “trained psychologist, capable of observing the mental processes at work with substantial objectivity,”⁶⁵ would be in better position to withstand the extreme situations of the camp than his fellow inmates without psychological training, who reacted irrationally or aggressively, and therefore self-destructively, to the SS guards (as well as to him). Here the psychologist in the camp is described as someone equipped with a better than average ability to survive, which would almost inevitably result in greater distance toward the other prisoners. The psychologist (referred to here in the third person as “N.”) is decoded in another article as Bruno Bettelheim himself, who relates the same episode again in the first person.⁶⁶

One of the persons with whom Bettelheim discussed his experiences and impressions of Buchenwald was Ernst Federn. Federn, of Jewish origin, was arrested for political reasons—he was active in a Leftist resistance group—at about the same time as Bettelheim and was also sent to Dachau. He was moved to Buchenwald in the same transport as Bettelheim and remained interned there until the camp was liberated in 1945. In his case the efforts made to secure his release failed. Federn did not meet his fellow inmate until they were at Buchenwald, and then under somewhat curious circumstances:

All the Jewish prisoners were transported from Dachau to Buchenwald on September 23rd, and we arrived at Buchenwald on September 24th. When we got there they didn't know what to do with us, and we were ordered to form a line and move a pile of bricks from one place to another. So there I am, standing in the line, and next to me is a young man I don't know, wearing a big pair of glasses. I start tossing bricks to him, and he drops every one. This made me mad, because for various reasons I didn't think it was a clever move at all. At any rate, I was annoyed and said to him, “Why are you dropping all the bricks?” To that he responded, “What's it to you? Are they yours?” In the exchange of words that followed I shouted at him, “You little nobody!” We weren't very polite to one another in the camps, and I was no exception. He shot back, “Who are you calling a nobody? I'm not nobody, I'm Bettelheim.” Then I said, “And I'm Federn!” He says, “What do you mean, Federn? Are you Paul's son?” I say yes. To make a long story short, we became friends.⁶⁷

Federn confirms that he and Bettelheim talked about their experiences of the camps in psychoanalytic terms. In our interview with him, however, he explicitly rejected the term “research” to describe their discussions.

Before we go on to discuss the content and results of these conversations, we would like to point out that this unusual research⁶⁸ was not the sole means by which a prisoner could maintain his integrity and increase the chances of survival. Federn even succeeded in conducting something like therapy sessions. After Federn's fellow prisoners learned that he came from a family of psychoanalysts, they occasionally confronted him with questions on the subject. Federn observes ironically, but at the same time with clear-sighted realism, that he could turn this to his advantage in the camp (in ways that often contributed to his survival): “As a Jew I was worth less than nothing, but as a psychoanalyst I had my value.”⁶⁹ For this reason a “green triangle” in the camp would not have been able to take away his relatively “good” assignment as a night watchman.⁷⁰

It remains an open question why Bettelheim presented himself in the role of a researcher or expert even in context where he could have dispensed with it. It is true that in the shortened version of the essay reprinted in *Politics*, one of the passages cut was the paragraph containing references to the number of persons interviewed, his co-investigators and his discussions with them, and the cautions about objectivity. However, even though Bettelheim may initially have been under outside pressure to appear “professional” and demonstrate that his methods approximated those used in “normal” research, in one case where there was no pressure—namely his postwar deposition—he not only included this section again but actually expanded it.

At the end of the war—he had just returned to the University of Chicago and become director of the Orthogenic School—Bettelheim was presenting himself as a mainstream sociologist and psychologist with a psychoanalytic background; only later, in *The Informed Heart*, do we encounter him as someone whose experiences in the concentration camps had forced him thoroughly to revise his understanding of psychoanalysis.⁷¹

3. ANALYSIS

Bettelheim’s analysis of the concentration camps consists of several parts, which he altered to varying degrees over the course of time. Some elements of his analysis he maintained throughout, others were dropped, and a few new ones added. This fact and the circumstance that the observations on which his conclusions are based vary from case to case (some being more exact and/or detailed than others) have prompted us to sort out these elements and discuss them separately, even though they are woven together in the original 1943 article and even more so in later versions. Our discussion concentrates on the empirical evidence Bettelheim cites as the foundation for his conclusions, evidence which can be compared with accounts from other survivors. Historiography is of minor value in this context because we refer to the observable episodes that constitute Bettelheim’s text whereas historians (and social scientists too) cannot base their conclusions like eyewitnesses on firsthand observations.⁷² The following elements can be identified in his articles on the concentration camps:

1. A model of the social stratification within the population;
2. explicit statements on the function of the concentration camps, internally (for the prisoners) and externally (for the German population under Nazi dictatorship);
3. systematic distinction between different types of behaviors;
4. an outline of the stages of adaptation to camp life, depending on the length of internment, and in connection with this;
5. the explicit differentiation into old and new prisoners; and also
6. a characterization of the hallmarks of the last stage of adjustment, e.g., identification with the Gestapo, etc.;
7. a conception (that remains largely implicit) of the type of prisoner capable of resistance, and within this context remarks on the imperative need for resistance;
8. and, last, characterization of the *Muselmann* or “moslem,” the antithesis of the resistant prisoner.

Each of these elements will be discussed separately below.

3.1 Social Stratification of the Prisoners

Initially Bettelheim distinguishes three categories or dimensions within which prisoners' status was ranked. The first category was the "grounds for arrest" that had brought them to the camp, a classification that overlaps to a high degree with the SS' administrative labeling of prisoners by means of the color-coded badges (*Winkel*) they were forced to wear. The second category was socioeconomic origins. The third category Bettelheim mentions is the degree of prisoner's political education or previous political awareness, but even in the original 1943 article he makes no systematic use of this dimension. Bettelheim's presentation of the material results in the stratification model in Table 3.

This model is quite obviously incomplete, and above all it lacks consistent cross-references between the various categories. It grew even less clear in *The Informed Heart*, because there Bettelheim introduces a further implicit dimension, namely, the distinction between Jewish and gentile prisoners (including the somewhat artificial-looking category of "Jewish work-shy prisoners"). In the text itself, however, Bettelheim uses only two categories to discuss differences in camp inmates' behavior: (1) classifying reactions to the initial shock of internment along socioeconomic lines, and (2) distinguishing between political and nonpolitical prisoners. (The group of upper-class prisoners discussed in detail in 1943 receives only scant attention in 1960).

Accounts by other survivors confirm that it is legitimate to speak of differing behavioral types in this context. Other analysts such as Kautsky, however, while also resorting to a stratification model, mention the value of religious (as in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses) or other philosophical convictions as a valuable aid in withstanding the shock. Kautsky further makes use of terms that, while denoting precamp social status, also reflect a particular men-

Table 3
Stratification Model

Socioeconomic Origins	Grounds for Arrest	Level of Political Education
Upper class	<i>political prisoners</i>	(fairly low)
Middle class	nonpolitical	none
	<i>Jewish political</i>	high
	Jehovah's Witnesses ¹ and other conscientious objectors	<i>nonpolitical but immune</i>
	political	high
	(professional) criminals	(prison experience) ²
Lower class	Antisocial or "work-shy" persons	
	Foreign Legionnaires ³	
	small groups of hostages, victims of personal revenge, persons accused of violating race laws	

Key to symbols: The entries marked in *italics* represent information altered by Bettelheim in 1960. Information implicit in Bettelheim's text appears in parentheses.

¹Bettelheim mentions Jehovah's Witnesses several times in a quite positive sense; their strong religious beliefs could be regarded as a functional equivalent of previous political education. In 1960 Bettelheim remarks that these prisoners "not only showed unusual heights of human dignity and moral behavior, but seemed protected against the same camp experience that soon destroyed persons considered very well integrated by my psychoanalytic friends and myself" (1960:20–21).

²Previous experience in prison is mentioned in 1943 as a further possible dimension, so that it appears legitimate to regard this as a functional equivalent of previous political education.

³In 1960 Bettelheim (probably mistakenly) lumps the Foreign Legionnaires together with the Jehovah's Witnesses and other conscientious objectors and ranks them all as "lower class" (1960:119n).

tality, e.g., “petite bourgeois” (*Kleinbürger*). He ascribes to this group only a limited capacity for survival.

The concentration camps were designed to eradicate in the prisoners any sense they might bring with them of belonging to a particular social stratum or class; no feelings of solidarity with one another would be permitted to develop. Such distinctions from the outside world were replaced by a new hierarchy, based on a prisoner’s function in the running of the camp. Although minimal in many cases, the differences in potential power wielded by the various inmate groups could mean the difference between life and death; as such they soon came to mean more than previous class origins and attitudes.⁷³

In 1947 Bettelheim published a review of two books by former political prisoners, Kautsky and Kogon, that had appeared out the previous year, using it as an opportunity to compare his own experiences in the concentration camps with those of men who had been interned for a significantly longer time. This article differs from conventional reviews in that it is explicitly limited to a discussion of one aspect: the class structure of camp society. Even at that early date Bettelheim saw it as having a “bearing on persisting social phenomena.”⁷⁴ He follows Kogon relatively closely in declaring that within the “SS-state” the SS ran the concentration camps like “a private little experimental state of its own,”⁷⁵ in this state, the ruling aristocracy that performed no labor was the SS corps itself. (Kogon speaks of “drones.”) Bettelheim finds support in Kogon for his belief that the body of prisoners was stratified and not the “comradely group” depicted in earlier accounts⁷⁶ published by “staunch democrats, socialists and communists,” which claimed prisoners “helped one another, were unified by their hatred of fascism, and morally superior to their torturers.”⁷⁷ The camp hierarchy mentioned in this review has little in common with the model developed in 1943. Bettelheim refers solely to the hierarchy of prisoner functions: The “top level” or “*doyens* of the camps” (elsewhere called “the prisoner aristocracy”⁷⁸), followed by the “blockleaders” in the barracks and “*Kapos*” or supervisors of the work groups. Below them came the “‘middle class’ of the prisoners composed of clerics, camp police and so on.” Still lower down were “the great ‘working class’ of skilled and semi-skilled labor and finally a sub-stratum of Jews, Poles and Russians often condemned by the SS to be ‘worked to death.’”⁷⁹

Bettelheim finds that the authors of both books provide detailed descriptions of the internal hierarchy in the camps, including details Bettelheim could not have observed directly himself due to his early release. In listing these details, Bettelheim adds one of his own, to which neither Kogon nor Kautsky refers: In their struggles with one another, the different groups of prisoners “accepted to a large degree as their own, Gestapo values and manners of behavior.” Strangely, he criticizes both authors for not explaining whether this behavior “was the result of mimicry, of an effort to outsmart the Gestapo, or of a common way of looking at matters”⁸⁰—although up to that time Bettelheim himself was the only former prisoner to have described it.

Although the title promises an analysis of “The Concentration Camp as a Class State,” Bettelheim instead devotes the bulk of his review to the individual fate of the authors, ascribing correctly “middle or upper class positions” to both.⁸¹ Kogon in particular is the target of intense criticism: As “private secretary to a camp physician,” he was “closely bound . . . to the SS”; “one can therefore understand why he makes a great bid for sympathy in the matter of class discrimination.” Citing one of Kogon’s chapter headings, “The Permanent Underground Fight Between the SS and the Anti-Fascist Forces in the Camp,” Bettelheim observes that this characterization from the pen of a fellow traveler is a distortion. In actual fact the conflict was a “dog fight, usually fought primarily for personal and secondarily for group

benefits.” The “sense of guilt” that Kogon himself felt, according to Bettelheim, compelled him to justify himself; he did so “as members of ruling classes” have done for centuries, “by pointing to his greater value to society.”⁸² After this, Bettelheim’s caveat that his own “critical remarks do not represent a fair picture” of Kogon can hardly be viewed as anything other than rhetorical.⁸³

One can hardly escape the impression that Bettelheim’s analysis of camp class structure here serves mostly as a vehicle for venting his resentment against a person whom he perceives to have been a member of the “ruling class”—and that only on sufferance. The emotion apparent in the attack on the “bid prisoner” type in 1943 (in the vocabulary of Bettelheim’s analysis there) is here directed against another camp survivor reporting on his experiences—in a jab that includes the target’s “name, address, and telephone number” (Brecht).

Another instance of narrowing direction in Bettelheim’s analysis that will become more evident in his later works appears here for the first time; namely, reduction of the question of survival to its individual (moral) component. This is connected to a kind of “Law according to St. Matthew”: “The main law of the camp was: Whoever has will be given, and whoever has not, from him will be taken away.”⁸⁴

3.2 *The Function of the Camps*

In the article “Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations,” Bettelheim devotes a relatively large amount of space to the question of the purpose the concentration camps were designed to serve. He identifies four goals:⁸⁵

1. “to break the prisoners as individuals and to change them into docile masses,”
2. “to spread terror among the rest of the population,”
3. “to provide the Gestapo members with a training ground,” and
4. to create “*an experimental laboratory*” with human subjects.⁸⁶

But Bettelheim states clearly and unambiguously that through internment in concentration camps the prisoners are also to be turned into “more useful subjects” of the Nazi state⁸⁷—and the aim of his paper is to analyze this process! By thus including the Nazi’s own claims about the function of the camps—allegedly to re-educate prisoners—Bettelheim indicates that he takes them seriously. He ultimately even goes so far as to suggest that prisoners themselves felt “freed . . . from much of their guilt-feeling” because of the “punishment which they had to suffer”;⁸⁸ after some time in the camps they believed they had “atoned for all guilt.”⁸⁹ He stretches the limits of the definition and meaning of “guilt,” however, when he ascribes it to the many interned “middle-class political leaders,” who felt “they had fallen down on their job, particularly the job of preventing the rise of Nazi power.”⁹⁰

In Bettelheim’s later writings other explanations of camp functions dominate, and the function of re-education is not mentioned again. In “Remarks on the Psychological Appeal of Totalitarianism”⁹¹ (1952) Bettelheim sees the Hitler salute as part of the campaign of terror waged upon the civilian population; it was a ritual of conformity that had to be performed daily whether or not the symbolic loyalty it expressed violated one’s personal convictions. The Hitler salute has replaced the threat of arrest which seemed more important in 1943. *The Informed Heart*, finally, presents the “Hitler State” as one of several examples of the “mass state”—Bettelheim specifically mentions Germany, Italy, Spain, and Russia—which abolishes “the relative freedom of late capitalism” and must then, in a transitional

phase, deal with the problem of “inducing citizens, if necessary forcing them, into conformity. . . . Once created, the existence of such a state depends on citizens who are willing to give up personal identity and individualized ways of life and let themselves be managed.”⁹²

In 1960 Bettelheim calls the concentration camps a “miniature mass society,” and says that analyzing it can contribute to an understanding of an “oppressive mass society.” Like the larger society of which they were a part, the camps were designed to “force prisoners into a mass.”⁹³

In the original version of 1943, Bettelheim notes in several places that he is referring only to a particular type of camp at a particular time. It was not particularly difficult for him to make the transition from such an individual case study⁹⁴ to criticism of a whole society that singles out the extreme case of the camps as an example,⁹⁵ however, because in the first version he made very sparing use of indexical and idiomatic phrasing. He used the jargon of the camp not at all and terminology specific to concentration camps only infrequently. Whereas other eyewitnesses of the camps mention their identification number in at least one place,⁹⁶ for example, and use camp terms such as “*Stubenältester*” or “*Rapportführer*,” sometimes without explaining them (probably to emphasize the authenticity of their accounts),⁹⁷ Bettelheim rejected such rhetorical evidence of his first-hand knowledge of camp life from the beginning.⁹⁸

It seems worth noting that in the much later written *The Informed Heart* the number of idiographic details and eye-witness reports is much higher; at the same time, it is the version of the text containing the smallest number of qualifying phrases and the strongest explanatory hypotheses: Even in 1958 many qualifiers such as “it seems,” “seemed,” “among others,” “may,” “for instance,” “particular,” “mostly” are lacking, along with quantitative limiters such as “great majority,” “much of,” etc. However, in neither of these texts did Bettelheim use camp jargon.⁹⁹

Bettelheim’s various attempts to explain how the Nazi state functioned and the role played by the concentration camps therein were neither original—despite his claim to have made a contribution to sociological analysis—nor were they steadfastly maintained.¹⁰⁰ Instead he takes up and assimilates the explanatory models that were current at the time, without developing independent view to any significant extent.

3.3 *Types of Behavior*

Although Bettelheim’s original article took its title from his distinction between three types of behavior, these behaviors in fact play only a peripheral role in the text. “Private behavior” is that “which originates to a large degree in a subject’s particular background and personality, rather than in the experiences” undergone in the concentration camp.¹⁰¹ Bettelheim used his own research activities during internment as an example of this kind of behavior. He used the term “individual behavior” for “that which, although developed by individuals more or less independently of one another, is clearly the result of experiences common to all prisoners.”¹⁰² The processes of adaptation discussed below fall into this category. Finally, Bettelheim provides a rather vague and circular definition of mass behavior as “those phenomena which would be observed *only* in a group of prisoners when functioning as a more or less unified mass.”¹⁰³ Here, too, the examples are more enlightening than the definition itself, especially the remarks on regression to infantile behavior (see section 3.6 below). Bettelheim did not include the types of behavior in *The Informed Heart* (but he did bring them back almost verbatim in “Surviving”).

3.4 *Stages of Adaptation*

In the original version, considerable space is devoted to describing the various stages the inmates went through in adapting to the world of the camps. Bettelheim gives a detailed and plausible account of the deliberate degradations he suffered during his transport (by railroad) to Dachau. This constitutes the prisoners' "original traumatization,"¹⁰⁴ as they are transferred to the control of the Gestapo;¹⁰⁵ he first described it in 1943 with the less psychoanalytically oriented phrase "initial shock."¹⁰⁶ The "initiation" to the camp (called the prisoners' "welcome" by Gestapo) consisted of strategic acts of torture, and inmates' reactions to it varied, Bettelheim observes, on the basis of their socioeconomic class. He reports that he himself experienced a "split between the 'me' to whom it [i.e., the torture] happened, and the 'me' who . . . was just an interested but detached observer";¹⁰⁷ "these horrible and degrading experiences somehow did not happen to 'him' as a subject, but only to 'him' as an object."¹⁰⁸

Bettelheim's description of the "initial shock" corresponds down to the details with a number of reports given by prisoners arrested at about the same time. But the significance of the category "initial shock" also remains clear in reports from later years, when guards no longer "took the trouble" to beat and torture prisoners en route or immediately upon arrival at the camps. Prisoners arriving at Auschwitz experienced a similar kind of shock as they were separated from family members, "deloused" and sent to "saunas" or showers (which in some cases really were showers). These well-organized, impersonal procedures had the same effect as physical and quasi-personal assaults by SS men. In later years, prisoners en route to Dachau also ceased to be beaten and tormented in the manner described by Bettelheim.¹⁰⁹

3.5 *Old and New Prisoners*

"Old" prisoners are those who have been in the camp for some time, "new" prisoners those who have only recently arrived. It is not necessarily trivial to note that Bettelheim saw himself more as a member of the "new" group than the "old."¹¹⁰ Bettelheim ascribes different attitudes to the two groups with regard to areas of social life such as family and friends outside the camp or hopes of release. Old prisoners' family ties had disintegrated, in his view, and any thoughts they had about possible release and a life on the "outside" had ceased to have much connection with reality. At the same time Bettelheim notes in them a regression to infantile behavior. Moreover, the old prisoners exerted group pressure on new prisoners who had not yet begun to display symptoms of regression:

They accused those who would not develop a child-like dependency on the guards as threatening the security of the group, an accusation which was not without foundation, since the Gestapo always punished the group for the misbehavior of individual members.¹¹¹

At the beginning of the section on regression, Bettelheim accurately emphasizes how the external framework and organizational structure of the concentration camps were designed to ensure that the inmates' behavior would resemble that of children. Yet despite his vivid descriptions of the humiliating conditions imposed on all prisoners (e.g., for eliminating bodily wastes), he attests to infantile regression only among the "old" prisoners.

On the basis of their study of source materials and interviews with survivors, Luchterhand, Pingel, and others dispute the general applicability of Bettelheim's theories about the stages of adaptation and the importance of the distinction between old and new prisoners.¹¹²

3.6 Identification with the Gestapo (or SS)

The last stage of this regression could be observed in an old prisoner, Bettelheim found, when he made “the final adjustment to the camp situation.” This consisted of changing “his personality so as to accept as his own the values of the Gestapo”¹¹³ and identifying with the Gestapo, an “identification . . . [that] did not stop with the copying of their outer appearance and behavior.”¹¹⁴

Bettelheim cites a number of examples in support of this hypothesis; for example, prisoners would:

- behave aggressively towards the “so-called unfit” prisoners;
- arrange their own clothing to imitate the guards’ uniforms;
- reject the idea of intervention by foreign powers aimed at liberating them (before the outbreak of World War II).¹¹⁵
- defend some elements of Nazi ideology.

These last-named aspects of Bettelheim’s analysis in particular raise a number of problems, quite apart from the fact that they tend to cast some doubt on other accounts of concentration camps, featuring “heroes” (in the versions told by political prisoners) or “victims” (told by those prisoners in particular danger from the Nazis’ racial extermination strategies).

In any event, Bettelheim’s assertions stand in need of re-examination. Very few of them have been discussed by scholars and systematically compared with other eye-witness accounts,¹¹⁶ even though many of these contradict Bettelheim directly. (Naturally other accounts require the same kind of careful evaluation.) Some survivors mention the problematic role of *Kapos* and *Prominente* or *Funktionshäftlinge* (prisoners with positions of responsibility or important functions who, according to Bettelheim, had for the most part been in the camps a long time). Primo Levi gives the following analysis:

They are the typical product of the structure of the German Lager: if one offers a position of privilege to a few individuals in a state of slavery, exacting in exchange the betrayal of a natural solidarity with their comrades, there will certainly be someone who will accept. He will be withdrawn from the common law and will become untouchable; the more power that he is given, the more he will be consequently hateful and hated. When he is given the command of a group of unfortunates, with the right of life or death over them, he will be cruel and tyrannical, because he will understand that if he is not sufficiently so, someone else, judged more suitable, will take over his post. Moreover, his capacity for hatred, unfulfilled in the direction of the oppressors, will double back, beyond all reason, on the oppressed; and he will only be satisfied when he has unloaded on to his underlings the injury received from above.¹¹⁷

Let us consider the example of the “old” prisoners’ clothing, which Bettelheim uses, (virtually) unaltered in every version of his article, as an indicator of the degree to which those in the camps longest had adapted to the Gestapo:

Old prisoners who seemed to have a tendency to identify themselves with the Gestapo . . . (and) would try to arrogate to themselves old pieces of Gestapo uniforms. If that was not possible, they tried to sew and mend their uniforms so that they would resemble those of the guards. . . . When asked why they did it they admitted that they loved to look like (one of) the guards.¹¹⁸

Apart from the problem of what clothing actually meant in the concentration camps (not only in terms of protection from the weather but also what it signified), we must ask

whether the behavior identified by Bettelheim did in fact exist as a general pattern. One of his fellow prisoners, Paul Neurath,¹¹⁹ whom we interviewed, was able to place a certain data Bettelheim had interpreted in a highly specific manner in a more “rational” context. Even more important, however, he provided a concrete historical context:

At first we still had police uniforms. When we got to Dachau, everybody was wearing old police uniforms, and some old army outfits, but mostly discarded police uniforms, I think. We arrived in Dachau on April 2nd [1938] and then I can't remember how much later it was, maybe three months—I don't know how long—they gave us prison stripes. Now the prison stripe clothing was made out of cellulose, it was practically paper, so the disadvantage of the new uniform wasn't the stripes—I mean, once you're in a concentration camp, you don't really care what you're wearing—it was that the rain went right through it. The Kaiser's army, on the other hand, wore good-quality cloth on its back, or even the republican army, after they got rid of the Kaiser. So that's why we tried to put off for as long as possible the day we had to exchange our old uniforms for stripes—to the extent we had any control over it, but sometimes you could fudge things a bit here and there. Of course at the end we were all running around in prison stripes, except for the Kapos who had access to the clothing-stores. They kept their police uniforms, naturally. Then in September—I don't remember the exact date anymore, but it was around the time of the Czechoslovakia crisis—they shipped us off to Buchenwald, and the Dachau folks, who were proud of their camp's striped outfits, because they were still new and in good shape, put us back in the old police uniforms. They made us all change before we were taken away, and gave us the old camp uniforms again, the police ones, and we were wearing them when we got to Buchenwald. The prison stripes turned up there, too, after a while. But since Buchenwald as a whole was not nearly as well organized as Dachau, it took longer in Buchenwald for us all to get shifted over to stripes. I remember I belonged to a really small work company, one I held together, and we kept finding excuses, for as long as we possibly could, about why we couldn't switch to stripes yet. The big Kapos or the important blockleaders, they were able to get their hands on police uniforms for quite a while still, from the clothing-stores, and Richter, too; he had a black uniform. Now I ask you—did he make a point of picking a black one because it made him look like an SS man? I don't know. But in any case, Richter always had a police uniform and boots. Only the real big shots among the Kapos could manage to get boots. I remember that I and a few others of us kept our police uniforms as long as possible. For what it's worth, ours were gray. But the important thing wasn't to have gray or look like an SS man, the important thing was not to get soaked to the skin right away.¹²⁰

Neurath's remarks are further confirmed by the independent account of Fein and Flanner, who report that “in the early days of the camp . . . the prisoners [wore] a motley collection of discarded police uniforms. The Austrians¹²¹ were the first group to receive the actual concentration camp uniforms after their incarceration in 1938.”¹²² Bettelheim does not take these circumstances into account in discussing the significance of clothing, although they are of great importance. In every version of his paper he included the matter of clothing as the most vivid and striking evidence for the theory that prisoners identified with the Gestapo or SS, and the passage has frequently been quoted and paraphrased by other investigators over the years. Now, however, in the light of Neurath's and Fein and Flanner's accounts, his conclusions appear open to considerable doubt.

This is not in any way to deny that all articles of clothing departing from the norm had particular value in the concentration camps, just like any other material object, if only because they could be traded,¹²³ enabling a prisoner to improve his position in the camp hierarchy thereby. There is a striking connection between rank and clothing, for example, in the following description from a former inmate of Buchenwald:

A group of people in *civilian clothing* were waiting in front of the bath houses. They had red triangles sewn on the fronts of their jackets, with their identification number in the middle. In the first moment *I didn't realize they were prisoners*. [. . .] One of them, who I later found out was one of the top men in the underground international organization and chief of the prisoners' organization in the camp, turned to me and asked me what I had done for a living. *I didn't know he was a prisoner* and hesitated, because I didn't know how I ought to answer. He understood my nervousness and *told me that he was a prisoner, too*.¹²⁴

The prisoner elite could dress in such a manner that they were no longer identifiable as inmates to a "normal" prisoner newly arrived at the camp. The passage cited above refers to Buchenwald in 1944.

Furthermore, all aspects of one's "outward appearance," including clothing, could have a private as well as public significance: Viktor Matejka reports regularly shaving his head during his years as a prisoner at Dachau, for instance; by exceeding the camp norm he could deviate from it, through his chosen signal, and yet still remain within the role of prisoner.¹²⁵ Margareta Glas-Larsson, an inmate at Auschwitz, reports in detail about how important it was for her to use make-up, and to give herself and other prisoners cosmetic treatments:

Therefore my longing for a lipstick, because to me, as a cosmetician actually, that appeared as a sign, as a sign from outside, and as something with which one could beautify oneself somewhat.¹²⁶

By such means (and a variety of others, depending on the individual), prisoners could at least preserve and assert their own inner selves, and also create a visible boundary between themselves and the "Moslems," those inmates who had ceased to resist even inwardly.

In Bettelheim's view, however, identification with the Gestapo expressed itself not only in prisoners' "manipulation" of their uniforms (a more or less harmless activity). As a further indication he cites the following:

Prisoners prided themselves on being as tough as the Gestapo members. This identification with their torturers went so far as copying their leisure time activities. One of the games played by the guards was to find out who could stand to be hit the longest without uttering a complaint. This game was copied by the old prisoners, as though they had not been hit often and long enough without needing to repeat this experience as a game.¹²⁷

This passage is repeated with only slight alterations in *The Informed Heart*: "They prided themselves on being as tough, or tougher, than the SS."¹²⁸ The text suggests first that the guards or SS had played perverse, masochistic games, and then that the old prisoners had imitated these games (and the underlying perversion) on the basis of an all-encompassing identification. It is not entirely clear, however, just what "game" is being played; and according to one former Buchenwald inmate, Bettelheim got it wrong:

I remember one thing; he [Bettelheim] writes somewhere that prisoners identified with the SS to such an extent that they somehow tried to toughen themselves mentally and physically, and that they trained at it. This was how they did it: They had some kind of peculiar exercise, where one of them had to lay his head in a second man's lap, and then the others come up on him from behind and hit him on the buttocks, and this is supposedly about who can take it the longest or something like that—some kind of endurance test. I remember very clearly telling this story to two or three former concentration camp inmates, who burst out laughing and said, "Schinken klopfen, Schinken klopfen [lit.: "hit the ham" or "beat the bottom"]!"¹²⁹—This was nothing more than a

perfectly normal game played by boy scouts, and the idea is of course not to see who can stand the most punishment or hit the hardest, but just the opposite: The player who's really good at the game just gives the other a tap on the backside, and then the second one has to turn around as fast as he can and guess which person did it. If he guesses right, then that person has to go into the middle and cover his eyes. But, as I say, it's not fair to hit really hard; anyone who does that isn't allowed to play.¹³⁰

Thus, according to this prisoner, the game Bettelheim means was called *Schinken-klopfen* and had rules that left no room for displays of "toughness."¹³¹

It is not possible to ascertain here whether, with its placing of the head in another's lap and spanking without really hurting, the "normal game played by boy scouts" may indicate either regression or, possibly, (unconscious) homosexuality.¹³² Obviously this game could have been played only by healthy prisoners and it is conceivable in one extermination camp. But cannot be excluded that also Jewish prisoners played such games in Buchenwald in 1938. In any event the interpretation offered by Bettelheim again does not seem to conform to the facts, as in the case of the prisoners' clothing.

In our view, one of the central problems of Bettelheim's interpretations is the following: He posits on opposition between the world of adults (i.e., members of a civilized society who to a large degree act and think autonomously) and the (pathologically) childish world of the old prisoners, whose childishness results less from the coercive measures of the concentration camps than from regression.

Bettelheim's psychoanalytic syllogism implies that once a person has regressed and become a child (again), as it were, then it is highly likely that he will make use of childish defense mechanisms such as "identifying with the aggressor," in this case the Gestapo or SS. As a basis for this he simply borrowed the psychoanalytic concept of identification with the aggressor, even if no citation of Anna Freud is to be found in the passage. Hilde Bluhm pointed out quite early on, in 1948 review of a number of eye-witness accounts by concentration camp survivors, that Bettelheim's interpretations were based on the psychoanalytic theories of Anna Freud and Sándor Ferenczi. Ernst Federn gave the following account of the interpretation's genesis:

Bettelheim and I had noticed the degree to which the mechanisms of defence [sic] that Sándor Ferenczi and Anna Freud have described as identification with the aggressor could be observed amongst the camp inmates. Who made the first observation I cannot tell today, but it was a significant one. What Anna Freud had described of children and what every nursery-school teacher can confirm can also be found among adults and most clearly when they are in a regressed state of mind.¹³³

Anna Freud related identification with the aggressor primarily to children in 1936:

In "identification with the aggressor" we recognize a by no means uncommon stage in the normal development of the superego. When the two boys whose cases I have just described identified themselves with their elders' threats of punishment, they were taking an important step toward the formation of that institution: they were internalizing other people's criticisms of their behavior. When a child constantly repeats this process of internalization and introjects the qualities of those responsible for his upbringing, making their characteristics and opinions his own, he is all the time providing material from which the superego may take shape.¹³⁴

It lies beyond the scope of this inquiry to attempt to historicize psychoanalytic concepts, by identifying and unfolding their historical and social roots. But it should be noted that Bettelheim's interpretation makes no fundamental distinction between the worlds of

those who are imprisoned and those not imprisoned, a distinction that appears justified in the light of observations by other authors. One could set against the world of those who are not imprisoned a concentration-camp world (*L'univers concentrationnaire*¹³⁵), whose highly efficient organization makes it function on a totally different basis from civilian life, with regard both to social relations and the economics of survival.

Far more able writers have had difficulties finding language adequate to describe this "totally different" world, the nature of which may become demonstrable only through the later history of the camps, particularly the extermination camps at Auschwitz. Günter Anders wrote of "Hades,"¹³⁶ and Kautsky used the metaphor of hell or the underground as early as 1946. For a number of prisoners if it was their very speechlessness, the inadequacy of language to describe the situation and their reaction to it, that characterized an essential dimension of the camp experience: "We had hardly begun to tell the story when we were struck dumb. What we had to say began to seem *unimaginable*, even to us."¹³⁷

For Bettelheim, on the other hand, the experience of the camps presented itself more as a problem of deviance from ordinary life, which he identified as regression to a childish state (with the concomitant defense mechanisms), rather than as a problem of complex survival strategies in the specific camp universe.¹³⁸ In addition it should be mentioned that some psychoanalysts have expressed doubt about whether Anna Freud's theory was appropriately applied by Bettelheim to this particular situation.¹³⁹

3.7 *The Ability to Resist*

It should have become clear by now that Bettelheim made rather large (empirical) assumptions regarding the stages of prisoners' adaptation to the reality of the concentration camps. The theory that the longer someone was exposed to this torture, the more he came to resemble his abusers, stands in a certain contrast to Bettelheim's own account that he found a way to withstand the pressures: He grew determined to prevent his own identity so that, should he ever succeed in escaping the camp, he would be able to take up his former life again.

In addition to these forms of individual opposition and inner resistance, the 1943 paper contains a few brief remarks on forms of collective resistance. We referred above to Bettelheim's view that one of the goals of the camps was to break the prisoners as individuals so that "no individual or group act of resistance could arise."¹⁴⁰

Bettelheim makes a very ambivalent statement about the question of resistance when he observes that the "great majority of the non-political middle class prisoners" continued to act obediently even in the extreme situation of the camp and "did not dare to oppose the ruling group."¹⁴¹ In a following passage he makes his argument more pointed by asserting that some of the political prisoners "had some guilt-feeling that they had fallen down on their job," because they had not fought the Nazis more effectively or prevented the rise of Nazi power.¹⁴² Bettelheim mentions a number of times in this context that these prisoners had felt "guilt."¹⁴³ He didn't explain neither his use of "guilt" nor didn't he try to explain the term itself.

Neurath commented:

I recall him [i.e., Bettelheim] writing something about guilt, which I found particularly outrageous. For if you ask me, out of all the people I came across, I encountered some who were angry at themselves, if you will, for having been stupid enough to get caught, but not guilty about having done anything for which they deserved to be sent to a concentration camp. Absolutely not, I mean, that was just not possible in the circumstances. Although I grant you, it is difficult to prove that no such person existed when you were one of, say, 10,000 prisoners; maybe he found one such case.¹⁴⁴

Because Bettelheim uses one and the same term, namely “resistance,” to describe various attitudes and forms of behavior, the text becomes ambiguous. First, he discusses the intellectual efforts required for a prisoner to maintain a sense of personal integrity and wholeness. Second, he mentions (the lack of) resistance to the Nazis in the period before their takeover, and finally he takes up the subject of acts of resistance that could have been performed in the camps (but were not). In the later versions of the paper Bettelheim presents this third topic so as to give the reader the impression that he expected or even demanded certain modes of behavior from the prisoners, although this is less the case in the original article. In chapter four of *The Informed Heart*, which contains extended passages from “individual and Mass Behavior,” he writes the following under the heading “The last human freedom”:

But to survive as a man not a walking corpse, as a debased and degraded but still human being, one had first and foremost to remain informed and aware of what made up one’s personal point of no return, the point beyond which one would never, under any circumstances, give in to the oppressor, even if it meant risking and losing one’s life. It meant being aware that if one survived at the price of overreaching this point one would be holding on to a life that had lost all its meaning.¹⁴⁵

One can infer from this passage a moral imperative to resist, as Ernst Federn did in reference to another passage in *The Informed Heart* about the family of Anne Frank:

That he reproaches Anne Frank’s father for not having fired a shot, that is just crazy; the father didn’t have the faintest idea how to use a revolver. But we realized at the time that he [Bettelheim] couldn’t really judge, with his 10 months’ experience of the camps. It makes a difference, first of all whether you were there 10 or 12 months or 10 years, and secondly in what camp—every camp was different—and whether you were a Jew or not, or a foreigner; all of that made a big difference. And that means he isn’t truly an expert on concentration camps; he couldn’t be, because he wasn’t in one long enough.¹⁴⁶

Federn has here clearly mixed two separate matters: first, Bettelheim’s view that a person (still) outside a concentration camp had a moral duty to offer resistance, and second the question of Bettelheim’s expertise on the camps themselves. Without wishing to overinterpret this mistake, one could infer that Federn (and the other survivors implied in his use of the plural “we”) correctly understood the moral message contained in *The Informed Heart*. The tenor of Bettelheim’s observations does indeed suggest an expectation that prisoners’ behavior will go beyond preserving their physical existence, and can be so read that, in extreme situations at least, his moral stance requires acts of resistance.¹⁴⁷

In his discussion of Terrence Des Pres’ writings,¹⁴⁸ Bettelheim clarifies his position, and in so doing alters the emphasis slightly. He objects to Des Pres’ stress on survival for survival’s sake, on a purely animal level, arguing that it misses the crucial point:

Any discussion of survivorship is dangerously misleading if it gives the impression that the main question is what the prisoner can do, for this is insignificant compared to the need to defeat politically or militarily those who maintain the camps—something that the prisoners, of course, cannot do.¹⁴⁹

A little later Bettelheim returns to his earlier point of view, however, when he remarks that resistance “in one’s mind” was the crucial factor: “To survive, one had to want to survive for a purpose.”¹⁵⁰ Occasionally such an attitude on a prisoner’s part even found approval from the SS guards:

. . . among the values of the SS was an appreciation not of mutual help but of an esprit de corps, at least up to the time Germany's defeat became clear to them. While they tried overtly to break such a spirit in the prisoners, covertly they had some grudging admiration for it, and utterly despised the prisoners who did not act in accordance with it.¹⁵¹

It is certainly not overstating the case to describe Bettelheim's remarks on the question of resistance as inconsistent, as the following passage demonstrates:

. . . prisoners did not suddenly begin to behave in the camps altogether differently from the way they had behaved in freedom. The extreme conditions of the camps brought out in often-exaggerated form the values by which the prisoners had lived, but rarely changed them. One was forced to do things one would not normally have done, but internally there were always limitations derived from previous behavior patterns.¹⁵²

The view presented here stands namely in complete contradiction to Bettelheim's theory of identification as discussed above: Here the camp doesn't change the "values" and there he argues that an identificationist adaptation took place.

In arguing against Des Pres' standpoint,¹⁵³ Bettelheim felt it important to stress the prisoners' moral responsibility (and the survivors' responsibility for their actions in the camps); in the 1943 paper, on the other hand, he was obviously more concerned with presenting, within a psychoanalytic framework, a plausible explanation for how moral integrity could be destroyed. In "Individual and Mass Behavior" he makes the "old prisoners" responsible for their behavior to a degree that, at the very least, may legitimately be questioned. From the middle distance of 1960 Bettelheim wrote ambiguously of "enforced self reeducation,"¹⁵⁴ whereby he left open whether the emphasis was to be placed on the "self" that is reeducated or the reeducation that had to be accomplished by "oneself."

3.8 Moslems

The original paper of 1943 made no mention of the "walking corpses" or "Moslems", but later Bettelheim claimed that they had existed even during the early period of his own internment.¹⁵⁵ Were the descriptions of this group added later mainly in order to make his picture of the camps more complete, or does it play a more significant role in his analysis? As mentioned above, in the 1943 paper Bettelheim saw the "final" phase of prisoners' adaptation to the concentration camp as occurring when they adopted the values of the SS, assuming they had not been killed or released earlier. The adaptation process is presented as if no alternative to the ultimate step of identification existed.

In *The Informed Heart*, by contrast, the Moslems represent precisely such an alternative:

Once his [the prisoner's] own life and the environment were viewed as totally beyond his ability to influence them, the only logical conclusion was to pay no attention to them whatsoever. . . .

Seeing them [the "asocial" prisoners] made every prisoner afraid he might become like them. . . . Fear of sinking into that subhuman stratum of prison society—the asocials, the "moslems"—was a powerful incentive to fighting a class war against them.¹⁵⁶

Bettelheim's analysis of 1960 adds several puzzles to his original hypothesis, but it would not be accurate to surmise that the later work contains a fundamental revision of his theory. It is rather the case that variants coexist, as we have shown in his discussion of Des Pres (and Lina Wertmüller's movie "Seven Beauties"), where the moral self of the prisoners

is contrasted with the survival ethic of a later generation of commentators and interpreters. It is very difficult to decide whether these modifications can (or should) be understood as a complete negation of his previous standpoint.¹⁵⁷ Rather than making such a decision, one might instead interpret Bettelheim's revisions in the light of Lakatos' methodology.¹⁵⁸ In such a context Bettelheim's insistence on the importance of his "identification-with-the-aggressor" model might suggest that this represents the "hard core" of his research program, which Bettelheim then modifies in order to protect it from falsifying objections. The decisive question posed by Lakatos, namely whether theoretical and/or empirically "progressive problemshifts" are involved (i.e., scientific progress), is not readily answerable, however, for reasons which have nothing to do with the content of Bettelheim's theory. In general, it is difficult if not impossible to validate theories in the social sciences by testing the accuracy of their prognoses. But short of such strict scientific criteria, one can without doubt say that in addition to creating his model of identification, Bettelheim was interested in investigating other aspects of life and/or survival under the conditions of the concentration camps.

The analysis of the reception of Bettelheim's work(s) that follows will show that later scholarly discussion has focused primarily on the above-mentioned "hard core," with its deficient empirical foundation, while other aspects of his analysis of the camps received little or no attention.

4. RECEPTION

Bettelheim's works have been so widely read and commented upon that it would be impossible to provide even a survey of their reception. A database search reveals the number of citations by other authors, but this information is available only for a limited number of years (see Table 4).¹⁵⁹ Both Bettelheim as author and the concentration camps as subject would lead one to expect the citations to be spread across a wide spectrum of academic disciplines, and this is indeed the case. Bettelheim's work on concentration camps is cited in the fields of psychology, social psychology, sociology, and history.

It is notable that 87.5% of the citations occurred in articles, 9.5% in reviews, and 3% in other types of scholarly publications. It is also interesting to note which of Bettelheim's works are cited, and in which database. This distinction can be observed for the period 1981–94. The results show clearly that Bettelheim's books are cited more frequently than

Table 4
Number of Publications in which Bettelheim's Works on Concentration Camps Are Cited, by Year (English and German editions)

1972	5	1984	22
1973	12	1985	25
1974	13	1986	21
1975	19	1987	15
1976	14	1988	19
1977	19	1989	16
1978	13	1990	25
1979	14	1991	16
1980	17	1992	27
1981	23	1993	18
1982	29	1994	29
1983	22		
Total			433

Table 5
Distribution of Citations by Discipline

Discipline	Percent (%)
Sociology	9.8
Psychology, Psychoanalysis, Psychiatry	34.3
Law, Administration, Criminology	7.2
History	5.9
Literature and Linguistics	5.1
Politics and Political Science	3.5
Education	5.1
General	19.0

the original article, although 22% of the authors note they consulted it as well. Thirty-seven percent of the citations refer to *The Informed Heart* (a figure that rises to 42% if citations of the German translation are included); 30% refer to the collection of essays entitled *Surviving* (34% including the German translation).

The difference between the reception of Bettelheim's work in the social sciences and in the humanities is striking: 72% of the citations occur in journals listed in the SSCI. The problem of duplicate references has already been mentioned (a number of social science journals are included in the AHCI, but virtually no humanities journals in the SSCI). Generally Bettelheim's works received more attention from scholars in the social sciences than in the humanities. Table 5 gives the distribution according to the primary area covered by individual journals; it shows that considerable note was taken of Bettelheim's work outside the confines of his own academic discipline. About one third of the citations appeared in a psychological frame of reference, one-tenth in sociology, but only 6% in history.

Because his books became best-sellers in many parts of the world, both in English and in translation, it must be assumed that their reception greatly exceeded the ordinary limits of academic discussion. This very fact makes a study of their reception all the more difficult, however. In what follows we shall restrict ourselves to that part of his work that particularly concerns us. As mentioned, several patterns emerge.

One observable tendency is the citation of Bettelheim in a *general* rather than a specific context. His name crops up as soon as *any mention* of concentration camps occurs, often in passing when the actual subject is quite far removed, without any reference to Bettelheim's *specific* views or theories. "Classic" authors in a particular field are often cited in this manner. Examples in Bettelheim's case are Berk, Loewenberg, McEwen, Gross, Snow and Anderson, and Mills and Kleinman,¹⁶⁰ all of whom sum up Bettelheim's analysis more or less accurately and profess themselves in agreement with it.

Another type of citation appeals to the status of Bettelheim's texts as "classics" as well, but with a different intention and with far more interesting implications for his theories. Under this heading may be subsumed the detailed summaries of parts of his works (often focusing on the adaptation-and-identification hypothesis) and the adaptations of his theories to fit other theoretical frameworks. This form of reception is based on the two-fold character of Bettelheim's observations, as both a specific eye-witness account and a general analysis; it also derives from the tendency noted above to shape and modify the texts to conform to theory. Bettelheim's efforts to "explain" the horrors of the concentration camps ("Hades," "the other side") had an obvious appeal for other scholars trying to develop their own global theories of human behavior.

Hannah Arendt was one of the first to cite Bettelheim's work in this manner, in *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). By the mid-1940s Arendt had recognized the particular significance of the concentration camp as a tool of totalitarian systems, and reached the conclusion "that it was the concentration camps that fundamentally distinguished the totalitarian form of government from any other."¹⁶¹ In 1948 Arendt applied for funding for a research project on concentration camps, but was turned down. In 1950 she published an article that can be read as a kind of outline of the planned research project, and she devoted the next-to-last chapter of *Origins of Totalitarianism* to the subject of the camps. Both the article and the book cite the work of Kogon, Rousset and Federn, and also Bruno Bettelheim, in particular his sworn statement of 1946.¹⁶²

Arendt draws on Bettelheim's identification theory in several places, although she does not quote him in the text. In *Origins of Totalitarianism* she mentions the different categories in which prisoners were classified within the camps and continues, "The gruesome and grotesque part of it was that the inmates identified themselves with these categories, as though they represented a last authentic remnant of their juridical person."¹⁶³ Previously she had written that "the inmates assimilate themselves to the outlook on life of their persecutors, although the latter rarely attempt to indoctrinate them."¹⁶⁴ Here again, although she makes no explicit reference to Bettelheim in her text, we hear echoes of the identification model. In contrast to Bettelheim, however, Arendt does not see identification as a particular psychological defense mechanism or strategy, but rather as the achievement of one of the camps' main goals, namely to condition the inmates to automatic responses, like "marionettes" or Pavlov's dogs. Instead of originating in the prisoners' own psychological defenses, as Bettelheim believes, the identification is imposed from outside, forced on the prisoners by the specific conditions of the camps.¹⁶⁵

Bettelheim's theories also play a major role in the work of Anthony Giddens. Giddens cites *The Informed Heart* (i.e., the most psychoanalytic of Bettelheim's reworkings of the text) in several of his own works as a special case of his theory of "resocialization." In brief, Giddens understands by this term a re-establishment or re-creation of the self based on altered routine behavior patterns acquired during or after extreme experiences ("critical situations") in which brute physical force is used to achieve adaptation. In *Central Problems in Social Theory* Giddens uses Bettelheim's account of the concentration camps as a prime example of a "critical situation" that can lead to resocialization.¹⁶⁶

The "resocialization" portion of Giddens' theory is supported almost exclusively by citations from Bettelheim, in particular Bettelheim's description of "old prisoners" and the specific behaviors he ascribed to them. At the same time, however, Giddens overlooks or ignores the genuine psychoanalytic orientation and implications of Bettelheim's texts, interpreting them solely from the standpoint of socialization theory.¹⁶⁷

In *The Constitution of Society*, where Giddens presents his theory of "structuration," he returns to Bettelheim's analysis of the camps.¹⁶⁸ At the start of this discussion Giddens quotes the passage from *The Informed Heart* where Bettelheim draws a direct connection between his concentration camp experiences and his revision of psychoanalytic theory. In paraphrasing Bettelheim's ideas, however, Giddens allows several new ideas of his own to creep in. Thus he alleges that "the changes in personality described by Bettelheim" were "experienced by all prisoners who were interned in the camp over a period of years," and that these changes "followed a certain sequence of stages" which was "quite evidently a regressive one."¹⁶⁹ The "old prisoners" had, according to Giddens,

lost altogether any orientation to the world outside and had, as it were, reconstituted themselves as agents by integrating themselves into camp life as participants in the very

rituals of degradation which, as new prisoners, they had found so offensive. . . . The end result, found in most but not all old prisoners, was a reconstructed personality based upon identification with the oppressors themselves, the camp guards. Old prisoners aped the activities of their captors, not merely to curry favour with them but also, Bettelheim suggests, because of an introjection of the normative values of the SS.¹⁷⁰

After summarizing Bettelheim's observations, Giddens interprets the material in terms of his own theory of resocialization: Deliberate assaults on the ordinary routines of life produce anxiety, which is expressed "in regressive modes of behaviour, attacking the foundation of the basic security system grounded in trust manifested towards others." Once autonomy and self-esteem have been eroded, they are replaced by "a limited and highly ambivalent" attitude of trust "involving identification with authority figures."¹⁷¹ In Giddens' view, such modes of behavior manifest themselves in all variants of totalitarian institutions.¹⁷²

Most recently, Giddens has included a section on Bettelheim in his textbook.¹⁷³ Once again we find a brief summary of the "famous description of resocialisation," but in contrast to previous discussions, Giddens here makes explicit reference to the copying of SS clothing and games (both discussed above). Giddens repeats his view that from the study of these critical situations valuable insights may be gained into the "orthodox process of socialization."

In all three of Giddens' texts, Bettelheim's text is used (along with several other examples taken from totalitarian institutions) to provide empirical support for Giddens' own theory of resocialization. Another sociologist makes different use of Bettelheim's essay, however: Lewis A. Coser draws on it as offering an explanatory framework for the mass suicide of members of a religious sect in Jonestown, Guyana.¹⁷⁴

Barrington Moore devotes the second chapter of his lengthy book *Injustice* to the "Moral Authority of Suffering and Injustice." In this context he advances the following claim: "Suffering and submission come to these people with such a powerful aura of moral authority that they take pride and pleasure in their pain." Moore applies this description, which might fit flagellants of the late Middle Ages, to ascetics and concentration camp inmates.¹⁷⁵

The statement of such a premise makes his depiction of the concentration camps all the more interesting. Moore bases it chiefly on three sources: Kogon, Cohen,¹⁷⁶ and Bettelheim's *The Informed Heart*. Despite the fact that, after an extended summary, he will later declare himself in general agreement with Bettelheim's analyses, Moore seems to have clearly recognized one problem in them, namely a tendency toward overgeneralization. He places himself at a certain distance from them by introducing a sense of their limits:

Under the Nazi regime *some* concentration camp inmates came to accept the moral authority of their oppressors through quite complex processes. . . . In certain camps this acceptance sometimes reached the point where some inmates tried to achieve identification with the SS, copying its style of dress (to the limited extent possible) in a manner that would be ludicrously comic had not the circumstances been so tragic.¹⁷⁷

At this particular point Moore makes no direct reference to Bettelheim, although he is the only source for the alleged copying of styles of dress. Thus although Moore was clearly concerned to avoid one of Bettelheim's traps, he promptly falls into the next one, the myth of the copied clothing. He then presents an extremely detailed summary of Bettelheim's position, finds "support" for parts of it in other sources (including Kogon and Cohen), and limits its validity implicitly only in that he avoids arguments he clearly assumes would be insulting to the victims (a stance Bettelheim did not always share).

For Moore, too—and this is the key point—the concentration camps can thus be “explained,” made comprehensible. He concludes:

As a whole then, the concentration camp appears as a horrible but only too easily recognizable caricature of many a “civilized” society. There is the same class hierarchy, the same competition for crumbs among individuals in the lower strata, the same emergence of a reformist and arrogant elite among those in principle opposed to the regime, and a variety of mechanisms that produce in the subordinate strata an acceptance of the values of the rulers.¹⁷⁸

Moore surely takes his most extreme position here, when he discovers the structure of the concentration camp to exhibit recurrent general features of widely scattered societies, and conversely sees the camp as a paradigm of modern social development in general and the working class of industrial Europe in particular. Both variants of this attempt to historicize or even “normalize” the Nazi camps seem of highly doubtful validity, not only because they ignore the specific identity of the victims, and to an even greater degree that of the perpetrators, but above all because they tend to blur the common view of the camps as a distinct historical phenomenon.¹⁷⁹

Not in any case has the attempt to transfer observations made in the context of the camps to other fields of history been obliged to fail so clearly. Stanley M. Elkins very cautiously draws some parallels between slavery and the camps, not exclusively making references to Bettelheim but to further psychological interpretations of the camp inmates. Elkins does not miss the opportunity to emphasize that the “American plantation was not even in a metaphorical sense a ‘concentration camp’; nor was it even ‘like’ a concentration camp.”¹⁸⁰

Some historians and sociologists have taken a more critical view of Bettelheim’s theory of identification, while others use references to Bettelheim’s theories as a kind of interdisciplinary shibboleth and consider discussion of them unnecessary (see the earlier discussion of Bettelheim as a “classic” author). Pingel belongs to the former group and cites numerous sources to demolish most of Bettelheim’s central thesis. He stresses the importance of prisoners’ previous experience in their capacity to master or endure conditions in the camps (as do Pollak and Strauss¹⁸¹): Someone who has already experienced treatment such as beatings, for example, will have less of a struggle in the world of the camp. Such a person’s adapted behavior makes sense when his precamp experience is taken into account, and it is “superfluous” to “assume a psychological process of ‘identification with the aggressor.’”¹⁸² Elsewhere Pingel takes an even more critical stance, arguing that Bettelheim’s explanation is correct in no more than “outward appearance.”¹⁸³

Dimsdale numbers Bettelheim’s text among those characterized by “strongly held beliefs.”¹⁸⁴ Although in Bettelheim’s case these beliefs are based not on “so-called popular opinions” but rather on personal experience, they are nonetheless open to doubt. Dimsdale’s study of Holocaust survivors identifies ten different coping strategies, one of which is identical to the “psychological removal” described by Bettelheim. Luchterhand attempted to find “possible exceptions to the claims of Bettelheim” in a number of interviews with survivors.¹⁸⁵

Sofsky,¹⁸⁶ like Pingel before him, has striven to produce an account of concentration camps free from arbitrary or skewed theoretical assumptions. He makes use of the term “power” and expands it into the concept of “absolute power” to describe the social order and structure of the camps. Both authors take a skeptical or negative stance toward Bettelheim’s extensive psychological assumptions, rejecting the core of his theory as either empirically inaccurate (Pingel) or of little value (Sofsky).

Sofsky distinguishes “three strategies for adapting to the center of power: mimetic servility, total obedience, and formation of an economic interest group.” The first category should not be confused with Bettelheim’s concept of “identification with the aggressor” even though it contains the aspect of mimicry, however, since “the behavior of the servant has a totally different significance than the behavior of the master.”¹⁸⁷ In general one can say Sofsky is skeptical of Bettelheim’s psychological theory and therefore intent on explaining the modes and strategies of behavior of the various “classes” of prisoners in terms of social interaction between prisoner and guard.

A third variant of the reception of Bettelheim’s work remains to be mentioned, which ranges from critique to explicit rejection. This group includes a large number of former inmates. Some of them seem to have been prompted by Bettelheim’s remarks to make their own controversial statements, although this is rarely made explicit.¹⁸⁸

The Polish sociologist Anna Pawelczynska, herself an Auschwitz survivor, obviously had Bettelheim’s phrase “old prisoners accepted Nazi values as their own” in mind when she posed the question of “Values and Violence” in her article on Auschwitz.¹⁸⁹ Her precise analysis is doubtless intended as a defense of the group of prisoners to which she herself belonged. Her notice of Bettelheim is limited to one subordinate clause and a footnote. Even though she is clearly engaged in contesting his results, she speaks only of the “doubtful theory about the need to identify with the aggressor.”¹⁹⁰ Before this, she makes a reference to the phenomenon of identification (without naming Bettelheim, although he is with certainty the source), noting that those affected by it represent an extremely small group. Pawelczynska rejects the idea that identification constitutes a necessary step in the process of adaptation to camp conditions, although she accepts the general notion of an adaptive process taking place over time. Indeed her own camp sociology contains just such a model. It appears to have been derived less from theoretical considerations, however, than from the empirical world of the inmates (of whom she was one): Those who made it through the first few days and the “initial shock” of Auschwitz had better chances for survival. Pawelczynska’s model departs from individuals equipped with varying degrees of resources to draw on in attempting to adapt. It was then precisely the degree of adaptation prisoners were capable of achieving that determined whether or not they survived.

The same author’s book *Values and Violence in Auschwitz* offers similar criticism of Bettelheim (i.e., more implicit than explicit). She refers to him directly in only one passage, a discussion of the breakdown of solidarity among prisoners. There she mentions Bettelheim’s thesis in connection with the division of prisoners into two groups, the powerful and the powerless.¹⁹¹ (The translator of the American edition takes a different view, however; in her lengthy introduction she attempts to locate Pawelczynska in the spectrum of opinion on the camps, on which Bettelheim, among others, has had considerable influence in the United States. The introduction names Pawelczynska, along with Des Pres, as among those who have dealt critically with Bettelheim’s theory.)

Primo Levi, the Italian chemist, writer, and Auschwitz survivor, became well known for his work on camps, which took both literary and autobiographical as well as more scholarly, theoretically oriented form.¹⁹² Levi was certainly no partisan of heroism in the camps, nor did he belong to a privileged group of inmates. In an interview in the late 1980s he accused Bettelheim of overgeneralization:

I have to confess that I didn’t think much of Bettelheim’s first book [sic! Levi means the 1943 article]. It seems to me that his interpretation as regression just isn’t valid in general. It’s valid for some but for others like me, it was the exact opposite. So to hold up this theory as a general rule strikes me as unfair.¹⁹³

In a previously published book Levi had made the same point even more emphatically: “Their interpretations, even those of someone like Bruno Bettelheim, who went through the trials of the Lager, seem to me approximate and simplified, as if someone wished to apply the theorems of plane geometry to the solution of spheric triangles.”¹⁹⁴ Here Levi used a mathematical image to explain why he rejected the entire approach.

The previous two examples might suggest that Auschwitz was so different in character from the other concentration camps (especially prewar Dachau and Buchenwald) that survivors of the former were bound to find Bettelheim’s observations on the camps erroneous. Selective use has been made of his theories in some cases, however, as when Langbein cites him to illustrate the process of wearing down inmates’ resistance or to describe the contempt felt by the “upper strata” of the inmate population for those below them.

Langbein even expresses agreement with the theory of regression and identification, at least in part, although he does not adopt Bettelheim’s model of the adaptation process as a whole.¹⁹⁵ He regards his own past experience as giving him license to write on the history of the camps, as the “author’s justification” of his 1972 book shows.

It should be noted, however, that Des Pres’ questioning of Bettelheim’s authority had been preceded by Bettelheim’s own attack on Des Pres’ book *The Survivor*. Like Primo Levi, Des Pres took a position opposed to Bettelheim: The individual best suited for survival in extreme situations is not the autonomous subject “conceived of simultaneously as a descriptive category of developmental psychology and an ideal”¹⁹⁶ who maintains his self-esteem, but rather the individual with the greatest capacity for adaptation; this capacity would include in particular the ability to establish relations with small groups and to dispense with those moral standards obtaining in the outside world that are inadequate for extreme situations. Des Pres’ ideas correspond in large measure with those of Primo Levi, although Levi ascribes a larger role in the question of survival to pure chance.¹⁹⁷ Sofksy argues at some length that the structures of the camp made friendship impossible; although he is careful not to overgeneralize, his line of reasoning appears questionable when Glas-Larsson and Pollak are taken into consideration.¹⁹⁸

5. SUMMARY

Bruno Bettelheim undoubtedly numbers among the most important and influential analysts of the Nazi concentration camps. Two fundamental reasons account for this: His first publication appeared at an early date; and, second, Bettelheim could successfully claim to have combined an eye-witness account with the expertise of a professionally trained scientific observer. He was therefore perceived as someone who spoke with particular authority. Our investigation of Bettelheim’s biography prior to 1938 revealed that the 1943 article represented his first scholarly publication of any kind (because his doctoral dissertation for the University of Vienna remained unpublished). His “entree” into the scholarly community, which was achieved with this article, thus did not take place until after he had emigrated. This was, as it happens, not infrequently the case in the history of scholars’ emigration from Europe during this period.

The circumstance that the author republished this article a number of times over the next several decades, making specific alterations in each case, suggested one step in our study: a precise comparison of the textual variants. The result pointed to an alteration in the author’s “identity” or self-image, both in his role as scholar/scientist and as a former concentration camp inmate. Two parts of this process appear of particular interest. Expressed in somewhat oversimplified form they are (a) the development from “mainstream” social

psychology to psychoanalysis, and (b) a shift from self-identification as a political prisoner toward that of a Jewish prisoner (i.e., a victim of “racial” persecution) identifying himself with the victims.

Considerable attention was devoted to Bettelheim’s oft-repeated remark that he had conducted research during the period (lasting under one year) he spent interned in two concentration camps. To the extent that the facts behind this claim could be ascertained, it appears that Bettelheim carried on conversations about the situation in the camp with a few fellow prisoners, which had a certain psychoanalytic tone to them; given the conditions of the camps themselves, it would not be obsolete to speak of empirical “research” in the ordinary sense. The fact that Bettelheim nonetheless presented his observations as such can be explained primarily by his need to appear to have followed the rules of the field of scholarship in one of whose journals the article was to be published.

Further analysis of textual variants with regard to their selective emphasis led to the following observation, among others: Bettelheim’s assumption that “old” prisoners identified with the Gestapo or SS came to play an increasingly important role, a shift that appeared to go hand in hand with the growing psychoanalytic orientation of his approach. An attempt to use other sources to reconstruct the empirical foundation on which Bettelheim based this hypothesis makes it appear likely that he interpreted the evidence incorrectly. From this it follows that the conclusions he drew regarding an “identification with the aggressor” as posited by psychoanalytic theory should be treated with great caution or rejected altogether.

The degree to which caution is advisable in this regard is demonstrated by a brief summary of the scholarly reception of Bettelheim’s work on concentration camps. Apart from the fact that scholars from a wide range of disciplines have commented on it—something that can be seen as indicating the status of a “classic” text—we observe that other authors have made use above all of Bettelheim’s hypothesis regarding prisoners’ identification with the Gestapo or SS. Such citations were featured prominently a number of times, in widely differing theoretical contexts. This is not to say that Bettelheim’s hypotheses have been accepted without criticism. Other authors who have analyzed the Nazi concentration camps have vehemently rejected his depiction of them, first and foremost among them other camp survivors.

It has often been observed how difficult it is for social scientists to write in the usual professional manner—that is, as neutral and unemotional observers—about concentration camps. The moral difficulties posed by this topic are indeed far greater than in some other areas, but this should not be taken to mean that any work on the camps written by a survivor is automatically immune from critical analysis. Using the genesis, modification, and reception of Bettelheim’s “Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations” as an example, we have attempted to show that uncritical acceptance of a survivor’s hypotheses makes it more difficult to acquire a cognitive grasp of life (and survival) in the concentration camps.

NOTES

1. The authors of this paper, which was a long time in the making, are greatly indebted to a number of people, first of all to Paul Neurath and Ernst Federn for granting interviews and offering suggestions and comments on an earlier version. We would also like to thank the following people for their constructive criticism, comments, and suggestions: Peter Gasser-Steiner, Marie Jhoda, Roland Kaufhold, Franz-Josef Krumenacker, Edith Kurzweil, the late Hermann Langbein, Harald Leupold-Löwenthal, Felix de Mendelssohn, Wolf-Dieter Narr, Wolfgang Neugebauer, Helga Nowotny, Falk Pingel, Herbert A. Strauss, and Erika Weinzierl. We benefited from the comments of two anonymous referees of this journal. Special thanks go to our translator and English copy-editor, Deborah Schneider. Part of the research for this essay was undertaken in the framework of a project supported by the Austrian Science Fund, “Knowledge Transfer Through Forced Emigration” (P 8831-Soz).

2. Simon Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us: The Simon Wiesenthal Memoirs*, ed. Joseph Wechsberg (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 334.
3. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960).
4. From the body of Western literature see, for example, Benedikt Kautsky, *Teufel und Verdammte. Erfahrungen und Erkenntnisse aus sieben Jahren in deutschen Konzentrationslagern* (Zürich: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1946); Ernst Federn, "Essai sur la Psychologie de la Terreur," *Syntheses* 1 (1946): 81–108; David Rousset, *The Other Kingdom* [L'univers concentrationnaire], trans. Ramon Guthrie (NY: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947); Ernst Federn, "The Terror as a System: The Concentration Camp (Buchenwald as it was)," *Psychiatric Quarterly Supplement* 22 (1948): 52–86; Ella Lingens-Reiner, *Prisoners of Fear* (London: Gollancz, 1948); Hermann Langbein, *Die Stärkeren. Ein Bericht aus Auschwitz und anderen Konzentrationslagern* (1949; reprint, Köln: Bund, 1982); Eugen Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them* [Der SS-Staat], trans. Heinz Norden (London: Secker & Warburg, 1950); Paul Neurath, "Social Life in the German Concentration Camps Dachau and Buchenwald" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1951); Viktor E. Frankl, *From Death-Camp to Existentialism. A Psychiatrist's Path to a New Therapy*, trans. Ilse Lasch (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959); Hermann Langbein, *Menschen in Auschwitz* (Wien: Europa, 1972).
5. Most of the early studies of concentration camps were produced by former inmates. Hannah Arendt, who was not interned in a camp herself, is a prominent exception.
6. See, for example, Bruno Bettelheim (interviewed by David J. Fisher), "Last Thoughts on Therapy," *Society* 28 (1991): 63ff.
7. Michael Pollak, *Die Grenzen des Sagbaren. Lebensgeschichten von KZ-Überlebenden als Augenzeugenberichte und Identitätsarbeit* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1988), p. 167.
8. See, as an example for this style of criticism, Paul Roazen, "The Rise and Fall of Bruno Bettelheim," *The Psychohistory Review* 20 (1992): 221–250.
9. For more on this and what follows, see Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud's Vienna and other Essays* (NY: Knopf, 1990), pp. 24ff, 95ff.
10. Bettelheim himself regarded it as typical, in fact; see Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 10ff.
11. The city is frequently celebrated today as one of the cradles of modern ideas; see Allan Janik and Stephen E. Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1973); Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (NY: Knopf, 1979); Michael Pollak, *Vienna 1900. Une identité blessée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984); Jacques Le Rider, *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in fin-de-siecle Vienna*, trans. Rosemary Morris (NY: Continuum, 1993).
12. Bettelheim, *Freud's Vienna*, p. 25f.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 39ff.; also Bettelheim, "Last Thoughts," p. 68. With this step Bettelheim established himself as a practicing (quasi-)therapist. In the main body of literature on the history of psychoanalysis in Austria during the First Republic, Bettelheim is mentioned either not at all or only as a marginal figure, despite his later renown, because he was not a candidate of the Psychoanalytic Society. See, for example, Wolfgang Huber, *Psychoanalyse in Österreich seit 1933* (Wien: Geyer-Edition, 1977); Johannes Reichmayr, *Spurensuche in der Geschichte der Psychoanalyse* (Frankfurt: Nexus, 1990); and also Patrick D. Zimmerman, "The Clinical Thought of Bruno Bettelheim: A Critical Historical Review," *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought* 14 (1991): 685–721.
14. From the winter semester of 1923–24 to the summer semester of 1937 (with an interruption in his eighth semester); see Phil. Rig. Prot. Ph. 59.41, Archives of the University of Vienna.
15. Bruno Bettelheim, "Das Problem des Naturschönen und die moderne Ästhetik" (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 1937).
16. This is according to information Bettelheim provided in a statement to the authorities made on July 10, 1945: Bruno Bettelheim, "Copy of Document L-73," in U.S. Department of State and Public Institutions, Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression. A Collection of Documentary Evidence Prepared by the American and British Prosecution Staffs* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), vol. 7, p. 819.
17. Bettelheim described his life at that time in a public lecture in Vienna entitled "How I Learned About Psychoanalysis" on 20 October 1987. This lecture, given under the auspices of the Sigmund Freud Society, went into greater detail than the essay published under the same title in Bettelheim, *Freud's Vienna*, pp. 24–38.
18. Bettelheim, *Freud's Vienna*, p. 24.
19. Bettelheim, "Copy of Document L-73," p. 819. Federn recalled (in a letter to the authors, 3 June 1993) that Bettelheim was not interned at Dachau until the end of May. Neurath is also of the opinion that Bettelheim could only have arrived with one of the later transports (letter to the authors, 20 June 1993). In the section of Neurath's dissertation headed "The Austrian Invasion" the following transports are listed: First and second transport (150 Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners) in April and May, 1938; third transport (500 Jewish prisoners) on May 27th; fourth transport (600 Jewish prisoners) on June 3rd; further mass transports in the next three weeks. "All told about 3,300 Austrians, 2,000 of them Jews, were added to 2,500 Germans of whom only 300 were Jews" (Neurath, "Social Life," p. 365f).

20. Bettelheim, "Copy of Document L-73," p. 819.
21. Federn, *Witnessing Psychoanalysis: From Vienna back to Vienna via Buchenwald and the USA* (London: Karnac Books, 1990), p. 3.
22. Proceedings of the Academic Senate for the academic year 1939–40, GZ 1501, Archives of the University of Vienna, with the stigmatizing addition to his name Bruno Israel Bettelheim.
23. On the so-called "Schober List," see Gerhard Botz, *Wien vom "Anschluß" zum Krieg. Nationalsozialistische Machtübernahme und politisch-soziale Umgestaltung am Beispiel der Stadt Wien 1938/39* (Wien: Jugend & Volk, 1978), p. 57.
24. Harald Leupold-Löwenthal informs us that Bettelheim mentioned this connection to him in conversation. Telephone conversation with Christian Fleck, 1 June 1993.
25. Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 5–8.
26. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 38 (1943): 417.
27. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 109.
28. Bettelheim, *Freud's Vienna*, p. 109. If appears problematic, for instance, when Bettelheim's arrest and the "deportation" of others after the *Anschluss* are presented solely as measures taken against "Jewish citizens," Joachim Mehlhausen, *Leben lernen. Gedenken an Bruno Bettelheim* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), p. 26ff.
29. His readiness to make a clear distinction between political prisoners and Stalinists, which is particularly noticeable in his review of the books by Kautsky (*Teufel*) and Kogon (*Theory*), for example, could be seen in this context. At one place he recalls "that any nation by virtue of German attack automatically became a 'democratic and peace loving' state, however dictatorial its government may have been." Bettelheim, "The Concentration Camp as a Class State," *Modern Review* 1 (1947): 629.
30. Bettelheim discusses his identity as a Jew in *Freud's Vienna*, p. 243ff.
31. The situation immediately following the *Anschluss* was characterized by random and arbitrary arrests and short periods of detention combined with humiliating treatment, as well as other excesses typical of pogroms.
32. See the summary in Gudrun Schwarz, *Die nationalsozialistischen Lager* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1990) p. 154ff.
33. Raoul Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961).
34. For more on this see Kogon, *Theory*, and also Erich Fein and Karl Flanner, *Rot-weiß-rot in Buchenwald. Die österreichischen politischen Häftlinge im Konzentrationslager am Ettersberg bei Weimar* (Wien: Europa, 1987), p. 183ff., for the Austrians interned there in particular. It produces a problematic picture of conditions there, however, when it is claimed—as Bettelheim does in *Informed Heart*, p. 109n—that in 1938–39 "all camps were a combination of what were later separated into Type II and Type III [extermination] camps."
35. See the detailed account in Zimmerman, "Clinical Thought," p. 691f., which indicates that his first job was financed by the Rockefeller Foundation and arranged through the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars. See also Bettelheim, "Copy of Document L-73"; Morris Janowitz, "Bruno Bettelheim" in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences Biographical Supplement*, ed. David L. Sills (NY: Free Press, 1979), pp. 59–63; Lewis A. Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America. Their Impact and their Experiences* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 63–68.
36. Bettelheim made his own small contribution to this shift in perspective. In 1943 he reported in a footnote that "contrary to widespread opinion, only a small minority of them [i.e., prisoners] were Jews" ("Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 418, note 4). In 1960, by contrast, he speaks of "inmates, especially Jewish." This no longer gives the impression of a small minority.
37. See Kogon, *Theory*, and Bettelheim, *Surviving and other Essays* (NY: Knopf, 1979), p. 14n.
38. Jonny Moser, "Österreich," in *Dimensionen des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Wolfgang Benz (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1991), pp. 67–93.
39. Cases that may serve as typical examples are those of Robert Danneberg, see Leo Kane, *Robert Danneberg. Ein pragmatischer Idealist* (Vienna: Europa, 1980), p. 184f.; and Käthe Leichter, see Leichter, *Leben und Werk*, ed. Herbert Steiner (Vienna: Europa, 1973), p. 206ff.
40. Bettelheim reports (*Informed Heart*, p. 150) that he was summoned three times and told he was about to be released; by the third time he no longer believed it would actually happen.
41. Janowitz ("Bettelheim") believes (followed by Coser, *Refugee Scholars*) that Bettelheim's career was helped by the fact that he settled in Chicago, where few emigrants were living at the time. Bettelheim's career in Chicago was also clearly furthered by Franz Alexander, who accepted him despite his lay status (Bettelheim, "Last Thoughts," p. 67). Alexander is considered to have been somewhat more liberal on the question of lay analysis than the APA, see Edith Kurzweil, *The Freudians: A Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
42. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 118.
43. Bettelheim, "Kulturtransfer von Österreich nach Amerika, illustriert am Beispiel der Psychoanalyse," in

Vertriebene Vernunft II. Emigration und Exil österreichischer Wissenschaft, ed. Friedrich Stadler (Vienna: Jugend & Volk, 1988), p. 217.

44. Ibid.

45. Disbelief in the contents of the report, the impossibility of confirming it, unwillingness to subject readers to such a harrowing account, and the lack of field notes are among the reasons for the article's rejection mentioned by Bettelheim in various places (*Informed Heart*, p. 118; *Surviving*, pp. 14–15), with a tone of understandable bitterness. John Galliher, "The Protection of Human Subjects: A Reexamination of the Professional Code of Ethics," *The American Sociologist* 8 (1973): 93, offers an example, at a relatively late date, that such absurd objections really can be raised: "In reading Bettelheim's well-known study of Jews [sic!] in German concentration camps one gets the impression that he obtained neither the permission of his fellow prisoners nor of the prison [!] staff, and that the latter was most certainly not aware of his research." The sentence that follows, "Obviously, such secrecy was required," does not much alter the generally condemnatory stance.

46. Unfortunately the details surrounding the first publication of the article cannot be reconstructed. The collection of the Gordon W. Allport papers of Harvard contains letters to and from Curt Bondy concerning his article (see note 52), but none to or from Bettelheim (Clark A. Elliott, Harvard University Archives, letter to Christian Fleck, 16 July 1991). Bettelheim told Spalek in 1976 that he burned all his papers when he moved to the West Coast, John M. Spalek, *Guide to the Archival Materials of the German-speaking Emigration to the United States after 1933* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), p. 95; for more on Bondy see *Daten zur Geschichte der deutschen Psychologie*, ed. Ulf Geuter (Göttingen: Hogrefe, 1986), Vol. 1, p. 148.

47. In 1942 an article on problems of teaching evaluation appeared, with C. W. Harris, P. B. Diederich, and Bettelheim as co-authors; see Franz Josef Krumenacker, "Bibliographie zu dem Werk von Bruno Bettelheim," in *Annäherung an Bruno Bettelheim*, ed. Roland Kaufhold (Mainz: Matthias-Grunewald Verlag, 1994).

48. Bettelheim, "Behavior in Extreme Situations," *Politics* 1 (1944): 199–209. *Politics* was "a journal of opinion read by an audience interested in general cultural criticism. This . . . brought Bettelheim to the attention of an audience of nonprofessionals"; Coser, *Refugee Scholars*, p. 65.

49. Bettelheim, "Copy of Document L-73."

50. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," reprinted in *Readings in Social Psychology*, ed. Eleanor E. Maccoby, Theodore M. Newcomb, and Eugene L. Hartley (NY: Holt, 1958), pp. 300–310.

51. It should be added that the translations led to further shifts in meanings and lent support to various possible interpretations.

52. Although no positive proof of this exists, for the reasons already cited, the Allport–Bondy correspondence suggests that this is what occurred: Bondy made extensive revisions to his paper before its publication, Curt Bondy, "Problems of Internment Camps," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 38 (1943): 453–457.

53. Compare the pioneering (and controversial) attempts of the Chicago school to gain acceptance for the genre of "own stories," Rolf Lindner, *The Reportage of Urban Culture. Robert Park and the Chicago School*, trans. Adrian Morris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

54. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 420.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., pp. 431, 437, 444; *Surviving*, pp. 52, 55, 62.

57. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 424. Patricia Benner, Ethel Roskies, and Richard S. Lazarus, "Stress and Coping under Extreme Conditions," in *Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators: Essays on the Nazi Holocaust*, ed. Joel E. Dimsdale (Washington, D.C.: Hemisphere, 1980), pp. 219–258, regard Bettelheim's decision to collect and analyze his concentration camp experiences in a detached, scientific manner as a "strategy of transcending the present" (240).

58. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 423; *Surviving*, p. 54.

59. Ibid.

60. Federn is mentioned in postwar editions, when this no longer represented a threat to his safety. Federn himself mentions Dr. Brief, a fellow prisoner who also worked on questions of the analysis, *Witnessing*, pp. 3–8.

61. Bettelheim, "Copy of Document L-73," p. 820.

62. Ibid., p. 821.

63. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 13.

64. Bettelheim, "Copy of Document L-73," p. 822.

65. Bettelheim, "The Victim's Image of the Anti-Semite. The Danger of Stereotyping the Adversary," *Commentary* 5 (1948): 173.

66. Bettelheim, "The Dynamics of Anti-Semitism in Gentile and Jew," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 42 (1947): 154.

67. Interview by the authors with Ernst Federn, 31 May 1990; see also Federn, *Witnessing*, p. 4.

68. It seems obvious that concentration camp inmates could not normally pursue (conventional) research. But we shouldn't overlook the fact that in numerous instances the SS used prisoners for their own "research projects," either as experts or as "guinea pigs." See Ludwik Fleck, "Wissenschaftstheoretische Probleme," in *Erfahrung und Tatsache. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. Lothar Schäfer and Thomas Schnelle (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp. 128–146, for example.

69. Federn, *Witnessing*, p. 6.

70. As a "Trotskyite," Federn belonged to a second group with a very low rank in the hierarchy of camp inmates; the Trotskyites were especially despised by the Communists who dominated the class of "political" prisoners. See also Hans Schafranek's interview with Ernst Federn of 10 July 1982 (in the collection *Erzählte Geschichte, Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes*, Vienna).

71. See also Zimmerman, "Clinical Thought."

72. It is another question to examine the validity or representativeness of eye-witness accounts vis-à-vis historical sources.

73. See, for example, Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (NY: Summit Books, 1988). Bettelheim does not really solve the problem by lumping virtually all political prisoners together in the lower-class group. In fact members of the former political elite, including a number of senior civil servants and government officials, had to wear the identifying "red badge" as well.

74. Bettelheim, "The Concentration Camp as a Class State," *Modern Review* 1 (1947): 629.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 628.

76. Bettelheim cites Wolfgang Langhoff, *Rubber Truncheon: Being an Account of Thirteen Months spent in Concentration Camp*, trans. Lilo Linke (NY: E. P. Dutton, 1935), as an example, he does not seem to have been familiar with the accounts of Paul Massing [Karl Billinger, pseud.] *Fatherland* (NY: Farrar & Rinehart, 1935); Karl A. Wittfogel [Klaus Hinrichs, pseud.], *Staatliches Konzentrationslager VII: Eine "Erziehungsanstalt" im Dritten Reich* (London: Malik, 1936); and Bruno Heilig, *Men Crucified: An Account of Experiences in Concentration Camps* (London, 1941).

77. Bettelheim, "Concentration Camp as a Class State," p. 629.

78. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 181.

79. Bettelheim, "Concentration Camp as a Class State," p. 628.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 630.

81. *Ibid.* in Bettelheim's view it would have been impossible for either to rise still further, into the "top ruling class," because both were Austrians. The ruling class "consisted only of gentle Germans," and Kogon and Kautsky's nationality also "removed them one step from identifying with matters German." Bettelheim believes both factors may have contributed to their "relative objectivity" (p. 630)!

82. Bettelheim, "Concentration Camp as a Class State," p. 631.

83. Bettelheim softens his criticism of Kogon to a considerable degree in *Informed Heart*, p. 186.

84. Bettelheim, "Concentration Camp as a Class State," pp. 636–37. Elsewhere, however, Bettelheim stresses that survivors—be it of Nazi concentration camps or the Soviet Gulags—could survive only because they were released or liberated, *Surviving*, pp. 287–288.

85. It is interesting to note that in this article Bettelheim mentions in several places that his observations are limited or relative only to certain cases, and also that certain questions will be answered only by future research. Thus in 1943 we find a footnote stating that a "more elaborate discussion, presenting abundant case material and its discussion, must be reserved for another publication"; "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 418, n. 5.

86. Bettelheim was not thinking of the medical experiments on prisoners, which has not yet begun, but rather "only" of testing "the minimum food, hygienic, and medical requirements needed to keep prisoners alive and able to perform hard labor," along with "effective means for breaking civilian resistance"; "Individual and Mass Behavior," pp. 418–419.

87. This aspect of the concentration camps' function is not included in Bettelheim, "Copy of Document L-72." Obviously the Nazis didn't include Jews in the population which should be turned into "more useful subjects"—but Bettelheim doesn't mention this in his 1943 article.

88. Bettelheim, *Surviving*, p. 59.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 59. Here again the presence of a certain ambiguity in Bettelheim's analysis must be noted. He attributes this feeling of guilt to all prisoners, although the identification of a basis for guilt feelings in the failure to have resisted the rise of Nazi power before 1933 (or 1938) is limited to the political prisoners.

91. Bettelheim, "Remarks on the Psychological Appeal of Totalitarianism," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 12 (1952): 89–96.

92. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 103. More in Bettelheim's remarks than just their terminology is reminiscent of Emil Lederer's analysis of National Socialism as a *State of the Masses* (NY: W. W. Norton, 1939). It may help to

shed some light on influences on Bettelheim's thinking to note that he first expressed these ideas in the Festschrift for Max Horkheimer *Sociologica I: Aufsätze, Max Horkheimer zum sechzigsten Geburtstag gewidmet* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1955); they were reprinted in Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*. Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), traces in detail their similarity to the views of Horkheimer in his later years.

93. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, pp. 181, 104, 136.
94. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 418, n. 4.
95. *Informed Heart*, p. 104.
96. Bettelheim cites such a passage in another author's account, *Informed Heart*, p. 161n.
97. Langbein, *Menschen in Auschwitz*, p. 26ff., for instance, considers precision in the matter of terminology essential for describing the camps accurately, and thus places an introductory chapter at the head of his account. The term *Stubenältester* refers to the "room chief" of a room in a barrack, and *Rapportführer* to "a senior SS officer, directly under the camp commander"; Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 143.
98. The shift from "the author" to the first-person "I," on the other hand, probably resulted from the growth of Bettelheim's reputation.
99. The few echoes of camp jargon, in such phrases as *fertig machen* ["finish off"], *auffallen* [be noticed], and *beseitigen* [eliminate], are more hints than direct quotations.
100. An example of the latter can be seen in the following sentence of Bettelheim's 1943 article: "Too many Germans became dissatisfied with the system"; "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 441. This statement makes both the concentration camps and the arbitrary arrest of representatives of social groups (which acted as a deterrent) appear functional. For the reprint in *Readings in Social Psychology* he altered the sentence to read: "Many Germans were dissatisfied with the system" (p. 306).
101. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 419.
102. *Ibid.*
103. *Ibid.*
104. Bettelheim, *Surviving*, p. 55.
105. Bettelheim doesn't make great effort to recognize the difference between SS and Gestapo.
106. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 424.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 434.
108. *Ibid.*, p. 431.
109. See, for instance, Karl Rüstl, interview by Christian Fleck, tape recording, Graz, 14 January 1986, whose account of his arrival there in 1941 is similar to Bettelheim's and Joseph Rován's very different report about the summer of 1944 in *Contes de Dachau* (Paris: Julliard, 1987).
110. This corresponds not only to the relatively short length of his internment in Dachau and Buchenwald, but also to remarks made by his fellow prisoner Ernst Federn. Similar references can be found in Paul B. Foreman, "Buchenwald and Modern Prisoners-of-War Detention Policy," *Social Forces* 37 (1959): 292.
111. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 444.
112. Elmer Luchterhand, "Prisoner Behavior and Social System in Nazi Concentration Camps," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 13 (1967): 245–264; Falk Pingel, *Häftlinge unter SS-Herrschaft. Widerstand, Selbstbehauptung und Vernichtung im Konzentrationslager* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1978); for a survey of this topic, see Luchterhand, "Social Behavior of Concentration Camp Prisoners: Continuities and Discontinuities with Pre- and Postcamp Life," in *Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators*, pp. 259–264.
113. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 447; in *Surviving*, p. 77, he softens this phrase, altering it to "so as to accept various values of the SS as his own."
114. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 448; *Surviving*, p. 79.
115. In the first version of 1943, Bettelheim remarks that many prisoners were hoping instead to be liberated by their fellow citizens: "He found only two who made the unqualified statement that everyone escaping Germany ought to fight the Nazis to the best of his abilities. *All others were hoping for a German revolution, but did not like the idea of interference on the part of a foreign power*" (italics in original; Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," 449). This passage was dropped in *Informed Heart* but is reproduced in *Surviving*, pp. 79–80.
116. Compare Herbert A. Strauss "Einleitung" in Jacob Goldstein, Irving F. Lukoff, and Herbert A. Strauss, *Individuelles und kollektives Verhalten in Nazi-Konzentrationslagern*, trans. Albert Müller (Frankfurt: Campus 1991), p. 17; however, Theodore Abel, "The Sociology of Concentration Camps," *Social Forces* 30 (1951): 150–155, also contains references to the social conditions of survival, without specifically mentioning Bettelheim.
117. Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz; and, The Reawakening: Two Memoirs*, trans. Stuart Woolf (NY: Summit Books, 1986), p. 91.
118. Bettelheim, "Individual and Mass Behavior," p. 448; *Surviving*, p. 79. In *Informed Heart* the term "Gestapo"

is replaced by "SS," and the end of the passage has been altered to "When asked why they did it, they said it was because they wanted to look smart. To them looking smart meant to look like their enemies" (p. 171).

119. Paul Neurath, interview by the authors, tape recording, Vienna, 12 July 1989.

120. Neurath, interview.

121. The reference is to the 420 Austrians who were shipped from Vienna to Buchenwald on 25 September 1938; see Fein and Flanner, *Rot-weiß-rot in Buchenwald*, p. 44.

122. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

123. See the reports by and about inmates who worked in either the warehouses where the effects of gassed prisoners were sorted and stored, or the warehouses where camp supplies were kept, such as Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After*, trans. Rosette C. Lamont (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) and Krystyna Zywułska, *I Came Back*, trans. Krystyna Cenkalska (NY: Roy, 1951).

124. Zacharias Zweig, "Mein Vater, was machst Du hier . . . ?" *Zwischen Buchenwald und Auschwitz. Der Bericht des Zacharias Zweig* (Frankfurt: Dipa, 1987), p. 128 (authors' emphasis).

125. Viktor Matejka, *Widerstand ist alles. Notizen eines Unorthodoxen* (Wien: Löcker, 1983), p. 95; Norman R. Jackman, "Survival in the Concentration Camp," *Human Organization* 17 (1958): 25, correctly observed that Bettelheim had failed to distinguish between "identification" and "imitation."

126. Margareta Glas-Larsson, *I Want to Speak: The Tragedy and Banality of Survival in Terezin and Auschwitz*, ed. Gerhard Botz, trans. Lowell A. Bangerter (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press 1991), p. 106.

127. Bettelheim, "Copy of Document L-72," p. 834.

128. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, pp. 171–72.

129. *Schinken* = ham, is a colloquial German term for "buttocks."

130. Neurath, interview.

131. It is interesting to note that in his recollection of reading Bettelheim, Professor Neurath believes Bettelheim to have provided an exact description of the game. Bettelheim provided no such description, however, a circumstance that enabled him to offer such a drastic interpretation of the game. Hermann Langbein confirmed to us that he had seen such a game being played by Auschwitz prisoners at least once (whereby they belonged to a group given better than average nourishment), letter to the authors, 31 May 1993. It seems clear that age was also a factor in which prisoners played the game.

132. Homosexual activities in the concentration camps among prisoners who were *not* interned as "homosexual offenders" are well documented, particularly in the case of Buchenwald relevant here. See for example Federn, "The Terror as a System," p. 77.

133. Federn, *Witnessing*, p. 5.

134. Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, trans. by Cecil Baines, rev. ed., *The Writings of Anna Freud* 2 (NY: International Universities Press, 1971), p. 116.

135. Rousset, *Other Kingdom*.

136. Günter Anders, *Besuch im Hades* (Munich: Beck, 1979).

137. Robert Antelme, *The Human Race*, trans. Jeffrey Haight and Annie Mahler (Marlboro Vt.: Marlboro Press 1992); see also Michael Pollak, *Die Grenzen des Sagbaren* and *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*, ed. Saul Friedländer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

138. See the summary of the literature in Michael R. Marrus, "The History of the Holocaust—A Survey of Recent Literature," *Journal of Modern History* 59 (1987): 114–160.

139. Elisabeth Brainin, Vera Ligeti, and Samy Teicher, *Vom Gedanken zur Tat. Zur Psychoanalyse des Antisemitismus* (Frankfurt: Brandes & Apsel, 1993), pp. 70–72.

140. Bettelheim, *Surviving*, p. 49.

141. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

143. In a study of 50 survivors, Schneider found the following difference with regard to general feelings of guilt: No such feelings were reported before the Nazis began carrying out their "final solution"; some survivors reported feelings of guilt after that, which were related to having offered too little active opposition before their own arrest and to the fate of close relatives. Schneider's data produced no confirmation of Bettelheim's theory of personality change. Gertrude Schneider, "Survival and Guilt Feelings of Jewish Concentration Camp Victims," *Jewish Social Studies* 37 (1975): 74–83.

144. Neurath, interview.

145. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 157.

146. Ernst Federn, interview by the authors, tape recording, Vienna, 31 May 1990.

147. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, pp. 263–265.

148. Terrence Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1976); Bettelheim, *Surviving*, pp. 288–290.
149. *Ibid.*, pp. 288–289.
150. *Ibid.*, pp. 292–293.
151. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
152. *Ibid.*, p. 302.
153. Terrence Des Pres, “The Bettelheim Problem,” *Social Research* 46 (1979): 619–647.
154. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, p. 159.
155. *Ibid.*, p. 109n, see also Zdzislaw Ryn and Stanislaw Klodzinski, “An der Grenze zwischen Leben und Tod. Eine Studie über die Erscheinung des ‘Muselmanns’ in den Konzentrationslagern,” in *Die Auschwitz Hefte*, ed. Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (Weinheim: Beltz, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 89–154.
156. Bettelheim, *Informed Heart*, pp. 152 and 184.
157. See also Helen Fein, “Beyond the Heroic Ethic,” *Society* 17 (1980): 51–55.
158. Imre Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes,” in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 91–195.
159. For this purpose we consulted both the Social Science Citation Index and the Arts and Humanities Citation Index from the earliest possible date, i.e., SSCI 1972–92 and AHCI 1980–92. Every effort was made to eliminate duplications.
160. Bernard Berk, “Face-Saving at Single Dance,” *Social Problems* 24 (1977): 542; Peter Loewenberg, “Psychohistorical Perspectives on Modern German History,” *Journal of Modern History* 47 (1975): 235; C. A. McEwen, “Continuities in the Study of Total and Nontotal Institutions,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 6 (1980): 169; David Gross, “Temporality and the Modern State,” *Theory and Society* 14 (1985): 73; David A. Snow and Leon Anderson, “Identity Work Among the Homeless—The Verbal Construction and Avowal of Personal Identities,” *American Journal of Sociology* 92 (1987): 1337; and Trudy Mills and Sherryl Kleinman, “Emotions, Reflexivity, and Action—An Interactionist Analysis,” *Social Forces* 66 (1988): 1012–1013.
161. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 204.
162. Hannah Arendt, “Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps,” *Jewish Social Studies* 12 (1950): 149–164, and Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951). Pingel, *Häftlinge unter SS-Herrschaft*, characterizes Arendt and Bettelheim as the “chief proponents” of the identification theory.
163. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 422.
164. Arendt, “Social Science Techniques,” p. 161.
165. Kulka faults both Arendt and Bettelheim for prejudices which led them to see Nazi Germany as “a monolithic society and regime”; Otto Dov Kulka, “Die Nürnberger Rassegesetze und die deutsche Bevölkerung im Lichte geheimer NS-Lage- und Stimmungsberichte,” *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 32 (1984): 583.
166. Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), p. 124.
167. For a further interpretation in terms of socialization theory, see Wilfried Gottschalch, “Bruno Bettelheims Beitrag zur Sozialisationsforschung,” in *Das Große bleibt groß nicht und klein nicht das Kleine. Politische Sozialisation in Deutschland* (Heidelberg: Asanger, 1990), pp. 75–94.
168. Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), p. 61ff.
169. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
170. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
171. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.
172. Giddens expresses the view in several places that Bettelheim’s analysis converges with Goffman’s. We find it interesting, however, that although Goffman cites literature relating to concentration camps in a number of his works, he never refers to Bettelheim.
173. Anthony Giddens, *Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 80–81. This is not the first time Bettelheim’s analysis has been taken over more or less uncritically in a widely used textbook of social psychology; see Theodore M. Newcomb, *Social Psychology* (NY: Dryden Press, 1950).
174. Lewis A. Coser, *A Handful of Thistles, Collected Papers in Moral Conviction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1988), p. 66.
175. Barrington Moore, *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (White Plains, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1978), p. 50. Moore follows this immediately with a reference to Anna Freud’s *Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, thereby providing a further example of the difficulty of removing particular psychoanalytic observations or statements from their empirical context and reformulating them as universally valid principles.

176. Elie A. Cohen, *Human Behaviour in the Concentration Camp*, trans. M. H. Braaksmā (London: Free Association Books, 1988).
177. Moore, *Injustice*, p. 64.
178. Moore, *Injustice*, p. 76.
179. Richard L. Rubenstein, "Moral Outrage as False Consciousness," *Theory and Society* 9 (1980): 745–755, criticizes *Injustice* as "essentially ahistorical" (p. 748).
180. Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 104.
181. Pollak, *Grenzen des Sagbaren*, and Strauss, "Einleitung."
182. Pingel, *Häftlinge unter SS-Herrschaft*, p. 12.
183. Pingel, "The Destruction of Human Identity in Concentration Camps: The Contribution of the Social Sciences to an Analysis of Behavior under Extreme Conditions," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 6 (1991): 169.
184. Dimsdale, "Coping Behavior of Concentration Camp Survivors," in *Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators*, p. 164.
185. Luchterhand, "Social Behavior of Concentration Camp Prisoners," p. 261.
186. Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp*, trans. William Templer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
187. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
188. For one explicitly critical view see Anna Ornstein, "The Holocaust and Life-Cycle Experiences," *Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 14 (1981): 135–154.
189. Anna Pawelczynska, "Values and Violence Sociology of Auschwitz," *The Polish Sociological Bulletin* 3 (1976): 5–17.
190. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
191. Pawelczynska, *Values and Violence in Auschwitz: A Sociological Analysis*, trans. Catherine S. Leach (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979), p. 49.
192. Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* and *The Drowned and the Saved*.
193. Risa Sodi, "An Interview with Primo Levi," *Partisan Review* 54 (1987): 358.
194. Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 85.
195. Langbein, *Menschen in Auschwitz*, pp. 31, 91, 92.
196. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
197. Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*.
198. Glas-Larsson, *I Want to Speak*, and Pollak, *Die Grenzen des Sagbaren* and *L'Expérience concentrationnaire. Essai sur le maintien de l'identité sociale* (Paris: Métailie, 1990).