PETER L. BERGER is a member of the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research and editor of its quarterly, *Social Research*. He is author of *Invitation to Sociology* and numerous publications in the sociology of religion.

THOMAS LUCKMANN, who has taught at Hobart College and the New School for Social Research, now holds a chair of sociology in the University of Frankfurt. He is author of *Das Problem der Religion in der Modernen Gesellschaft* and, with Alfred Schutz, of the forthcoming *Strukturen der Lebenswelt*.

The Social Construction of Reality

A TREATISE IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann

ANCHOR BOOKS
DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC. GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

tion posits the need for "artificial" techniques of reality-accentuation that are unnecessary in a situation dominated by a religious monopoly. It is still "natural" to become a Catholic priest in Rome in a way that it is not in America. Consequently, American theological seminaries must cope with the problem of "reality-slipping" and device techniques for "making stick" the same reality. Not surprisingly, they have hit upon the obvious expedient of sending their most promising students to Rome for a while.

Similar variations may exist within the same institutional context, depending upon the tasks assigned to different categories of personnel. Thus the degree of commitment to the military required of career officers is quite different from that required of draftees, a fact clearly reflected in the respective training processes. Similarly, different commitments to the institutional reality are demanded from an executive and from lower-echelon white-collar personnel, from a psychoanalyst and from a psychiatric social worker, and so forth. An executive must be "politically sound" in a way not incumbent on the supervisor of the typing pool, and a "didactic analysis" is imposed upon the psychoanalyst but only suggested to the social worker, and so on. There are, then, highly differentiated systems of secondary socialization in complex institutions, sometimes geared very sensitively to the differential requirements of the various categories of institutional personnel.[16]

The institutionalized distribution of tasks between primary and secondary socialization varies with the complexity of the social distribution of knowledge. As long as it is relatively uncomplicated, the same institutional agency can proceed from primary to secondary socialization and carry on the latter to a considerable extent. In cases of very high complexity, specialized agencies for secondary socialization may have to be developed, with full-time personnel specially trained for the educational tasks in question. Short of this degree of specialization, there may be a sequence of socializing agencies combining this task with others. In the latter case, for example, it may be established that at a certain age a boy is transferred from his mother's hut to the warriors' barracks, where he will be trained to become a horseman. This need not entail full-time educational personnel. The older horsemen may teach the younger ones. The development of modern education is, of course, the best illustration of secondary socialization taking place under the auspices of specialized agencies. The resultant decline in the position of the family with regard to secondary socialization is too well known to require further elaboration here.[17]

c. *Maintenance and Transformation of Subjective Reality*

Since socialization is never complete and the contents it internalizes face continuing threats to their subjective reality, every viable society must develop procedures of reality-maintenance to safeguard a measure of symmetry between objective and subjective reality. We have already discussed this problem in connection with legitimation. Our focus here is on the defense of subjective rather than objective reality, reality as apprehended in individual consciousness rather than on reality as institutionally defined.

Primary socialization internalizes a reality apprehended as inevitable. This internalization may be deemed successful if the sense of inevitability is present most of the time, at least while the individual is active in the world of everyday life. But even when the world of everyday life retains its massive and taken-for-granted reality *in actu*, it is threatened by the marginal situations of human experience that cannot be completely bracketed in everyday activity. There is always the haunting presence of metamorphoses, those actually remembered and those only sensed as sinister possibilities. There are also the more directly threatening competing definitions of reality that may be encountered socially. It is one thing for a well-behaved family man to dream of unspeakable orgies in nocturnal solitude. It is quite another to see these dreams empirically enacted by a libertarian colony next door. Dreams can more easily be quarantined within consciousness as "nonsense" to be shrugged aside or as mental aberrations to be silently repented; they retain the character of phantasms *vis-à-vis* the reality of everyday life. An actual acting-out forces itself upon consciousness much more clamorously. It may have to be destroyed in fact before it can be coped with

in the mind. In any case, it cannot be denied as one can at least try to deny the metamorphoses of marginal situations.

The more "artificial" character of secondary socialization makes the subjective reality of its internalizations even more vulnerable to challenging definitions of reality, not because they are not taken for granted or are apprehended as less than real in everyday life, but because their reality is less deeply rooted in consciousness and thus more susceptible to displacement. For example, both the prohibition on nudity, which is related to one's sense of shame and internalized in primary socialization, and the canons of proper dress for different social occasions, which are acquired as secondary internalizations, are taken for granted in everyday life. As long as they are not socially challenged, neither constitutes a problem for the individual. However, the challenge would have to be much stronger in the former case than in the latter to crystallize as a threat to the taken-for-granted reality of the routines in question. A relatively minor shift in the subjective definition of reality would suffice for an individual to take for granted that one may go to the office without a tie. A much more drastic shift would be necessary to have him go, as a matter of course, without any clothes at all. The former shift could be socially mediated by nothing more than a change of job—say, from a rural to a metropolitan college campus. The latter would entail a social revolution in the individual's milieu; it would be subjectively apprehended as a profound conversion, probably after an initially intense resistance.

The reality of secondary internalizations is less threatened by marginal situations, because it is usually irrelevant to them. What may happen is that such reality is apprehended as trivial precisely because its irrelevance to the marginal situation is revealed. Thus it may be said that the imminence of death profoundly threatens the reality of one's previous self-identifications as a man, a moral being, or a Christian. One's self-identification as an assistant manager in the ladies' hosiery department is not so much threatened as trivialized in the same situation. Conversely, it may be said that the maintenance of primary internalizations in the face of marginal situations is a fair measure of their subjective reality. The same test would be quite irrelevant when applied to most

secondary socializations. It makes sense to die as a man, hardly to die as an assistant manager in the ladies' hosiery department. Again, where secondary internalizations are socially expected to have this degree of reality-persistence in the face of marginal situations, the concomitant socialization procedures will have to be intensified and reinforced in the manner discussed before. Religious and military processes of secondary socialization could again be cited in illustration.

It is convenient to distinguish between two general types of reality-maintenance—routine maintenance and crisis maintenance. The former is designed to maintain the internalized reality in everyday life, the latter in situations of crisis. Both entail fundamentally the same social processes, though some differences must be noted.

As we have seen, the reality of everyday life maintains itself by being embodied in routines, which is the essence of institutionalization. Beyond this, however, the reality of everyday life is ongoingly reaffirmed in the individual's interaction with others. Just as reality is originally internalized by a social process, so it is maintained in consciousness by social processes. These latter processes are not drastically different from those of the earlier internalization. They also reflect the basic fact that subjective reality must stand in a relationship with an objective reality that is socially defined.

In the social process of reality-maintenance it is possible to distinguish between significant others and less important others.[18] In an important way all, or at least most, of the others encountered by the individual in everyday life serve to reaffirm his subjective reality. This occurs even in a situation as "non-significant" as riding on a commuter train. The individual may not know anyone on the train and may speak to no one. All the same, the crowd of fellow-commuters reaffirms the basic structure of everyday life. By their overall conduct the fellow-commuters extract the individual from the tenuous reality of early-morning grogginess and proclaim to him in no uncertain terms that the world consists of earnest men going to work, of responsibility and schedules, of the New Haven Railroad and the New York *Times*. The last, of course, reaffirms the widest co-ordinates of the individual's reality. From the weather report to the help-wanted ads it

assures him that he is, indeed, in the most real world possible. Concomitantly, it affirms the less-than-real status of the sinister ecstasies experienced before breakfast—the alien shape of allegedly familiar objects upon waking from a disturbing dream, the shock of non-recognition of one's own face in the bathroom mirror, the unspeakable suspicion a little later that one's wife and children are mysterious strangers. Most individuals susceptible to such metaphysical terrors manage to exorcise them to a degree in the course of their rigidly performed morning rituals, so that the reality of everyday life is at least gingerly established by the time they step out of their front door. But the reality begins to be fairly reliable only in the anonymous community of the commuter train. It attains massivity as the train pulls into Grand Central Station. *Ergo sum*, the individual can now murmur to himself, and proceed to the office wide-awake and self-assured.

It would, therefore, be a mistake to assume that only significant others serve to maintain subjective reality. But significant others occupy a central position in the economy of reality-maintenance. They are particularly important for the ongoing confirmation of that crucial element of reality we call identity. To retain confidence that he is indeed who he thinks he is, the individual requires not only the implicit confirmation of this identity that even casual everyday contacts will supply, but the explicit and emotionally charged confirmation that his significant others bestow on him. In the previous illustration, our suburbanite is likely to look to his family and other private associates within the family ambience (neighborhood, church, club, and the like) for such confirmation, though close business associates may also fulfill this function. If he moreover sleeps with his secretary, his identity is both confirmed and amplified. This assumes that the individual likes the identity being confirmed. The same process pertains to the confirmation of identities that the individual may not like. Even casual acquaintances may confirm his self-identification as a hopeless failure, but wife, children and secretary ratify this with undeniable finality. The process from objective reality-definition to subjective reality-maintenance is the same in both cases.

The significant others in the individual's life are the principal agents for the maintenance of his subjective reality. Less significant others function as a sort of chorus. Wife, children and secretary solemnly reaffirm each day that one is a man of importance, or a hopeless failure; maiden aunts, cooks and elevator operators lend varying degrees of support to this. It is, of course, quite possible that there is some disagreement between these people. The individual then faces a problem of consistency, which he can, typically, solve either by modifying his reality or his reality-maintaining relationships. He may have the alternative of accepting his identity as a failure on the one hand, or of firing his secretary or divorcing his wife on the other. He also has the option of downgrading some of these people from their status of significant others and turning instead to others for his significant reality-confirmations —his psychoanalyst, say, or his old cronies at the club. There are many possible complexities in this organization of reality-maintaining relationships, especially in a highly mobile and role-differentiated society.[10]

The relation between the significant others and the "chorus" in reality-maintenance is a dialectical one; that is, they interact with each other as well as with the subjective reality they serve to confirm. A solidly negative identification on the part of the wider milieu may eventually affect the identification offered by the significant others—when even the elevator operator fails to say "sir," the wife may give up her identification of her husband as a man of importance. Conversely, the significant others may eventually have an effect on the wider milieu—a "loyal" wife can be an asset in several ways as the individual seeks to get across a certain identity to his business associates. Reality-maintenance and reality-confirmation thus involve the totality of the individual's social situation, though the significant others occupy a privileged position in these processes.

The relative importance of the significant others and the "chorus" can be seen most easily if one looks at instances of disconfirmation of subjective reality. A reality-disconfirming act by the wife, taken by itself, has far greater potency than a similar act by a casual acquaintance. Acts by the latter have to acquire a certain density to equal the potency of the former. The reiterated opinion of one's best friend that the news-

papers are not reporting substantial developments going on beneath the surface may carry more weight than the same opinion expressed by one's barber. However, the same opinion expressed in succession by ten casual acquaintances may begin to outweigh a contrary opinion of one's best friend. The crystallization subjectively arrived at as a result of these various definitions of reality will then determine how one is likely to react to the appearance of a solid phalanx of grim, silent, briefcase-carrying Chinese on the commuter train one morning; that is, will determine the weight one gives the phenomenon in one's own definition of reality. To take another illustration, if one is a believing Catholic the reality of one's faith need not be threatened by non-believing business associates. It is very likely to be threatened, however, by a non-believing wife. In a pluralistic society, therefore, it is logical for the Catholic church to tolerate a broad variety of interfaith associations in economic and political life, but to continue to frown on interfaith marriage. Generally speaking, in situations where there is competition between different reality-defining agencies, all sorts of secondary-group relationships with the competitors may be tolerated, as long as there are firmly established primary-group relationships within which *one* reality is ongoingly reaffirmed against the competitors.[20] The manner in which the Catholic church has adapted itself to the pluralistic situation in America is an excellent illustration.

The most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation. One may view the individual's everyday life in terms of the working away of a conversational apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs his subjective reality.[21] Conversation means mainly, of course, that people speak with one another. This does not deny the rich aura of non-verbal communication that surrounds speech. Nevertheless speech retains a privileged position in the total conversational apparatus. It is important to stress, however, that the greater part of reality-maintenance in conversation is implicit, not explicit. Most conversation does not in so many words define the nature of the world. Rather, it takes place against the background of a world that is silently taken for granted. Thus an exchange such as, "Well, it's time for me to

get to the station," and "Fine, darling, have a good day at the office" implies an entire world *within which* these apparently simple propositions make sense. By virtue of this implication the exchange confirms the subjective reality of this world.

If this is understood, one will readily see that the great part, if not all, of everyday conversation maintains subjective reality. Indeed, its massivity is achieved by the accumulation and consistency of casual conversation—conversation that can *afford to be casual* precisely because it refers to the routines of a taken-for-granted world. The loss of casualness signals a break in the routines and, at least potentially, a threat to the taken-for-granted reality. Thus one may imagine the effect on casualness of an exchange like this: "Well, it's time for me to get to the station," "Fine, darling, don't forget to take along your gun."

At the same time that the conversational apparatus ongoingly maintains reality, it ongoingly modifies it. Items are dropped and added, weakening some sectors of what is still being taken for granted and reinforcing others. Thus the subjective reality of something that is never talked about comes to be shaky. It is one thing to engage in an embarrassing sexual act. It is quite another to talk about it beforehand or afterwards. Conversely, conversation gives firm contours to items previously apprehended in a fleeting and unclear manner. One may have doubts about one's religion; these doubts become real in a quite different way as one discusses them. One then "talks oneself into" these doubts; they are objectified as reality within one's own consciousness. Generally speaking, the conversational apparatus maintains reality by "talking through" various elements of experience and allocating them a definite place in the real world.

This reality-generating potency of conversation is already given in the fact of linguistic objectification. We have seen how language objectifies the world, transforming the *panta rhei* of experience into a cohesive order. In the establishment of this order language *realizes* a world, in the double sense of apprehending and producing it. Conversation is the actualizing of this realizing efficacy of language in the face-to-face situations of individual existence. In conversation the objectifications of language become objects of individual con-

sciousness. Thus the fundamental reality-maintaining fact is the continuing use of the same language to objectify unfolding biographical experience. In the widest sense, all who employ this same language are reality-maintaining others. The significance of this can be further differentiated in terms of what is meant by a "common language"—from the group-idiosyncratic language of primary groups to regional or class dialects to the national community that defines itself in terms of language. There are corresponding "returns to reality" for the individual who goes back to the few individuals who understand his in-group allusions, to the section to which his accent belongs, or to the large collectivity that has identified itself with a particular linguistic tradition—in reverse order, say, a return to the United States, to Brooklyn, and to the people who went to the same public school.

In order to maintain subjective reality effectively, the conversational apparatus must be continual and consistent. Disruptions of continuity or consistency *ipso facto* posit a threat to the subjective reality in question. We have already discussed the expedients that the individual may adopt to meet the threat of inconsistency. Various techniques to cope with the threat of discontinuity are also available. The use of correspondence to continue significant conversation despite physical separation may serve as an illustration.[22] Different conversations can be compared in terms of the density of the reality they produce or maintain. On the whole, frequency of conversation enhances its reality-generating potency, but lack of frequency can sometimes be compensated for by the intensity of the conversation when it does take place. One may see one's lover only once a month, but the conversation then engaged in is of sufficient intensity to make up for its relative infrequency. Certain conversations may also be explicitly defined and legitimated as having a privileged status—such as conversations with one's confessor, one's psychoanalyst, or a similar "authority" figure. The "authority" here lies in the cognitively and normatively superior status that is assigned to these conversations.

Subjective reality is thus always dependent upon specific plausibility structures, that is, the specific social base and social processes required for its maintenance. One can maintain

one's self-identification as a man of importance only in a milieu that confirms this identity; one can maintain one's Catholic faith only if one retains one's significant relationship with the Catholic community; and so forth. Disruption of significant conversation with the mediators of the respective plausibility structures threatens the subjective realities in question. As the example of correspondence indicates, the individual may resort to various techniques of reality-maintenance even in the absence of actual conversation, but the reality-generating potency of these techniques is greatly inferior to the face-to-face conversations they are designed to replicate. The longer these techniques are isolated from face-to-face confirmations, the less likely they will be to retain the accent of reality. The individual living for many years among people of a different faith and cut off from the community of those sharing his own may continue to identify himself as, say, a Catholic. Through prayer, religious exercises, and similar techniques his old Catholic reality may continue to be subjectively relevant to him. At the very least the techniques may sustain his continued self-identification as a Catholic. They will, however, become subjectively empty of "living" reality unless they are "revitalized" by social contact with other Catholics. To be sure, an individual usually remembers the realities of his past. But the way to "refresh" these memories is to converse with those who share their relevance.[23]

The plausibility structure is also the social base for the particular suspension of doubt without which the definition of reality in question cannot be maintained in consciousness. Here specific social sanctions against such reality-disintegrating doubts have been internalized and are ongoingly reaffirmed. Ridicule is one such sanction. As long as he remains within the plausibility structure, the individual feels himself to be ridiculous whenever doubts about the reality concerned arise subjectively. He knows that others would smile at him if he voiced them. He can silently smile at himself, mentally shrug his shoulders—and continue to exist within the world thus sanctioned. Needless to say, this procedure of autotherapy will be much more difficult if the plausibility structure is no longer available as its social ma-

trix. The smile will become forced, and eventually is likely to be replaced by a pensive frown.

In crisis situations the procedures are essentially the same as in routine maintenance, except that the reality-confirmations have to be explicit and intensive. Frequently, ritual techniques are brought into play. While the individual may improvise reality-maintaining procedures in the face of crisis, the society itself sets up specific procedures for situations recognized as involving the risk of a breakdown in reality. Included in these predefined situations are certain marginal situations, of which death is by far the most important. Crises in reality, however, may occur in a considerably wider number of cases than are posited by marginal situations. They may be either collective or individual, depending upon the character of the challenge to the socially defined reality. For example, collective rituals of reality-maintenance may be institutionalized for times of natural catastrophe, individual ones for times of personal misfortune. Or, to take another example, specific reality-maintaining procedures may be established to cope with foreigners and their potential threat to the "official" reality. The individual may have to go through an elaborate ritual purification after contact with a foreigner. The ablution is internalized as a subjective nihilation of the alternative reality represented by the foreigner. Taboos, exorcisms and curses against foreigners, heretics or madmen similarly serve the purpose of individual "mental hygiene." The violence of these defensive procedures will be proportional to the seriousness with which the threat is viewed. If contacts with the alternative reality and its representatives become frequent, the defensive procedures may, of course, lose their crisis character and become routinized. Every time one meets a foreigner, say, one must spit three times—without giving much further thought to the matter.

Everything that has been said so far on socialization implies the possibility that subjective reality can be transformed. To be in society already entails an ongoing process of modification of subjective reality. To talk about transformation, then, involves a discussion of different degrees of modification. We will concentrate here on the extreme case, in which there is a near-total transformation; that is, in which the individual "switches worlds." If the processes involved in the extreme case are clarified, those of less extreme cases will be understood more easily.

Typically, the transformation is subjectively apprehended as total. This, of course, is something of a misapprehension. Since subjective reality is never totally socialized, it cannot be totally transformed by social processes. At the very least the transformed individual will have the same body and live in the same physical universe. Nevertheless, there are instances of transformation that appear total if compared with lesser modifications. Such transformations we will call alternations.[24]

Alternation requires processes of re-socialization. These processes resemble primary socialization, because they have radically to reassign reality accents and, consequently, must replicate to a considerable degree the strongly affective identification with the socializing personnel that was characteristic of childhood. They are different from primary socialization because they do not start *ex nihilo*, and as a result must cope with a problem of dismantling, disintegrating the preceding nomic structure of subjective reality. How can this be done?

A "recipe" for successful alternation has to include both social and conceptual conditions, the social, of course, serving as the matrix of the conceptual. The most important social condition is the availability of an effective plausibility structure, that is, a social base serving as the "laboratory" of transformation. This plausibility structure will be mediated to the individual by means of significant others, with whom he must establish strongly affective identification. No radical transformation of subjective reality (including, of course, identity) is possible without such identification, which inevitably replicates childhood experiences of emotional dependency on significant others.[25] These significant others are the guides into the new reality. They represent the plausibility structure in the roles they play *vis-à-vis* the individual (roles that are typically defined explicitly in terms of their re-socializing function), and they mediate the new world to the individual. The individual's world now finds its cognitive and affective focus in the plausibility structure in question. Socially, this means an intense concentration of all significant interaction

within the group that embodies the plausibility structure and particularly upon the personnel assigned the task of re-socialization.

The historical prototype of alternation is religious conversion. The above considerations can be applied to this by saying, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. By *salus* we mean here (with due apologies to the theologians who had other things in mind when they coined the phrase) the empirically successful accomplishment of conversion. It is only within the religious community, the *ecclesia*, that the conversion can be effectively maintained as plausible. This is not to deny that conversion may antedate affiliation with the community—Saul of Tarsus sought out the Christian community *after* his "Damascus experience." But this is not the point. To have a conversion experience is nothing much. The real thing is to be able to keep on taking it seriously; to retain a sense of its plausibility. *This* is where the religious community comes in. It provides the indispensable plausibility structure for the new reality. In other words, Saul may have become Paul in the aloneness of religious ecstasy, but he could *remain* Paul only in the context of the Christian community that recognized him as such and confirmed the "new being" in which he now located this identity. This relationship of conversion and community is not a peculiarly Christian phenomenon (despite the historically peculiar features of the Christian *ecclesia*). One cannot remain a Muslim outside the *'umma* of Islam, a Buddhist outside the *sangha*, and probably not a Hindu anywhere outside India. Religion requires a religious community, and to live in a religious world requires affiliation with that community.[26] The plausibility structures of religious conversion have been imitated by secular agencies of alternation. The best examples are in the areas of political indoctrination and psychotherapy.[27]

The plausibility structure must become the individual's world, displacing all other worlds, especially the world the individual "inhabited" before his alternation. This requires segregation of the individual from the "inhabitants" of other worlds, especially his "cohabitants" in the world he has left behind. Ideally this will be physical segregation. If that is not possible for whatever reasons, the segregation is posited by

definition; that is, by a definition of those others that nihilates them. The alternating individual disaffiliates himself from his previous world and the plausibility structure that sustained it, bodily if possible, mentally if not. In either case he is no longer "yoked together with unbelievers," and thus is protected from their potential reality-disrupting influence. Such segregation is particularly important in the early stages of alternation (the "novitiate" phase). Once the new reality has congealed, circumspect relations with outsiders may again be entered into, although those outsiders who used to be biographically significant are still dangerous. They are the ones who will say, "Come off it, Saul," and there may be times when the old reality they invoke takes the form of temptation.

Alternation thus involves a reorganization of the conversational apparatus. The partners in significant conversation change. And in conversation with the new significant others subjective reality is transformed. It is maintained by continuing conversation with them, or within the community they represent. Put simply, this means that one must now be very careful with whom one talks. People and ideas that are discrepant with the new definitions of reality are systematically avoided.[28] Since this can rarely be done with total success, if only because of the memory of past reality, the new plausibility structure will typically provide various therapeutic procedures to take care of "backsliding" tendencies. These procedures follow the general pattern of therapy, as discussed earlier.

The most important conceptual requirement for alternation is the availability of a legitimating apparatus for the whole sequence of transformation. What must be legitimated is not only the new reality, but the stages by which it is appropriated and maintained, and the abandonment or repudiation of all alternative realities. The nihilating side of the conceptual machinery is particularly important in view of the dismantling problem that must be solved. The old reality, as well as the collectivities and significant others that previously mediated it to the individual, must be reinterpreted *within* the legitimating apparatus of the new reality. This reinterpretation brings about a rupture in the subjective biography of the individual in terms of "B.C." and "A.D.," "pre-Damas-

cus" and "post-Damascus." Everything preceding the alternation is now apprehended as leading toward it (as an "Old Testament," so to speak, or as *praeparatio evangelii*), everything following it as flowing from its new reality. This involves a reinterpretation of past biography *in toto*, following the formula "Then I *thought* . . . now I *know*." Frequently this includes the retrojection into the past of present interpretative schemas (the formula for this being, "I already knew then, though in an unclear manner . . .") and motives that were not subjectively present in the past but that are now necessary for the reinterpretation of what took place then (the formula being, "I *really* did this because . . ."). Prealternation biography is typically nihilated *in toto* by subsuming it under a negative category occupying a strategic position in the new legitimating apparatus: "When I was still living a life of sin," "When I was still caught in bourgeois consciousness," "When I was still motivated by these unconscious neurotic needs." The biographical rupture is thus identified with a cognitive separation of darkness and light.

In addition to this reinterpretation *in toto* there must be particular reinterpretations of past events and persons with past significance. The alternating individual would, of course, be best off if he could completely forget some of these. But to forget completely is notoriously difficult. What is necessary, then, is a radical reinterpretation of the meaning of these past events or persons in one's biography. Since it is relatively easier to invent things that never happened than to forget those that actually did, the individual may fabricate and insert events wherever they are needed to harmonize the remembered with the reinterpreted past. Since it is the new reality rather than the old that now appears dominatingly plausible to him, he may be perfectly "sincere" in such a procedure—subjectively, he is not telling lies about the past but bringing it in line with *the* truth that, necessarily, embraces both present and past. This point, incidentally, is very important if one wishes to understand adequately the motives behind the historically recurrent falsifications and forgeries of religious documents. Persons, too, particularly significant others, are reinterpreted in this fashion. The latter now become unwilling actors in a drama whose meaning is necessarily opaque to them; and, not surprisingly, they typically reject such an assignment. This is the reason prophets typically fare badly in their hometowns, and it is in this context that one may understand Jesus' statement that his followers must leave behind them their fathers and mothers.

It is not difficult now to propose a specific "prescription" for alternation into any conceivable reality, however implausible from the standpoint of the outsider. It is possible to prescribe specific procedures for, say, convincing individuals that they can communicate with beings from outer space provided that and as long as they stay on a steady diet of raw fish. We can leave it to the imagination of the reader, if he is so inclined, to work out the details of such a sect of Ichthyosophists. The "prescription" would entail the construction of an Ichthyosophist plausibility structure, properly segregated from the outside world and equipped with the necessary socializing and therapeutic personnel; the elaboration of an Ichthyosophist body of knowledge, sufficiently sophisticated to explain why the self-evident nexus between raw fish and galactic telepathy had not been discovered before; and the necessary legitimations and nihilations to make sense of the individual's journey towards this great truth. If these procedures are followed carefully, there will be a high probability of success once an individual has been lured or kidnapped into the Ichthyosophist brainwashing institute.

There are in practice, of course, many intermediate types between re-socialization as just discussed and secondary socialization that continues to build on the primary internalizations. In these there are partial transformations of subjective reality or of designated sectors of it. Such partial transformations are common in contemporary society in connection with the individual's social mobility and occupational training.[20] Here the transformation of subjective reality can be considerable, as the individual is made into an acceptable upper-middle-class type or an acceptable physician, and as he internalizes the appropriate reality-appendages. But these transformations typically fall far short of re-socialization. They build on the basis of primary internalizations and generally avoid abrupt discontinuities within the subjective biography of the individual. As a result, they face the problem of

maintaining consistency between the earlier and later elements of subjective reality. This problem, not present in this form in re-socialization, which ruptures the subjective biography and reinterprets the past rather than correlating the present with it, becomes more acute the closer secondary socialization gets to re-socialization without actually becoming it. Re-socialization is a cutting of the Gordian knot of the consistency problem—by giving up the quest for consistency and reconstructing reality *de novo*.

The procedures for maintaining consistency also involve a tinkering with the past, but in a less radical manner—an approach dictated by the fact that in such cases there is usually a continuing association with persons and groups who were significant before. They continue to be around, are likely to protest too fanciful reinterpretations, and must themselves be convinced that such transformations as have taken place are plausible. For example, in the case of transformations occurring in conjunction with social mobility, there are ready-made interpretative schemes that explain what has happened to all concerned *without* positing a total metamorphosis of the individual concerned. Thus the parents of such an upwardly mobile individual will accept certain changes in the latter's demeanor and attitudes as a necessary, possibly even desirable, accompaniment of his new station in life. "Of course," they will agree, Irving has had to de-emphasize his Jewishness now that he has become a successful doctor in suburbia; "of course" he dresses and speaks differently; "of course" he now votes Republican; "of course" he married a Vassar girl—and perhaps it will also become a matter of course that he only rarely comes to visit his parents. Such interpretative schemes, which are ready-made in a society with high upward mobility and already internalized by the individual before he himself is actually mobile, guarantee biographical continuity and smooth inconsistencies as they arise.[30]

Similar procedures take place in situations where transformations are fairly radical but defined as temporary in duration—for example, in training for short-term military service or in cases of short-term hospitalization.[31] Here the difference from full re-socialization is particularly easy to see—by comparing what happens with training for career military service

or with the socialization of chronic patients. In the former instances, consistency with the previous reality and identity (existence as a civilian or as a healthy person) is already posited by the assumption that one will eventually return to these.

Broadly speaking, one may say that the procedures involved are of opposite character. In re-socialization the past is reinterpreted to conform to the present reality, with the tendency to retroject into the past various elements that were subjectively unavailable at the time. In secondary socialization the present is interpreted so as to stand in a continuous relationship with the past, with the tendency to minimize such transformations as have actually taken place. Put differently, the reality-base for re-socialization is the present, for secondary socialization the past.

2. INTERNALIZATION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Socialization always takes place in the context of a specific social structure. Not only its contents but also its measure of "success" have social-structural conditions and social-structural consequences. In other words, the micro-sociological or social-psychological analysis of phenomena of internalization must always have as its background a macro-sociological understanding of their structural aspects.[32]

On the level of theoretical analysis attempted here we cannot enter into a detailed discussion of the different empirical relationships between the contents of socialization and social-structural configurations.[33] Some general observations may, however, be made on the social-structural aspects of the "success" of socialization. By "successful socialization" we mean the establishment of a high degree of symmetry between objective and subjective reality (as well as identity, of course). Conversely, "unsuccessful socialization" is to be understood in terms of asymmetry between objective and subjective reality. As we have seen, totally successful socialization is anthropologically impossible. Totally unsuccessful socialization is, at the very least, extremely rare, limited to cases of individuals with whom even minimal socialization fails be-