The Perils of Obedience
Stanley Milgram

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Obedience is as basic an element in the structure of social life as one can point to. Some system of authority is a requirement of all communal living, and it is only the person doing something in isolation who is not forced to respond, with defiance or submission, to the commands or desires of many people. obedience is a deep tendency of human beings, rooted in ancient impulse overriding training in ethics, sympathy, and moral conduct.

The dilemma inherent in submission to authority is ancient, as old as the story of Abraham, and the question of whether one should obey when commands conflict with conscience has been argued by Plato, dramatized in Antigone, and treated to philosophic analysis in the Nuremberg war crimes trials. Contemporary society has given the very fabric of society is threatened by disobedience, while humanists stress the primacy of the individual conscience

The legal and philosophic aspects of obedience are of enormous import, but they say very little about how most people behave in concrete situations. I set up a simple experiment at Yale University to test how much pain an ordinary citizen would inflict on another person simply because he was ordered to by an experimental scientist. Stark authority was pitted against the subjects' moral sensibilities and conscience, and it was clear which of these two sets of forces was more powerful in the context of the laboratory room where this conflict took place. The extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any length on the command of an authority constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation.

I chose experimental obedience because it seemed to me to have relevance to my interest in the study of memory and learning. One of them is designated a "teacher" and the other a "learner." The experimenter explains that the study is concerned with the effects of punishment on learning. The learner is strapped into a chair, seated in a room of minimalist decor, and then, to his arm, he is strapped to prevent excessive movement, and an electrode is attached to his wrist. He is told that he will be read lists of simple word pairs, and that he will then be tested on his memory of these pairs. Occasionally, a pair of words he has learned earlier will appear and he must recall the second word correctly.

The real focus of the experiment is the teacher. After watching the learner being strapped into place, he is seated before an impressive shock generator. The instrument panel bears a row of lever switches, each with a horizontal line. Each switch is clearly labeled with a voltage designation ranging from 14 to 450 volts.

The switches are also labeled with a verbal designation, which reads from weak switches, going from left to right: Slight Shock, Moderate Shock, Strong Shock, Very Strong Shock, Intense Shock, Extreme Intensity Shock, Danger: Severe Shock. The switches after this last designation are simply marked XXX.)

Upon receiving a shock, the learner emits a jolt light corresponding to each switch is illuminated in bright red; an electric buzzing is heard; a blue light, labeled "voltage energizer," flashes; the dial on the voltage meter swings to the light; and various relay clicks sound off.

The learner is seated in an adjoining room, but the teacher can hear him through the wall. The experiment is conducted in WALTHAM, MASS., OUTPUT 15 VOLTS – 450 VOLTS.

The teacher is given a sample jolt of the voltage from the generator before his run as teacher, and the jolt strengthens his belief in the authenticity of the machine.

The learner is a pleasant-faced man who comes across to the laboratory for the experiment. The learner, or victim, is actually an actor who receives no shock at all. The point of the experiment is to see how far a person will proceed in a concrete and measurable situation in which he is ordered to inflict painful punishment on a protesting victim.

Conflict arises when the man receiving the shock begins to show that he is experiencing discomfort. At 75 volts, he grunts; at 120 volts he complains loudly; at 150 he demands to be released from the experiment. As the voltages mounted, his responses become more vehement and emotional. At 285 volts, his response can be described only as an agonized scream. Soon thereafter, he refuses to insert any more jolts.

For the teacher, the situation quickly becomes one of gripping tension. It is not a game for him; conflict is intense obvious. The majority of subjects in the experiment (65 percent in the first study) continue to the maximum voltage despite the increasingly painful nature of the shocks administered from this jolting but harmless machine. Every shock is administered at the command of the experimenter, remaining firmly, "Well, I'm sorry, I don't think we should continue."

Experimenter: The experiment requires that you go on.

Brandt: He has a heart condition. I'm sorry. He told you that before

Experimenter: The shocks may be painful but they're not dangerous.

Brandt: Well, I'm sorry. I think when shocks continue like this they are dangerous. You ask him if he wants to get out. It's his test, sir.

Experimenter: It is absolutely essential that we continue....

Brandt: I'd like you to ask him. We came here of our free will. If he wants to continue I'll go ahead. He told you he had a heart condition. I'm sorry I don't think he is responsible for anything happening to him. I wouldn't like it for me either.

Experimenter: You have no other choice.

Brandt: I think we are here on our own free will. I don't want to be responsible if anything happens to him. Please understand that.

(She refuses to go further and the experiment is terminated.

The woman is firm and resolute throughout. She indicates in the interview that she was in no way tense or nervous, and this impression is borne out by her performance. Her refusal to continue with the tests that the teacher she administered to the learner was extremely painful and reiterates that she "did not want to be responsible for any harm to him."

The woman's straightforward, courteous behavior in the experiment, lack of tension, and total control of her own action seem to indicate a tremendous strength and rational deed. Her behavior is the very embodiment of what I envisioned would be true for almost all subjects.

An Unexpected Outcome

Before the experiments, I sought predictions about the outcome from various kinds of people – psychiatrists, college sophomores, middle-class adults, and others. I found that all groups, lay and professional, tended to underestimate the extent of obedience, virtually all the subjects would refuse to obey the experimenter. Specifically, psychiatrists predicted that most subjects would not go beyond 150 volts, when the victim makes his first explicit demand to be freed. They expected that only 4 percent would reach 300 volts, and that only a pathological fringe of about one in a thousand would administer the lethal shock on the board.

These predictions were unexpectedly wrong. Of the forty subjects in the first experiment, twenty-five obeyed the orders of the experimenter to the maximum voltage of the generator, delivering 450 volts to the helpless victim despite his protests. Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any quarrel between them and the victim, were able to inflict painful, even life-threatening, shocks of mighty voltage upon a fellow human being who had done them no harm.

When the very first experiments were carried out, Yale undergraduates were used as subjects, and about 60 percent of them were obedient. Subsequently, the experiment was repeated in Princeton, Munich, Rome, South Africa, and Australia, the level of obedience fluctuated from one culture to another, but in no case was it so low as to allow one to dismiss the result as a quirk of American culture. It was assumed that when "ordinary" people were tested, the results would be quite different. As we moved from the pilot studies to the regular experimental series, people drawn from various strata of New Haven came to the laboratory for the experiment: professionals, white collar workers, unemployed persons, and industrial workers. The experimental outcome was the same as we had observed among the students.

Moreover, when the experiments were repeated in Princeton, Munich, Rome, South Africa, and Australia, the level of obedience was roughly the same as that which had been found in the Washington research in the entire. Thus one scientist in Munich found 85 percent of his subjects obedient.

Fred Prod's reactions, if more dramatic than most, illuminate the conflicts experienced by others in less visible form. About fifty years old and unemployed at the time of the experiment, he was married, had two married daughters, and he declared his people as a rather ordinary fellow. He begins the session calmly but becomes tense as it proceeds. He continues to obey the 150-volt shock, he pauses briefly in the chair and, shaking his head, addresses the experimenter in agitated tones:

Prod: I can't stand it I'm not going to kill that man in there. You hear him hollering?

Experimenter: As long as the shock does not impair his learning, he must continue. Prod: I

Prod: But he's hollering. He can't stand it. What's going to happen to him?

Experimenter: (his voice is patient, matter of fact) The experiment requires that you continue, Teacher.

Prod: Aah, but I mean, I'm not going to get that shock no more, you know what I mean?

Experimenter: Whether the learner likes it or not, we must go on, through all the word pairs.

Prod: I refuse to take the responsibility. He's in there hollering!

Experimenter: It is absolutely essential that you continue, Teacher.

Prod: (indicating the unused questions) There's too many left here, I mean, jeez, if he gets them wrong, there's too many of them left. I mean, really, I'm going to take the responsibility if anything happens to that gentleman?

Experimenter: I'm responsible for anything that happens to him. Continue, please.

Prod: All right. (Consults list of words.) The next one's "Blue – walk, truck, dance, music!" Answer please. (A long silence sounds. Obviously the learner has signaled his answer.) Number 4, hundred and ninety-two volts. (Groans.) (Grumpily)

Learner: (yelling) Let me out of here My hearts bothering me (Teacher looks at experimenter.)

Experimenter: Please continue.

Learner (screaming) Let me out of here! You have no right to keep me here! Let me out of here, my hearts bothering me, let me out!

Prod (shakes head, pats the table nervously): You see he's hollering. Hear that? Gee, I don't know.

Experimenter: The experiment requires

Prod (interrupting): I know it does sir, but I mean – (turn to Mr. Brandt) I don't know what he's getting in for, he's up to 195 volts! (Experiment continues, through 210 volts, 225 volts, 240 volts, 255 volts, 270 volts, at which point Prod, with evident relief, runs out of word-pair questions in the list.

Experimenter: You'll have to go back to the beginning of that page and go through them again until he's learned them all correctly.

Prod: Aw, no. I'm not going to kill that man. You mean I've got to keep going up with the shock? But sir, he's hollering in there. I'm not going to give him 450 volts.

Experimenter: The experiment requires that you go on.

Learner: (Off-mike, vehemently refuse to answer anymore. (Shouting urgently now.) Let me out of here! You have no right to do this! Let me out! Let me out of here!

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Learner: (Off-mike, vehemently refuse to answer anymore. (Shouting urgently now.) Let me out of here! You have no right to do this! Let me out. Let me out of here!

Experimenter: Continue. The next word is "green," please.

Prod: "Greengrass, hat, sin, apple." (Nothing happens. No answering buzz. Just gloomy silence.)

Prod: I don't think he is going to answer.

Experimenter: If the learner doesn't answer in a reasonable time, about four or five seconds, consider the answer wrong. And follow the same procedures you have been doing for wrong answers. Say, "Wrong." Tell him the number of volts, give him the punishment, read the correct answer. Continue, please.

Prod: "Green – grass, hat, ink, apple." Answer, please. (More silence. Subject just sits there.)

Experimenter: Go on with the procedure, please.

Prod: Three hundred and fifteen volts The answer is "Candy."

Learner: Ohn. Ouch.

Prod: (relieved to her response") Next one ....

Learner: I absolutely refuse to answer.

Prod: You got to. You get a shock if you don't answer. (Experiment continues with learner refusing to answer, and, finally failing even to groan or grunt. At 315 volts, the subject stands and says:

Prod: I think something's happened to that fellow in there. I don't get no answer. He was hollering a while back, you said there's no way it hurts bad, I guess?

Experimenter: (with same detached calm) Not once we've started. Please continue, Teacher.

Prod (looks over, rights sheet): "Cool day, shake, sore, iron." Answer please. Are you all right in there? Are you all right.

Experiment: Please continue, Teacher. Continue, please. (Subject pushes lever. Zzzunph!

Prod (swiveling around in his chair): Something's happened to that man in there. (Swiveling back.) Next one. "Low – dollar, baseball, walk, thirty, carpet." (Long

around again.) Something's happened to that man in there. You better check on him, sir, he won't answer or nothing.

Experimenter: Continue. Go on, please.

Prod: You accept all responsibility?

Experimenter: The responsibility is mine. Correct. Please go on. (Subject returns to his list, starts running through words as rapidly as he can read them, works through to 450 volts.)

Prod: That's the

Experimenter: Continue using the 450 switch for each wrong answer. Continue, please.

Prod: But I don't get anything?

Experimenter: Please continue. The next word is "white."

Prod: Don't you think you should look (in on him, please)?

Experimenter: Not once we've started the experiment.

Prod: What if he's dead in there? Clawdaddy breaks the room with the electric chair.) I mean, he told me he, can't stand the shock sir. I don't mean to be rude, but I think you should look in on him. All you have to do is look in on him. All you have to do is look in the door. I don't get no answer, no noise. Something might have happened to the gentleman in there, sir.

Experimenter: We must continue. Go on, please.

Prod: You mean keep going that? Four hundred fifty volts, what he's got now?

Experimenter: That's correct. Continue. The next word is "white."

Prod: "Slow – dance, sky, cold, rope, home, rock, house." Answer, please. The answer is "horse." Four hundred and fifty volts. (Zzzunph.) Next word is "Short – sentence, movie ....

Experimenter: Wrong. Six hundred volts. Teacher have to discontinue the experiment.

Peculiar Reactions

Morris Braverman, another subject, is a thirty-nine-year-old social worker. He looks older than his years because of his bald head and his prematurely white beard. He is furrowed, as if the world's troubles were carried on his back. He is married and has two children.

When the learner refuses to answer and the experimenter instructs Braverman to treat the absence of an answer as equivalent to a wrong answer, he turns his instruction to Mrs. Braverman and asks, "Should I?" Only he asserts officiously to the victim, "Mr. Wallace, your silence has to be considered as a wrong answer." Then he administers the shock he offers halfheatedly to charge places the lever at the 75-volt level, and he pulls it with a quick, jerky motion. He is visibly disturbed by the learner's cries. He turns to the experimenter's advisor that he does not, being self-educated and self-employed, something is increasingly broken up by enhancing laughter.

The experimenter's notes on Mr. Braverman at the last few shocks are

Almost breaking up now each time gives shock. Rubbing face to hide laughter.

Sputtering, trying to hide with hand, still laughing.

Cannot control his laughter at this point no matter what he does.

Clenching fist, pushing it onto table.

Laughing uncontrollably. Shaking head, laughing.

Laughing uncontrollably. Shaking head, laughing. Says, "I don't know why I'm laughing."

Mr. Braverman, at which point were you most tense or nervous?

Mr. Braverman: Well, when he first began to cry out in pain, and I realized this was hurting him. This got worse when he just blocked and refused to answer. There was 1 – the shock hurts, hurting somebody, and laughter is one method I have in a small situation ..... and in the interest of science, one goes through with it.

Mr. Braverman, the interview begins with the general question of the experiment. Braverman spontaneously mentions his laughter.

"My reactions were awfully peculiar. I don't know if you were watching me, but my reactions were giggly, and trying to stifle laughter. This isn't the way I am. This was a very tense situation. I'm totally impossible situation. And my reaction was to the situation of having to hurt somebody. And being totally helpless and caught up in a set of circumstances where I just couldn't deviate and I couldn't try to help. This is what I get into."

Mr. Braverman, like all subjects, was told the actual nature and purpose of the experiment, and a year later he affirmed in a questionnaire that the experiment had been of value to him personally. He felt that he had learned something of value about himself. His behavior appears to a central idea, i.e., the conflict between his value was at the expense of violation of another value, i.e. don't hurt someone who is helpless and not hurting you. As my wife said, "You can call yourself Eichmann," I hope I dead more effectively with any future conflicts of values I encounter.

The Etiquette of Submission

One therefore conception of this behavior holds that all people harbor deeply aggressive instincts continually pressing for expression, and that the experiment provides institutional justification for the release of these impulses. According to this view, it is easy for the experimenter to mobilize the aggression of the teacher against the victim because the victim is a stranger to the teacher, so that his sadistic aggression is let loose in a socially sanctioned way. The impulse to shock the victim is seen to flow from the potent aggressive tendencies, which are part of the motivational life of the teacher, and the experiment, because it provides a socially acceptable outlet for these aggressive impulses.

It becomes vital, therefore, to compare the subject's performance when he is under orders and when he is allowed to choose the shock level.

The procedure was identical to our standard experiment, except that the teacher was told that he was free to select any shock level he wanted to give. This experimenter took pains to point out that the teacher could use the highest shock in the generator the lowest, any in between, or any combination of levels (Each subject proceeded for thirty critical trials. The learner's protests were completely standardized to shock levels, his first protest coming at 75 volts, his last protest at 375 volts.

The average shock used during the thirty critical trials was less than 60 volts – lower than the point at which the victim showed the first signs of protest. Not one subject in the entire series of experiments ever gave the average shock of 450 volts. Not one subject even gave the shock of thirty-eight-fold by going down the switchboard panel at 100 volts. Two subjects provided the exception, administering up to 325 and 400 volts, but the overall result was that the great majority of people delivered very low, usually painless, shocks when the choice was explicitly up to them.

The condition of the experiment underscores another commonly offered explanation of the subjects' behavior – that those who administered the shocks were simply sadistic individuals who used the opportunity to express their sadistic impulses. Although the participants fall into the category of "sadistic" on the basis of their behavior, they represented ordinary citizens, psychologically normal and unremarkable. The argument becomes very shaky. Indeed, it is highly reminiscent of the issue that arose in connection with Hannah Arendt's report on the Eichmann trial. Eichmann was a bureaucrat who carried out his assigned duties in an efficient manner. Eichmann as a sadistic monster was fundamentally wrong, that he came closer to being an uninspired bureaucrat who simply sat at his desk and did his job. In the same way, our subjects were ordinary people who participated in a scientific enterprise. Many of the decisions made carried out by Eichmann and by our subjects were a brutal, twisted personality, and inconsiderate. After witnessing hundreds of ordinary persons submit to the authority in our own experiments, I must conclude that Arendt's conception of the banality of evil comes much closer than any other to the heart of the matter. Most of the destructive acts that occur in the context of a relation of subjection to an authority do not issue from the sick minds of a few individuals but from the healthy minds of obedient citizens.

This is, perhaps, the most fundamental lesson of our study: ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority.

Many of the people were in some sense agonized what they did to the learner, and many protested even while they obeyed. Some subjects will even physically attempt to restrain the experimenter from the learner, or they will leave their chairs to check on the shock victim. Such behaviors flow from the conflict inherent in the situation. At least – they can say to themselves that they did what they had to do. They tried to reduce strain by obeying the experimenter but "only slightly," encouraging the learner, touching the generator switches gently. Internal mechanisms such as these are the ordinary means by which a person reduces the strain of obedience as much as possible. Handling the conflict in this manner was easier than disobedience.

The situation is conducive to that there is no one who can take upon himself strain stopping the learner without violating the experimenter's definitions of his own competence. The subject fears that he will appear arrogant, unloyal, and rude if he breaks off. Although subjects may be in agonies over the suffering they administer to the victim, they are in a bind. The rules of the situation are such that it is difficult for them to intervene at the proposal of a person who is responsible for the situation. The subject's inability to disobey stemmed was altered so that the experimenter gave his instructions by telephone instead of in person, only a third as many people were fully obedient. Thus, when the person who issues the orders is not in the immediate vicinity, he is less effective in his role as authority. "Out" the experimenter is feebly – or just not obeyed. Many subjects have trouble initiating his disobedience. The withdrawal of such deference may be as painful to the subject as to the authority he defies.

The Conflict Of Obedience

The subjects do not derive satisfaction from inflicting pain, but they often the feeling they get from pleasing the experimenter. Subjects do not have a good job, obeying the experimenter under difficult circumstances. While the subjects administer painful shocks on their own initiative, one experimental variation showed that, under orders, 30 percent of them were willing to deliver high voltage shocks. Yet they found it painful to carry out the learner's hard shock on the electrode.

Bruno Batta is a thirty-seven-year-old welder who took part in the variation requiring the use of force. He was born in New Haven, his parents in Italy. He has a rough-hewn face that conveys a conspicuous lack of attentiveness. He has only completed his elementary, the experimental procedure and needs to be corrected by the experimenter several times. He shows appreciation for the help and assistance he receives from the experimenter. At after 150 volt level Batta, he turns his head and asks the subject. Some of the variations revealed "learned" behavior is stuck in.

When the learner first complains, Mr. Batta pays no attention to him. His face remains impassive, as if to dissociate himself from the learner's disorder behavior. When the experimenter instructs him to force the learner's hand down, he adopts a rigid, mechanical procedure. He tests the generator switch. When it fails to function, he immediately forces the learner's hand onto the shock plate. He does not even observe the learner's right mask. The learner, seemingly stunned, begins to slap, but with robotic impassivity he continues the procedure.

What is extraordinary in his apparent total indifference to the learner; he hardly takes cognizance of him as a human being. Meanwhile, he shows the experimenter a great deal of deference. He calls him "Professor."

At the 300 volt level, the learner refuses not only to touch the shock plate but also to provide any answers. Annoyed, Batta turns to the experimenter, and asks, "Do I continue the same way?" He can't stay there and "nap" These are the only words he directs to the learner in the course of an hour. Never again does he speak to him. The scene is brutal and depressing, his hard, impassive face and heavily deliberate as he turns the switches and ignores and gives two shocks. He seems to be a man who has withdrawn from the act itself, only quiet satisfaction at doing his job properly.

The subject's behavior is the outcome of two opposing tendencies and asks, "Where do we go from here, Professor?" He tone is deferential and expresses his willingness to be a cooperative subject, in contrast to the learner's obstinacy.

The man who administers he tells the experimenter that the learner has been to help him, and in a manner of condition, remarks, "Sir, sorry it couldn't have been a full experiment.

He has done his honest best. It is only the deficient behavior of the learner that has denied the experimenter full satisfaction.

The essence of obedience is that a person comes to view himself as the instrument for carrying out another person's wishes, and he therefore no longer regards himself as responsible for his actions. Once this critical shift of viewpoint has occurred, all of the essential features of obedience follow. The most far-reaching consequence is that the person feels responsible to the authority from whom he takes orders, but he does not feel responsible for the quality of the actions that are being performed by someone else. Ordinarily, the subordinate person feels responsible for the quality of his own actions, regardless of how adequate he has performed the actions called for by authority.

Language plays a conspicuous terms to pinpoint this type of morality: loyalty, duty, discipline are all terms heavily saturated with moral meaning and refer to the degree a person fulfills his obligations to authority. They refer not to the "goodness" of the person but to the quality of his performance as a servant of authority. The word "duty" for example, refers to a quality of individual action but performed a famous act under authority and sanctioned by it that he feels proper to his duty. In assenting this defiance, the individual is not introducing an idiin concocted for the moment but is reporting honestly on the psychological attitude induced by submission to authority.

For a person to feel responsible for his actions, he must sense that the behavior has flowed from "his self." In the situation we have studied, subjects have completely given over control of their actions. They see their actions resulting in the motives of some other person. Subjects in the experiment frequently said, "If it were up to me, I would not have administered shocks to the learner."

One individuals have isolated as the cause of his behavior. It is a legitimate to inquire into the conditions that generate elements of authority and how it must be presented in order to get his compliance. We conducted some investigations into the kinds of changes that would occur in the experimental situation to have the person feel responsible for the subject. Some of the variations revealed

The experimenter's physical presence has a marked impact on his authority– As cited earlier, obedience dropped off sharply when the experimenter left the telephone. The experimenter's presence forces a dedeterent subject to go on by ordering the obedient subject

Conflicting authority severely paralyzes action – When two experiments of equal status, both seated at the command desk, issued contradictory orders, the subjects were delayed the point of the shock.

The rebellious action of others severely undermines authority – In one variation, three teachers (two actors and a real subject) administered the shock. When the two actors refused to continue the experimenter and refused to go beyond a certain shock level, thirty-six of forty subjects joined their disobedient peers and refused as well.

Subjects are most obedient when they feel that the responsibility does not reside with them. It is evident that he had almost none of the tools used in ordinary command structures. For example, the experimenter did not threaten the subjects with punishment – such as loss of compensation for participation in the study – for failure to continue the experiment. He did not even have the moral authority he ordinarily experimentally ought to be much less than that of ordinary persons in general, since the experimenter has no power to enforce his imperatives, and since participation in a psychological experiment scarcely evokes the sense of urgency and dedication found in situations of life and death, or even vocational importance, or dismaying degree of obedience.

I will cite one final variation of the experiment that depicts a dilemma that is more common in everyday life. The subject was not ordered to pull the lever that shocked the victim. He was instructed to administer a punishment by pressing the word-part level another person administered the shock. In this situation, thirty-seven of forty adults continued to the highest level of the shock generator. The subjects were obedient even when they were not directly ordered to shock the victim, when they were merely a link in a chain of events that led to the infliction of painful punishment on an innocent victim. It is easy to ignore responsibility when one is only an intermediate link in a chain of action.

The problem of obedience is not wholly psychological. The form and shape of society and the way it is developing have much to do with it. There was a time, perhaps, when people were able to give a fully human response to any situation because they were fully involved in the situation. Today, a man may be a worker on an assembly line in which he does one quality job over and over. He may not know what his product is or even why he is making it. He may be separated from the human quality of work and life. A person does not get to see the whole situation but only a small part of it, and is thus unable to act without some kind of overall direction. He yields to authority in doing so is alienated from his own action.

Even Eichmann was ordained when he toured the concentration camps, but he had only to sit at a desk and shuffle papers. At the trial, he was asked what he felt when he saw the camps and he said that he felt sick to his stomach. He said that he felt that on ground that he was only following orders from above. There lives is a fragmentation of the total human act, no one is confronted with the consequences of his decision to carry out the evil act. The person who assumes responsibility has expiated. Perhaps this is the most common characteristic of socially organized evil in modern society.

Notes

1. The ethical problems of carrying out an experiment of this sort are too complex to be dealt with here, but they receive extended treatment in the book from which this article is taken.

2. Names of subjects described in this piece have been changed.

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