

The perils of obedience

Business



In his intriguing article, *The Perils of Obedience*, Stanley Milgram carries out experiments that portray effects of obedience in the society.

Milgram claims that obedience has been a basic element that every society uses to rate its levels of moral conduct and ethics. However, he believes that submission to authority is a peril that derails the society towards humanity.

Milgram experiments this by setting up a teacher-learner atmosphere in which a teacher inflicts pain to a learner who fails a question. In the experiment, the teacher is the subject who administers an electric shock to a learner. The learner acts as though he receives a real shock by complaining to imaginary shocks administered to him. The objective of this experiment is to monitor the level at which the subject will proceed on inflicting pain to the learner through obedience of the instructor's opinion.

In his findings, Milgram demonstrates that a majority of individuals would subject pain to the learners upon obeying such orders from the experimenters. While, in agreement with his findings, it is evident that a majority of people tend to be subjective to orders and directions beyond their conscience. Obedience is indeed a source of perils in the society.

Individuals inflict pain to members of the society or act in ways that derail developments because of laws or as an option of pleasing their masters.

Milgram illustrates this when he discovers that the majority of people administered shocks to complaining learners up to the maximum level of shock on the scale provided.

However, they did it after a series of consultations from the experimenter on whether they should proceed with the experiment. This indicates that the

subject knew the extent of pain and destruction they were causing to the learners but opted to proceed because of obedience. They never followed their conscience that asked them to stop the experiment. However, people tend to follow their conscience when they have options and are not subjected to guidelines and responsibilities. Milgram discovered this when majority of subjects in his experiment administered less severe shocks when they were given options to pick a power level than if instructed. However, people can still cause destruction and inflict pain on others when they have a loophole to denounce their responsibility.

This occurred when the person pressing the shock button was different from the subject administering the shock. The results showed that a majority of people proceeded to the highest level of shock (Milgram 1-4). Obedience is indeed a peril in the society. Individuals tend to make their masters happy and forget that conscience ought to be the fundamental basis of decision-making. Disobedience as a Psychological and Moral Problem In, Disobedience as a Psychological and Moral Problem, Erich Fromm describes disobedience as a tool that has driven humankind to freedom. Fromm argues that the society has always viewed disobedience as a vice that contradicts laws and authority.

He gives examples and forms of disobedience that shows how conscience of mind leads to disobedience thus a better guide than obedience and authority. Indeed, disobedience made out of conscience is a virtue and not all obedience is a vice. In both religious and political backgrounds, disobedience has led to freedom and developments in the society. An example is the first biblical story of Adam and Eve that portrays disobedient

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humankind towards his creator. The acts of disobedience of Adam and Eve opened their eyes and made them draw a line between wrong and right.

This freed them from the garden and led them to other developments- multiplication and prosperity. The political scene has in past seen dictators rule humankind by their subjective authority. It is only through disobedience that humankind has uncurled himself from such slavery and walked to freedom. A man that always obeys is like a slave who has no freedom of opinion. Obedience has never been a virtue in all spheres. Fromm puts it that obeying the inhuman laws of the society leads to disobedience of the laws of humanity.

This makes such obedience to be a vice that promotes slavery of conscience. Irrational obedience where both the master and the subject have no common interest is a vice. However, rational obedience is inevitable. Fromm emphasizes this when he suggests that disobedience without obedience is rebellion (Fromm 1-4). This illustration shows that humankind ought to make a decision out of conscience.

Rational acts of disobedience lead to freedom and prosperity.