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Stanley Milgram, a psychologist at the Yale University conducted an experiment in 1961, to assess the extent of obedience of an individual under authority.

He devised this experiment to understand and justify the acts of the Nazi Germans involved in the Holocaust, whether or not they were truly inhumane or were they just following instructions. The experiment was set up and was told to be a study of memory and the effect of punishment on it, involving three people at a time that is, the “ experimenter”, the “ teacher” and the “ learner”. The “ teacher” who was actually the subject was placed in a room with the scientist, given to him a set of word pairs he was required to ask the “ learner” who is placed in a separate room. With each wrong answer, the “ teacher” was asked to increase the voltage of the shock that ranged from 15V-450V. The “ learner” however was not actually receiving the shocks and, the responses heard by the “ teacher” were pre-recorded. This study of obedience was carried out initially on forty males who were promised a meager fee of \$4 to volunteer.

**Purpose and Result**The main aim of this study was to see the extremities of blind obedience. Milgram wanted to know to what extent the actions of an individual go under authority even if it caused pain and harm to someone. He wanted to analyze whether the Nazi German soldiers responsible for the acts of genocide were truly inhumane or were they just following orders. The “ volunteers” chosen were ordinary people from all walks of life, as they were naive and could have easily rejected the amount being paid to them and stopped the experiment. The scientists were given a set of probes to be said in order whenever the subject is unsure or is in conflict to encourage

them to proceed with the experiment. The psychologist had estimated that most subjects would go beyond 150 volts if the “ learner” demands to be freed. but the actual results were rather surprising and disturbing at the same time. Once the experiment ended it was seen that nearly all of them went beyond 300 volts and almost twenty-five of them went up to end, the dangerous 450 volts and were still ready to continue.

The subjects of the study were in discomfort when the screams of the “ learner” increased and finally stopped, which showed that their conscious were in conflict but yet chose to obey. Milgram further repeated this experiment with certain variations across various countries. The results were, however, similar. It was seen that the level of obedience was the least when the subjects were physically closer to the “ learner” as it has an impact even visually. Utilitarian and Kantian View Utilitarianism argues that actions are morally right if it provides maximum utility to the person and to all those affected by it. If assessed in according to this view, the study will be considered unethical. In the experiment, we see that the “ teacher” is in conflict and discomfort indicating that he is not quite happy to proceed but yet chooses to do so hence, it makes the idea of continuing the experiment morally wrong. Further, it resulted in causing emotional stress and a feeling of guilt within the subjects due to deception but the effects were although not long-lasting.

The Utilitarian view requires one to be “ strictly impartial”. As for this study, most of the subjects chosen were males, which questions the credibility of the experiment among the female population. The very foundation of morality by Immanuel Kant is based on theories that is to always obey

authority but to also reasonably argue to ensure that your actions have a positive impact on the society. In this study, we see that the subjects who question the “ experimenter” are given prompts such as “ You have no other choice, you must go on.” in a way forcing the subjects to continue the study.

As the result, we see the subject’s obedience to authority but most of them fail to argue and are considered “ immature” in relation to this view. In Kantian view, obedience is said to maintain peace, but in this case, we see fear and distress in the minds of the subjects as they feel that lack of cooperation would make them responsible for for ruining the experiment in some way. Ethical or Unethical (Personal Opinion)As per my readings and knowledge of this experiment, I find the result of this experiment to be valuable and thus, ethical. Many criticise that it deceived and tricked the participants but I believe that a certain degree of deception was necessary to get the most reliable outcome. It initially did affect the subjects mentally but they were later informed about the true aim of the experiment and that no one was actually being hurt, to eliminate the guilt and tension within them. Milgram conducted this experiment with a good intention even if its result was not all that pleasing.

The various criticism, although justified in their own ways, cannot overshadow the importance of the study. In my opinion, this study also gave rise to a thought to the disasters it would bring if authority ever fell into the wrong hands.