

# Review: the lucifer effect by philip zimbardo

Literature



Review: The Lucifer Effect Inspired by the Old Testament's story of Satan, formerly the beloved angel of God who declined His wishes and was doomed to transmute into Lucifer, the Lucifer Effect raises a deep-seated question about the disposition of human nature. The book reflects how an ordinary human being is compelled to indulge in evil action and face himself as the sprite of the civilization.

Philip Zimbardo, the author of the book the Lucifer Effect attempted to answer the question how good people can turn evil, a research which penetrates into the working definition of evil and its effects on humanity. Zimbardo argues suggestively that it is the harshness of the environment that breeds cruelty. The book starts off with the most astringent sights of man's atrocities on his own kind. In 1937 the Japanese butcher nearly 350, 000 Chinese at Nanking. Another incident quoted is the massacre of around 800, 000 Rwandans in the genocide of 1994. He observes that morality is one component of human life that shifts to neutral during such ruthless moments in history. The book focuses on the story of Abu Ghraib with masterful narrative technique. After American occupation of Iraq, they also got hold of the prison which Saddam Hussein used to torture and even murder the dissidents twice a week in the form of execution which was done in public. Tragically the Americans used the same prison to execute the Iraqis which made the place as hellish as before.

Both the prisoners and the US soldiers were equally afraid of the prison because the latter's job was to guard it. The place was shelled more than 20 times. A female officer in charge Brigadier General Janis Karpinski, never visit the place because she had practically no experience of running such prisons. She denied her supervision in that extraordinary site which was used for all

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sorts of abuse. Zimbardo appeared as the key witness of the one of the guards, Frederick, in the publication of the photographs of seven guards who were charged for maltreating the hostages. Frederick was rather dehumanized after committing to this job. He lived in a situation normally inhabited by wild wolves and dogs. Zimbardo writes that it was this extreme setting which de-individualized the guard. Rape and sex became common among them. There was cruelty at its height. Bush hammed up in his typical style stating that the wrongdoers shall be brought to impartiality. As agreed by the author, " The seeds for the flowers of evil that blossomed in that dark dungeon of Abu Ghraib were planted by the Bush administration in its triangular framing of national security threats, citizen fear and vulnerability, and interrogation/torture to win the war on terror." 1

Frederick did plead guilty and was given eight years. The Human Rights Watch accused Donald Rumsfeld, the former US Secretary as well as the chief of the CIA and the Army of the US for making decisions which violated the law at a large scale. Hence the extreme transformation of the beloved angel of God into Lucifer is shown as a mild reflection in the human history as sincere and good people begin to employ bad deeds.

#### Bibliography

Zimbardo, Philip G. *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. New York: Random House, 2007. Print.