

Given a threshold of certain conditions, how is it that an ordinary person ends up throwing away their autonomy?

- Yale psychologist Stanley Milgram
- 1960's - aftermath of WWII
- Nazi officers under trial cited "obedience" to justify their war crimes - simply obeying a superior order

Not to justify their actions - In the scope of authority, why did the Nazi officers essentially throw away their entire sense of moral autonomy by taking part in genocide?

Milgram Obedience Test

Procedure

- ...
- If the teacher refused to shock the learner, the experimenter would always say, in order each time:
 1. Please continue.
 2. The experiment requires that you continue.
 3. It is absolutely essential that you continue.
 4. You have no other choice, you *must* go on.

Experiment's Conclusion

- $\frac{2}{3}$ of the teachers shocked the learner to the max of 400 volts. All went past the “severe danger” threshold of 300 volts
- Why'd the teacher keep shocking the learner?

- Shoes

- Cross apply to the Nazis

Authority

What determines authority?

According to Milgram:

1. The person giving the orders is perceived as being qualified to direct other people's behavior. That is, they are seen as legitimate.
2. The person being ordered about is able to believe that the authority will accept responsibility for what happens. (ie experiment)

(I):

Milgram's two states

Crossing the threshold

- 1. autonomous state – people direct their own actions, and they take responsibility for the results of those actions
- 2. agentic state – people allow others to direct their actions and then pass off the responsibility for the consequences to the person giving the orders. In other words, they act as agents for another person's will.

Current events: as we watch the protests against police brutality unfold along with a growing collective hatred towards cops, how do these two states apply?

1. The autonomous state

- Protesters are being autonomous by standing up against what they believe is morally wrong.
- In context of law enforcement, cops were probably autonomous before they took the job.

1. The agentic state

- Cops: Not to justify their actions in any way, but could it be that just like the Nazis and the Teachers, they have lost their moral autonomy under a superior officer and the overall systemic racism baked into the entire concept of law enforcement?

The spectrum

In between -

- What about a black police officer? Or even just an officer who is torn between doing their job, whatever it entails, and standing up for injustices that their colleagues have engaged in?

Extreme -

- Adolf Eichmann:
- organized the Holocaust, when at trial said “To sum it all up, I must say that I regret nothing”.
- Cops who truly feel as if their power is something to be abused in that way

Why are we nervous around police officers?

- Law enforcement officers have authority. They have guns. They can arrest you.
- Consequently, when citizens are put in a situation with a cop, we lose our own autonomy by trying to adhere to what they want to see in order to avoid exercises of their power.
- The public in the face of cops: When confronted by an officer, do we lose some of our own autonomy?
- If you are of a certain race that cops are known to target, you're taught to be obedient and compliant when in the presence of a p.o. = lose autonomy in the face of authority.

Another explanation:

- In committing atrocious acts that cause them to lose their own moral autonomy, p.o. may engage in a trade off.

Ok - we've concluded that certain forms of authority undermine people's own autonomy

What about the scope of our own lives, outside of police, Nazis and Milgram's experiment?

Ex: Our parents are authority.

We legally belong to our parents until we turn 18. Most underage people are brought up by their parents. It's a construct of our entire society that a child is raised by their parents in the way that they see fit. My parents, and probably most people's, are the biggest influence on me as I grow up.

Why do I see personality aspects of my dad showing up in me? I inherit his physical features, but his cognitive features too? Even ones that I don't really want... Did I choose, as an autonomous being, to inherit those? Or did I just absorb, without a choice, my parents' vibe?

Is my personal identity really mine? Or is it just a patchwork of chance?

When under the influence of authority, how can our moral autonomy break so easily when we're under a ruse of non-responsibility?

Has the influence of the settings of my life caused me to forever be in the agentic state?

Idk. I'm confused. The end!