

Philosopher David Hume, “the idea of implicit submission and the easiness with which the many are governed by the few”.

The idea of implicit submission and the ease with which the many are governed by the few can be explored through various lenses, including political philosophy, sociology, and psychology. Let's break down these concepts:

Implicit Submission

Implicit submission refers to the often unspoken or unacknowledged acceptance of authority or control by individuals within a society. This concept implies that people may comply with rules, norms, and authority figures without explicit coercion or conscious decision. Several factors contribute to implicit submission:

1. From a young age, individuals are taught to respect authority, follow societal norms, and accept established hierarchies. This conditioning makes submission to authority feel natural and unquestioned.
2. Cultural values and traditions play a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions of authority and governance. In many cultures, respect for authority and adherence to social norms are deeply ingrained.
3. Psychological factors such as the desire for security, stability, and belonging can lead individuals to conform to societal expectations and submit to authority. People may also experience cognitive dissonance if they resist authority, leading them to rationalize their submission.
4. Institutions such as schools, workplaces, and governments are designed in ways that reinforce compliance and submission. Hierarchical structures and systems of rewards and punishments further promote implicit submission.

The Ease with Which the Many are Governed by the Few

The phenomenon where a small group of individuals governs or controls a much larger population is a fundamental aspect of many political and social systems. This can be explained by several factors:

1. Historically, societies have often centralised power in the hands of a few individuals or a ruling class. This centralisation simplifies decision-making processes and maintains order but also concentrates control.
2. The governing few often derive their authority from various sources of legitimacy, such as tradition, charisma, legal-rational structures, or democratic processes. When the governed perceive the authority as legitimate, they are more likely to comply.
3. Those in power often control key resources (economic, military, informational) that enable them to maintain and exert control over the population. Control over information, in particular, allows the few to shape public opinion and suppress dissent.
4. Many political theories, such as those proposed by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, suggest that individuals implicitly consent to be governed in exchange for security and order. This social contract is the foundation of many political systems.

5. The governed often exhibit a range of psychological traits, such as obedience to authority, conformity, and the bystander effect, which make it easier for a few to govern the many. Stanley Milgram's experiments on obedience and Philip Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment highlight how ordinary people can easily submit to authority under certain conditions.

6. Over time, systems of governance become institutionalized, meaning they are embedded in the fabric of society through laws, norms, and practices. This institutionalization makes the governance structure self-perpetuating and resistant to change.

Examples and Theoretical Perspectives

- In "The Prince," Niccolò Machiavelli discusses how rulers can maintain power by understanding human nature and using a combination of fear and respect.
- In Marxist theory, the ruling class (bourgeoisie) maintains control over the working class (proletariat) through the control of means of production and ideological dominance.
- Michel Foucault's work on power and discipline examines how modern societies regulate individuals through institutions, surveillance, and normalisation processes.

Conclusion

The concepts of implicit submission and the ease with which the many are governed by the few are deeply interrelated. Implicit submission arises from a complex interplay of social, cultural, psychological, and institutional factors, creating conditions where governance by a few becomes not only possible but also stable and enduring. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for analysing power structures and their impacts on society.