

BMAT ESSAY

2017, Q1



TIMING ⌚ 30m

LEARNED TO OBEY / COMMANDER

‘He who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander’. (Aristotle)

Explain what you understand by this statement. Argue to the contrary. To what extent do you agree that someone cannot be a good leader without learning how to follow?



ESSAY PLAN

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EXPLAIN WHAT YOU UNDERSTAND BY THE STATEMENT

- Statement is referring to the chain of command - people have to learn what it is like to obey to have others obey them and give them instructions
- Mutual respect between commander and army - commander needs to be empathetic to his army and by learning to obey they will be able to relate to them a lot more



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ARGUE TO THE CONTRARY

- Sometimes this can mean that leaders are a bit too compassionate to its subordinates - they often have to make difficult decisions and by being able to understand mistakes can occur and giving the benefit of the doubt may affect their performance
- There are other important qualities of a good commander. For example a leader needs to be passionate, honest and a good communicator. These are perhaps more important than gaining respect for his counterparts having obeyed before
- Extreme language ‘ cannot be a good commander’. Not everyone has the ability to obey and follow the chain of command.
- It is difficult to assess exactly what makes a good commander - we touched on some of the other qualities it can be argued that these are more attributable to this



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TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE?

- By learning obedience, tempered with compassion and empathy, a good commander is able to transmit these virtues to the people he is placed over.
- He knows how to do this by virtue of having been on the receiving end.
- A person who has never learned the rudiments of obedient behavior will not be able to expect those subordinate to him to follow his leadership. He is, almost unconsciously projecting his contempt for obedience by his past behavior.
- A person who has never made a mistake, or failed to do something perfectly, will never tolerate mistakes or failure in those subordinate to him. This rigid system of little margin for error makes for very bad leaders, and even worse followers.

