had, he could have produced an extraordinary biography, rather than an uneven biography of a model priest that only offers glimpses of what made him that way.

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Milgram's Legacy

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Review of Thomas Blass, The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley Milgram. New York: Basic Books, 2004. Hardcover ISBN 0738203998, 360 pages, $26.00.

After World War II, Holocaust survivors who were liberated from concentration camps were often accused of committing devious acts in order to survive. At that time *The Saturday Evening Post* and the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported: "The few that remain to us in Europe are not necessarily Judaism's best. The nation's jewels were destroyed first, and many of the survivors are suspected of low morality." How ironic that the victims were blamed for their survival! The perpetrators, many of whom managed to escape, were not subjected to such denigration.

Perhaps it should not have surprised us that the man who tried to discover what was behind such barbaric inhumanity is a person who has been accused of immorality. Stanley Milgram, the world-renowned social psychologist, is best known for his studies of "obedience to authority," even though his other research findings, such as "six degrees of separation," have become part of everyday popular culture. Thomas Blass in his exquisite portrayal *The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley Milgram,* removes Milgram's anonymity and restores for us the panoply of Milgram's contributions to our own understanding of human behavior. Blass sheds insight into the question of why the man who legitimized the field of social psychology is only mentioned in passing in the writings of the history of psychology.

One explanation proposed by Blass for Milgram's lack of recognition is that Milgram did not have a school of thought that followed him. Yet, Milgram had more graduate students than most members of the faculty at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. I am a case in point. I was one of Stanley Milgram's students, one whose work would not be identifiable in a "Stanley Milgram school of social psychology." Or would it?

Being interested in moral capacity in human beings, I was intrigued by the minority in Milgram's study who disobeyed authority when asked to shock a person who gets a wrong answer to a word-association test in an experimental laboratory. What enabled certain individuals to maintain their moral integrity? I did not avail myself of Stanley Milgram's simulated shock generator. Rather, I did a case study of non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. I also attempted to develop a "Tendency to Help" personality measurement. Although my methodology was different from Milgram's approach to uncovering human behavior in different situations, he applauded my qualitative methodology. He helped me draft a letter to *Psychology Today*; and indeed, my preliminary findings were published in that popular magazine. Milgram died at the age of 51, shortly after he approved my dissertation proposal.

In 1981, when I began to voice interest in moral issues during the Holocaust, and more specifically in altruistic behavior, I discovered that most people were suspicious of altruistic behavior. They would declare that psychoanalysts say that altruism does not exist; unconscious motivation—narcissistic gratification—is at the core of helping others. People would say, "The rescuers must have had ulterior motives." Holocaust survivors would say, "Don't make such a big deal about the rescuers; there were so few." Although I was not accused of being immoral, the idea that non-Jews risked their lives to save Jews without financial or other rewards is not accepted by all, no matter what my interviews with rescuers and those they helped show. I empathized with Mil

gram's encounter with criticism of his findings that a majority of people will comply when told to harm another person by an authority figure.

My first encounter with Stanley Milgram was in 1978 in Jerusalem, where he was an invited speaker at an international conference on psychological stress. He took a particular interest in my producing a film. From Milgram I learned about film as a medium to communicate knowledge, and how it is different from the written format. He lived long enough to see my documentary, *Breaking the Silence: The Generation After the Holocaust,* air on national PBS and the ZDF in Germany.

I was one of many of Milgram's students who Blass tracked down and interviewed. Blass's portrait of Milgram as a teacher is not a glorification of the dead. He depicts Milgram with all his wounds and strengths. Indeed, Blass reports on the students' diverse research interests and on their reactions to Milgram. Professor Milgram was imaginative and possessed an insatiable curiosity. It is that quality that he passed on to his students. If there is a "Stanley Milgram school of social psychology" it is that each student should pursue a question that most intrigues him or her about the social world and human behavior, and find interesting ways to answer the question. The dependent variable has to be attention-grabbing.

Milgram's curiosity about the world around him and invention of experiments to prove one thing or another was a part of his core self from childhood. He was curious about how "everything worked." Blass's informative psychohistorical biography is enriched by interviews with Milgram's brother, sister, wife, children, childhood friends, and by previous interviews.

In recounting Milgram's childhood, Blass highlights two incidents that in hindsight serve as a harbinger to Milgram's professional interests. In the first incident, a child was knocked down by a car in Milgram's neighborhood in the Bronx. Milgram watched as a crowd of protesters gathered on the sidewalk to chant, "Sit down strike! Sit down strike!" They built a barricade from milk crates across the width of the street and sat on the crates. Shortly after, a one-way street was established. The power of groups did not bypass the keen observer Milgram.

The second critical incident occurred when Stanley Milgram was four or five years old, and playing with his cousin in his room. Milgram wanted to measure the distance between two beds with a belt that stretched. According to Milgram, "The belt slipped, and the buckle, with its sharp spindle, fell on Stanley's [his cousin] head causing a small flow of blood. Even though it was an accident, Milgram was scolded by his mother. Years later, Milgram contemplates this encounter: "Still, to be blamed for such things was a burden. But whether I learned my lesson remains unclear. For many years later, was I not again to become an object of criticism for my efforts to measure something without due regard to the risks it entailed for others?"

What is most striking to me is that Milgram's immigrant parents, who valued their children as "treasures," were role-models for never giving up in the face of hardship. They overcame financial limitations with dignity and perseverance. It is those qualities that one also observes in Milgram. When he was not admitted to Harvard graduate school in psychology, because he had not majored in psychology as an undergraduate, he did not take "No" for an answer. Milgram figured out how to get accepted, and worked very hard to get himself ready for the challenge.

When Milgram's father, a baker and cake decorator, died at fifty-five years of age of a coronary thrombosis, Milgram was in college and living at home. The father's bad investments left them poverty-stricken, but his "resourceful and resilient" mother found a job. The father's death brought on a premonition in Milgram that he would die when he was fifty-five years old. Milgram also resolved to protect his own future family from financial disaster should he die young. Family was a high priority in Milgram's life. His drive and ambition academically did not undermine his valuing of family life, and the close knit-family of his childhood was replicated in his adult life.

Thomas Blass's detailed sequential narrative of Stanley Milgram's life and work probably would not have been possible without the meticulous archive Milgram left behind. The attention to specifics is what made Milgram the scientist *par excellence*. This certainly comes through in the engaging, readable, page turning biography, whose readers are ea-

ger to know: "what is Stanley Milgram up to next?"

Milgram's inquisitive nature led to many questions about observable social behavior. A lost letter addressed to what kind of an organization is more likely to be mailed? Who would succeed in getting passengers on a New York subway to give up their seat? Are New Yorkers more or less helpful than people in various European cities? Are Americans more or less obedient to authority than are Norwegians or French? Milgram explained that he was an "experimentalist" because "only in action can you fully realize the forces operative in social behavior. Picking up a "lost letter," or giving up one's seat on the subway, or observing familiar strangers at a train station, behavior in crowds are a few of the concrete dependent variables.

Milgram did have some studies that did not fit this paradigm, such as the study of cognitive maps of different cities. His study on television's effects on antisocial behavior is a landmark contribution as well. Milgram's appetite for filmmaking was whetted when he was in Hollywood during the filming of *Medical Center*. He prolificacy in low budget films such as *The City and the Self* was astounding. Blass captures the excitement that Milgram experienced in using this medium.

In reading *The Man Who Shocked the World*, several of Milgram's personality traits come alive and in essence shape the format of Blass's book. Milgram is portrayed as having been very organized. He was meticulous in recording conversations, correspondences, procedures, and day-to-day events, and his letters reveal much about relationships with colleagues, family members and friends. Milgram documented each research project or film project from its beginning, through its middle, and to the end. He was a great believer in the finished product: What would it look like? Would it be interesting? To be able to have so many details, almost as if Milgram wrote it himself, must have been a biographer's delight.

Despite Milglram's prominence, his proposals were not always accepted for funding. Blass illustrates how critics of Milgram limited his ability to get funds for certain projects. Throughout Milgram's life, criticism of the obedience studies continued to pop up here and there and needed constant attention. The American Psychological Association's ethics committee and IRBs (Institutional Review Board) became very stringent as a result of the criticism. It is highly unlikely that such experiments would pass a review board today.

Blass does not focus only on Milgram's research. *The Man Who Shocked the World* is full of tidbits about Milgram's social life, early dating, and the courtship of his wife Sasha, as well as the social life they enjoyed together, and his role as a father. Milgram loved pranks and had a sense of humor. He was an experimenter and his experimentation included, unapologetically, drugs.

Stanley Milgram died almost twenty years ago. His ideas have become part of our vernacular: "What a small world"—a Milgramism—is what we say when someone tells us he met someone we know. When I read in the press about soldiers who are obeying or disobeying orders, workers who are conforming to group pressures, the familiar strangers we noticed on September 11, 2001 when we were stuck on subway stations in New York City or walked miles to reach our homes with thousands of others, I think about Stanley Milgram. Thomas Blass's *The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley Milgram* is a "must read" for those who want to see the world through an inspiring, uncommon lens.

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Historical amnesia is a grave danger of our age