FITNESS TO PRACTISE PANEL
16-20 JUNE 2008
7th Floor, St James's Buildings, 79 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6FQ

Name of Respondent Doctor: Dr Rajendra PERSAUD

Registered Qualifications: MB BS 1986 University of London

Registered Address: Kent

Registration Number: 3117660

Type of Case: New case of impairment by reason of: misconduct.

Panel Members: Dr A Morgan, Chairman (Medical)
Mrs A Granne (Lay)
Miss K Heenan (Lay)
Dr A Vaidya (Medical)

Legal Assessor: Mrs S Breach

Secretary to the Panel: Miss L Meads

Representation:
GMC: Mr J Donne, QC, instructed by GMC Legal.

Doctor: Present and represented by Mr R Francis, QC, instructed by RadcliffesLeBrasseur Solicitors.

ALLEGATION

1. At all material times you were employed as a Consultant Psychiatrist for the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust and held an honorary post as a senior lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, University of London; **Admitted and found proved**

2. In March 2003 your book 'From the Edge of the Couch' was published by Bantam Books; **Admitted and found proved**

3. Your book contained passages plagiarised from various sources, including

   a. an article entitled 'Capgras Syndrome: a novel probe for understanding the neural representation of the identity and familiarity of persons' by A and B, **Admitted and found proved**

   b. an article entitled 'Autoerotic Asphyxia: A Case Report' by C and D, **Admitted and found proved**

   c. an article entitled 'Treatment of an Unusual Case of Masochism' by E and F, **Admitted and found proved**

   d. an article entitled 'An Evolutionary Connection? Personality and Individual Differences' by G, H and I; **Admitted and found proved**

4. Your article entitled 'Why the Media Refuses to Obey' was published in the March 2005 edition of 'Progress in Neurology and Psychiatry'; **Admitted and found proved**

5. Your article entitled 'Frailty That Allows Evil to Triumph' was published in the Times Educational Supplement on 18 February 2005; **Admitted and found proved**

6. Your article entitled 'The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley Milgram' was published in the British Medical Journal on 6 August 2005; **Admitted and found proved**

7. On a date unknown before 30 December 2005 you submitted to the British Medical Journal for publication an article entitled 'Do you Obey Or Do you Rebel'; **Admitted and found proved**

8. Your articles at 4-7 above contained passages plagiarised from an article and a book entitled 'The Man Who Shocked the World' written by Professor J and material published on Professor J's website on Stanley Milgram; **Admitted and found proved**

9. Your article entitled 'A Dangerous War on Psychiatry' was published in the Independent newspaper on 30 June 2005; **Admitted and found proved**

10. Your article at 9 above contained passages plagiarised from an article entitled 'The Globalization of Scientology; Influence, Control and Opposition in Transnational Markets' written by Professor K; **Admitted and found proved**

11. In relation to the articles, or portions thereof, set out at 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 above, these were

    a. not your own work, **Admitted and found proved**

    b. copied, **Admitted and found proved**

    c. reproduced from another source; **Admitted and found proved**

12. Your actions as described at 3, 8 and 11 above were:

    a. Inappropriate, **Admitted and found proved**

    b. Misleading, **Admitted and found proved**

    c. Dishonest, **Found proved**

    d. liable to bring the profession into disrepute. **Found proved**

And that by reason of the matters set out above your fitness to practise is impaired because of your misconduct". **Found proved**

Determination on facts

Dr Persaud: The Panel has given careful consideration to all the evidence adduced in this case including the witness statements of Dr L (Consultant Psychiatrist), Mr M (an Editor of

the British Medical Journal), Professor K (Professor of Sociology) and Professor J (Professor of Psychology). It has also heard the oral evidence of Professor I (Professor of Clinical Psychology), Professor N (Professor of Psychiatry), your own evidence and the evidence by telephone of Professor O (Professor of Psychiatry).

The Panel has taken account of the submissions made by Mr Donne on behalf of the General Medical Council (GMC) and those of Mr Francis on your behalf.

At the start of the hearing, Mr Francis made the following admissions on your behalf: paragraphs 1, 2, 3 in its entirety, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 in its entirety, 12a (as amended) and 12b (as amended). These have already been announced as found proved.

In relation to the burden and standard of proof, the Legal Assessor advised the Panel that the burden of proof rests on the GMC and that the standard of proof to be applied, at this stage of the proceedings, is that applicable to civil proceedings. She referred the Panel to the case of The Queen (on the application of N) -v- The Mental Health Review Tribunal (Northern Region) [2006] in which Richards LJ stated at paragraph 62:

> *"Although there is a single civil standard of proof on the balance of probabilities, it is flexible in its application. In particular, the more serious the allegation or the more serious the consequences if the allegation is proved, the stronger must be the evidence before a court will find the allegation proved on the balance of probabilities. Thus the flexibility of the standard lies not in any adjustment to the degree of probability required for the allegation to be proved (such that a more serious allegation has to be proved to a higher degree of probability), but in the strength or quality of the evidence that will in practice be required for an allegation to be proved on the balance of probabilities."*

The Panel has appreciated that the remaining allegations are serious and that the Panel's findings could have serious consequences for you. It has therefore given very careful regard to the cogency of the evidence presented by the GMC.

The Panel has considered each of the remaining paragraphs separately and has determined the following:

Paragraph 12c (as amended)

The Panel applied the dishonesty test as set out in the Privy Council case of R v Ghosh [1982]. In that case, Lord Lane stated:

> *"In determining whether the prosecution has proved that the defendant was acting dishonestly, a jury must first of all decide whether according to the ordinary standards of reasonable and honest people what was done was dishonest. If it was not dishonest by those standards, that is the end of the matter and the prosecution fails. If it was dishonest by those standards, then the jury must consider whether the defendant himself must have realised that what he was doing was by those standards dishonest. In most cases where the actions are obviously dishonest by ordinary standards there will be no doubt about it. It will be obvious that the defendant himself knew that he was acting dishonestly. It is dishonest for a defendant to act in a way which he knows ordinary people consider dishonest, even if he asserts or genuinely believes that he is morally justified in acting as he did."*

The Panel first considered whether plagiarism is thought to be dishonest by the ordinary standards of reasonable and honest people. It determined that plagiarism is considered to

be inherently dishonest.

It then considered whether you realised that what you were doing was dishonest. You are an eminent psychiatrist with a distinguished academic record who has combined a clinical career as a consultant psychiatrist with work in the media and journalism. The Panel is of the view that you must have known that your actions in allowing the work of others to be seen as though it was your own would be considered dishonest by ordinary people.

The Panel has therefore determined that your actions were dishonest in accordance with the accepted definition of dishonesty in these proceedings.

Paragraph 12c (as amended) has been found proved.

Paragraph 12d (as amended)

The Panel has determined that your actions, in plagiarising the work of others, were liable to bring the profession into disrepute.

Paragraph 12d (as amended) has been found proved.

Having reached findings on the facts, the Panel will invite Mr Donne to adduce further evidence and make any further submissions as to whether, on the basis of the facts found proved, your fitness to practise is impaired. Following Mr Donne's submissions Mr Francis will be given the opportunity to respond on your behalf and call any evidence if he so wishes.

Determination on impaired fitness to practise

Dr Persaud: The facts found proved are as follows:

At all material times you were employed as a Consultant Psychiatrist for the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust and held an honorary post as a senior lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, University of London.

In March 2003 your book 'From the Edge of the Couch' was published by Bantam Books. Your book contained passages plagiarised from various sources, including:

- an article entitled 'Capgras Syndrome: a novel probe for understanding the neural representation of the identity and familiarity of persons' by A and B,
- an article entitled 'Autoerotic Asphyxia: A Case Report' by C and D,
- an article entitled 'Treatment of an Unusual Case of Masochism' by E and F, and
- an article entitled 'An Evolutionary Connection? Personality and Individual Differences' by G, H and I.

Your article entitled 'Why the Media Refuses to Obey' was published in the March 2005 edition of 'Progress in Neurology and Psychiatry'. Your article entitled 'Frailty That Allows Evil to Triumph' was published in the Times Educational Supplement on 18 February 2005. Your article entitled 'The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley Milgram' was published in the British Medical Journal on 6 August 2005. On a date unknown before 30 December 2005 you submitted to the British Medical Journal for publication an article entitled 'Do you Obey Or Do you Rebel'. These articles contained passages plagiarised from an article and a book entitled 'The Man Who Shocked the World' written by Professor J and material published on Professor J's website on Stanley Milgram.

Your article entitled 'A Dangerous War on Psychiatry' was published in the Independent

newspaper on 30 June 2005. This article contained passages plagiarised from an article entitled 'The Globalization of Scientology; Influence, Control and Opposition in Transnational Markets' written by Professor K.

The sections of your book and the other articles, or portions thereof, were not your own work, but were copied and reproduced from another source.

Your actions as described above were inappropriate, misleading, dishonest and liable to bring the profession into disrepute.

The Panel has considered whether, on the basis of the facts found proved, your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your misconduct. Mr Donne has submitted on behalf of the General Medical Council (GMC) that your fitness to practise is impaired. Mr Francis, on your behalf, submitted that your fitness to practise is not impaired.

The Panel has taken account of the advice of the Legal Assessor who referred the Panel to the case of Harry v GMC [2006] in which Goldring J stated:

"First, it must ask itself if there has been misconduct. If the answer is yes, it must go on to ask itself whether that misconduct has impaired the doctor's fitness to practise. In deciding whether there has been misconduct, it is not possible, in my view, to ignore the public interest in the wider sense. That interest is an integral aspect when deciding whether the particular facts proved have passed the threshold and amount to misconduct."

The Legal Assessor also drew the Panel's attention to the case of Roylance v GMC [1999] in which Lord Clyde stated:

"Misconduct is a word of general effect, involving some act or omission which falls short of what would be proper in the circumstances. The standard of propriety may often be found by reference to the rules and standards ordinarily required to be followed by a medical practitioner in the particular circumstances."

The Panel has taken into account the GMC's publication 'Good Medical Practice' (May 2001 edition applicable at the time) which states that doctors should be honest and trustworthy and that 'serious or persistent failures to meet the standards in this booklet may put your registration at risk'.

The Panel acknowledges that patients have not been harmed. However, it is aware of its responsibility to protect the public interest, particularly with reference to maintaining public confidence in the profession and upholding proper standards of conduct and behaviour. Doctors occupy a position of privilege and trust in society and are expected to act with integrity and to uphold proper standards of conduct. The public is entitled to expect that doctors will be honest and trustworthy at all times, and that they adhere to the highest standards of probity. Your conduct has fallen below the standards of behaviour that the public is entitled to expect from doctors and undermines public confidence in the profession.

The Panel has determined that your dishonest conduct in plagiarising other people's work on multiple occasions represents a serious breach of the principles that are central to Good Medical Practice. The Panel is in no doubt that this amounts to misconduct which is serious.

In determining whether your fitness to practise is impaired, the Panel has considered the

GMC's Indicative Sanctions Guidance (April 2005). In particular, at paragraph 11 of section 1, it states that:

"Neither the Act nor the Rules define what is meant by impaired fitness to practise but for the reasons explained below, it is clear that the GMC's role in relation to fitness to practise is to consider concerns which are so serious as to raise the question whether the doctor concerned should continue to practise either with restrictions on registration or at all."

Indicative Sanctions Guidance, paragraph 58 at page S3-14, states that a question of impaired fitness to practise is likely to arise if:

"A doctor has behaved dishonestly, fraudulently or in a way designed to mislead or harm others".

The Panel recognises that it is entitled to take into account past conduct when considering current impairment on the basis that past conduct is relevant to a doctor's suitability to continue to practise.

Your dishonest conduct brings the profession into disrepute and the Panel has, pursuant to Section 35C(2)(a) of the Medical Act 1983 (as amended), concluded that your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your misconduct.

The Panel will now invite further submissions from Mr Donne as to the appropriate sanction, if any, to be imposed on your registration. Mr Francis will then have an opportunity to respond on your behalf. Submissions on sanction should include reference to the Indicative Sanctions Guidance, using the criteria as set out therein to draw attention to the issues which appear relevant to this case.

Determination on sanction

Dr Persaud: Having made and announced its finding that your fitness to practise is impaired by reason of your misconduct, the Panel has now considered what action, if any, it should take with regard to your registration.

The Panel has taken into account the submissions of Mr Donne, on behalf of the General Medical Council (GMC), and those of Mr Francis, on your behalf. Mr Donne submitted that suspension is both the appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case. Mr Francis, on your behalf, submitted that it is open to the Panel to conclude your case at this stage without taking any further action.

The Panel has also taken into account all the evidence in this case, including the references from your professional colleagues and various charities, and the testimony from Dr P, your mentor.

The Panel considered whether to conclude your case and take no further action. However, in the light of the nature of your misconduct, it decided that to take no action on your registration would be wholly insufficient.

The Panel has had regard to the GMC's Indicative Sanctions Guidance (April 2005). It has borne in mind that any sanction must be proportionate and that its purpose is not to be punitive, though it may have a punitive effect. The Panel has balanced your interests with the wider public interest. The public interest includes not only the protection of patients but also the maintenance of public confidence in the profession and the declaring and

upholding of proper standards of conduct and behaviour.

The Panel considered whether it would be sufficient to impose conditions on your registration. The Panel concluded that there are no appropriate conditions that it could impose. It has determined that the imposition of conditions would be insufficient as they would not adequately reflect the gravity of your misconduct, or protect the public interest by maintaining public confidence in the medical profession.

The Panel then went on to consider whether it would be sufficient to suspend your registration.

The Panel has noted the submissions of Mr Francis on your behalf that you are a clinician with many talents and that you have worked enthusiastically as a communicator in the media to improve public understanding of mental illness. Mr Francis further submitted that you were under pressure with your writing and this led you to cut corners. You have told the Panel that you now know that what you did was wrong, that you deeply regret your behaviour and apologise for it.

The Panel has noted that you have the support of your employers and that you have taken remedial action to ensure that you do not find yourself in a similar position again. You have cut down on your media and journalistic projects. Dr P, with whom you have regular contact, has informed the Panel that, since these events, you are more cautious about taking on extra work.

The Panel is impressed by the testimonial references submitted by eminent persons and colleagues, several of whom have confirmed their testimonials in the light of this Panel's finding of dishonesty.

Your misconduct occurred between three and five years ago and there has been no evidence that you have repeated this type of behaviour since. The Panel considers that it is highly unlikely that you would ever repeat your actions in future.

It has noted the words of Mr Justice Collins in paragraph 29 of his judgment in Giele v the GMC [2005]:

"I do not doubt that the maintenance of public confidence in the profession must outweigh the interests of the individual doctor. But that confidence will surely be maintained by imposing such sanction as is in all the circumstances appropriate. Thus in considering the maintenance of confidence, the existence of a public interest in not ending the career of a competent doctor would play a part."

Although the Panel does not condone your dishonest actions, it has concluded that your behaviour, although serious, is not incompatible with your continuing to be a registered medical practitioner. The Panel is satisfied that it is appropriate, proportionate and sufficient to direct that your registration be suspended.

The Panel has considered the length of the period of suspension to be imposed, taking into account all the evidence and circumstances of this case. It has had regard to the fact that there has been no patient harm, that your plagiarism was not financially motivated, that it did not relate to research fraud and that there are measures in place to avoid repetition. The Panel has determined that a three month period of suspension is sufficient to send out a signal to you, the profession and the public that plagiarism is unacceptable behaviour.

The decision to suspend your registration for a period of three months will take effect 28

days from when written notice is deemed to have been served on you, unless you exercise your right of appeal. A note explaining your right of appeal will be supplied to you.

That concludes this case.

Confirmed

Date
Chairman

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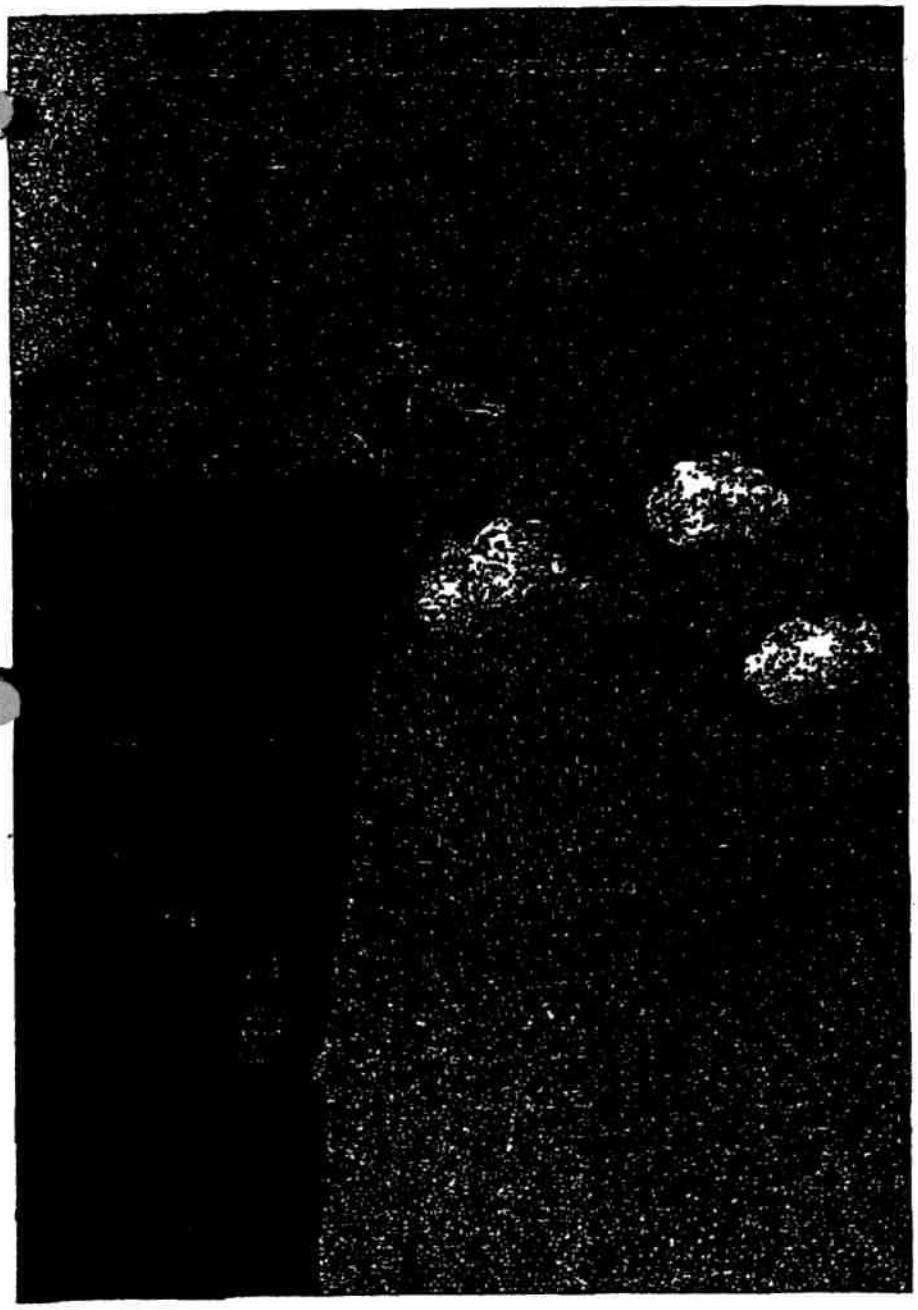

Volume 9 Issue 2 March 2005

Why the media refuses to obey

In Media viewpoint, Professor Raj Persaud explores popular media health stories and discusses the potential impact on psychiatry. In this article, he discusses the media's obsession with Stanley Milgram's famous study of obedience and why, despite repeated airings of the experiment, the media remains unable to grasp its full implications.

Doctors traditionally wear white coats but they may be unaware that these symbols of authority have a special place in the history of psychology, where perhaps the most famous series of experiments in the discipline demonstrated the awesome power of such a garment in getting the public to obey.

The late Stanley Milgram, perhaps the most famous social psychologist of all time, is renowned for a series of experiments on obedience to authority that he conducted at Yale University in 1961-1962. He found, surprisingly, that 65 per cent of his subjects, ordinary residents of New Haven, were willing to give apparently harmful electric shocks – up to 450 volts – to a pitifully protesting victim, simply because a scientific, lab-coated authority figure commanded them to, and in spite of the fact that the victim did not deserve such punishment.

Evil or obedient?

Milgram's interest in the study of obedience partly emerged out of a deep concern with the suffering of fellow Jews at the hands of the Nazis and an attempt to fathom how the Holocaust could have happened. His research, like Freud's, lead to profound revisions in some of the fundamental assumptions about human nature.

It suggested that 'evil' as a concept was not necessary to explain why ordinary people do terrible things. Instead Milgram's work, and that of other social psychologists, suggests that much of what we do, we do automatically. Evil often occurs simply because we do not question our actions enough; instead, they are a consequence of our trust in authority figures who are in 'charge'

The subjects in Milgram's original series of tests believed they were part of an experiment supposedly dealing with the relationship between punishment and learning. An experimenter – who used no coercive powers beyond a stern aura of mechanical and vacant-eyed efficiency – instructed participants to shock a learner by pressing a lever on a machine each time the learner made a mistake on a word-matching task. Each subsequent error led to an increase in the intensity of the shock in 15-volt increments, from 15 to 450 volts.

In fact, the shock box was a well-crafted prop and the learner an actor who did not actually get shocked. The result: a majority of the subjects continued to obey to the end – believing they were delivering life-threatening 450 volt shocks – simply because the experimenter commanded them to. Although subjects were told about the deception afterwards, the experience was a very real and powerful one for them during the laboratory hour itself.

These groundbreaking and controversial experiments have had, and continue to have, long-lasting significance, and the media has been obsessed with them ever since, repeatedly 'rediscovering' them and re-reporting them as if they were amazing news.

Milgram and the media

In August 1976, CBS, the major US TV network, presented a prime-time dramatisation of the obedience experiments and the events surrounding them, entitled *The Tenth Level*. William Shatner (of Star Trek fame) had the starring role as Stephen Hunter, the Milgram-like scientist. Milgram served as a consultant for the film. While it contains a lot of fictional elements, it powerfully conveyed enough of the essence of the true story for its writer, George Bellak, to receive an 'honorable mention' in the American Psychological Association's media awards for 1977.

Rock musician, Peter Gabriel, was an avid admirer of Milgram. His album, *So*, which came out in 1986, contains a track entitled, 'We do what we're told – Milgram's 37' There is also a French-German punk-rock group named Milgram. In 1973, British playwright Dannie Abse produced a play, *The Dogs of Pavlov*, inspired by the research. Since then, at least half a dozen plays have been written or are in progress, based on the obedience studies.

Raj Persaud
MSc, MPhil,
MRCPsych

Media viewpoint

But despite the media's obsession, does the supposed in-depth reworking of this famous experiment actually manage to convey what it was really about?

Milgram's study demonstrated with brutal clarity that ordinary individuals could be induced to act destructively even in the absence of physical coercion, and humans need not be innately evil or aberrant to act in ways that are reprehensible and inhumane. While we would like to believe that when confronted with a moral dilemma we will act as our conscience dictates, Milgram's obedience experiments teach us that in a concrete situation with powerful social constraints, our moral sense can all too easily be overwhelmed.

The experiment was also conducted with amazing verve and subtlety: for example, Milgram ensured the 'experimenter' wore a grey lab coat rather than a white one precisely because he did not want subjects to think that the 'experimenter' was a medical doctor and thereby limit the implications of his findings to the power of physician authority.

But the nuances of the experiment and therefore the in-depth thinking that lies behind great experiments is usually completely lost in media accounts. Plus the media generally basks in the gory details of the procedure but misses the key conclusion. This is seen by the fact that the media immediately returns to conventional explanations of evil for the terrible acts that humans commit, which Milgram's work rejects.

Instead Milgram believed that the true explanation for evil like the Holocaust was shown through his experiments to be a propensity for people to accept definitions of action provided by legitimate authority. That is, although the subject performs the action, he allows authority to define its meaning.

We did not need Milgram to tell us we have a tendency to obey orders; what we did not know before his experiments is how powerful this tendency is. And, having been enlightened about our extreme readiness to obey authorities, we can try to take steps to guard ourselves against reprehensible commands.

Beyond the media's grasp?

While many professions have taken heed of Milgram's work – indeed the US army now incorporates Milgram's findings into its education of officers in order to illuminate the issue of following unethical orders – it is not clear that the media has fully grasped the implications of Milgram's work.

It is fitting that Milgram should have the last word on this matter. In a letter to Alan Elms, a former student at Yale, dated September 25, 1973, Milgram wrote: 'We do not observe compliance to authority merely because it is a transient cultural or historical phenomenon, but because it flows from the logical necessities of social organisation. If we are to have social life in any organised form – that is to say, if we are to have society – then we must have members of society amenable to organisational imperatives.

Perhaps the media is blind to what the 'obedience to authority' experiments really reveal, precisely because the media itself is engaged in an attempt to obtain obedience through authority. But such conspiracy theories are not needed to at least realise that if the media cannot grasp what is really going in an experiment they keep reporting year after year, what hope is there for most of the rest of psychological and psychiatric research it glances at just once?

Raj Persaud is Gresham Professor for public understanding of psychiatry and Consultant Psychiatrist at the Maudsley Hospital and Institute of Psychiatry, London

Raj Persaud

A weekly column on how the mind works

Frailty that allows evil to triumph

The late Stanley Milgram, perhaps the most famous social psychologist of all time, derives his renown from a series of experiments on obedience he conducted at Yale University in 1961. He found that 65 per cent of his subjects, ordinary local citizens, were willing to give apparently harmful electric shocks to a protesting victim. They did this under the instruction of a scientific, lab-coated authority, and in spite of the fact that the victim had done nothing to deserve such punishment.

The victim was, in reality, a good actor, who did not actually receive shocks, a fact later revealed to the subjects. But the experience was a powerfully real and gripping one for most participants.

Milgram's interest in the study of obedience partly emerged from a deep concern with the suffering of his fellow Jews at the hands of the Nazis, and was an attempt to fathom how the Holocaust could have happened.

Milgram's research, like Freud's, led to profound revisions in some of the fundamental assumptions about human nature. It suggests that ordinary people do not do terrible things because they are "evil" Instead Milgram's work, and that of other social psychologists, suggests that much of what we do, we do automatically. "Evil" often happens simply because we don't question enough; instead we put our trust in authority figures who are "in charge"

Milgram's experiments demonstrated with brutal clarity that ordinary individuals could be induced to act destructively even in the absence of physical coercion. Humans need not be innately evil or aberrant to act in ways that are reprehensible and inhumane. We would like to believe that when confronted with a moral dilemma we will act as our conscience dictates. But Milgram's experiments teach us that when we are operating within powerful social constraints, our moral sense can all too easily be overwhelmed.

Milgram believed the true explanation of evil lay in his experiments, which demonstrated "a propensity for people to accept definitions of action provided by legitimate authority. That is, although the subject performs the action, he allows authority to define its meaning."

Teachers may find this research perplexing: every day they see anything but the phenomenon of "obedience to authority" that Milgram found so easy to elicit in his laboratory. Perhaps one explanation for this comes from Milgram's own methodology.

He found that if subjects saw another subject refusing to obey the instructor, then compliance rates dropped dramatically. The key to disobeying authority appears to be to band together and disobey as a group. So once a class sees disobedience from one pupil, which he or she gets away with, it will be much more difficult to instil "obedience to authority"

Another key point from Milgram's work is the notion of authority, which is imbued in subjects by the laboratory conditions and the esteem in which science is held. Hence the white-coated "authority" of the person in charge of the experiment.

Teachers need to think about where their authority comes from. Who do pupils respect? Who do they look up to? Perhaps we need to start with inculcating a basic respect for knowledge before we can build authority and then obtain obedience.

Professor Raj Persaud is a consultant psychiatrist at the Bethlem Royal and Maudsley hospitals in London. His latest book is *The Motivated Mind* (Bantam Press, £12.99). Email: rajpersaud@tes.co.uk

The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley Milgram

Thomas Blass

Basic Books,
£15.50/$26/$C40, pp 360
ISBN 0 7382 0399 8
Due for publication in paperback next month

Rating: ★★★★

The late Stanley Milgram fairly lays claim to be one of the greatest behavioural scientists of the 20th century. He derives his renown from of a series of experiments on obedience to authority, which he conducted at Yale University in 1961-4. Milgram found, surprisingly, that 65% of his subjects, ordinary residents of New Haven, were willing to give apparently harmful electric shocks—up to 450 volts—to a pitifully protesting victim, simply because scientific, lab coated authority commanded them to, and despite the fact that the victim did nothing to deserve such punishment. The victim was, in reality, a good actor who did not actually receive shocks, a fact that was revealed to the subjects at the end of the experiment.

Milgram's interest in the study of obedience partly emerged out of a deep concern with the suffering of fellow Jews at the hands of the Nazis and an attempt to fathom how the Holocaust could have happened. His researches, like Freud's, led to profound revisions in some of the fundamental assumptions about human nature.

Milgram's experiments suggested that it was not necessary to invoke evil" as concept to explain why so many ordinary people do terrible things. Instead his work, and that of other social psychologists, suggested that much of what we do, we do automatically. Evil often occurs simply because we do not question our acts enough; instead our rationale arises from our trust in authority figures who are in "charge.

Items reviewed are rated on a 4 star scale (4=excellent)

The subjects in Milgram's original series of tests believed that they were part of an experiment dealing with the relation between punishment and learning. An experimenter—who used no coercive powers beyond a stern aura of mechanical and vacant eyed efficiency—instructed participants to shock a learner by pressing a lever on machine each time the learner made mistake on a word matching task. Each subsequent error led to an increase in the intensity of the shock in 15 volt increments, from 15 to 450 volts.

Actually the shock box was a well crafted prop and the learner an actor who did not receive shocks. Most of the subjects continued to obey to the end—believing that they were delivering life threatening 450 volt shocks—simply because the experimenter commanded them to. Although subjects were told about the deception afterward, the experience was real and powerful one for them during the laboratory hour itself.

These groundbreaking and controversial experiments had—and continue to have—longlasting significance. The media have been obsessed with them since, repeatedly "re-discovering" them and re-reporting them as if they were amazing news.

Milgram's study demonstrated with brutal clarity that ordinary individuals could be induced to act destructively, even in the absence of physical coercion, and humans need not be innately evil or aberrant to act in ways that are reprehensible and inhumane. While we would like to believe that when confronted with moral dilemma we will act as our conscience dictates, Milgram's obedience experiments teach us that, in concrete situation with powerful social constraints, our moral sense can all too easily be overwhelmed.

The research was also conducted with amazing verve and subtlety—for example, Milgram ensured that the "experimenter" wear a grey lab coat rather than a white one, precisely because he did not want subjects to think that the "experimenter" was a medical doctor and thereby limit the implications of his findings to the power of physician authority.

The nuance of Milgram's conclusions has often been obscured by the superficial reporting of his work, which Blass, a US psychology professor, goes to some lengths in this important book to rectify. Milgram believed the true explanation of evil such as the Holocaust was linked to his experiments by their demonstration of " propensity for people to accept definitions of action provided by legitimate authority. That is, although the subject performs the action, he allows authority to define its meaning."

Milgram: groundshaking experiments

We did not need Milgram to tell us that we have tendency to obey orders. But what we did not know before Milgram's experiments was just how powerful this tendency is. And having been enlightened about our extreme readiness to obey authorities, we can try to take steps to guard against unwelcome or reprehensible commands.

Many professions have taken heed of Milgram's work. The US army, for example, now incorporates his findings into its education of officers in order to illuminate the issue of following unethical orders. However, it is not clear that medicine has truly understood the implications of Milgram's work. How often are doctors or medical students in the position of having to obey "orders" or implicit expectations in hospitals or clinics, when they are uneasy about the ethics of doing so?

What is perhaps most intriguing about this book is not so much the dramatic implications of Milgram's work, but instead the insight that Blass gives us into the kind of unconventional mind required to devise groundshaking experiments that will continue to echo through the corridors of history long after much more mundane work currently dominating learned journals is forgotten.

Raj Persaud *Gresham professor for public understanding of psychiatry and consultant psychiatrist, Maudsley Hospital, London*

The Man Who Shocked The World

Thomas Blass probes into the life of Stanley Milgram the man who uncovered some disturbing truths about human nature

By Thomas Blass

Linsly Chittenden Hall on Yale s old campus is easy to miss—an improbable hybrid of Romanesque and neo Gothic styles that sits in the shadow of the magnificent clock arch straddling High Street But in July 1961 the building hummed with an unusual amount of activity as people came and went through its doors at hourly intervals The increased traffic was due to the arrival and departure of participants in an experiment with unexpected findings that would make it one of the most significant—and controversial—psychological studies of the 20th century

The research was the brainchild of 28 year old Stanley Milgram then a recent graduate with a Ph D in social psychology from Harvard s department of social relations The name Stanley Milgram may not elicit the kind of instant recognition as say Sigmund Freud And though he was something of a Renaissance man making films and writing poetry Stanley Milgram was no Sigmund Freud He did not attempt an all encompassing theory of behavior no school of thought bears his name But what he did do—rather than probe the interior of the human psyche—was to try to expose the external social forces that though subtle have surprisingly powerful effects on our behavior

Milgram s research like Freud s did lead to profound revisions in some of the fundamental assumptions about human nature Indeed by the fall of 1963 the results of Milgram s research were making headlines He found that an average presumably normal group of New Haven Connecticut residents would readily inflict very painful and perhaps even harmful electric shocks on innocent victims

The subjects believed they were part of an experiment supposedly dealing with the relationship between punishment and learning An experimenter—who used no coercive powers beyond a stern aura of mechanical and vacant eyed efficiency—instructed participants to shock a learner by pressing a lever on a machine each time the learner made a mistake on a word matching task Each subsequent error led to an increase in the intensity of the shock in 15 volt increments from 15 to 450 volts

In actuality the shock box was a well crafted prop and the learner an actor who did not actually get shocked The result A majority of the subjects continued to obey to the end—believing they were delivering 450 volt shocks—simply because the experimenter commanded them to Although subjects were told about the deception afterward the experience was a very real and powerful one for them during the laboratory hour itself

That year the headline of an article in the October 26 issue of *The New York Times* blared Sixty five Percent in Test Blindly Obey Order to Inflict Pain A week later the *St Louis Post Dispatch* also informed its readers about the experiments—in an editorial lambasting Milgram and Yale for the ordeal they put their subjects through That article marked the beginning of an enduring ethical controversy stirred up by the experiments that sometimes overshadowed the substance of the findings

Those groundbreaking and controversial experiments have had—and continue to have—long lasting significance They demonstrated with jarring clarity that ordinary individuals could be induced to act destructively even in the absence of physical coercion and humans need not be innately evil or aberrant to act in ways that are reprehensible and inhumane While we would like to believe that when confronted with a moral dilemma we will act as our conscience dictates Milgram s obedience experiments teach us that in a concrete situation with powerful social constraints our moral sense can easily be trampled

Humbled Beginnings

Stanley Milgram was born in New York City on August 15 1933 the second of three children His parents had emigrated from Europe his father was an expert cake baker and his mother worked in the bakery

Milgram s best friend and classmate was Bernard Fried who went on to become a world famous parasitologist Fried recalls that Milgram was exceptional in all subjects One could not have predicted early on what he would do because he was just as good in the arts as in the sciences At James Monroe High School in New York City Milgram was a member of Arista the honor society and became editor of the *Science Observer* a school newspaper He also worked on stagecraft for the school s theatrical productions—an experience he would later draw on to infuse his obedience experiments with the dramatic elements that made them such gripping realistic experiences for his subjects

After majoring in political science at Queens College in New York City Milgram applied to the Ph D program at Harvard s

department of social relations He was rejected because he had not taken a single psychology course at Queens Milgram was however encouraged to reapply—and was accepted—as a special student for the fall of 1954 To make up for his deficiencies in psychology coursework he took six undergraduate courses during the summer at three New York area colleges He did so well his first year at Harvard that the following year his status was changed to that of a regular student

The person at Harvard with whom Milgram had been corresponding regarding admission was Gordon Allport the head of the social relations department s graduate programs One of the most eminent psychologists of the 20th century Allport was to become the most important person in Milgram s academic life Their initial exchange of letters set the tone for their relationship as student and mentor

Allport would be a constant source of encouragement for Milgram and he had a bemused admiration for Milgram s limitless drive and persistence in the face of obstacles But when Allport felt the necessity he knew how much pressure to apply to Milgram without provoking his resistance Milgram in turn was always deferential enough to Allport to get his way without seeming too pushy And when it came time to do his dissertation Milgram asked Allport to be his chairman because of his open mentoring style Rather than expecting his doctoral students to hitch a ride on one of his research projects Allport let them be themselves and pursue their own interests

Milgram s dissertation was a cross cultural comparison of conformity performed in Norway and France between 1957 and 1959 He used an adaptation of a technique invented by the social psychologist Solomon Asch In 1955 Asch had come to Harvard as a visiting lecturer and Milgram was assigned to be his teaching and research assistant Milgram became intimately familiar with Asch s conformity experiments In these experiments a subject seated among seven others had to indicate which one of three lines was equal in length to a fourth line The other seven however were in cahoots with Asch and intentionally gave incorrect matches during some of the trials Asch found that a naive subject yielded to the will of the bogus majority about one third of the time

Milgram modified Asch s procedure using sound rather than visual stimuli In each trial subjects had to indicate which of a pair of tones was longer

In addition Milgram used a simulated majority to create peer pressure—before giving an answer the naive subject heard tape recorded answers from five other subjects (they were not physically present in the lab although the subject believed they were)

In his dissertation Milgram wryly explained the advantages of this procedure The group is always willing to perform in the laboratory at the experimenter s convenience and personalities on tape demand no replay royalties

It was an ambitious study involving almost 400 subjects Overall Milgram found the Norwegians to be more conforming than the French participants In 1959 and 1960 he worked for Asch at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton New Jersey helping him edit a book on conformity During his spare time Milgram wrote his dissertation As a result of their association there and at Harvard Milgram considered Asch to be his most important scientific influence

In June 1960 Milgram received his Ph D and that fall he began at Yale as an assistant professor in the department of psychology That first semester he carried out pilot studies on obedience with his students and began the formal series of experiments in the summer of 1961 with grant support from the National Science Foundation Going beyond Asch s conformity research Milgram wondered whether it would be possible to demonstrate the power of social influence with something more consequential than simple line judgments

Under the Influence

It wasn t just Asch s work that influenced Milgram Milgram s interest in the study of obedience also emerged out of a continuing identification with the suffering of fellow Jews at the hands of the Nazis and an attempt to fathom how the Holocaust could have happened A poignant illustration of this can be found in a letter Milgram wrote from France to his schoolmate John Shaffer in the fall of 1958

My true spiritual home is Central Europe not France the Mediterranean countries England Scandinavia or Northern Germany but that area which is bounded by the cities of Munich Vienna and Prague I should have been born into the German speaking Jewish community of Prague in 1922 and died in a gas chamber some 20 years later How I came to be born in the Bronx Hospital I ll never quite understand

During a period of a year Milgram conducted more than 20 variations of the basic experiment to see how changing aspects of the experimental situation might alter subjects willingness to obey Four days after Milgram s last participant was studied the Israeli government after a lengthy trial hanged Adolf Eichmann for his role in the murder of 6 million Jews The action seemed to

anticipate the important role Milgram s experiments would come to play in debates about how to account for the behavior of the Nazi perpetrators

In all Milgram spent three years at Yale In January 1961 he met Alexandra Sasha Menkin at a party in Manhattan After a year of courtship they were married And in the fall of 1963 as his experiment results were made public Milgram was invited back to Harvard s social relations department as an assistant professor

But he was never granted tenure Some of the opposition toward Milgram came from colleagues who felt uneasy about him ascribing to him certain negative properties of the obedience experiment Being banished from academia s Eden was a very painful experience for Milgram In 1967 he accepted an offer to head the social psychology program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) as a full professor—skipping the associate professor level—and remained there until he died from his fifth heart attack in 1984

After the obedience experiments Milgram continued to pioneer inventive research For example at Harvard he devised a method for studying the small world effect Individuals in one U S city were given the job of sending a packet to a particular stranger in a different part of the country via the acquaintances they knew on a first name basis Surprisingly it took only some six intermediaries to reach the target stranger Milgram published the first article about these findings in the premier issue of *Psychology Today* in May 1967 Milgram also conducted a study of the effects of TV on antisocial behavior and helped launch the psychological study of urban life with the publication of his article The Experience of Living in Cities in *Science* magazine

Universal Fame

Despite the variety of research Milgram produced his obedience studies continue to overshadow his other work Milgram s book *Obedience to Authority An Experimental View* has been translated into 11 languages The wide interest in his experiments has transcended the usual disciplinary boundaries In fact the influence of this research goes beyond academia permeating contemporary culture and thought There is a French German punk rock group named Milgram In 1986 musician Peter Gabriel an admirer of Milgram recorded a song titled We Do What We re Told

Milgram s experiments have also captured the dramatic imagination In 1973 British playwright Dannie Abse produced a play

The Dogs of Pavlov inspired by the research Since then at least a half dozen plays have been written or are currently in progress based on the obedience studies And in 1976 CBS aired a film *The Tenth Level* starring William Shatner as a Milgram like character

Milgram s warning—that when an individual merges into an organizational structure a new creature replaces autonomous man unhindered by the limitations of individual morality freed of human inhibition mindful only of the sanctions of authority —has much resonance Professionals in fields as varied as nursing marketing accounting and management have inferred practical lessons from Milgram s obedience studies

Legal scholarship has also drawn heavily on the obedience studies and their implications For example Steven Hartwell a law professor at the University of San Diego conducted an educational exercise for his students in which they were to individually advise litigants in a small claims court He told his students that he would be available in an adjacent office if they needed to consult with him Hartwell writes

The clients were in fact a single confederate who sought the same advice from each student how she should present her side of a rent dispute I told each student to advise the client to lie under oath that she had paid the rent When students asked for clarification I uniformly responded My advice is that if your client wants to win her case then you must tell her to perjure herself We wanted them to experience the pull between loyalty to authority and prescribed ethical conduct Although many of the 24 participating students grumbled either to me or to the client about my proffered advice 23 told their client to perjure herself

We didn t need Milgram to tell us we have a tendency to obey orders What we didn t know before Milgram s experiments is just how powerful this tendency is And having been enlightened about our extreme readiness to obey authorities we can try to take steps to guard ourselves against unwelcome or reprehensible commands

Yes Sir

One important place where the lessons of Milgram s work have been taken seriously and acted upon is in the U S Army Milgram s research and its implications are discussed in two mandatory psychology courses at the U S Military Academy In

1985 the head of the academy s department of behavioral sciences and leadership wrote One of the desired outcomes of this is that our future military leaders will be fully cognizant not only of their authority but also of their responsibility to make decisions that are well considered and morally sound

What accounts for the far flung influence of Milgram s obedience experiments? I believe it has to do with how in his demonstration of our powerful propensity to obey authority Milgram has identified one of the universals of social behavior one that transcends both time and place conformity And people intuitively sense this

I have carried out two data analyses that provide at least some evidence to back up this assertion In one I correlated the results of Milgram s standard obedience experiments and the replications conducted by others with their dates of publication The results There was absolutely no relationship between when a study was conducted and the amount of obedience it yielded In a second analysis I compared the outcomes of obedience experiments conducted in the U S with those conducted in other countries Remarkably the average obedience rates were very similar In the U S studies some 61 percent of the subjects were fully obedient while elsewhere the obedience rate was 66 percent

It is fitting that in an article about Milgram he should have the last word on this matter In a letter to Alan Elms a former student at Yale (now on the faculty of the University of California at Davis) dated September 25 1973 Milgram wrote

We do not observe compliance to authority merely because it is a transient cultural or historical phenomenon but because it flows from the logical necessities of social organization If we are to have social life in any organized form—that is to say if we are to have society—then we must have members of society amenable to organizational imperatives

For more information see stanleymilgram com

Psychology Today Magazine Mar/Apr 2002
Last Reviewed 28 Nov 2006
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Progress
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Articles

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Retraction

By Progress in Neurology and Psychiatry

Volume No: 9 Issue No: 7 September / September 2005

'Why the media refuses to obey' by Professor Raj Persaud published in volume 9, Issue 2, pages 12-14. This media commentary has been retracted because a very substantial percentage of the wording of the commentary consists of material reproduced without permission or acknowledgement from the following previously published sources: 'The man who shocked the world' an article written by Thomas Blass, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology University of Maryland, Baltimore County USA, and published by Psychology Today (March/April 2002); Professor Blass's informational website, www.stanleymilgram.com, and Professor Blass's biography of Stanley Milgram, 'The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley Milgram' (Basic Books 2004). Wiley Interface Ltd sincerely regrets what occurred.

PERSONAL VIEWS

How important are we really?

During a lull in the proceedings in the local out of hours service, a debate arose between me and another 50-something doctor as we awaited our call to action. The debate, if we can stretch the concept of the term, was based on how important we really are as doctors—or not.

I suspect that we both needed to be of a certain age and able to look back on a combined clinical experience of about 60 years. In essence, our debate had all the hallmarks of the raillery of grumpy old men. Nevertheless, it set me thinking. I recalled sitting in doctor's mess one evening when medical registrar stormed in after a particularly long outpatient session. She was incandescent with indignity. "That's it. I've had enough. I'm changing to anaesthetics," she spluttered. "Why don't they [patients] do what I tell them to do!"

I remembered having the same thought in 1978 when I started my training in general practice. I recollect the Gestalt-like feeling of having "found" the solution to the patient's problem. The joy of telling them what to do (the arrogance, oh the arrogance of youth!), counterbalanced by the disappointment that not only are they not cured but they didn't take your advice on what to do to help themselves. A young doctor can take only so much of this. Many contemplate training in surgery. (I did.)

> If patients are not taking our advice, then what are they doing in between surgery visits?

If patients are not taking our advice, then what are they doing in between surgery visits? Presumably coping—and probably much better than we imagine, I suspect. The older I get the more I realise how notoriously good doctors are at underestimating people's ability to survive without their ministrations. I began wondering—and reached for my daughter's calculator. How much time do patients spend not seeing doctors?

> Curative medicine is peripheral to most people's lives nowadays

Forgive my calculations. Harangue me if I'm wrong. But hopefully you'll get my drift. There are 8760 hours a year (525 600 minutes). Patients in the United Kingdom have access to doctors 24 hours a day. Most GP consultations last about 10 minutes. Most hospital outpatient appointments last about 20 to 60 minutes for initial assessment and 15 minutes for follow-up, plus or minus 60 to 120 minutes waiting for investigations (which I shall ignore). A week in hospital is 168 hours, and so on and so on. What I calculated was:

If patients see their GP once a year for 10 minutes they spend 99.99980974% of their year not seeing a doctor

If patients have six 10 minute appointments a year the figure is 99.98858447%

For patients seeing their doctor on alternate weeks over a year for 10 minutes at a time the figure is 99.95053272%

Two weeks in hospital: 96.16438356%

A new hospital referral: 99.96575342%.

If a patient were to spend 10% of a year seeing doctor they would spend 876 hours a year with the doctor—that's 36.5 days or 1.30357142 months. Oh, the joys of the calculator! As readers will realise I'm neither a statistician nor a politician, but this wee foray into the world of arithmetic has allowed me to recognise some of the pleasure that academicians derive from manipulating figures. Perhaps the numbers are meaningless, which could be (and often is) said of the statistics that are so frequently (mis)used by politicians and other animals. But look at the figures. Even I, a non-statistician, non-politician, can see clearly what I know to be true: most patients spend most of their time not seeing doctors. They obviously have better things to do.

The moment they leave our surgery they re-enter the real world, a world seldom seen or experienced by doctors, who are cursed to view the world from their medical (dis)advantage point. Few people are simply the sum of the problems they present to us. Our obsession with their problems and vulnerabilities blinds us to their strengths. Most people cope perfectly well and have more skills, resilience, and strengths than most of us realise.

Let's be honest: we're less important than we like to think. We continue our never ending quest for pathology while conveniently forgetting that a surprisingly large number of cases we see in general practice, clinic, or hospital have little or no organic basis. Curative medicine is peripheral to most people's lives nowadays. However, the growth in preventive medicine threatens to label us all with chronic disease status. No longer are we healthy—now we're all "pre-ill," if you will. Furthermore, preventive medicine raises the spectre of eugenics: how dreadful it is that people are allowed to eat what they want, drink as much as they like, smoke, have sex, and engage in risky behaviour ("Healthism and eugenics," *BMJ* 2005; 331:411).

The words of that noted neurotic Marcel Proust come to mind: "For each illness that doctors cure with medicine, they provoke ten in healthy people by inoculating them with the virus that is a thousand times more powerful than any microbe: the idea that one is ill" (*The Guermantes Way*).

Are we in danger of becoming specialists who know more and more about medicine and less and less about patients?

Ian Palmer *professor in defence psychiatry, HM forces, Southsea*
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Retraction

The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley Milgram

We are retracting this article by Raj Persaud (*BMJ* 2005;331:356) owing to unattributed use of text from other published sources.

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Retraction

By Progress in Neurology and Psychiatry

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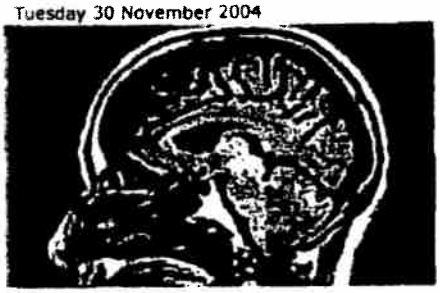

WAKE THERAPY

Could something as simple as setting an alarm clock help people suffering from depression? Wake Therapy, a treatment which uses a single night of total or partial sleep deprivation, has been shown to induce a rapid and dramatic improvement in some patients.

Raj Persaud is joined by Dr **Irshaad Ebrahim**, Consultant Neuropsychiatrist and Medical Director at The London Sleep Centre, to discuss this little known treatment.

THE VISUAL BRAIN

Colours and shapes elicit different emotions in each person. Is beauty in the eye of the beholder?

Dr **Raj Persaud** goes to the National Gallery with **Semir Zeki**, professor of neurobiology at University College London to talk about his research on the visual brain.

OBEDIENCE

We live in a social environment with strong influences to obey. Professor Stanley Milgram, a psychologist at Yale University spurred interest in obedience to destructive authority with his innovative studies on the conflict between obedience and conscience.

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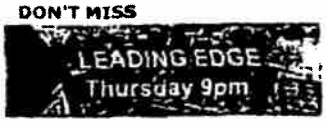

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Raj Persaud meets Dr **Thomas Blass**, a social psychologist with expertise in obedience and author of *The man who shocked the World*, to discuss the research, life and legacy of Stanley Milgram.

SECRETS
From government conspiracies to children in the playground, secrets infuse every level of society. The dynamics of secrets can sometimes be explosive, but is it better to hide or share a secret and how does it affect our emotional needs?

Raj Persaud is joined by **Chris Hauke**, Lecturer in psycho-analytic studies at Goldsmiths College in London to discuss the Jungian idea that secrets are and remain an essential part of our development through life and talk about the evolutionary advantages of making and sharing secrets.

Additional information:

Dr Irshaad Ebrahim
Consultant Neuropsychiatrist and Medical Director at **The London Sleep Centre**

Professor Semir Zeki
Head of the Laboratory of Neurobiology at University College London

Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain
Publisher: Oxford University Press
ISBN 0198505191

National Gallery

Professor Stanley Milgram
(1933 - 1984)

Obedience to Authority
Stanley Milgram, Jerome Bruner (foreword)
Publisher: Pinter & Martin
(published January 17, 2005)
ISBN 0953096475

Professor Thomas Blass
Social Psychologist, Department of Psychology, University of Maryland

The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley

Milgram
Publisher: Perseus Publishing
ISBN 0738203998

Obedience to Authority: Current Perspectives on the Milgram Paradigm
Thomas Blass (Editor)
Publisher: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc
ISBN 0805839348

Chris Hauke
Lecturer in psycho-analytic studies at **Goldsmiths College**, University of London

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