



Social Psychology and the Holocaust

2-3 DECEMBER '21

24-25 MARCH '22

9-10 JUNE '22

UNIVERSITY OF TOULOUSE

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Social Psychology and the Holocaust

The conjunction that links the two items in the title of this colloquium refers to the theoretical gesture that Stanley Milgram carried out at Yale University in the early 1960s: to experimentally study Nazi Germany. This theoretical gesture, which predates the implementation of the famous experiments on submission to authority, and which is barely thematized in Milgram's published writings, explains the importance attributed to his results: if the behaviors observed in the laboratory had not been conceived as representative of historical behaviors, they would have been a mere experimental artifact, and would probably not have received so much attention.

This gesture is all the more important because it was explicitly taken up by Christopher Browning in the monograph in which he describes the bloody itinerary of the men of Battalion 101 of the Ordnungspolizei in Poland in 1942-44, in a work that launched historical studies on the role of ordinary executors in executing the Holocaust. In order to understand how ordinary individuals could be transformed overnight into mass murderers, *Ordinary Men* refers not only to Milgram's findings, but also to the Stanford prison experiment: Browning too believes that laboratory psychology provides us with the elements of a satisfactory answer to account for the conduct of historical agents.

In its philosophical dimension, Milgram's gesture is based on radical decisions, which must be questioned. Concerning the question of the unity of sciences, this approach manifests an original way of articulating natural sciences and social sciences, on the one hand, and social sciences with one another, on the other hand.

In particular, as the controversy between Daniel Jonah Goldhagen and Christopher Browning showed, it questions the possibility of practicing the human sciences without resorting to interpretative practices, while working at the micro level, that of individual actions.

On the contrary, this gesture seems to be based on a nomological conception of the explanation of the murderers' behaviors. It follows that, from the point of view of individual responsibility, this approach seems to deny agents the mastery of their acts, both by denying them their capacity for initiative and their ability to identify the real causes of their own conduct. This anthropology, since referred to as « situationism » and notably defended by the philosopher John Doris, maintains that human behavior is caused by circumstances rather than by the beliefs or stable character traits of individuals.

However, Milgram's work has recently been reinterpreted and even questioned, notably through the opening of the archives of his experiments, while other social psychologists continue to work within the experimental paradigm inherited from Milgram. At the same time, Christopher Browning has trained or influenced a whole generation of historians who have tried to take a stand on and often go beyond the alternative between situational and ideological explanations.

A philosophy of social sciences concerned with starting from real rather than idealized scientific practices should thus take note of these recent developments in order to (re)question Milgram's gesture. In order to achieve this, this colloquium will proceed in an interdisciplinary manner: it will consist of three days of study devoted, respectively, to the psychological, historiographical and philosophical dimensions of the articulation of social psychology and the Holocaust.

2-3 DECEMBER 2021

REREADING MILGRAM

Thursday 2 December — 5pm-7pm

Nestar RUSSELL — University of Calgary — Stanley Milgram's Obedience to Authority Experiments and Norbert Elias' Civilizing Process: A Disconcerting Connection to the Holocaust

Anna ZIELINSKA & Phil HUTCHISON — The Uses of 'Obedience'

Friday 2 December — 9am-11am

Alex HASLAM — Nothing by mere authority: A social identity analysis of obedience in the Milgram paradigm and beyond

Gina PERRY — Credibility and incredulity

24 MARCH 2022

REREADING BROWNING

Thursday 24 March — 2pm-6pm

Géraldine SFEZ — Laboratory experiments and filmic experiments in Alain Resnais's "Mon Oncle d'Amérique" and "Je t'aime je t'aime"

Waitman BERON — (Re)Thinking Perpetrators: Reflections on Theory and Method

Johann CHAPOUTOT — Entre Experiment et Erfahrung : une expérience en questions

Thomas KUHNE — Ordinary Men and Masculinity: Gendering Holocaust Perpetrators.

9-10 JUNE 2022

Philosophical Perspectives on Social Science and the Holocaust

Thursday 9 June — 2pm-5pm

John DORIS — Rewriting the History of Psychology?
New -- and Old -- Commentary on Milgram and
Zimbardo

Pascal LUDWIG — Why do perpetrators obey? The
relevance of Milgram's experiment for perpetrators'
studies

Isabelle DELPLA — Philosophe sur et philosophe
dans

Friday 10 June — 2pm-5pm

Carsten STUEBER — Only Fragmentary
Understanding is Possible: On the Limits of Empathy,
Theories, and Narratives

Raphaël KÜNSTLER — An interpretivist interpretation
of Milgram's experiment

Paul ROTH — *Hearts of Darkness: Twenty Years Later*

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

Conference organizer

Raphaël Künstler

Conference attendance

The conference will be held online

Registration

There is no registration fee.

To register send an email to Raphaël Künstler:

raphael.kunstler@univ-tlse2.fr

For more details, please visit the following website:

<https://sph.hypotheses.org/>