BOOK REVIEWS


H.J. Eysenck has long been the self-proclaimed voice of pragmatic 'commonsense' in British psychology. His targets have been any viewpoint which is not consistent with his own "scientific", empirically-based, opinions, whether the issue happens to be hypnosis, psychoanalysis, race differences (?) in intelligence, or the attempt to analyse psychological or medical problems at the social or political levels. In The Future of Psychiatry Eysenck continues his attack on those who would dare to criticise the institutional and professional structure and practice of psychiatry on any grounds other than his own. The result is an oddly defensive and dogmatic series of assertions which bear very little logical relation to the general recommendations he wishes to make concerning how psychiatric training and practice might be re-directed.

Eysenck is a "populariser" - an academic who is not afraid to write 'down' to the layman. But this all too frequently entails the simplification of one's opponent's arguments, as well as a reluctance to propose detailed theoretically-motivated arguments one's self. Instead of allowing these constraints to instil caution, Eysenck turns them into excuses for bald assertion, argument ad hominem and crude travesties of any opposing viewpoint. These tactics so weaken his discussion of contemporary psychiatry as to make this brief monograph of little value to anyone seriously interested in how psychiatry might be changed.

Eysenck is concerned to justify and perpetuate current trends by institutionalising what he accepts as a fundamental dichotomy in psychiatric diagnosis; he recommends that the behavior (psychological - environmentally induced) problems of the neuroses be distinguished from the organic diseases of some (he argues all) the psychoses and CNS disorders. (Central Nervous System - ed.) The latter may remain the province of medical psychiatry, the former should be dealt with by psychologists - specifically, by behavioristically-trained personnel who would employ procedures such as operant conditioning and systematic desensitisation which rely on no assumptions of organic impairment.

To support this separation of functions, Eysenck reelists the evidence which he has cited in other publications (from Rachman and others) to show that behavior therapy is demonstrably efficient in alleviating "various types of anxieties and phobias", while other therapies are no better than none. In a limited sense, these points might find support among many psychologists, if not psychiatrists - behavioral "disorders" which lack any organic pathology are becoming widely...
accepted as non-medical problems.

But Eysenck's conclusion and recommendations for the future of psychiatry beg a number of important questions which have occasioned a debate of such radical significance as to belie his glib dismissal of their implications. In effectively ignoring these questions Eysenck limits his discussion of the future of psychiatry to a prediction and an expression of hope for one aspect of its practice. He never even questions whether psychiatry as he knows it could be radically altered, let alone eliminated as a discipline within medicine. A few examples should suffice to make this point:

First, the monograph assumes that all the "varieties of schizophrenia" will be shown to have an organic basis, whatever the contribution of psychological stress. The so-called "functional" psychoses ".... may not be 'functional' (i.e. due to environmental causes) in any real sense". As might have been guessed, this is due to the strong genetic basis for schizophrenia (hence R.D. Laing and Thomas Szasz can be dismissed) and because this type of disorder ".... responds well and specifically to certain drugs .... Anti-psychotic drugs and physical treatments like electroshock certainly do truncate certain types of attacks, and make recurrence less likely". But the partial efficacy of "physical" treatment does not imply any specific etiology of the disorders in question (what do drugs and ECT have in common?) Moreover, Eysenck admits that neuroses also involve "strong genetic factors", but he suggests that these disorders are polygenetically based, whereas the number of genes involved in the psychoses "may be quite small" (may be!). Hence, the schizophrenias and manic-depressive illnesses are regarded as organic, although most authors would distinguish these two classes of "illness", expressing more confidence in the organic bases of the latter than the former.

On the basis of these very tentative arguments which assume the veracity and value of medical diagnosis anyway, Eysenck leaves the psychotics with the medical profession and marches the neurotics off to consult the behavior therapists.

Some years ago, Eysenck proposed a general theory of personality which purported to isolate three independent dimensions of character by "scientific" means (i.e. questionnaires and factor analysis). These dimensions were called "Introversion-Extraversion", "Neuroticism" and "Psychoticism". He has now discovered, in psychiatric diagnosis, support for these independent dimensions that his theory posited. And this will be the factual basis for splitting the practice of psychiatry in two: The future of psychiatry is beginning to look very much like the past.

The weaknesses of Eysenck's dismissal of all sociological or non-individualistic analyses of psychiatric assumptions and practice are nowhere more patent than in the naive references to terms like "politics", "manipulation" and "culture". For example, comparing Soviet psychiatry with that practised in the West, he states "political extremism is not even considered by psychiatrists (in the West) in making diagnoses". (Note the equation of "political" with "political extremism" as defined by the professional group itself.) Denying that psychiatry as a profession is likely to manipulate patients, he suggests that the only safeguard necessary is that the patient be allowed to refuse or demand treatment. After all ".... practically all (psychiatrists are) good, conscientious, kindly people, whose major concern is the well-being of their patients". That, of course, is not the issue. Eysenck tells us that "culture" does not cause neuroses, "interpersonal exchanges" do! The assumed independence of the latter from the former, is typical of the assumptions of the whole monograph. Even psychoanalysts whom Eysenck regards as unscientific could see that a cultural value-system stressing sexual repression was closely related to certain forms of neurotic disorders. Eysenck seems to think that "interpersonal exchanges" take place in a social vacuum.

In sort, the very concepts which might have allowed a discussion of the possible futures of psychiatry are used in such a narrow, conventional way by Eysenck that his paper merely predicts the continuation of a current trend that he personally favors.

- Philip Bell.

THE ARABS IN ISRAEL, Sabri Jiryis (foreword by Noam Chomsky), Monthly Review Press, 314 pp., $15.80 (hard cover).

In 1975 the UN General Assembly passed a resolution condemning Zionism as a form of racism. This brought howls of outrage, not only from supporters of Israel, but from thousands of others. After all, how could a group who had been decimated by hundreds of years of oppression and anti-semitism be guilty of racism? Jiryis' book goes a good deal of the way towards answering this question.

As with most forms of racial oppression, the position of Arabs in Israel is closely tied to the economic needs of the colonialist zionist settlers. In 1948 most of the Arabs in Palestine were peasants, grazing or tilling land they "rented" from absentee landlords. Others, particularly the Bedouin, were nomadic. It was land that was the key to their economic survival and their way of life.

It has been the struggle over land that has determined the relationship between the Arabs and the zionist settlers since immigration began in
the 1890s. So far, the Arabs have lost, with “over 90 per cent of the land now owned by the state or the Jewish National Fund (JNF)”.

Jiryis recognises the importance of the land question, and devotes nearly half his book to describing and documenting the seizure of Arab lands since 1948. The Zionists have used a barrage of laws to dispossess the Palestinian Arabs. The “Absentee Property Law”, the “Defence (Emergency) Regulations”, the “Emergency (Security Zones) Legislation”, the “Cultivation of Waste Lands Ordinance”, and the “Law of Requisitioning of Property in Times of Emergency” is a formidable arsenal of legislation to face. These laws were backed up by the massacre of Arabs who were reluctant to leave their land. Deir Yasin, the most infamous case of zionist terrorism, resulted in the slaughtering of 250 Arab villagers by the Irgun in 1948.

The spirit of the Irgun and Haganah has not died! In 1956, fortynine Arab villagers from Kfar Kassim were massacred by the Israeli army. Some of those responsible were brought to trial and found guilty, but after a strong campaign by the Israeli right wing, more of the culprits were released after serving less than three years. Gabriel Dahan, convicted of killing 43 Arabs in one hour, is now an “Officer of Arab Affairs” in the municipality of Romle.

More recently, hundreds of Arabs have been killed or wounded by Israeli troops during demonstrations in Jerusalem, the West Bank and other Arab districts. However, the Israelis have generally found that “legal” repression is just as effective, and less troublesome.

Since 1948 mosr Arab areas have come under the Emergency Regulations, a hangover of the British occupation. These regulations placed all power in the hands of the local military governor. He could declare any area “closed”, which meant entry and exit were allowed by permits signed by the governor. In this fashion a de-facto “pass system” was established allowing the authorities to instigate the forced migration of Arabs. Also, by “closing” certain areas, such as fields belonging to a village, and then refusing entry permits to that area, the Arabs were excluded from their land. These lands were then expropriated under one of the “legal” measures mentioned earlier.

By these methods, Jiryis estimates that about 65 per cent of Arab-owned land has now become the property of the JMF or the Israeli state. The bulk of this land has been resettled by Jewish kibbutzim or other Jewish enterprises.

This estimate of expropriated land doesn’t include that which was legally bought from absentee landlords, even though the peasants expelled from this land may have been working it for years. Nor does it include the “waqf” (Islamic communal property such as mosques and cemeteries) or the land left by the Palestinians who fled the 1948 war.

According to Jiryis “out of 807 Arab villages and towns in Palestine in 1945, 433 were still left standing in 1967”.

Hand in hand with this massive expulsion of Arabs from their land went a whole barrage of other oppressive and racist measures. “Judaisation” was carried out at all levels.

Arabs were barred from joining the Histadrut (the Israeli trade union organisation) and attempts to organise their own trade union bodies were crushed. In fact, most Arab organisations were banned, especially if they expressed any nationalist sentiments. Even many sporting clubs were outlawed. The Israeli Communist Party (Rakah) is the only predominantly Arab political organisation that has been allowed to exist, and it is continually harassed by the army and police.

“Judaisation” also meant the exclusion of Arabs from most jobs. A dairy refused to employ an Arab recommended for a job because ‘in times of war milk is a strategic item and a disloyal Arab could do much damage’. The thousands of Arabs driven from their land have entered four main areas of the labor market: the construction industry; hotel employees and servants; teachers in Arab schools; or the unemployed. Top administrative and public service jobs are held almost exclusively by Jewish settlers.

Despite the exhaustive documentation of his case (there are twenty pages of statistics and tables in the Appendix) Jiryis overlooks several crucial areas in his analysis. The book is an “update” of a text written in 1966. Thus the major developments inside Israel since the ‘67 war are not included. The riots in Jerusalem, the West Bank and other Arab areas, as well as the recent election successes of Arab nationalists, are significant events which are not discussed.

In his attempt to explain the economic and legal underpinning of Israeli treatment of Arabs, the “less concrete” forms of racism practised against the Palestinian Arabs are overlooked. Religious persecution, the ID Card system, the prevention of inter-marriage, the jailing and mistreatment of political dissidents, and the rabbinate’s influence on the state are all key areas of Arab oppression. Jiryis leaves these gory details for the political propagandists, but his book suffers as a result.

It remains, however, an important and damning indictment of a state that still attempts to present itself as a haven of western enlightenment surrounded by hostile reactionaries. Israel’s generous aid to Rhodesia and South Africa becomes understandable after you have read Jiryis’ account. These governments have a lot in common!

- Greg Giles.