

Chapter 24

Eysenck as teacher and mentor

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1. THE CONCEPT OF INFLUENCE

One measure of a scientist is *influence*. It is a common standard of comparison in many fields—in politics, the arts, philosophy, scholarship, and science. For scientists, in particular, an objective index of influence is citation by other scientists in scholarly journals and books (not necessarily publicity in the mass media). Besides the sheer number of citations, there is also their average “half-life,” that is, for how many years (or decades) after their publication are a scientist’s papers and books still cited? A flurry of citations of a work can be merely a “flash in the pan,” dwindling soon to zero, while some items maintain an imperceptibly declining citation rate for decades; few become a landmark classic, usually mentioned without a reference.

According to the *Social Science Citation Index* (SSCI, which began publication in 1970), the most frequently cited among living persons in 1997 is Hans Eysenck. Among all persons, living or dead, ever listed in the SSCI, Eysenck’s citations are exceeded only by Freud and Marx. Hence this standard criterion, at least, stops any argument over Eysenck’s influence in contemporary psychology and the social sciences. It is a mistake to suppose that the influence indicated by citations can be attributed simply to having published an extraordinary number of books and articles. (The number of Eysenck’s publications, incidentally, exceeds that of any other figure in the history of psychology.) Although there is, in fact, a high correlation between people’s number of publications and their number of citations, the correlation is less than perfect. And, in any case, it is not directly causal, any more than the total number of a composer’s compositions determines the frequency with which his works are performed. Siegfried Wagner, for example, wrote more operas than did his father, Richard; and Antonio Salieri, in his 75 years, composed more music than his contemporary, Mozart, composed in his 35 years. An example in psychology is America’s most prolific psychologist in research and publications, Edward L. Thorndike. He died half a century ago, but in recent years is still among 100 most often cited in the SSCI. (The same is true for Charles

Spearman.) One of Thorndike's contemporaries with nearly as many publications is not even listed in the SSCI. (Self-citations, of course, don't count.) Clearly, a given work, however regarded, must make an authentic dent, fill a gap, or initiate something new in its field to earn more than a few citations.

Biographical facts and psychological theories about the causal factors apparently involved in exceptional influence now have a surprisingly extensive literature; much of it has been referenced and expertly reviewed in Dean Simonton's (1988, 1994) two most fascinating books. (Simonton is himself the most prolific contributor to this literature.) One could appeal to such material for an explanation, albeit only in general terms, of Eysenck, or anyone who has achieved eminence. But to winnow all of these generalities about the origins of eminence to discover which ones best fit a particular subject, the specifics of the subject's life must be sought in biographical material. The specifics on Eysenck are provided in Gibson's (1981) frank biography and in Eysenck's autobiography (1990). It is a rare biography or autobiography, however factually accurate, that makes its readers feel that the person more than the persona has been revealed, and in that respect these two works do not seem to me exceptional. But their perspectives nicely complement each other and both should be of intrinsic interest and value to anyone in the behavioral sciences. Taken together, they convey an overall picture that well matches the impression of the man and his philosophy of psychological research that those who have observed Eysenck at close range for a number of years have come to know.

As this kind of information about Eysenck is already accessible, therefore, my assignment here can best supplement the extant biographical material only if I take a more personal and subjective slant and try to explain Eysenck's special influence as a teacher and mentor: a subject not really treated either in Gibson's biography or Eysenck's autobiography. I imagine there are probably many other students who have gone through Eysenck's department with an experience somewhat similar to mine. So, with the reader's forbearance, my story here becomes unavoidably autobiographical.

I began thinking and recollecting about Eysenck's influence when, a few years ago, I received a letter from a historian of psychology inquiring if there was anyone in my life I considered as personally having had an important influence on my own career in psychology. The one and only name that instantly came to mind was "Eysenck." I had to think a little to consider other possibly influential persons. And there were others, of course, such as my major professor under whom I studied for my Ph.D., Percival Symonds, and for whom I was a graduate research assistant for three years. I have always felt grateful for the rather fatherly and tutorial interest he took in me as a student. A learned scholar and prolific writer, Symonds was an excellent model of professorial and productive work habits. But then, when I began to think about

all of my teachers and professors in terms of how different my career might have been had I never known them, Eysenck clearly came out far ahead. Taking a postdoctoral fellowship in his department surely seemed the smartest thing I ever did as far as its influence on my subsequent work was concerned.

2. DISCOVERING EYSENCK

It was Professor Symonds who first suggested that I apply for a National Institute of Mental Health postdoctoral fellowship. Take it somewhere, he advised, that I could learn a lot more than I already knew about whatever line of psychological research interested me the most. Symonds had recommended me to his old and admired friend Gardner Murphy, then Director of Research at the famous Menninger Clinic. (I wonder what course my subsequent career might have taken had I followed that possibility.) But during my internship in clinical psychology, I came to the happy realization that working with people seemed much less interesting to me than working with psychological data. I doubted that I could have been happy, or even successful, as a clinician; the idea of becoming a professor and researcher seemed just the right ticket.

Now I must backtrack a few years, to an occasion in 1951, when I first heard the name “Eysenck,” since the circumstances probably had some valence in determining later events. While teaching high school biology in San Diego, I was also working for a master’s degree in psychology at the State University there. The psychology department sponsored a lecture series, which I regularly attended one evening each month, to hear an invited speaker talk about his or her own research. For some benevolent (and seemingly prophetic) reason that was unknown to me, one of my professors invited me to join him and two of his colleagues at a restaurant where they and the guest speaker (and his wife) would have dinner before the evening lecture. The guest that night happened to be Roger Russell, who, though an American, had recently been appointed as successor to Sir Cyril Burt, as Professor (and Head) of the Psychology Department in University College, London—obviously an outstanding achievement, as Russell was then not yet 40. All I can recall of Russell’s dinner conversation were his responses to questions about Burt and then about Eysenck. Burt was famous, of course, but this was the first time I heard of Eysenck. (At that time, he was 35 years of age.) One of the professors at the dinner had read Eysenck’s first book, *Dimensions of Personality* (1947) and was curious to know what Eysenck was like in person. Russell explained that he seldom saw Eysenck, because he had his own department in the Institute of Psychiatry, some miles away on the other side of London. But he went on talking about Eysenck for a minute or two, saying he thought of Eysenck as an exceptionally up-and-coming young fellow with the kind of ability, ambition,

and confidence to have already earned quite a reputation in Britain's psychological circles. He was somebody to keep an eye on as most apt to make a mark. And that was it.

Very soon thereafter, as a graduate student working for a Ph.D. at Columbia University, I read Eysenck's *Dimensions of Personality*; then I came across his popular and provocative *Uses and Abuses of Psychology* (1953). I enjoyed both books immensely, especially for their didactic clarity and their straightforward and logical arguments. Not in their specific content, but in their tough-minded, no-nonsense polemical style, Eysenck's books reminded me of the first psychology book I ever read, by John B. Watson, which I had enjoyed reading when I was in high school. It was the origin of my interest in psychology. When I mentioned my interest in Eysenck to Professor Symonds, he handed me a review copy he had recently received of Eysenck's *The Scientific Study of Personality* (1952). In an early chapter, one of Symonds' own studies (applying psychoanalytic interpretations to projective techniques) was, to put it mildly, trenchantly criticized. Because, as Symonds' research assistant, I was engaged in this very kind of work, Symonds asked me to read the book and let him know what I thought. I found this book the most exciting of anything I had yet read by Eysenck, especially for its vision of how personality research could be approached with the objective, quantitative, and experimental methods of the natural sciences. I quite enjoyed Eysenck's attacks on the kind of things being taught in some psychology courses that I had already begun to dislike as falling beyond the pale of science. When I came back to Symonds, a little apprehensively, to tell him my favorable opinion of Eysenck's book, I was surprised by his nonchalant, nonargumentative response; rather he seemed somewhat amused by my enthusiasm, and only complained about what he thought was, in his words, "Eysenck's loudmouth style of criticism." My Ph.D. dissertation, aimed at empirically testing some of Symonds' "dynamic" interpretations of aggression in the Thematic Apperception Test, failed to substantiate a single one of the objectively testable hypotheses derived from Symonds' type of psychoanalytic theory. But this didn't seem to disturb him; he remarked, good naturedly, "You seem to have overworked the null hypothesis." (My sample sizes were sufficiently large and the statistical results were sufficiently clear-cut to counter Symonds' question about Type II error, and all of my thesis examiners, who were reputedly tough—Professors Irving Lorge, Edward J. Shoben, and Joseph Zubin—seemed to like the findings. Symonds was supportive throughout, and even suggested that I submitted a shortened version of my thesis to *Psychological Monographs*, which I did. Later, he offered to write a recommendation to NIMH, knowing I intended to apply for a postdoc in Eysenck's department. But he advised that I should ask people who might have some inside knowledge of what I might expect of Eysenck. I think there is perhaps a general lesson to be learned from my having followed that suggestion. I inquired of three professors whose opinions I respected.

Though they all knew something about Eysenck's work, only one had ever met him in person, and none had any inside knowledge of Eysenck's department or knew how postdocs fared there. And it turned out that the suppositions proffered by two of them were way off the mark.

3. SOME OPINIONS, CONJECTURES, AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT EYSENCK

3.1 Another Thorndike?

Professor Laurence Shaffer, who headed the clinical psychology program at Columbia and, in his capacity as president of the APA, had met Eysenck on his 1953 visit to the U.S.A., was by far the most enthusiastic. He said he thought Eysenck was much like E. L. Thorndike when he was Eysenck's age, and that this presaged comparable eminence. Neither E. L. Thorndike nor Eysenck, he said, was an eclectic who tries to find a little good in every viewpoint, and they were similar in promoting their strong convictions about the path psychology should follow, disdaining anything that was contrary. I was happy to hear Shaffer's likening of Eysenck to E. L. Thorndike, because at that time Thorndike (probably still America's greatest psychologist) happened to be my only "hero" in psychology. (He still is, but there are now also a few others.) Shaffer admitted that he himself wished he were in a position that allowed him to spend a year in Eysenck's department; first choice, absolutely, he said, and he offered to recommend me.

3.2 Another Burt?

Professor Robert L. Thorndike, on the other hand, warned that Eysenck might hold such strong opinions about psychology as to be too authoritarian and intolerant of anyone who didn't completely agree with him. He said he had once heard his father, E. L. Thorndike, speak about Cyril Burt to the effect that he was notoriously authoritarian; and, after all, wasn't Eysenck Burt's protégé? And his leading disciple? (How little Thorndike knew of Eysenck's rebellious relationship to Burt!) Not long after I arrived in London, I learned that this authoritarian image of Eysenck could hardly have been more false. In fact, I was surprised by Eysenck's attitude toward his postdocs (of which I was one of several during my two-year stay) and even his own staff. It appeared all so nondirective and laissez-faire. Yet nearly everyone seemed to be working on things related to Eysenck's research program. Naturally, I thought; and why shouldn't they? I got the impression, however, that Eysenck would be little interested in anyone who wasn't engaged in research at least consonant with his view of psychology as a quantitative natural science. Yet I always felt I could believe, say, and do whatever I pleased during my two years' postdoc without anyone's even noticing or asking. Eysenck's attitude toward personal

one-on-one interaction with postdocs was entirely passive. One had to go to him, not the reverse. When my research was related to his interests, he was immensely helpful, providing laboratory equipment, experimental subjects, and any advice I ever asked for. It was as near an ideal learning environment as I could imagine.

3.3 Aloof and remote?

Professor Joseph Zubin had surmised, judging from Eysenck's extraordinary output, that anyone who kept himself that obviously busy would most likely be stingy with his time and attention to others, particularly postdoctoral fellows. Zubin imagined Eysenck's department was probably very hierarchical (as was traditional in many European universities), so that outsiders like me, assigned to the bottom rung, would hardly have access to "the great man" at the top. And Zubin gave me a copy of a highly detailed "inside-report" of the U.S. Office of Naval Research (which had awarded Eysenck a large grant) about what was going on in Eysenck's laboratory. The report had been prepared by Professor Lee J. Cronbach during his tenure (1955–1956) as the ONR Liaison Officer in London, and I found it a fascinating document that gave more informal inside information about Eysenck and other members of the research staff than I had been able to find elsewhere. I already knew Cronbach's reputation as an exceptionally sharp but rather ungenerous and acerbic critic who pulled no punches. Yet I found his ONR report quite favorable over all, and it left the impression that Eysenck ran a lively shop, very much as I had gathered from reading his books and journal articles. Hence I felt more certain that I should head for London. When finally I got there, I discovered first-hand that Professor Zubin's reservation about Eysenck as possibly remote and aloof (at least to postdocs) was quite the opposite of the prevailing conditions. (In talking with postdocs at other institutions, however, it was common to find their initial hopes disappointed by their meager opportunities for interaction with their nominal mentors.)

I found Eysenck to be the most dependably accessible professor in all of my experience, both before and since my postdoc. From 8:30 am to 4:00 or 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday, Eysenck was in his office. His door displayed one of three signs: either "In," or "Dictating," or "Out." The "In" sign was most often displayed in the afternoon; then, if you wanted to talk with Eysenck, you only had to knock on the door. Glad to discuss any technical question or problem, he did so with admirable clarity and authority, thoroughly but efficiently, plainly avoiding any time-wasting pleasantries or small-talk—it was all pure business. (He never in the least took what could be called a personal interest in anyone around the department, as far as I could tell; in fact, his totally impersonal attitude toward everyone so irritated one secretary that she quit her job because of it!) Observing Eysenck's whole routine, I always got the

impression he was one who, as musicians say, never missed a beat. But he was never hurried, always relaxed, seemingly easy-going, and, strangely, he never even seemed at all busy when one entered his office (for example, I rarely saw anything on his desk, and his phone calls were controlled from the secretarial office). Yet, every day incredible amounts of work emanated from his office, keeping two full-time secretaries constantly busy. The smooth, frictionless efficiency of Eysenck's operation was indeed impressive.

3.4 Ferocious?

Dr Michael Shepherd, a psychiatrist from the Maudsley Hospital, one day came as a guest lecturer to the University of Maryland Psychiatric Institute in Baltimore, where I was on my clinical internship. So I asked him, too, about Eysenck—what was he like? “Oh, a brilliant and charming fellow,” Shepherd said, “Ferocious only in the face of opposition!” *Ferocious?* It could make one think twice about going to his department. But what a terribly wrong impression this was—as I later discovered! The notion of “ferocious” was a misnomer, or at best a kind of half-truth, and quite exaggerated at that. It was wholly misleading in any personal sense, but I discovered it had become a popular image outside Eysenck's department, and especially in British psychiatric circles. It certainly didn't apply to any of Eysenck's personal encounters, with me or anyone I knew who ever had any personal dealings with him. This fictitious reputation seems to have originated, however, from two indisputably real sources: First, there was Eysenck's hard-hitting, but right-on-the-mark, published criticisms of certain views in psychology that, from his perspective, looked more like religion than science. And second, there was Eysenck's supreme confidence and his quickness of mind and mastery of his subject that he could summon in a flash to deftly impale anyone who would stand up at the end of one of his lectures and dare to denounce or argue some point. In almost every audience at one of Eysenck's open lectures, it seemed, there was someone who wanted to oppose him on one point or another and imagined he could nail Eysenck with a clever put-down type of question or argument. (One inveterate opponent even advertised widely his intention to do this.) Eysenck's lectures often seemed to invite these attacks. Evidently most of his critics had no warning or premonition of the likely outcome, although the typical outcome had become such common knowledge as to be almost legendary. Smiling as if he relished the moment, Eysenck invariably answered his critics in a conspicuously courteous manner—serene, and in the same modulated voice as his lecture. But the amazingly pointed, cogently organized, and perfectly articulated assembly of facts, logic, and argumentation that Eysenck could immediately level against his critic's statement was generally viewed by the audience as a knockout blow. Usually that ended the encounter, with the derailed challenger taking his seat, looking rather put out, and saying

no more. Whether or not the poor fellow (it was always a male) felt humiliated, the audience perceived it as such. And the most tender-minded among them probably interpreted Eysenck's broadside as "ferocious," however perfectly cool and seemingly polite. I heard someone once joke that it all went off so neatly that he wondered if a stooge was planted among the audience, or if precognition permitted Eysenck to have prepared and rehearsed his response some days in advance. This slyly combative facet, however, was so unlike anything I ever noticed in his encounters with students, or his seminars, or his "at homes," or in private conversation, that I regarded it as a kind of showmanship (along with a good bit of what Stephen Potter referred to as lifemanship) reserved for special kinds of opponents, and then deployed only when there was a large audience present. In his later years, he has either toned it down noticeably or his more aggressive opponents have dwindled—probably both. The last quintessential knockout I witnessed was at one of his lectures in Australia, in 1977, when we were both invited there for a series of presentations at several universities. Eysenck always seems so laid-back at these events that I suppose he scarcely remembers them, though they become other people's anecdotes.

4. DISTILLING MY POSTDOCTORAL EXPERIENCE IN EYSENCK'S LAB

4.1 Introduction

So that's the story of how my two-years' postdoc with Eysenck (1956–1958) all came about, and, of course, it was only made possible by Eysenck's kind consent and a generous fellowship awarded by the NIMH. I had found the whole experience so rewarding that six years later, on my first sabbatical leave (1964–1965) from my chair at Berkeley, I applied for and received a Guggenheim Fellowship to revisit Eysenck's laboratory for the whole year. So now, from my store of memories of the three years, in all, that I spent with Eysenck, I shall try to distill out those elements that I think contributed most to his profound influence as a teacher and mentor.

4.2 Eysenck as a writer

Many people have been influenced by Eysenck only in his role as a writer. And probably even among the circle of psychologists who know him personally, his main source of influence is his books and articles—an influence that reaches a number of different audiences, since his research and writing have made significant contributions in four major fields in the behavioral sciences (personality, behavior therapy, human abilities, behavior genetics), as witness the variety of topics covered in the present volume and in the collection of "pro and con" essays on Eysenck's work edited by Professors Sohan Modgil and Celia Modgil (1986).

Besides the purely factual and theoretical contents of Eysenck's output, which, of course, are the main interest, the one aspect that I think hooked me and has probably had the most generalized and continuing effect is a characteristic manifested in nearly all of his writings, particularly his books and his many contributed chapters (even his reviews of other authors' books). I refer to the fact that they are infused with a philosophy of science, usually illustrated with analogies between research problems in psychology and those in other sciences. The subtly didactic quality of his writings results mainly from his typically going a step beyond any specific finding or fact to a more general level regarding method and theory, so the reader comes away with a rather more generalizable order of knowledge and understanding. His writings are also imbued with certain attitudes, values, ideals, and inspiration that more or less unconsciously carry over to one's own work. This is the quintessence of intellectual influence.

It helps, too, that Eysenck's writing style is so clear and easy, especially when he has to explain complicated things. He himself refers to it as a "natural" style, probably because he writes exactly as he speaks (or vice versa); I've never known anyone else whose manner of speaking and writing are so much the same.

His speaking and writing are, in fact, one and the same, as I discovered during my postdoc. Eysenck's steady output of publications is so incredible (almost three times that of E. L. Thorndike, who held the world's record for number of publications in psychology until Eysenck came along) that, as a postdoc, I was curious about how it was possible. It so happened that Eysenck's office was clearly visible, at a distance of about 50 feet, from the window of my office, at an angle of about 135 degrees. The large glass French doors that opened onto the balcony extending from Eysenck's office afforded a full view inside. I noticed that nearly every morning, for about three hours, he paced around in circles in his large office (he seldom sat at his desk), dictating the whole time, either to a secretary taking shorthand or to a dictaphone on his desk. Two secretaries were kept busy all afternoon typing whatever he dictated in the morning. During the first half-year of my postdoc, Eysenck dictated two books and many journal articles and book reviews, in addition to many research proposals, progress reports, and a large correspondence. One day his secretary couldn't make out a technical term in his recorded dictation and asked me to put on the earphones and listen to the playback at that point. Eysenck's dictation was paced just as if he were simply reading aloud, smoothly, evenly, without any back-tracking, double takes, corrections, or hesitations. And the resulting typescript, except for correction of a few typos, was sent off to the publishers. When I once mentioned to Eysenck his amazing skill at dictation, he said it was simply a gift for which he was most grateful. Someone suggested that it resulted from the fact that English was Eysenck's third language (after German and French), which he had acquired mainly from

reading psychology books in English and therefore didn't have to suppress informal and colloquial language as most of us do when we write (or try to dictate) formal prose. One summer, after Eysenck had dictated a whole book during two weeks of his summer vacation on the Isle of Wight, I asked him if he ever got tired while dictating for hours at a stretch. A moment's thought, and he pointed to his jaw, saying that perhaps at times his jaw got a little tired. The jaw, not the brain! Pure Eysenck! His secretary played me a part of one of the dictaphone tapes he had brought back from his vacation, again hoping I could help decipher one sentence that was obscured by—what?—voices on a TV show that one could hear in the background! Apparently the TV didn't in the least hinder his concentration or the easy flow of his words forming well-constructed sentences and paragraphs! It all could be published without editing. He usually left mere proofreading entirely to others. Occasionally this resulted in a minor catastrophe; for example, a proofreader rather consistently altered the spelling of Spearman's term *noegenesis*, making it *neogenesis* instead, in a work (Eysenck, 1979) that, overall, is probably still the best college textbook on intelligence. (In light of the boom in research on human mental ability since 1979, a new, updated edition of Eysenck's 1979 book would be most welcome!)

What might have been an example of Eysenck's productive efficiency occurred at one of his office seminars, attended by his five postdocs and any members of his staff who wished to attend. He began the discussion by delivering, off-the-cuff (as no notes were in sight), what amounted to a full lecture on the history of personality research. I thought it all so beautifully organized and clearly delivered it seemed a pity that it wasn't tape-recorded, typed, and submitted for publication. But then apparently that is what he had done, either before, after, or possibly during, his lecture (I didn't notice whether his recording machine was "on"), because several months later it appeared as an article in the *British Journal of Psychology*. As best I could recall, it was word-for-word the same as the spoken presentation.

Besides their substantive content that makes Eysenck's writings important, an added attraction is the absence of the jargon and the dry, bland, and uncommitted tone that prevail in academic psychological literature. For those writers afraid of criticism, a studiously impersonal, pedantic, tentative, and timid style might possibly help in warding off intellectual opponents. Eysenck, on the contrary, likes to stick his neck out; excessive caution for fear of criticism is not one of his faults. Avoiding the neutralizing stylistic devices often adopted in academic writing to mute or obscure potentially controversial statements, Eysenck's writing (and speaking) style, though never in the least dogmatic or doctrinaire, maintains an explicit viewpoint on the topic at hand, states clear-cut opinions, shuns hedging, displays clarity of factual exposition and cogency of argument, and delivers a strong message. Many readers admire this. But I have also come across a few persons who are riled by it; and if they

also happen to disagree with the substance of the message, they become furious. Eysenck commented once, with amused wonderment, that for some people, for some odd reason, his writing apparently has “emotional stimulus value.” I recall one such incident, at a luncheon in Berkeley with a group of psychologists at the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR). We were entertaining a guest speaker, a British psychiatrist of Freudian stripe, who was scheduled to give a lecture at IPAR that afternoon. He had every appearance of a dignified, intellectual, and amiable gentleman—until, at one point during the lunch conversation, someone happened to mention Eysenck’s then current book, *The Dynamics of Anxiety and Hysteria*, whereupon our guest flew into an emotional tirade, face reddening, eyes bulging, as he sputtered denunciations of Eysenck’s book and its basic conception of psychology as a quantitative, experimental science. With everyone looking anxious, as if fearing the speaker’s emotion could escalate into an apoplectic stroke, the luncheon hosts, Professors MacKinnon and Crutchfield, abruptly intruded and changed the topic completely, while our rattled guest regained composure. Such is Eysenck’s peculiar effect on what one hopes are a rare few. (The only person in my experience who had even stronger negative “emotional stimulus value” for some people was Professor William Shockley, but that’s another story.)

4.3 Eysenck as teacher

Although Eysenck never seemed busy, one knew from all the things that were happening in his department that he really couldn’t have been other than busy, and therefore one always felt a little reluctant to impinge on the time he spent in his office. I would go to him only when I wanted his own opinion in particular on some point. The Institute had other expert research psychologists and two excellent statisticians (A. E. Maxwell and Patrick Slater) to whom one could go for help and discussion of problems. When necessary, one could go to Eysenck as a final arbiter; and it was always clarifying and enlightening. I would come away feeling I had witnessed a formidable intellect brought to bear on the given problem. It was something like a student of conducting (as I once was) watching Toscanini in rehearsal with the NBC Symphony (as I did many times while I was a student in New York.)

Eysenck also received an extraordinary number of visitors. Each took some of his time. It seemed (especially in summer) that every noted American psychologist who came through London wanted to see Eysenck. The list of his visitors was like a “who’s who in psychology.” He would spend an hour or so talking with a visitor; through my office window I would see him standing at the blackboard in his office, drawing graphs and explaining things to his visitor. Occasionally the visitor was invited to give a research colloquium for the staff and postdocs, or we would be able to meet a visitor in informal discussion at

Eysenck's weekly "at homes." In my two postdoctoral years there, I heard and met more famous psychologists than I ever saw at any one APA convention I have ever attended. What a place to take a postdoc!

The graduate students studying for a Ph.D. in Eysenck's department were assigned to work under the supervision of one or another member of the research staff; I can't recall any evidence of Eysenck's personally paying them much attention, other than his initially going over the student's research proposal, then reading the dissertation and attending the student's oral defense of it. Eysenck dispatched such chores faithfully; he never allowed his work to pile up. In two instances I witnessed, drafts of dissertations delivered to him by students on one day were returned on the very next day, accompanied by his remarkably detailed corrections, queries, and comments.

Most fortunately for his postdocs, however, Eysenck allowed many informal opportunities for us to talk with him and to sit in on his discussions with others. The daily routine was for everyone to go over to the Maudsley cafeteria for a half-hour's mid-morning coffee break. In order to discuss something with one of his research staff without having to infringe on their office time, Eysenck (if not giving dictation) would accompany the person to the cafeteria, and as many of us as could crowd around the same table would be able to get in on the discussion. This occurred, on average, two or three days a week. Eysenck never took coffee or anything else (he explained that he hated the cafeteria coffee, food, etc.); but for him this wasn't a coffee break, but a concession to the efficiency of his department's research mission. These sessions were like brief research conferences, in which one could learn how Eysenck thought about many things, though always psychological. In the aggregate, over two years, I found these sessions were more revealing of Eysenck's character than any other form of his encounters with people that I was ever in a position to witness. (I was struck, incidentally, by how much politics was discussed at other tables during coffee breaks, but never around Eysenck; in his presence, no one strayed from psychological research or scientific matters; he himself seemed to have no other intellectual interests.)

Eysenck's only formal teaching duty, to my knowledge, was the series of lectures he gave as part of the Institute's training program for psychiatric registrars. I attended these, and although they covered rather elementary psychology (and much of the material in *Uses and Abuses of Psychology*), I found it interesting to see how neatly Eysenck presented it. Another postdoc, who also attended a few of these lectures, complained that they went off so effortlessly and automatically (though Eysenck never read from notes) as to give the impression that he wasn't really thinking out his lecture then and there; and the registrars' few simple questions usually permitted such easy, one-sentence answers as to be uninteresting. True, a psychology postdoc could hardly get much from these formal lectures that the Institute required of

Eysenck. They were designed for an entirely different kind of audience. In a sense, there is a fundamental difference between formal lecturing and informal teaching, and this distinction seemed especially clear in Eysenck's case.

His less formal teaching function, intended specifically for his postdocs, was entirely voluntary on his part. It would take place in his office seminars on late Friday afternoons, usually attended also by certain members of his staff, depending on the topic of discussion, which was most often related to their current work in Eysenck's research program. In this setting, Eysenck rarely lectured but was truly a teacher, doing the things that advanced students can most profit from—providing a mix of ideas, hypotheses, constructive criticism, suggestions, discussion, argument, questions, and answers on the topic of that day's seminar. Each session lasted over two hours. Afterwards we would usually go to the local pub for a pint of bitter, without Eysenck, of course, as he was very abstemious (once saying that he avoided anything that depressed cortical activity); on several occasions I've heard him say that he particularly hates beer. I doubt that he's ever been inside a pub.

Eysenck's most distinctive characteristic as a teacher, as in much of his writing, is that he always uses the particulars of a given problem to point out certain general rules that they suggest. Besides discussing the specifics of a given problem or technical point, he habitually elevated the specifics to a conceptually higher, more general level than they possessed when first introduced. Hence, always along with any factual information, one imbibed general concepts and principles, which over time coalesced finally into a whole philosophy for behavioral science research, embracing taxonomy, objective measurement, statistical reasoning, a reductionist orientation with tie-ins to genetics and biology, hypothetico-deductive methodology, and a strong conviction—a moral ideal—that scientific inquiry, properly worked as a perpetually self-correcting process, will allow natural truths to get out. In the history of science even some of the most improbable and zany hypotheses, properly worked out, have led to important discoveries. This mental attitude, I think, is the essence of Eysenck's personal influence on one's subsequent career. It is something to live by. Few professors I have known, even if they wished, would be able to imbue students with this sort of ideal in such full measure as Eysenck was able to impart. This is because it was never delivered all at once on any occasion, like an explicit lesson or sermon; rather it was the basic operating principle that infused Eysenck's own thinking and activity; so it was inevitably and thoroughly, yet almost imperceptibly, disseminated throughout the many occasions spent with him. Such is the influence of an ideal mentor.

4.4 Eysenck's "at homes"

Eysenck's life clearly revolves around his work, and many of us in his department were the beneficiaries. A special treat that I always looked forward to were Eysenck's "at homes," held regularly every Wednesday night, from 7:30 to 10:30. The research staff and postdocs had a standing invitation. These meetings were most informal, with a good deal of banter and joking, and Sybil Eysenck always served refreshments. But the "at homes" were also highly and pleasantly instructive. Typically, after everyone had comfortably settled down in the living room, someone was prepared to describe, in a quarter of an hour or so, the theoretical rationale and the methodology or procedure (and the results, if any) for the study or experiment he or she was planning, or was already engaged in, or had just completed. Others would chime in with questions and comments, and Eysenck would often bring up any closely related studies or theories in the literature. (He has an amazingly encyclopedic knowledge such as one rarely encounters in a lifetime.) Alternative methods of statistical analysis would be considered, and after an hour or so the subject had received a fairly thorough discussion. Members of the group also would volunteer comments on recent journal articles or books relevant to our research interests. Eysenck covered anything of interest in the German psychological journals, which he routinely read, and nearly every week he could report on some recent book he had just read. He is a voracious reader; few, if any, psychologists I have known are in the habit of reading even half as many books as Eysenck routinely publishes reviews of. It's a rare month that I don't find at least one book review by Eysenck in some journal. Often the review is more worth reading than the book itself. I have yet to come across another reviewer in psychology, except Cyril Burt, who brings such a broad erudition to bear. Besides informing about the book's contents, of course, Eysenck's reviews are also used as vehicles for exercising in various ways his own philosophy of psychology. (What other good reason could there be for the thankless chore of writing a book review?)

5. THE BASIS OF EYSENCK'S INFLUENCE

Individuals differ greatly on the scale of innate capacities, and if measured on the same scale, individuals' achievements differ even by orders of magnitude. Galton attributed the level of outstanding achievement that distinguishes a person as eminent in some field to that person's possessing a combination of three distinct factors, each to an exceptional degree: *ability* (or capacity), *drive* (or zeal), and *perseverance* (or sustained goal-directed effort in the face of problems, hardships, or opposition). Eysenck's illustrious career manifests all these conditions in abundance. They are the general basis of his eminence and influence.

As for *ability*, it seems vapid even to mention Eysenck's exceptional level of intelligence, as it is so obvious. To be more specific, what I have especially noticed (and it is a more outstanding characteristic even than his possession of a phenomenal encyclopedic knowledge) is that he often, and quickly, grasps the larger picture that is latent in a welter of more or less isolated facts. At times, in his writings or in personal encounters, I would get the impression that his mind encompasses a larger theater for performing intellectual operations than most people's. To a greater degree than many others who are considered highly intelligent, he discerns a larger number of the essential elements embedded in a problem, issue, or argument, and can mentally manipulate a larger number of these elements all at once, to arrive at a clearer, more coherent, and larger comprehension of the issue than most of us can come up with. It's enviable, of course, this facility to confront a novel problem and readily see the larger picture and all its various elements in their perspective relation to the whole. (I suppose this larger "mental space" is a part of his ability to artfully compose an entire article or book chapter in one continuous dictation session.) Also enviable is his ability whilst in a discussion, to so quickly cut through and clarify any confused or muddled argument; to swiftly scan his vast store of knowledge to bring up the most directly relevant material on a given point; to do certain things remarkably easily that many psychology Ph.D.s apparently never can do at all. Seeing such mental equipment, some five sigmas out from the mean, can at first seem a bit discouraging, but then one must learn to live with the plain fact of nature that, on any particular dimension of human differences, some persons are given more than others, and so you simply try to do your own best with what you have.

As for *motivation* or zeal, one sees in Eysenck no sign of the typical image of a "driven" person. Quite the contrary. One of his colleagues once remarked that if you watched him for any short period of time during the day, you'd likely get the impression he was a quite laid-back and lazy sort of fellow. A correct description of appearances perhaps. But such an illusion! It seems to me that we have to infer some extraordinary, perhaps obsessive, level of *intrinsic* motivation, and probably a certain inevitable egocentric selfishness in the deployment of time and energy, to explain Eysenck's achievements and what might be called (for want of a better word) his unflagging dedication to the advancement of psychology as a natural science. But this energy or drive never seems to show itself physically, except for his constantly pacing around in his office while he is dictating. Perhaps he dissipates the purely motor aspect of his high energy level during his daily exercise on the tennis court, which then keeps him super-relaxed during his working hours. It is impossible to imagine the absence of an immense and well-channeled level of energy in any person who makes as big a dent in his field of endeavor as Eysenck has done in behavioral science. Besides a strong personal ambition to make a mark and enhance one's self-esteem (which is absolutely common to all great achievers), I see the

overwhelming intrinsic motivation for Eysenck's activity as a product of channeling an abundance of general *mental energy* into the typical aspirations of a scientist to acquire existing knowledge, to discover new knowledge, and, in general, to advance his field of science, which in Eysenck's case just happened to be psychology. (My use of the word *energy* here doesn't mean ability per se, or Spearman's *g*, but rather a kind of inherent lifelong itch to use one's brain, just as some athletes speak of having an itch to use certain muscles. This "brain itch" is an interesting variable [or construct] that hasn't yet received much attention in differential psychology, though people differ markedly in it.)

As for *perseverance*, Eysenck's entire career speaks for itself. It has sustained a constant rate of immense productivity now for over 55 years. The "greats" in any field, as I've noticed in my reading of many biographies, typically keep on doing "their thing" all their life, barring dire illness or infirmity. (This itself is an interesting psychological phenomenon, since most people are glad to be able to retire from work as early in life as they can attain sufficient financial security, and then they retire whole hog.) Eysenck is among those elect few that one can think of whose lifetime record of accomplishments could be divided among a dozen persons and each of them would be considered outstanding by ordinary standards, with various honors, biographical entries in *Who's Who* and the like.

A few years ago, while having dinner with one of Eysenck's long-term colleagues, Dr Niel O'Connor (a distinguished psychologist in his own right) he said something that struck me as interesting and, I think, peculiarly apt. Shaking his head in puzzlement, he said he never could think of Eysenck really as a person, but always thought of him as some kind of institution or phenomenon. (At these words, I remembered George Bernard Shaw's comment about Mahatma Gandhi, spoken to news reporters; GBS said "Gandhi is not a man, but a phenomenon.") Niel O'Connor's insight is true, I think, at least in one sense. Of course, Eysenck is a man (as certainly was Gandhi), but by normal standards those visible aspects of his great career are, as they say, "larger than life"—and indeed a phenomenon.

A significant part of this phenomenon is Eysenck's influence and inspiration as teacher and mentor. My own experience and observations related here are but one idiosyncratic example. But many of Eysenck's former students, in every continent of the globe, I'm sure, would like to give their testimony about how their work in the behavioral sciences has been influenced through their own unique experiences of Eysenck. The one thing we all would express in common is our continuing gratitude for this privilege and good fortune.

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