German voice) of British psychology. Such was the interest, he was interviewed in 1990 as part of the Face to Face television series, which included interviews with other luminaries, actors such as Kirk Douglas, film directors including Steven Spielberg, and comedians like Billy Connolly. In 1994 a whole BBC programme was devoted to him in the ‘Lipsticks and Menaces’ series. Eysenck was also in demand by popular magazines, from the middle-brow Reader’s Digest to the top-shelf Playboy and Penthouse (where some of his most insightful interviews may be found; e.g Cohen, 1970).

Echoing similar sentiments to Diana, Princess of Wales, who died just a few days earlier than him, Eysenck’s obituary in The Guardian called him the ‘People’s Psychologist’. Somewhat like Diana, people seemed to identify with him, and it was not always clear exactly why – in their very different, and less than flawless, ways they touched on issues that other people considered important.

All of this was quite extraordinary for an academic psychologist. Eysenck’s contributions were many, varied and significant, including: the promotion of the importance of clinical psychology; the slaying of the psychoanalytical dragon, pioneering behaviour therapy and, thus, helping to usher in the era of cognitive behavioural therapy (although he had little time for the ‘cognitive’ part); and developing a highly influential model of the biological nature of personality and individual differences, which now provides the general framework for personality psychology today. As with rapidly developing field of personality neuroscience started to uncover the biological underpinnings of the 1930s, his work was followed closely and accounts in the 1950s, as Dick Pasingham notes, this was ‘very brave’ (Cort, 2016, p.322) for what in its day was not only described personality but also explain it – given the restrictions and individual differences, which now provides the general framework for personality psychology today.

William Yule (2013: see also Yule, 1998) gives a very favourable view of Eysenck’s contribution to the development of clinical psychology, recalling how Eysenck and Aubrey Lewis went to the University of London to get course approval. When they arrived at the meeting, only later to discover that Cyril Burt had pressured the committee secretary to record a ‘rejection’ decision. Eysenck and Lewis had to troop back to the Senate House to get a second, and final, time. (Jack Rachman, similarly, recounts the vital role played by Burt in this regard.)

Eysenck opened up the promise of a truly integrated scientific psychology. Much later, during my PhD at the IoP, I met Eysenck and even shared a desk with him for three months, although our paths rarely crossed – my doctoral research contrasted his theory of personality with that of Jeffrey Gray. I could not have imagined that some 20 years later I would be publishing a biography of Eysenck! Despite reservations regarding his specific theories, and especially some of his pronouncements – some of which were plain silly – than and now, Eysenck is a vital life force who set the scientific agenda for us either to work towards or actively oppose. His work, and he himself, still matter.

Reputation and recognition
Such was the regard for Eysenck, awards and honours should be expected to come in quick succession. Not so though in Britain, despite his fame and reputation in the international psychology community. As a matter of fact, he was well ahead of other British psychologists in terms of fame and citations. This fact is not appreciated enough today. According to Google Scholar (Boykoff and colleagues, 2002) analysis of eminence in 20th-century international psychology, Eysenck was the third most cited psychologist (after Freud and Piaget – no other British psychologist even appears in the top 25); their survey of international psychologists places him 24th (again no other British psychologist

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Meet the author

During my pre-degree study of psychology, I was impressed by the quality, scope and implications of Hans Eysenck’s writings. His books are so accessible, are ‘about people’, and they seem to offer scientifically grand theories of everyday behaviour (e.g. smoking and neurosis) – like no other psychologist then or since. Eysenck opened up the promise of a truly integrated scientific psychology. Much later, during my PhD at the IoP, I met Eysenck and even shared a desk with him for three months, although our paths rarely crossed – my doctoral research contrasted his theory of personality with that of Jeffrey Gray. I could not have imagined that some 20 years later I would be publishing a biography of Eysenck! Despite reservations regarding his specific theories, and especially some of his pronouncements – some of which were plain silly – than and now, Eysenck is a vital life force who set the scientific agenda for us either to work towards or actively oppose. His work, and he himself, still matter.

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appears on this top 25 list); and by a ranking of universities, awards, distinctions, etc. he was ranked 13th – the next British psychologist appearing in this list, Donald Broadbent, was down this list at 40th.

However, he was also an outsider from the start. Initially Burt told him he would not be because he hated the Nazis and everything for which they stood. He voted for himself Jewish, as neither of his parents were German Jewish upstarts on the make, and then later, a psychological one. In the award of several distinctions from the British Psychological Society, he was feted in the USA with shunned by the psychology establishment (although, unlike other awards, in recent times this seems to have fallen into abeyance). Although Eysenck was shunned by the psychology establishment in Britain, he was feted in the USA with the award of several distinctions from the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Psychological Society (APS).

In a real sense, Eysenck was always an outsider, during WWII a liberal Jew, and then, later, a psychological one. In academia, this started with Cyril Burt’s decision to give him no non-directorate, if a German Jewish upset on the make, and the ringleader of a Jewish Plot (at the Maudsley, Eysenck, 2010) – all very ironic, because Eysenck never considered himself to be a liberal Jew, but did very well under the Nazis, and during his teenage years. Eysenck could have expected equal favour. But, this was not to be because he hated the Nazis and everything for which they stood. He voted with his feet, leaving Germany in 1934, at the age of 18, first, and briefly, for France and then London where he spent the rest of his life.

A quote by Bill Yule sums up nicely. My overall view is that Hans made a great contribution to UK psychology. However, he was an outsider from the start. Initially Burt told him he would not be because he hated the Nazis and everything for which they stood. He voted for himself Jewish, as neither of his parents were German Jewish upstarts on the make, and then later, a psychological one. In the award of several distinctions from the British Psychological Society, he was feted in the USA with shunned by the psychology establishment (although, unlike other awards, in recent times this seems to have fallen into abeyance). Although Eysenck was shunned by the psychology establishment in Britain, he was feted in the USA with the award of several distinctions from the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Psychological Society (APS). In a real sense, Eysenck was always an outsider, during WWII a liberal Jew, and then, later, a psychological one. In academia, this started with Cyril Burt’s decision to give him no non-directorate, if a German Jewish upset on the make, and the ringleader of a Jewish Plot (at the Maudsley, Eysenck, 2010) – all very ironic, because Eysenck never considered himself to be a liberal Jew, but did very well under the Nazis, and during his teenage years. Eysenck could have expected equal favour. But, this was not to be because he hated the Nazis and everything for which they stood. He voted with his feet, leaving Germany in 1934, at the age of 18, first, and briefly, for France and then London where he spent the rest of his life.

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for him, most notably Rokeach and Handley (1956) and Christie (1956). As documented by their letters (Buchanan, 2010, p.2), Rokeach and Christar wanted to ‘shame Eysenck’ – I shall leave the psychoanalytical interpretation of the remark to those better qualified to comment. Indeed, Rokeach wrote to Christie, ‘The major goal we had set ourselves [sic] was to discredit Eysenck’s reputation as a scientific investigator because we had come to the conclusion that he is not – once again, there is a potent mix of scientific, political and personal antipathy towards the portmanteau caricature of Eysenck.

This was also around the time when the rumour mill started working overtime to insinuate that Eysenck was engaged in academic malpractice, the more serious whispered accusations never finding a footing in fact – although there is evidence of carelessness and the favouring of research findings that supported his preferred theoretical positions (discussed in Corr, 2016, pp.269–274). The lack of official recognition and honours may have been in no small measure the result of this concerted campaign to ‘shame Eysenck’ – in this respect, Rokeach and others succeeded in their self-avowed aim. Ironically, Rokeach (1973, p.186) was later to develop his own conceptual scheme of human values, which he stated, ‘most closely resembles Eysenck’s (1954) hypothesis.

Centennial reflections

Some of the disconcerting aspects of Eysenck’s work reflect schisms in psychology itself, and this is nowhere more apparent than in his main scientific interest of personality (including intelligence). Eysenck is requiring this interest of personality (including psychology itself, and this is now here more apparent than in his main scientific

Scientific attitude and canons

Well, what are we to make of Eysenck’s attitudes and beliefs? And, importantly, what can we learn that is of relevance to psychology 100 years after his birth? Is he merely a ghostly figure of the scientific past, or does his spirit live on and have relevance for the concerns, both in terms of theoretical perspectives and policy, today?

Eysenck was certain that people differ in their temperament, personality and cognitive abilities, and these individual differences matter for the whole of psychology and its applications (e.g. occupational, educational, and social policy). For this reason, systematic individual differences should be incorporated into all experimental designs, behavioural, psychophysical (and physiological) and neuromaging studies, as well as all areas of applied research. Burying most of the between-people variance in the ‘error’ term is not good enough for psychological science that has the serious aim of explanation and prediction.

Running through the entire corpus of Eysenck’s work is the view that the mind is a product of nature (biology) and nurture (environment), and it is the two working together that produces the observed phenotype (e.g. extraversion, intelligence and social attitudes). This implies that all psychological research should be biocentric in nature, especially as ‘environmental’ influences have to go through the brain where significant individual differences are evident in the selection, shaping and interpretation of what is ‘out there’ (Frith, 2007). In all of this, Eysenck called for the unification of the differential and experimental schools of psychology, seeing them as merely flip sides of the same scientific coin (Cronbach, 1957).

Eysenck also called attention to the nonconscious-automatic nature of behaviour, regulated by conditioning processes (e.g. in those prone to criminality: Eysenck, 1966/2014). Today many of his views on the nature of mind–brain find a ready audience in judgement and decision making, research, and especially in behavioural economics, where System 1 (reflexive-automatic) processes are assumed to reign supreme over System 2 (reflective-controlled) processes (Kahneman, 2012).

Finally, Eysenck may be seen as the grandfather of impact, and not because he chose to follow the expedient path. In the era of Research Excellence Framework (REF)-defined impact, Eysenck’s call that psychological research should underpin social policy debate seems prescient. However, less consistent with REF impact is his demand that such research should be conducted without consideration of possible outcomes, as these are unknown: scientific knowledge should not be hindered by political concerns of how it might be used. For him, scientific knowledge and political implications are different things and should be kept separate (personal values link the two).

In relation to this point is Eysenck’s belief that scientists should be free to search for the truth wherever they think it may be found, and without political (however, small or benign the ‘?’ influence. In addition, the search for the truth should not be inhibited by fear of offending some people. More contentiously, he argues, scientists should be given intellectual freedom of research and expression, and these should be upheld especially in controversial areas where this rule is best tested.

Many readers will dispute some or all of Eysenck’s views; and this is the point. His work raises important issues about how we go about the professional business of psychology and the role of psychology in wider society: they open legitimate debate. But, where do we draw lines in these debates (e.g. in offending other people’s cherished beliefs?) in Eysenck always pointed to the political winds that blow around the social sciences, which makes it uncomfortable for those wanting to challenge the status quo.

Although he was most certainly an enfant terrible, maybe psychology always needs an Eysenck.