

**The Future of Man.** The BBC Reith Lectures, 1959. P. B. Medawar. Basic Books, New York, 1960, 128 pp. \$3,

## Book Reviews

**Oasis and Casbah: Algerian Culture and Personality in Change.** Anthropological Papers, Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, No. 15. Horace M. Miner and George De Vos. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1960. vi + 236 pp. \$2.50.

This book is an important landmark, for it is the first modern personality study of a Saharan community yet published. It deals with the sedentary Arabic-speakers of Sidi Khaled (a small oasis in the northwestern desert), including those who have remained and others who have become economic refugees in Algiers.

An excellent historical sketch and a detailed anthropological study by Miner are followed by a searching analysis of personality made by De Vos in consultation with Miner. The analysis is based mainly on Rorschach protocols of a random sample of 64 adult males.

Two main objectives were to test Kardiner's theory that institutions can be predicted from knowledge of basic personality and to discover at about what age personality really becomes set. "Blind" Rorschach analysis proved valid for cross-cultural personality rating, even with the intervention of interpreters, but inadequate for predicting relationships between psychological and cultural variables.

Compared with "normal" Americans, the total sample shows high levels of rigidity and maladjustment, which are correlated in the urban group but not in the oasis. Thought processes tend to be stereotypic and illogical as opposed to systematic, and a strong "obsessive-compulsive" quality is apparent; associative blocking is relatively high; and personality in general is "inner-directed" and individualistic. Anxiety and tension, and awareness of them, are higher in Sidi Khaled than in America, and higher in Algiers than in the oasis. Women are passive, "sexual objects" rather than "social beings"; yet they seem more "easy-going" and better adjusted to their lot than men. During

childhood "There is little room for logical discussion, and recourse to objective fact is not often used as a way of settling issues." A man does not take for granted the loyalty or integrity of either his wife or his children. In short, Saharan Arabs are less matter-of-fact rationally than we are, even after intense urban exposure to Western thought and ways: they just don't think as we do.

I have had many years of both professional and casually social relations with the kind of people Miner and De Vos describe, and I agree wholeheartedly with their interpretations. But, in addition, I am inclined to draw from their material further conclusions which probably occurred to them but which are not stated specifically in their book. Chiefly, I seem to see in the personality of the Arab undergoing acculturation in Algeria a phenomenon which is painfully apparent elsewhere: an emotional compulsion to adopt the superficial culture traits (clothing, eating habits, public comportment, and so forth) of alien rulers, while at the same time intensifying those occult native culture concepts and systems of perception which are most antagonistic to the culture of the dominant alien community. Miner's case history No. 26 is particularly revealing in this respect, for here we see a typical intellectual "grass-roots nationalist" stripped to his naked soul.

To sum up, *Oasis and Casbah* is an enormously important book, even though it is too technical to be entertaining reading for any except specialists. Its importance lies in the fact that it is a searching "soil analysis," so to speak, of the ground in which the Algerian rebellion has its roots. Anyone interested in the march of events in North Africa today should read it without delay, as should anyone interested in the much broader problem of why Western governments so often fail to "make friends and influence people."

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There was a time when the conflict between the hereditarians and the environmentalists seemed almost irreconcilable; the low point of this era was, perhaps, about 1897 when the sociologist C. H. Cooley published his essay "Genius, fame and the comparison of races."

Since that time we have progressed, for protagonists on both sides of the fence have found merit in the criticisms of the opposition and have corrected and enlarged their views. In recent years there have been several books that have gone a long way toward bringing together the conflicting lines of evidence. Among the best of these is this little book of Medawar's. With a fine eclecticism he describes a great variety of facts, in writing which is concise and clear but which is yet part of an overall structure that is surprisingly complex for so small a book. Why the complexity? I will return to this question after first describing the contents.

While making the greatest use of genetic knowledge, the author strongly inveighs against *geneticism*, which he defines (page 61) as "the application to human affairs . . . of a genetic knowledge or understanding which is assumed to be very much greater than it really is." Some of the errors that geneticism (or perhaps better, *biologism*) leads to he identifies as follows (page 99): "That competition between one man and another is a necessary part of the texture of society; that societies are organisms which grow and must inevitably die; that division of labour within a society is akin to what we can see in colonies of insects; that the laws of genetics have an overriding authority; that social evolution has a direction forcibly imposed upon it by agencies beyond man's control—all these are biological judgments; but, I do assure you, bad judgments based upon a bad biology." Similarly (page 34), the labeling of a family stock as degenerate because it has produced an unfortunate double recessive phenotype is bad biology. "People who brandish naturalistic principles at us," says Medawar (page 103) "are usually up to mischief. Think only of what we have suffered from a belief in the existence and overriding authority of a fighting instinct; from the doctrines of racial superiority and the metaphysics of blood and soil; from the belief that warfare between men or classes of men or na-