

Book Reviews

The Chemical Gag: Why psychiatrists give neuroleptic drugs

by Peter Lehmann

(Peter Lehmann Antipsychiatrieverlag,
1986, DM29.80)

Reading this book helped me to understand many things: the danger of drugs, the collusion of German psychiatrists in the final solution (the murder of mental patients) during the Second World War, the hypocrisy of modern psychiatry, but most of all, it helped me to understand my own self. When I finished reading it, it took my breath away: "Why yes," I told myself, "this is really true. I believe this. So I am not for the reform of psychiatry, I am for its abolition just like slavery, or apartheid; if it is **wrong**, morally wrong, don't concern yourself with fixing it, just walk away from it."

I have learned more from this book about the secret inner workings of psychiatry than I was able to piece together in ten years of analytic training. After a personal analysis (five days a week for five years) and various other psychotherapies (being done to and doing to others) the best therapy I ever had was reading this book.

I have felt, intuitively, that psychiatrists have committed crimes against humanity. But it was hard to put this intuition into words. Now Lehmann takes away all the mystery from psychiatry, so that when someone tells you that "psychiatrists mean well", you can tell them, "No, what they mean is, what they do: their own business consists of making healthy people ill, with poisons called *medicine*", as Lehmann puts it

so succinctly, and this is precisely what psychiatrists do best.

Read this book, and it will be like coming out of a fog into the clear sunshine. Much that was obscure and intuitively felt will become crystal clear. All of the worst suspicions I had about psychiatry were confirmed and given voice by this book, which speaks in plain language, humanely, with no pretensions or desire to obscure or impress. It is a work of magisterial lucidity. Suddenly Lehmann makes it clear with blinding insight that everybody reacts the same (badly) to psychiatric drugs, so-called "normal" people, psychiatrists, so-called "schizophrenics", and even spiders (who stop spinning webs; no doubt a triumph for psychiatry: witness the German phrase, *du spinnst*). Nowhere else have the many serious dangers of neuroleptics been so carefully catalogued. Read this book and throw away your drugs, leave your therapist, and vow never to call another person crazy except in affectionate jest.

Jeffrey M. Masson