

Significant Books

Reviewers/Robert R. Leeper
Gordon P. Liddle

The Miracle of Dialogue. Reuel L. Howe. New York, New York: The Seabury Press, 1963. 154 p. \$3.50.

"To my students who in dialogue become my teachers." This dedication of *The Miracle of Dialogue* gives terse yet eloquent expression of the author's philosophy and of his faith in dialogue as a change process. Stated in this manner the book becomes a tribute both to the self- and other-renewing qualities of the dialogue and to a process by which the teacher or supervisor or administrator can feel free enough and self-confident enough to continue, frankly and enthusiastically, to develop and grow while on the job.

Readers of the 1963 and the 1962 yearbooks of ASCD will find special interest in *The Miracle of Dialogue*. In *New Insights and the Curriculum* (1963) the chapter by Marshall McLuhan, treating the growth and possible extension of dialogue, and the chapter by Dwayne Huebner, treating the new modes of man's relationship to man tie in admirably with Dr. Howe's volume. Also related is the 1962 yearbook, *Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming*, with its projection of perceptual field theory psychology as it applies in human relationships and in wholesome personality development. Each of these authors puts primary reliance upon man as his own change

agent—provided he can find the support and the insight he needs. Such support and insight, the author believes, can be made available through the dialogue.

The author defines dialogue as "that address and response between persons in which there is a flow of meaning between them in spite of all the obstacles that normally would block the relationship. It is that interaction between persons in which one of them seeks to give himself as he is to the other, and seeks also to know the other as the other is. Such is the relationship which characterizes dialogue and is the precondition to dialogical communication" (p. 37).

Some of the seriousness with which the author regards dialogue as a change process is evident in his statement "what happens between men is of primary importance and provides an enabling or disabling context for the purpose of whatever exchange takes place between them" (p. 38).

"The Importance of Dialogue" is indicated in Chapter One. The author states: "This is the miracle of dialogue: it can bring relationship into being, and it can bring into being once again a relationship that has died" (p. 3). This relating of the dialogue to life and to the means by which a person may live well is a continuing theme of the volume. For example, the author says: "Communica-

tion means life or death to persons" (p. 4).

Dialogue is described as beginning with infancy and as characterizing all the myriad relationships which the individual experiences in his growing up and in his continuing contacts with other human beings, whether in school, in marriage, in business or in church.

"The Barriers to Communication" are discussed in Chapter Two. The author explains: "A barrier to communication is something that keeps meanings from meeting. Meaning barriers exist between all people, making communication much more difficult than most people seem to realize" (p. 23). The specific barriers analyzed are those of language differences, the images which the individuals bring to the communication process, the anxieties of the partners attempting to communicate, defensiveness on the part of the individuals concerned, and the holding of contrary purposes.

Chapter Three concerns itself with the conscious movement of the individual "From Monologue to Dialogue." Helpful is Dr. Howe's admonition, "When we are studying a theory we should at the same time be thinking in terms of life situations and questions to which it applies and which test it" (p. 42). The author succeeds in making such practical application throughout the volume.

"The Purpose of Dialogue" is developed in Chapter Four. Two inadequate purposes which the author dismisses are: (a) the purpose of communication that seeks only to give *our* answers to people's questions; and (b) the purpose of communication that seeks only to secure consensus with the point of view of the communicator. Constructive purposes of communication are these: (a) When communication is a means by which in-

formation and meaning are conveyed and received between individuals and groups. The author indicates that either the language of words or the language of relationship may serve this purpose. (b) To help persons make a responsible decision whether that decision be Yes or No in relation to the truth that is being presented. The author states that "the word of dialogue is an open word which accepts as relevant all that is seriously said" and thus "maintains a different attitude toward negative and critical responses than does monologue which, by its very nature, finds denial intolerable. Dialogue has more respect for a responsible No and all that it signifies than for an irresponsible Yes" (p. 57-58). (c) "To bring back the forms of life into relation to the vitality which originally produced them" (p. 63). (d) "To bring persons into being. Man becomes man in personal encounter, but personal encounter requires address and response between person and person" (p. 65).

"The Participants in Dialogue" are described in Chapter Five. The dialogical person is described as one "who, by word or relationship, is in communication with his environment and open to the communication that environment offers, environment in this sense including both persons and things" (p. 69). The dialogical word is described as "an open word, a word of beginnings, because it is a word of expectation inviting response" (p. 83).

Chapter Six describes "The Dialogical Crises." Chapter Seven indicates some of "The Fruits of Dialogue," discussing some of the almost miraculous changes which have been produced by dialogue in the lives of various individuals. Chapter Eight looks at "Dialogue and the Tasks Ahead."

One drawback of this book as far as educators are concerned is the fact that the author has directed his volume primarily to ministers and to others concerned with religious work and growth. To his own credit, however, and to the advantage of every reader of the volume is Dr. Howe's continuing emphasis upon the process of dialogue as one of change and of growth in every human relationship in which "men open themselves . . . by turning honestly to one another."

This is an inspiring and useful book. It has proved helpful to the reviewer and will, in his opinion, benefit all persons who open themselves thoughtfully and receptively to the ideas developed therein.

—Reviewed by ROBERT R. LEEPER,
Editor, EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP.

First Flight. John Williams Andrews.
Westport, Connecticut: Pavilion Press,
1936, 1962 and 1963. 31 p. \$2.50.

This volume, a narrative poem, presents "The Story of Orville and Wilbur Wright at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina." Thoroughly capable is Andrews' treatment both of the birth of aviation and of the setting for this event, the bleak and windswept sand dunes of the Outer Banks.

Published originally as part of a longer work entitled, *Prelude to "Icaros,"* this account of the first successful flight of a heavier-than-air machine, is reissued in honor of the sixtieth anniversary of that event, which took place on December 17, 1903.

Evident throughout the poem are the author's flexibility and soundness of technique. This skill enables him to combine exciting lyric passages describing the physical setting with the exacting account of the scientific procedures followed by the Wright brothers as they

went about testing their models and creating the new science of aerodynamics.

Teachers working with pupils of upper-elementary through high school levels will find this poem a useful and moving celebration of the beginning of man's conquest of the air by machine.

—Reviewed by ROBERT R. LEEPER.

The Concepts of Over- and Underachievement. Robert L. Thorndike.
New York: Bureau of Publications,
Teachers College, Columbia University,
1963. 79 p. \$3.25.

Diary of a Slow Learner Class. Jack Abramowitz. Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1963. 48 p. \$1.00.

Teaching the Gifted Child. James J. Gallagher. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1963. 330 p. \$6.95.

The Counselor in a Changing World. C. Gilbert Wrenn. Washington, D.C.: American Personnel and Guidance Association, 1964. 195 p. \$2.50.

When a Child Is Different. Maria Egg.
New York: John Day Company, 1964.
155 p. \$3.75.

The Mentally Retarded Child. A. R. Luria. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963. 207 p. \$7.50.

The School Dropout. Daniel Schreiber, editor. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1964. 214 p.
Cloth \$4, Paper \$3.

Many factors reported involved in underachievement of students in one study fail to be confirmed in subsequent studies. Robert L. Thorndike's monograph, *The Concepts of Over- and Underachievement*, is an attempt to improve the quality of research on this subject through an examination of some of the ambiguity of terms and deficient experimental designs which have been used. For example, many researchers have

simply subtracted aptitude scores from achievement scores and on this basis labeled children as achievers or under-achievers. Others have ignored regression equations or have allowed the same score, such as a class grade, to represent different real levels of performance in different subgroups. Thorndike suggests ways to minimize or eliminate these errors, and provides a concise checklist indicating the precautions necessary for making better, more meaningful studies of achievement.

Diary of a Slow Learner Class by Jack Abramowitz should warm the heart of anyone who has ever faced a class of nonachieving adolescents. He describes his day-to-day battle to make reluctant learners into learners, students successful enough to leave his class while he struggles with the even more reluctant truants. Dr. Abramowitz is achievement oriented. He wants to get through his lesson plan unless something more valuable comes along, but more often than not progress is slowed by new enrollees, too many absentees, a fire drill, a Cuban crisis, a broken projector, or a church holiday. Class size rises from 26 to 40 during the period of the diary. Adapting to different situations which arise in the class, learning from failures, and building on successes come alive in this diary.

James J. Gallagher's *Teaching the Gifted Child* describes what is known about identification, characteristics of gifted achievers and underachievers, and administrative modification designed to meet their needs. The new element in this book is found in the chapters on math, science, social studies, and discovery and inquiry training. Here the author illustrates the type of curricular modifications he thinks are necessary. He describes set theory, illustrates, by example, teaching for generalization, and

illustrates the individual differentiation which should be made to meet the learning needs of various types of gifted children. This is a comprehensive, well-written book.

How can counselors help young people meet the problems of a world which will be considerably different from today's world? In order to answer this question we must try to envisage the future of society and the role of education, counselors, and the training of counselors in this society. C. Gilbert Wrenn, who attempted this task for the American Personnel and Guidance Association, set forth his views in *The Counselor in a Changing World*. His conclusion is that counselors must become very well-educated, well-rounded persons who keep growing intellectually and are slow to be judgmental. The author thinks that the counselor who studied psychology a decade ago but has since stopped reading and thinking has a conceptual revolution to catch up with, and Wrenn proposes in-service activities designed to bring this about. The author discusses the controversial issues in the guidance and counseling field, discusses the relevant research, and then states his views. For example, he thinks that counselors should place primary emphasis on developmental needs and decision points rather than on remedial needs and crisis points. He says that vocational choice should be seen as a process extending over a period of years; it is not a question of "making up your mind." Wrenn outlines what he thinks should be the functions and priorities of the counselor and urges that other activities be discouraged.

The author of *When a Child Is Different* is Maria Egg, a Swiss psychologist and educator of the severely retarded. The emphasis in this remarkably prac-

tical book is on the role of parents in helping the severely retarded child to lead as full a life as possible without sacrificing the personal and family life of the parents and siblings. Dr. Egg describes the symptoms of severe retardation and urges parents to secure medical help, but she advises parents, if it is necessary, to accept the fact that their child's retardation will probably become more pronounced as time goes by.

Parents are urged to follow-up a realistic appraisal of the retarded child's limitations and the limitations upon their energy with a program aimed at stimulating the child's limited attention and abilities so that he does not become a "basket case." The author has many practical suggestions aimed at helping the retarded appear and act normal and attain the limited amount of independence and social acceptance which is possible for him. The book does not discuss the problems facing the retarded and their parents in the teens and in adulthood.

A group of Russian scientists published *The Mentally Retarded Child*. They summarized the present state of their knowledge concerning various types and degrees of severe retardation caused by intrauterine or early childhood disease or as a consequence of heredity. The electrical activity of the brain illustrates the pathologically changed background against which the reflex and higher mental activities take place. While speech processes play a much smaller role in the organization of activity of these children, the authors discuss experiments which have shown that within severe limits a correctly arranged system of training and instruction can accomplish a great deal toward helping children compensate for their defects.

In *The School Dropout*, under the editorship of Daniel Schreiber, more

than a dozen authors examine the various societal factors involved in the dropout problem and the implications of the problem for the schools. At times the authors pointedly disagree, and they do not pull any punches. The result is thought provoking. Friedenbergs says that education has served in the past as an opiate, but that the children of the poor have gradually come to see that most of the dropouts would not have a better chance, even economically, if they finished high school. These children and young people are now getting over their addiction. He thinks that we must explore the possibilities of a rapprochement rather than merely trying in vain to keep lower-class youngsters on an "education kick." The jobs the dropout's parents knew are gone, and mastery of the language and at least some of the rudiments of middle-class life are necessary if these children are to operate successfully in today's world. A number of the authors have suggestions for schools interested in establishing closer teacher-parent relationships and in raising the sights of children and parents. In order to have a significant effect on the dropout problem, teachers and parents must have a sense of participating in an educational advance, not a rear-guard remedial program.

—Reviewed by GORDON P. LIDDLE, Associate Director, Interprofessional Research Commission on Pupil Personnel Services, University of Maryland, College Park.

A Secular Approach—Black

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great civilization can go down in ruins if its people are confused in values and fail to develop moral character. So long as there is effort to share the finest fruits

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