BOOK REVIEWS


This book consists of papers and discussions at a two-day conference in 1962 in a Child Development Centre in New York. The speakers were psychologists, psychiatrists, and educationalists, and the topic was 'Development and Education'. The papers were those of Ausubel on 'Stages of Intellectual Development and their Implications for early Childhood Education'; Lili Peller on 'Language and Development'; Peter B. Neubauer on 'Development Considerations of the Nursery School Experience'; and Jules Henry on 'Death Fear and Climax in Nursery School Play'.

The book is definitely more suitable for psychologists than it is for simple-minded paediatricians, who will find much of it difficult to understand. For instance, Ausubel, in a section entitled 'The concrete abstract dimension of cognitive development' wrote: 'The concrete abstract dimension of intellectual development may be divided into three qualitatively distinct developmental stages—the preoperational stage, the stage of concrete operations, and the stage of abstract operations.' 'This dependence upon concrete—empirical props obviously limits his (the elementary school pupil)'s ability meaningfully to group and manipulate relationships between abstractions, since he can only acquire these understandings and perform those logical operations which do not go beyond the concrete and particularized representation of reality in his use of props.'

Mrs. Lili Peller's contribution is a psychoanalytical account of language development. Some ignorant paediatricians, like the writer, will find her explanations difficult to follow. She wrote 'Through the highly libidinized, incessant, and tremendously repetitive motor and sensory activity of the sadistic—anal phase, the child develops the image of his self and of his body functions. He creates the world of things anchored in space'. She goes on to say, 'A psychoanalytic symbol carries an intense affect, which originally belonged to a body part, a body function, a basic family relationship, or to facts of life and death. The shift of affect from the symbolized, e.g., urination to the symbol, e.g., water—is due to repression.' She declares that 'It is narcissism and the drive for mastery which accounts for all early play'.

Elsewhere in the book there is an interesting discussion on the age at which children can learn, and the question of whether they can learn anything that adults can. Ausubel contends that children cannot learn as much as adults, though they are at certain advantages over adults: the latter may have to unlearn things if they have been taught badly, they are more apt to have emotional blocks with respect to subjects, and 'there is a marked falling off of intellectual enthusiasm as one moves up the academic ladder'.

Psychologists and educationalists will find much of interest in this book.


The main core of this book consists of a report of an epidemiological survey of stuttering in schoolchildren. For the purposes of the survey a representative sample of stutterers and their mothers was matched with a group of controls. A comprehensive battery of questions and tests was put to each and the results both compared simply, and analysed statistically. In this way several factors which differentiated the stutterers from the control group emerged. These should prove of considerable practical value.

The scoring of stutterers was then examined separately to highlight intergroup differences. From this emerged four factors which the authors pinpointed as appearing singly or jointly in all but a small minority of cases studied.

The book is concluded with an account of an interesting but unfinished experiment conducted with 35 stutterers of all ages, into the inhibition of stuttering by the use of syllable-timed speech.

In addition to the main studies in the book, there are two smaller, but no less interesting sections, one reviewing concisely the existing literature on the subject and the other dealing with the genetics of stuttering.

This important book should be of value to all those who are interested in a methodical approach to the syndrome of stuttering. The authors themselves admit the value of a detailed observation of a limited number of cases, as a first stage in research. The next is essentially a formal attempt to validate the hypotheses so formed, and it is as a part of this stage that the work was carried out. The authors have succeeded in producing a clear, concise, and