

Book Reviews

Talent and Society. New perspectives in the identification of talent. David C. McClelland, Alfred L. Baldwin, Urie Bronfenbrenner, Fred L. Strodbeck. Van Nostrand, Princeton, 1958. vii + 275 pp. \$3.75.

The committee of social scientists which wrote this volume on utilization of talent turned away from traditional concerns with ability tests and thinking processes, exploring instead the values and styles of behavior that distinguish high achievers from low achievers. For example, high-achieving groups are much less fatalistic, and much more ready to break family ties in pursuing other goals.

This finding comes from the most interesting of the empirical chapters, Strodbeck's study of family influences in transmitting "the American achievement ethic." Since Jews are high achievers by many criteria, and Italians low achievers, Strodbeck examines differences in their family relations by several methods, including an ingenious technique for observing "how decisions are won" in family arguments. His striking intermixture of theory and evidence indicates that power relationships among parents and child determine the child's outlook on achievement. Power structures, in turn, depend on subcultural tradition, social class, and the out-of-home success of the male parent.

An intricate paper by Bronfenbrenner and others redefines the problem of measuring social sensitivity or insight. Their small-scale experiment cries out for replication; if the findings are confirmed, it will have outstanding implications for social psychology.

McClelland's summary of the four topical chapters shows that selecting the most promising young people is an inadequate solution to the problem of talent. He stresses the desirability of encouraging the individual to go into situations for which his values and styles of work are most adaptive. This replaces the concept of all-round potential with a concept of potential for specific roles. It is also suggested that we can modify the child's experiences so as to develop attitudes conducive to achievement in this culture, and that school and work situations can be modified to use value patterns that do not now lead to success.

A typical question is: If school success is a prerequisite to responsibility and if school demands certain personal characteristics, may we not be eliminating individuals who lack these traits but whose other characteristics would make them highly successful in science, art, or public affairs? Questions may be raised about some of the positions advanced. Some inconsistency is apparent. Though matching persons to tasks on the basis of personality characteristics, for example, is a plausible aim, the evidence that different types of achievement require different values and styles is missing. Likewise, when McClelland assumes that a person's values, motives, and sensitivities are so stable that they "lead him to behave in certain ways whatever the situation," he appears to pay too little respect to the adaptations most people make readily in going from one role to another.

This yeasty contribution to thinking and research merits the attention of psychologists and sociologists. The first and last chapters have much to say to all others concerned with improving education. The committee members offer no definitive answer, but this is a token of their wisdom; the problem of talent is broad, and our ignorance of basic facts is great.

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Zhurnal Mikrobiologii, Epidemiologii i Immunobiologii. vol. 28, No. 1-3. *Min. zdavookhranenia.* Moscow, S.S.S.R. English translation. D. J. Bauer, scientific translation Ed. Published on the initiative and with the financial support of the National Institutes of Health, Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Pergamon Press, London and New York, 1957.

Everybody who knows Russian scientific writing will be worried about the attempt to give a complete, word-by-word English translation of a Russian *Zhurnal*. It is not enough to know the two languages. It is necessary to have a thorough knowledge of the different

fields of science, the special terminology of both languages, and, furthermore, the Russian scientific slang.

The scientific value of the translation will be determined by the exactness of the translation. Comparison of the original Russian text with the English translation will show how accurate the latter is in this most important respect.

The articles of the *Zhurnal* vary greatly in their difficulty for the translator. Easiest to translate are the short technical papers; most difficult are the long "general" articles and those saturated with Marxist philosophy.

Many of the technical papers are surprisingly well translated; among these are the articles by Nabokov (No. 1, page 19), Varfolomeeva (No. 1, page 38), Markova (No. 2, page 185), Miasnikov (No. 2, page 270), Zherikova (No. 3, page 329), and many others. Unfortunately not all the translators had the knowledge necessary to produce perfect translations. The translations contain many errors, some of them grave, which completely distort the original text. Table 1 shows some of these errors.

As Table 1 shows, errors are caused by lack of knowledge in the special field of science under discussion or by misunderstanding of the Russian text and terminology. Some improvement can be noted: the third issue contains fewer errors than the first. There are practically no printing errors.

The technical papers reveal, to the unprepared Westerner, the incredibly unsanitary and poor living conditions in rural Soviet Russia. Epidemics of a type for generations unknown in the West ravage the people of Soviet *kolkhozes*. The cadavers of dead animals are thrown into gardens and the dogs tear them apart (No. 2, page 247). To prevent their freezing, young animals are kept in the living quarters (No. 2, page 248), or at least this was the case until an anthrax epidemic swept through the population. Some *kolkhoz* workers stay for long hours with bare feet in mud contaminated with urine and feces of swine (No. 2, page 241). These farms have very little water, and what water there is, is stored in barrels embedded in earth. From these barrels water is used both for pigs and for people. On the farms discussed in these papers, the small pig pond was extensively used by the inhabitants for bathing (No. 2, page 242). Such conditions caused the development of a great deal of swine leptospirosis among the population of these *kolkhozes*. The reader is told that during these calamities the population receives scientific help from government agencies. The epidemics, the course of diagnosis, and the preventive measures taken are well described in the translations and provide the most rewarding reading in the volume; these are not pages from a text-