

## *Book Reviews*

*Learning Theories for Teachers.* By Morris L. Bigge, 1964. Available from Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, N.Y. 366 pp. \$3.95 (paperback).

Increased knowledge about learning theories will enable teachers to more fully understand the learning process; this in turn will result in more effective teaching. With this in mind, the author devotes more than half of the book to a comparative study of learning theories, with emphasis on contemporary educational principles and practices and the similarities and differences between them. Dr. Bigge presents these in a clear and impartial manner, giving opposing or alternative views whenever these exist. But he also expresses personal convictions and his own leaning toward acceptance of the cognitive-field theory of learning, which focuses on interaction and interrelationships, and postulates that "nothing can be perceived or experienced as a thing-in-itself, but only as it is related to other things." This is sometimes referred to as the "goal-insight" theory of learning, which is quite different from stimulus-response theory.

But the book is not all theory. It is also highly practical in that the presentation of theory is augmented by logical implications in terms of practice. There are chapters on transfer of learning, accepted principles of learning, and the problems involved in relating learning to teaching.

Of greatest value to the Extension worker, perhaps, is the clear and detailed discussion of three levels of learning: memory, understanding, and reflection. At the memory level of learning, the emphasis is on facts. While facts may provide usable background material for problem-solving, they are usually not relevant to future thought needs and are quickly forgotten. Understanding consists of (1) seeing relationships and (2) perceiving the "tool" use of facts. Teaching at this level therefore concentrates on relationships between principles and single facts and the possible application of these principles. The reflection level of learning is characterized by much greater student participation during the learning process. The learner is confronted by genuine problems; previously accepted ideas are carefully and critically examined in light of supporting evidence. The result is an enlarged store of tested insights of a generalized nature and increased ability on the part of the learner to solve problems on his own.

Suggested techniques and the steps involved in teaching at the re-

tion level are discussed in detail. Mastery of such principles should be especially pertinent to Cooperative Extension Service personnel since they deal heavily in problem solving. This book would make a useful addition to the reference library of any professional educator.

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*Group Leadership and Democratic Action.* By Franklyn S. Haiman, 1951. Available from Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Massachusetts. 307 pp. \$4.50.

This text ". . . attempt(s) to bring together in one place the philosophical-scientific background and the practical techniques of democratic group leadership." It is within this framework that Haiman presents the book's major concept: that leadership functions—and the approaches to leadership—lie on a continuum between the poles of anarchy (on the political and schematic left) and totalitarianism; and that within the midrange of that continuum, another idea is needed to accommodate the range of democratic approaches to leadership which lie between "pure" democracy and autocracy.

These parallel continua enable the author to demonstrate that pure forms of leadership rarely, if ever, occur and that, in fact, one's approach to leadership is best described in terms of an "orientation." In support of this position, the author says, "There can be democracy with much individual liberty and there can be democracy with little individual liberty—the only requirement of a democracy being that authority rests with the members of the group." Haiman's orientation is toward democracy with a maximum of individual liberty, for as he notes, "The only circumstances people fully understand are those they have themselves experienced. The only ideas they fully grasp are those in whose formation they have participated." The significance of this statement becomes more apparent when considered in the light of the following: "The term leadership—as well as guidance, influence, or control—implies a *purpose* on the part of the leader. Leadership is an effort on his part to direct the behavior of others *toward a particular end.*"

To accept this definition on face value is to infer that leadership is manipulative and, as a consequence, basically undemocratic. However, quite to the contrary, one infers from reading the entire volume that the leader's function is to serve as a catalyst between the group and the (educational) purposes constituting its *raison d'etre* so that each member can maximize his potential for gain from his participation. Realistically, this represents a maximization of the democratic process; for democracy,

carried to an extreme, would wreck an educational program. Likewise, when the abilities of members of the group are widely disparate, democracy becomes something of a sham for the less able persons who will be manipulated. Under these circumstances, Haiman suggests "that we should openly recognize and admit the need for an authoritarian instructor-type of leadership."

And this brings one, full circle, back to the concept of the parallel continua.

Assuming that the reader is convinced of the efficacy of the democratic approach, he might most profitably turn his attention first to determining and developing those qualities described by Haiman as *social sensitivity* and *a belief in the value of the individual*. The whole democratic leadership construct is predicated on these two highly subjective factors, for as Haiman says, "A sincere belief in the dignity of the individual, as we see it, is practically synonymous with an intelligent belief in the value of free discussion. . . . We do want to make absolutely clear at this point our firm conviction that the leader's attitude toward people is infinitely more important than a carload of techniques."

With this sense of perspective, the reader can approach the detailed coverage of the techniques of leadership with a degree of equanimity.

Haiman's book would be valuable reading for Extension workers, for when an organization is dependent upon voluntary participants, democratic leadership is of unquestionable value. Our attitudes toward other people are so transparent that they cannot be disguised for long, so it is necessary that we reflect to them an accepting, democratic attitude. And this is the significance of Haiman's position: One can have a basically democratic orientation without wrecking his programs by a slavish adherence to a framework within which people are unable — or unprepared — to work. Then leadership becomes a developmental activity, and democracy comes alive.

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*Understanding Culture*. By John J. Honigmann, 1963. Available from Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, N.Y. 468 pp. \$6.75.

Understanding culture, as explored in this book, has far reaching implications for all informal educators. The author's objective is to provide a rationale whereby the reader might develop a better understanding of any culture. The book offers a skeleton definition of culture by equating it with artifacts, activities, and thoughts and feelings that are socially standardized. On the other hand, through many examples, the author portrays an extended characterization of various cultures in an attempt to delineate phenomena of culture. The fact that the author

has himself assimilated some of the cultures he characterizes makes the book more meaningful.

Throughout, culture is portrayed as the cement through which members of a social system are held in relationship to one another. The author feels that man somehow has failed in his attempt to understand and appreciate a large segment of the other fellow's culture. Because of his reflective consciousness, man is endowed with considerable cultural variety. He sometimes finds it hard to live with this much variety as he attempts to cope with cultural differences.

Both heredity and environment are recognized as factors influencing the shaping of cultural patterns in a society. Once these cultural patterns have taken shape they are not easily modified. Yet, some change is utterly essential in order for a society to survive. The author emphasizes that not all cultural change is even and that ultimately all cultural change is manmade. Hence, the wider a man's cultural horizons, the more resources he has to work with and the richer his creative output can be in his attempt to bring about cultural change. In man's effort to transform cultural patterns, not only external conditions need to be altered but also the internal conditions of man as he has developed up to now.

The author develops the theory that all modern cultures are the fruition of historic opportunities for growth, which should be considered when attempting to transform cultural patterns. The reader's attention is frequently focused on the idea that when an individual understands a phenomenon he is well on the way to controlling it. Emphasis is also placed on the fact that social systems are made up of different individuals who will never think alike on all issues. Hence, a successful change agent recognizes this and works to balance and integrate different interests and viewpoints, not to abolish them.

Recognition is made of the fact that most everything that paleontologists and archeologists have been able to discover about evolution (biological and cultural) has come about in the last 150 years. Prior to this man ascribed his culture to divine origin. Finally the author portrays the luster of civilization in man's attempt to improve his own well being.

This book can help the reader better understand the various factors influencing cultural patterns. In addition, it will help in establishing some basic principles for initiating these cultural changes.

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