

Book Review

A SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION

FUNDAMENTAL CHILD PSYCHOLOGY by Dr. J. Pikūnas. Illustrated with charts and photographs. 259 pp. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company. 1957.

After World War II a number of Lithuanians, as well as other East Europeans, who had either voluntarily left their countries or been deported to Germany, experienced some anxious moments with regard to their future. The anxiety was, however, lifted when in 1948 the US Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act. This fact initiated a tremendous sociological experiment: a mass transplanting of political refugees, mostly intelligentsia to another continent. The problem of assimilation of these individuals as well as their relative value to the new country gave concern to those who endorsed this movement, and those opposing this action felt that the problems mentioned were insurmountable. These questions have not been answered yet to the fullest extent, but there is no doubt that those in favor of this immigration can point to specific empirical data which proves the meaningfulness of the acceptance of political refugees into the U.S.A. One specific empirical aspect is to be pointed out in this particular review.

Dr. J. Pikūnas, who spent the postwar years at the University of Munich in Germany, has now enriched the scientific literature of this country by writing a book on fundamentals of child psychology. The textbook is intended as study material for prospective teachers and as a guide for parents. Thus the range of those who may use this publication is certainly not very limited, and since, generally speaking, it is a good textbook, the effort can be considered as successful not only scholastically but economically as well.

The text material is organized on the basis of four major sections, which in turn have a number of chapters. The basic approach to child study is discussed in the first section with specific reference to history, basic concepts and general principles of development. In the second part the actual phases of development are described, and the author mentions four predominant ones. Part III is devoted to the basic aspects and dimensions of personality, and in the last section of his book the author discusses personality, the self, and child guidance. The book is illustrated with a number of interesting pictures of young children and contains a few valuable charts.

Since this quarterly does not pretend to be a psychological journal, the review is intentionally limited to a general evaluation with no specific emphasis on details. The publication attracts one's attention because the author has an educational background which is not frequently encountered nowadays. His particular synthesis of European and American trends of thought as well as areas of concentration is reflected throughout his book. Lack of a rigid adherence to any one of the basic psychological schools of thought is one of the manifestations of this particular educational background. The author is rather sceptical of Freud's theories, and, considering the latter's actual influence on European psychological thinking, the author's position is readily understood. It is unfortunate, however, that Dr. Pikūnas fails to provide the reader with specific evidence regarding lack of validity of Freudian theories (p. 86). The operationally oriented American psychologist will certainly be surprised to find an integral part of the book devoted to religious and moral training. The author must be commended for the inclusion of this topic; psychologists cannot limit themselves and simply ignore areas of subject matter because of lack of ability to define and study these areas operationally. Although the majority of bibliographical notes refer to publications in English, the author has also included a number of French and German references, and thus the reader is provided with a more balanced bibliography.

For Lithuanians living in the U.S.A. this textbook bears a special meaning. As far as is known, this publication is the first textbook written by a Lithuanian for American Institutions of Higher Learning. Numerous other scientific contributions have been made, but this seems to be the first textbook, and it certainly can be considered as a valuable contribution to the field of psychology. This fact, as well as many others, clearly shows the keen and sound judgment of those individuals who about one decade ago advocated the admittance of refugees into this country, and it may be safely assumed that such contributions to the field of science and arts have amply rewarded their efforts.

