The Psychology of Special Abilities and Disabilities.

Price. $1.75.

Dr. Bronner defines her problem in terms of individual adjustmets and limits it to educational and vocational considerations. Arising from the present lack of recognition of special abilities and disabilities of children and the consequent tendency to ignore particular aptitudes, only the general low level of ability, the problem of adjustment for its solution upon the discovery of individual abilities and limitations. Thus an individual may function normally except for a mental defect, or an individual who, though generally mentally normal, may yet have some special ability. By "an individual with special defect," the author means "a person with some mental defect or defect, rightfully be designated feeble-minded or subnormal; one who, in the main, he is normal. The extent of incapacity may be narrow. On the other hand are the mental defectives with special abilities. The feeble-minded "who fall somewhat below the upper limits of mental deficiency (the Binet tests for the twelve year level) possess abilities which, not discovered by these tests, render them able to compete in an ordinary environment." The author defines also the "sub-normal," who, "while definitely lacking in the higher mental processes as estimated by tests, yet pass the Binet twelve year level and possess abilities of social significance." To effect the best possible solution of these individuals to the group, the author proposes diagnosis by psychological tests with a view to practical solutions.

The proposed solution of this problem is, then, through the study of the mental processes involved in various activities. The limitations in consideration of the means at present available and the present knowledge with respect to the measurement of such processes, are noted in connection with the discussion of the mental processes which are supposed to be discriminated by certain tests.

The need of such diagnosis is emphasized in a brief survey of educational tendencies which Dr. Bronner interprets as the
individual," stressing chiefly the group rather than the individual. That
individually diagnoses can be made of practical value even with the acknowl-
edge present limitations of our laboratory methods, is the author's conten-
tion. And it is by such study, she thinks, that we may hope to improve our
of discriminating the various mental traits.

The means employed to solve this problem, the methods of diagnosis, are
various revisions of the Binet-Simon scale for measuring general
rene, and second, "other tests available for the study of the various
processes." The clinical findings are supplemented by the "develop-
mental," "the physical conditions at the time of the examination," "national opportunities," "the social background," and "perhaps the
heredity." "It is the accuracy and completeness of all these data
determine the value of the final diagnosis."

"other tests" used consist of performance tests, association tests,
psycho-motor control," etc.

Introductory Test: a combination of the form board with the picture
(Healy Intro. Picture Form Board).

Construction Test 1: consisting of a wooden frame into which five
pieces to be fitted. (Healy Construction Puzzle A).

Construction Test II: more complicated than I. (Healy-Fernald
Construction Puzzle B).

The Puzzle Box: box fastened by a series of strings passed over
which can be unfastened only in a certain sequence. (Healy).

Cross Line Test I: two lines crossing like a large X with numbers
(Healy).

Cross Line Test II: more complex form of cross line test I. (Healy).

Retro Completion Test: picture representing ten activities from
which ten squares of equal size have been cut out so that in each piece is a
part essential to the meaning of the whole. (Healy).

Cranings Completion Test: mutilated text. (Trabue Scales).

Arbitrary Association or Substitution Test: Association between a
symbols and numerals. (Healy).

Tests of Memory for Logical Material: stimuli visual and auditory.

Tests for Memory Span.

Tests for Visual Memory.

Tests for Remote Memory.

Tapping Test: tapping in half inch squares. (Motor Coordination
Test).

Tests for Controlled Association: words given by subject must
assigned relation to stimulus word. (Woodworth-Wells).

Kraepelin Addition and Subtraction Tests: continuous addition and
20. Instruction Box. (Healy).
21. Analogies Test. (Terman and others).
22. Ball and Field Test. (Terman).
23. Link Chain Test.
24. Test for Mechanical Ability. (Stenquist).
25. Directions Test. (Woodworth-Wells).
27. Questionnaire Tests for Ordinary Information. (Healy).

The author groups them as “tests for the study of the various processes.” There are performance tests for the perception of form relationships; tests for discriminative capacity of color, form; tests of “apperception” such as the Ebbinghaus and Pictorial Completion methods; tests for memories, auditory, visual, etc.; the various association tests, Kent-Rosanoff, Woodworth-Wells, etc.; tests for reasoning ability; for psycho-motor control; for mental control; and for other special abilities. It is an attempt to “study in detail the various mental processes in relation to the capabilities of the individual.”

In his diagnosis, the clinical psychologist must differentiate cases of special mental disability from psychopathological cases. Nervous disorders, hysteria, dementia praecox, epilepsy, chorea, and other diseases with a disturbance in the functioning of the mental processes must be carefully discriminated. Thus differential diagnosis assumes an important place in the examination.

In accordance with the author’s purpose to study these cases with a view to educational and vocational considerations, she considers “special defects in number work,” “special defects in language ability,” and these with a consideration of “special defects in mental processes,” “special defects in mental control,” after which she devotes a section to “special defects with general mental subnormality.” The method of treatment consists of an analysis of the elements involved in the special disability under consideration and the citation of illustrative cases to answer the question: mental processes as studied by psychological tests can be analyzed to explain the defect that is found.”

In the analysis of the mental functions involved in arithmetic cited in illustration have all proved normal except for the one defect in number work. The case study is followed by a recommendation made and the results obtained on the basis of such recommendation. In each case the issue was a thoroughly practical one based on educational or vocational guidance. For instance, one boy had a defect in auditory memory for numbers” with no other noticeable defect even “exceptionally good visual powers.” It was recommended...
Teach use visual methods of presentation. The results were of immediate
practical value.

Special defects in language ability are discussed under three heads,
reading, spelling, and spoken language. Emphasis is laid on the "complexity
of the reading process and the various phases of the mental life that are
involved therein."

Case studies follow. There is in each instance a recommendation of
education or social import.

Under the heading, "special defects in separate mental processes," the
discusses, defects of memory," "defects of inner visual functions,"
ables for work with concrete material," "defect in speed of reactions,
in perceptual abilities," and "defects in higher mental processes."
the relationships of the various aspects of the memory processes to
her and applications to complex activities have not yet been fully
lined, the author reminds us. She then discusses cases; one who has
"defect for auditory presentations," a case who has "defective rote memory
whose immediate memory is normal" and also a case whose
"visual memory" was poor whose "apperceptions were quicker than his visual
perceptions. 1. Emphasis is, however, chiefly on the discriminative capacity of
immediate and remote memory.

discussion of disabilities for work with concrete material follows.
ility which is the result of "lack of dexterity to carry out well the
one has reached." The former involves lack of "perception of
relationships," the latter poor "psychomotor control." Both types of
are illustrated.

defect in speed of reactions explains occasional instances of "seeming
capacity." Individual differences in sensory and perceptual powers
in discrimination of weight, color, form, length of line, etc. The
oted that "in spite of much experimentation we do not know the
which disability in perceptual powers, auditory, visual, or
or of other types, becomes important as conditioning failure in edu-
cational or vocational life."

defects in the higher mental processes are discussed with the reservation
presence of such defects leads one to doubt whether the individual
ing them can be regarded as sufficiently normal mentally to fall within
of individuals with special defects." Such are persons who seem
ormal capacity as judged by social reactions or results on mental
t yet may have "extremely poor ability in some one or more of the
higher mental powers." Apperception as "capacity for sizing up
" is cited. Defective power of "mental representation" is discussed
lated, also defective "perceptions of relationship."

regard to defects in mental control, the author considers that "defec-
tive powers of control of actions may be due, on the one hand, to inability to repress the feelings, that is, to lack of emotional control; and, on the other, to failure to arouse inhibiting ideas." She cites Davenport's classification of such individuals as "the feebly inhibited." The cases chosen for illustration are the typical "control defectives," "delinquents - - - their inability to resist temptations, their extreme bad temper, angry threats and violent reactions."

The opposite type of mental irregularities, namely, special abilities that rise above the level of general mental subnormality is then discussed. Special abilities on account of their minor social significance, are accorded briefer consideration. Some, however, which give evidence "of such significance that there is a strong possibility of successful adjustment by the individual to conditions outside of institutions" deserve a special consideration. Special ability in number work, in language, in work with concrete material and in rote memory are discussed with illustrations and their possible social significance noted. A brief consideration of border-line cases follows. These are the cases which after long observation and repeated testing are still difficult to classify.

The chapter on general conclusions, somewhat in the nature of an apologia, restates the author's purpose and again emphasizes the limitations of the method.

"No dogmatic statements can be made in regard to general construction measures." "Even though subtle distinctions cannot be made and minute differences discriminated, we may find illustrating suggestions in special instances of success and failure." There is a recapitulation of (1) the recognition of a need for individual adjustment with the purpose to present types of abilities and disabilities that require special consideration and to prove the practical importance of directing efforts in accordance with these mental characteristics; (2) present means which are helpful but inadequate; (3) need for educational diagnosis; and (4) the inadequacy of mental tests. The author emphasizes the fact that the "balances should be preserved between reasonable expenditures of time and energy and the value of results we may hope to attain." And she concludes it the part of wisdom to discover all one can of the characteristic mental traits of individuals and practical procedure in the light of these findings - - - that mental processes which are elements in activities for which defects exist would seem to offer the best of hope of rationally attacking problems of specialized incapacity."

That she has maintained her thesis of the practical value for educational and vocational guidance of her method seems evident to this extent - - - X can not retain impressions received by means of auditory stimuli certainly the part of wisdom to caution his teacher to use visual stimuli in lies no difficulty. But that such expressions as "poor visual memory," "poor auditory memory," etc., imply, in spite of the author's caution,
used can and do measure these mental functions, is very misleading
of such terminology and of such expressions as "social apperceptions,"
apt to beguile the psychologist into a false sense of scientific accuracy.
Toward the method the author states that "analysis of mental processes
seem to offer the best hope of rationally attacking the problem," testing for these various mental processes, it appears. Whether or not
one is testing by these means, one is on the way and may, from our
point of view, finally arrive. But one feels that after all it seems
a Paracelsus way, as who should say, "I see my way as bird's their
way, I shall arrive." In the last analysis it is the personal judgment
psychologist which must evaluate all these various results. We are
afar from a scientific method.

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