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In the June-July 1997 issue, we presented summaries of previously reviewed books that we considered to be outstanding works in educational psychology and gifted education. The brief descriptions of books in this issue are based on our reviews of outstanding biographies and reminiscences beginning in 1991. We highly recommend these works for use by gifted students and their teachers.

THE ROAD AHEAD BY BILL GATES (1995). VIKING: NEW YORK.

This book and the diskette found inside the back cover are about the life of Bill Gates, the development of Microsoft Corporation, and the future impact of the computer industry upon American society. For those individuals whose computer skills have matured in conjunction with Microsoft's ascendance during the last 15 years, Gates' story is a nostalgic journey through different versions of MS-DOS and the PC computer to today's powerful Pentium computer and Windows 95. For young gifted students concerned with computer technology and programming, the book will show them the enormous leaps of technological progress made from the end of the Second World War to present times. (Feb.-March 1996)

MARIE CURIE: A LIFE BY SUSAN QUINN. (1995). SIMON & SCHUSTER.

The life of Marie Curie (1867-1934) demonstrates the intellectual development, determination and sheer scientific brilliance of the first woman to win a Nobel Prize. In 1903, she and her husband, Pierre, along with Henri Becquerel received this award for their joint research on radioactivity. There was much hostility among members of the Nobel committee against awarding this prize to a woman. Fortunately, sanity prevailed after they realized the quality of her independent work and genius in physics. Marie Curie's unique and pioneering contributions to the study of radioactive substances helped later physicists and chemists to unravel the inner structure of matter. This book covers both Curie's scientific-intellectual and personal lives. There is no greater human being that gifted students can study and emulate. (June-July 1995)

GENIUS IN DISGUISE: HAROLD ROSS OF THE NEW YORKER BY THOMAS KUNKEL. (1995). RANDOM HOUSE.

How did a "country bumpkin" from Aspen, Colorado become one of the best editors in American literary history who cultivated some of this nation's finest writers? Harold Ross (1892-1951) was a gypsy wanderer before he came to New York -- he worked as a newspaper reporter in Salt Lake City, Utah; Marysville, Sacramento and San Francisco, California; and Atlanta, Georgia. He founded *The New Yorker* in 1925. This was a landmark date in American literary history because it was the beginning of a weekly literary and news journal that included America's most talented writers. The world-wide reputation of this magazine was based on the idea of "literary journalism" that Ross nurtured in writers such as Joseph Mitchell, A.J. Liebling, Alexander Woolcott, S.J. Perelman, Dorothy Parker, E.B. White and James Thurber. (June-July 1995)

NATURALIST BY EDWARD O. WILSON. (1994). ISLAND PRESS: WASHINGTON, D.C.

It is difficult to determine the early influences on a person's life that lead to great achievements as an adult. Wilson's fascinating and wonderfully illustrated (line drawings) autobiography helps the student of human development to understand some of these early factors. This world-renowned Professor of Biology at Harvard University has attained the heights of accomplishment in his research on animal behavior and ecology. He is particularly well-known as one of the founders of sociobiology (the study of biological/genetic factors on animal and human behavior) and as a world-class authority on ants, i.e., their biological characteristics, behavior and social organization. (April-May 1995)

PROFILES OF FEMALE GENIUS: THIRTEEN CREATIVE WOMEN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD BY GENE N. LANDRUM. (1994). PROMETHEUS BOOKS: AMHERST, NY. TELEPHONE: (800) 421-0351.

Landrum has written an excellent resource, particularly for gifted girls who are seeking female role models in the business, entertainment, political, and publishing fields. He has conducted an extensive analysis of the psychological, social and educational factors related to the success of thirteen of our nation's and the world's most outstanding women. Among them are Golda Meir, Ayn Rand, Oprah Winfrey, Jane Fonda, Mary Kay Ash, Gloria Steinem, and Maria Callas. The first seven chapters present a detailed summary of these women as related to birth order, self-esteem, education, intelligence, personality traits and temperaments. His two provocative chapters on the origins and expressions of creativity would be of particular interest to educators of the gifted. For example, he argues that early life crises have

been the instigators of creativity in all of his subjects. He says that "crisis is the mother of creativity." (October-November 1994)

THE PRIVATE EINSTEIN BY PETER A. BUCKY (IN COLLABORATION WITH ALLEN WEAKLAND). ANDREWS AND McMEEL, 1992. TEL.: 800-826-4216.

There have been several wonderful biographies published about Einstein, most notable is '**Subtle is the Lord...**' **The Science and the Life of Albert Einstein** (1982) by Abraham Pais. But Peter Bucky's view of this great genius has a very different slant. He was a close friend and carefully kept a written record of their conversations and interactions during visits, vacations and trips they took together across the United States. Peter Bucky's family knew Einstein and his wife when both families lived in Germany. After the Bucky's and Einsteins fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s, they remained close friends in the United States. Peter's father was a brilliant physician and inventor of X-ray technology; he consulted regularly with Einstein. This book contains charming anecdotes about Einstein the man. It also includes many serious topics such as Einstein's "Thoughts on Germany and Hitler"; his role in the Atomic Bomb Project; viewpoints on religion and education; his family life, musicianship and "light-hearted" poetry. It expands the human perspective of Einstein's life, and will help gifted students to obtain a broader understanding of him. (December 1993-January 1994)

A PHILOSOPHY FOR THE GIFTED SENSIBILITY BY MICHAEL E. WALTERS **CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE SCHOOLS**

The **Meditations** of Marcus Aurelius (121-180 AD) should be a significant part of the gifted curriculum. One of the key traits of the gifted individual is the ability and need for creative and intelligent self-reflection. Therefore, the activity of keeping an ongoing diary or journal is especially stimulating for the gifted sensibility, and **Meditations** can serve as a model for accomplishing this task. The original title for this book was **To Himself**. Ironically, these literary and philosophical dialogues have endured to achieve a universal audience. Marcus Aurelius was the Emperor of Rome from 161-180 AD. It was at night while in his tent, near Vienna and the Danube in a military campaign, that he wrote this unique work. Besides philosophical concepts, this book includes daily observations and fragments of readings that had much personal meaning to him. Marcus Aurelius perceived himself as a philosopher. During his era, to be a philosopher was a serious avocation. The philosopher of Roman times was a blend of scientist, theologian, civic leader and therapist. The gifted individual comprehends this sense of the relevance of being a philosopher.

The style of writing in this book was expressed in serious and precise language. Recently, in the Bronx, I gave a lesson on one of the meditations to a gifted Spanish bilingual fourth grade class. The students were impressed with how this great thinker of the past used language, which they had no problem understanding – linguistically and conceptually. They eagerly responded to the assignment of keeping a diary in a manner similar to Aurelius. These gifted fourth graders were impressed with his timelessness. Although he wrote almost 2,000 years ago, lived in Europe and was the leader of the most powerful nation during that historical period, his concerns were about situations and problems to which gifted students can easily relate. The main problem Marcus Aurelius addressed was human suffering, and despite his awesome political power, he was mostly concerned with universal human dilemmas. He was a member of the Stoic school of philosophy. The Stoics believed that endurance, courage and personal grace were the answers to the pain associated with the human condition. Modern writers such as Albert Camus and Ernest Hemingway had similar writing styles and personal views. A wonderful exercise for gifted students would be to contrast the lives, writing styles and philosophies of these two writers with Marcus Aurelius.

Marcus Aurelius believed in two concepts that are relevant to contemporary physics and biology – the unity of matter, and the constant aspect of change. Our modern word, the quantum, was called "tension" by Aurelius. He was also an exponent of the need for people to be citizens of the world. (His term for this identity was "cosmopolitan.")

The burden of the past and the expectation of the future are insignificant according to Aurelius. It is the present that calls for moral and ethical behavior. He perceived the human condition as constructed upon one's interactions with and criteria regarding the present situation. ". . . Again, remember that it is not the weight of the future or the past that is pressing upon you, but ever that of the present alone. . . ." (**Meditations**, p. 129, Penguin Classics).

The **Meditations** of Marcus Aurelius is a treasure lode of our cultural past waiting to instruct and inspire gifted students for the challenges of the 21st century.