

BOOKS

THE GREAT EDUCATORS: Readings for Leaders in Education,
Edited by Hugh C. Black, Kenneth V. Lottich and Donald S. Seckinger
(Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1972, \$12.00)

One of the great shortcomings of educational writings in the fields of psychology, sociology, history and philosophy has been the sometimes exceedingly narrow preoccupation of their authors with the educational reference of their subject. It is as if they were unaware that a world beyond that of the classroom, educational administrator, and laboratory of educational researchers did not exist, or if it was acknowledged to exist, was discounted as unimportant compared to the mighty significance of the purely Educational. Most histories of education until quite recently paid little attention to the extra-educational life of men and nations; most psychologies of education somehow managed to ignore even the most earth-shaking discoveries and theories of modern psychology; philosophers of education overlooked the momentousness of sweeping challenges thrown up by modern philosophers, as well as the fundamental work of axiologists, epistemologists, and social philosophers throughout time; and many educational sociologists ignored the existence of much of society beyond the immediate range of school and university concerns. Much of this miasmatic obfuscation of the large world of knowledge and theory has recently begun to be dispelled, but there are still far too many works in the so-called foundations of education which are somehow able to ignore the real foundations of knowledge and value in their respective fields.

The Great Educators: Readings for Leaders in Education, corrects this shortcoming only patchily for the history of educational ideas, itself a division of history. Where it falls short is in the failure to provide the socio-economic-political context within which educational, along with other ideas of all kinds, arise, change, or are handed on relatively unchanged. The context provided is still too exclusively educational, as are the contents. One reads straight through Bacon, Comenius, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Herbart, Spencer, Mann, Harris, Parker, Dewey - the line is entirely predictable, as are its uninterruptedness, and the conventionality of its contents: excerpts from Bacon's *Novum Organum*, Comenius' *The Great Didactic*, Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Rousseau's *Emile*, Spencer's first chapter, on the knowledge of most worth, from *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*. The excerpts are for the most part short, they are grouped in historical periods each one of which is introduced by the editors, and the selections cover the conventional span from Athens to Dewey's Chicago and beyond. In all of this nothing strikes the imagination as creatively innovative and stimulating; most of the writings reprinted here are easily available in dozens of books of readings as well as in the original volumes.

One other fault and I shall have done with negatives. It is a serious fault, however, and one that perhaps cannot be rectified so long as the tradition persists of separate textbooks and books of readings in the two fields of history of educational ideas, and philosophy of education. (It is significant that educationists have not yet produced histories of the philosophy of education - perhaps for the good reason that they would be very slim volumes indeed.) What we need to break out of this straightjacket of habit is the recognition that where ideas are concerned, their most fruitful discussion can only take place in the context of both historical and philosophical enlightenment brought together. The social context in the largest sense should be involved, as should metaphysical and analytical philosophical examination of the sense of the doctrine, stipulations, systems of thought, conceptual meanings and philosophical procedures of the ideas being discussed.

But given these cavils, and although they are fairly serious ones, the shortcomings they point to are repeated *ad infinitum* in similar productions, this volume - a long one of 784 pages (minus index, alas) - has virtues generally lacking in other volumes. The run of writings from Bacon to Dewey referred to above are interspersed with both lesser known writings on the ideas of the great thinkers or on allied subjects. There are something of the order of fifty such latter selections, a sampling of the titles of which will convey the value of their contribution: Brownson's discussion of late nineteenth century Transcendentalism; Hans J. Morgenthau's "Reflections on the End of the Republic;" the Wilds and Lottich pages from their *The Foundations of Modern Education on feudalism and the guild system in medieval education (how infrequently the chivalric system of education is taken proper account of in educational histories!)*; a 30-page series of selections from the *Revised Standard Version of the Bible, in illustration of the contribution of the Hebrews to culture*; Merle Curti on William T. Harris; Hugh Black on Pestalozzi's work with the disadvantaged; St. Basil's "Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature" as an example of "counter-culture" writing; Edith Hamilton on the Greeks; a *Playboy* interview with Frederico Fellini on his aesthetic; Susanne K. Langer on Symbolic transformation. Similarly there are infrequently published excerpts from the writings of Bacon; Tacitus; Locke; Burt on Dewey; Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, second president of the Republic of Texas; Rhabanus Maurus; and Minucius Felix, the early Church Father.

Finally, the volume includes sections on primitive peoples - although to my mind this is much too short and could have been extended considerably to take in the writings of several of today's better anthropologists - and on contemporary educational theory. I find the subtitle reference to "leaders in education" an anachronism most of us hopefully left behind in the sixties, but there is enough relatively fresh in content and orientation to make this book a worthwhile addition to university library and study shelves.

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