BOOKS

J. M. Stephens. *The Process of Schooling: A Psychological Examination.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1967. Pp. 168. $3.95.

A public announcement that children learn spontaneously under the most diverse methods of teaching would not normally produce more than polite assent and lack of sustained interest. When the pronouncement is made by an educational psychologist of J. M. Stephens' reputation and set forth in the form of a small book, an educator's curiosity should compel him to find out why an extended statement is needed for such an obvious fact.

The Process of Schooling is divided into three unequal parts: *Introduction, The Theory of Spontaneous Schooling,* and *Implications and Elaborations.* Several chapters are no more than four or five pages in length. Chapter 7 (The Constancy of the School's Accomplishments) produces five pages of references (one hundred and eleven in all) to document the author's position that "One method (of teaching) was about as good as the other and no better."

Professor Stephens outlines succinctly in the Preface and Chapter 1 what disquietudes of his professional career have compelled him to formulate his theory of spontaneous schooling. He laments the fact that " . . . we can make no claim to any coherent group of principles from which the major facts of schooling and teaching could be deduced," and states that "The essential features of education may reside not in the program itself but in a few primitive forces which always accompany the program." Along with the late Aldous Huxley,[1] he suggests that it is about time that researchers took a long, hard look at the lowly, basic mechanisms on which all educational activities depend. Educators might then be in a better position to comprehend why "the outcomes of schooling respond so grudgingly to deliberate efforts at acceleration."

Stephens finds orthodox behaviouristic points of view of little help in producing a basic rationale for his theory. Like the humanistic psychologists[2] he is driven to postulate a dynamic (spontaneous) organism which carries within itself the necessary forces and mechanisms to organize the input of its senses (i.e., to acquire learning). It would seem that certain adults with spontaneous tendencies to communicate need only be

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[1]A. Huxley, "Human Potentialities," in *Man and Civilization: Control of the Mind,* S. M. Farber and R. H. L. Wilson, editors (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), pp. 75-76.

[2]See James F. T. Bugental, editor. *Challenges of Humanistic Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

juxtaposed with maturing children for "schooling" to take place. Accordingly, "the chief argument for asking teachers to study educational psychology and similar subjects is based on an esthetic rather than a practical imperative."

Most of *Part Two* (Chapters 2-7) is given over to socio-psychological speculations about the respective roles of the home and the school as mediating agencies of the educative process. The author acknowledges that his discussion is aimed at understanding rather than reform and that his intent is "to explain how it is that the schools are as good as they are." It is a little difficult at times to appreciate his distinctions between the immediate (survival) and non-immediate concerns of the home and the school, respectively, since criteria must surely be relative to priorities induced by a given culture. Much more convincing is his documentation of largely negative evidence concerning the improvability of processes of schooling through curricular, methodological, and administrative manipulations. The means for rapidly accelerating human learning are not yet known; and, as with the mechanisms of child care in the rearing of children, we are inexorably driven to the conclusion that inner ("psychological") factors, in teacher and pupil or in parent and child, are much more important to educating-learning processes than easily accessible externals.

In the remaining section of his book, Stephens discusses such diverse topics as the effective teacher, limitation of the school's function to academic matters,[3] the case for a less frenzied, less compulsive approach to teaching as a process and as a profession, and (in his final chapter) possible tests of his hypotheses. This latter discourse will be a let-down for those who have followed his arguments to this point and have, quite understandably, been expecting some rather original suggestions as to how to come to grips with the "basic forces" to which the author has frequently alluded.

J. G. Woodsworth
The University of Calgary (On Leave)

Syril Winn and Maurice Jacks, *Aristotle.* London: Methuen and Co., 1967. 114 pp. 25s.

The thesis propounded in *Aristotle* is that conditions of education in modern England bear sufficient resemblance to those of classical Greece to make the educational thought of Aristotle pertinent. It must be emphasized that this appeal to the thought of Aristotle is not based upon classical realism. Winn and Jacks are not arguing that universal properties of human nature and of external reality entail that what was sound educational theory in classic Greece will be sound for this generation of Englishmen.

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[3]See Educational Politics Commission, *The Central Purpose of American Education* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1961).