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New educational ideas from the U.S.A.: [Review of the book New directions for the American university by Frederick Mayer (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1957)]

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BOOKS REVIEWED

from violence would be a negation of the moral lessons of history. Violence cannot cure the real troubles of man; it eliminates a few problems and creates a multitude of others. The temptation is to use force not as means, but as end. Faith in war, as Toynbee demonstrates, is not a sign of vigour, but **a symptom of decline. The more we conquer, the more we lose; the more we dominate, the more we are dominated."** And one more short quotation to close this review of a book that we recommend to every intelligent teacher: "Education, like religion, cannot advance in an atmosphere of coercion and dogmatism. Education, like religion, depends on constant rebellion and re-evaluation."

Harking back to an earlier American philosopher, The Philosophical Library has published JOHN DEWEY: DICTIONARY OF EDUCATION. This book is a culling of the more compelling and original of Dewey's utterances, arranged alphabetically. Mainly it would be of interest to those of our readers who have made a very thorough study of this great American, for to use it merely to find some decorative thought would be superficial.

B.W.R.

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New educational ideas from the U.S.A.



New Directions for the American University by Frederick Mayer. (Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C.).

This is another of the many volumes which have appeared recently and which express the deep-felt dissatisfaction of American educationists with current education. Aldous Huxley in a sharply analytical introduction lists some of the problems facing education and we see in these a picture of our own in South Africa — the necessity to run like mad to remain in the same place; the need for prodigious expansion of technical and general education facilities, for new buildings and equipment, for much higher salaries to attract men and women to a profession which is, and increasingly will be, short of teachers; the place of other educational agencies besides the school in the upbringing of the child; the imperative need for quality.

Dr. Mayer, Professor of Philosophy at Redlands University, in the present book tries to suggest solutions to some of the problems. He does this in an incisive and entertaining way and many of his statements are fresh and quotable: "Education as we see it today is neither heaven nor hell; it is an exercise in purgatory." "The university must supply leaders for the changing world; not authoritarian personalities who believe they are infallible." "As teachers we often live fragmentary lives, and then we give a fragmentary account of ourselves." "Science without poetry is an excursion in a mathematical wasteland."

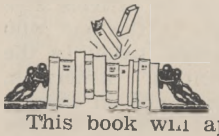
Many of Dr. Mayer's suggestions for getting out of the educational purgatory are similar to those tried at Brown University — intensive, purposeful learning; small tutorial groups where ideas are critically examined; creativity as well as receptivity. In addition, he tackles the question of the shortage of teachers, and here the professional teacher may part company with Dr. Mayer when he suggests the use of advanced students to do a limited amount of teaching. Another suggestion is the use of television in the class- and lecture-room. If, as some people suggest, only one teacher in ten is a good teacher, it is obvious that effective use could be made of the outstanding teacher through T.V. If, further, we accept Dr. Mayer's assertion that our students today are more alert than ever and that they have a real desire for learning if they are challenged and motivated, a case can be made out for using the new medium in school and college.

Dr. Mayer sees the need for quality as well as quantity in the educational product (some distance from a recent statement by a departmental official in the Transvaal that between 80 and 90 per cent of the pupils in the present Std. VI will go on to matriculation or Std. X). There must be two types of higher education — one for the highly gifted minority, the other for the less gifted majority. Dr. Mayer has the support of many educationists in this view, but he takes care to emphasise the importance of general education, not only at school but also at the university, and stresses the possible dangers of over-specialisation, especially with the gifted group where it is so tempting. He reminds teachers very forcibly that their judgements of their pupils are by no means infallible.

To sum up Dr. Mayer's thesis, perhaps inadequately, we may say that, living as we are in an age of bigness, we must be big in our educational ideas, creative and challenging.

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University text in philosophy



A History of Ancient Philosophy by I. Brady o.f.m. (Bruce).

This book will appeal more to members of our Universities than to the general educationist, for the discipline of ancient philosophy is somewhat specialised. It is a generous and extraordinarily incisive survey that goes right back to the philosophies of the Ancient Egyptians. Greek philosophy is handled must succinctly, and this reviewer put the book down with a renewed admiration for Epicurus, that most moderate and sane of all philosophers. For any student making a first approach, there is a very able summary of the Socratic tradition, developing through Plato to Aristotle. Roman philosophy is not neglected and the book is concluded by two very interesting sections on Arabian Philosophers (such peoples as Avicenna, Al-Ghazzali and Ibn Rushd) and the early Jewish Philosophers, more especially Moses Maimonides, "the greatest Jew since Bible times." The style of the book, lacking all pomposity, is most readable.

R.T.P.