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Deep thinking in the direction of modern education: [Review of book Patterns of a new philosophy by Frederick Mayer and Frank Bauer (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1955)]

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1960-09
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https://hdl.handle.net/10539/24321
Rose, B.W. (1960, September). Deep thinking in the direction of modern education: [Review of book Patterns of a new philosophy by Frederick Mayer and Frank Bauer (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1955)]. Symposium: A Journal for Education in Southern Africa, pp. 90-91.

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BOOKS REVIEWED

A useful new journal directed toward African interests —



Teacher Education (Vol. 1, No. 1), May 1960. (Oxford University Press).

Teacher Education grew out of the Education Conference held in Salisbury in September 1958, and has as its goals "the communication of concepts, methods, and experience of practical interest to the educationist in Africa." Edited by Mr. J. Wilson of the University of London Institute of Education, the new Journal is fortunate in having on its Advisory Board such stalwarts as Professor B. A. Fletcher of Rhodesia, Mr. A. Taylor, Director of University of Ghana Institute of Education, and Prof. R. G. Macmillan of Natal, among others; and with the support and experience of the Oxford University Press, there was the promise of a publication of unusual standard both in format and content.

The Editor's article on **The Teaching of English in a Bilingual Partnership** should introduce a topic of increasing interest and urgency in Africa. His gentle strictures on the modern concept of Structural Linguistics, for instance, with its imposition of gradings of language forms which ignore the motivations of the children and their need to have verbal tools to express their wants and needs, might well be expanded into a major criticism. Allied to this theme is the over-meticulous care for form in immature speakers, and the resultant rise of anxiety and blocking of initiative. "Certainly," comments Mr. Wilson, "if either of the two languages involved is confined by the tyranny of the timetable, school organisation, or examination system to a few set periods, then the school situation is not bilingual, and bilingualism will not result from it." One wonders just how far this comment may justly apply over wide areas of Southern Africa. "'Language," he adds, "cannot be taught, least of all when bilingualism is involved, by teachers who are no more than cogs in some instructional scheme born of a mechanistic conception of the nature of language." We hope that the Editor will allow himself space in future issues to develop this very well-presented theme.

Professor R. G. Macmillan, in discussing Teacher Training in the Union of South Africa, sees the necessity to move some issues from a Provincial to a National level, but adds that "National control . . . of a delicate function like teacher-training would be a tragedy in South Africa . . ."

Professor Fletcher reports on some of the research projects in the Federation, which certainly reflects a stimulating range and variety. The intrusion of personal detail, such as the bald statement of the number of lectures given by the Director in the United Kingdom, seemed to us matter for an Annual Report rather than material of consequence to his Journal colleagues. This private statement descends to the Director's membership of the Inyaiti Centenary National Committee, one of many items which proves that he is considerably occupied, but which is hardly in place here. We hope that Teacher Education will make better use of the talent of this most able and energetic educationist in its later issues, who so considerably impressed audiences at the Natal Conference.

We noted with much interest the establishment in London of the Overseas Visual Aids Centre, which offers up-to-date advice on aids of all sorts, their use, purchase and application. This body, the O.V.A.C. is "anxious to co-operate with persons and organisations overseas in research into problems connected with visual and aural aids in education." We found the Reviews informed and informing — which is all one can ask, surely?

But we could not help feeling that so able a group of educationists could have produced a Journal of slightly more even standard and level. There are times when its excellencies are off-set by material of lesser tension and significance. But we have no doubt that **Teacher Education** will fill a very real need, and will grow in stature. One's first number — as we know very well ourselves — is by no means the easiest to manage.

R.T.P.

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Deep thinking on the direction of modern education.



Patterns of a New Philosophy by Frederick Mayer and Frank Bauer (Public Affairs Press, Washington).

One of the very real perplexities facing the teacher is that of keeping abreast with modern thinking. One tends to enter into spirited arguments with material that was fresh a quarter of a century ago. The verities remain, beyond time: but problems change over a quarter-of-a-century, and it is therefore most pleasant to read this book which, apart from offering a new philosophic perspective for educationists, provides an excellent survey of the major philosophies that have influenced education. Professor Mayer is rapidly becoming one of the most influential educational thinkers in the United States, and discussions with the reviewer's colleagues disclosed that he is by no means unknown beyond his own country, too. It is difficult to give a comprehensive survey of this thoughtful, responsible and provocative book. Among the **bon mots,** for instance, that we noted with enjoyment: "Education thus involves a process of rebellion. Merely to conform is to end in a petrified wasteland in education." Or again: "It is not an exaggeration to say that probably the future of our schools may decide the future of our civilisation." Or again: "Nationalism is the political expression of a ruthless form of Darwinism; it symbolises a return to the jungle with all modern conveniences."

But this work is much more than a christmas pudding from which one may fork out an occasional succulent verbal plum. It is a wise book — wise in a way so often lacking in works by philosophers. "To rely solely upon force and to expect miracles

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."

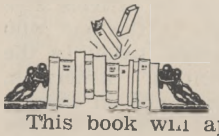
Many of Dr. Mayer's suggestions for getting out of the educational purgatory are similar to those tried at Brown University — intensive, purposeful learning; small tutorial groups where ideas are critically examined; creativity as well as receptivity. In addition, he tackles the question of the shortage 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.