

Letters

SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY

After a visit to a Mexican school in a fishing town on the Gulf of California, I got to wondering whether we could simplify the curriculum in United States schools.

In Mexico they are doing a pretty fair job of educating their young without the benefits of special education, Title I reading, speech therapy, physical therapy, hot lunches, milk programs, bus systems, school pictures, and so on.

I say they are doing a pretty fair job because in the school where I work, we get a few students from them each year. They seem to be as well prepared, in Spanish of course, as our own are in English.

After nearly 30 years in education, I am having serious doubts about more being better. There are so many things taking place in the school day, we're able to teach only the bare surface material. For example, we teach "skills" so much we don't get to teach reading. Where is the point of diminishing returns?

—JOHN TRUED
Principal
Hudson Elementary School
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ROOTS OF HUMANISM

Would that those who espouse "Humanism," "Humanist Manifesto I and II" consider seriously practicing what they preach. Primack and Aspy [December 1980], rather than kicking a dead horse (the Manifesto signers denied religions which place God and creed above human needs back in 1973), might take an example from their colleagues, the theistic humanists, and then listen to Mathilde Neil.

"In our epoch, it no longer suffices to be a humanist in thought and in the solitude of one's conscience. It is necessary to be a Humanist in practice, and with others. . . . In other words, people are beginning to demand that Humanist values, which were Humanist ideals until now, be effectively lived by both the individual and the society. . . . Humanism . . . is above all a form of prac-

tice. It is necessary to begin now to transform combative individual and social relationships into cooperative relationships and to bring into being new and effective means of action not contradictory to those ends."

—JOE FIELDS
Associate Professor
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NO USE FOR HUMANISM

One can infer from "Three Misconceptions about Humanistic Education" by Monte Moses and Charles Dickens [December 1980] that "humanistic theory" has no application in American public schools.

"If the focus of helping is to control or change another person, it is not humanistic" (p. 228), but the state's fundamental reason for running schools is irrevocable: to effect a level of intelligence in the people that will secure its republican form of government.

"Humanistic environments cannot be imposed on people and still be humanistic" (p. 228), but student attendance in public schools—whatever their learning climate—is usually compulsory.

It is noteworthy that, unlike B. F. Skinner, neither Moses nor Dickens was an original signer of Humanist Manifesto II. What can one infer from this?

—BERT STONEBERG, JR.
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REQUIRED RELIGION

Scientific Creationism! Has a nice ring to it, doesn't it? Let's give it a place in the sun. Biology is usually a required course, as it should be. I propose another—a course in theology, or, more accurately, theologies. That course should also be required and should also explain—but not endorse—various views of the universe, its origin and its nature. The biology teachers I have known, in high school and in college, had their own views on the origin and

nature of humankind, I am sure, but they did not impose them upon us. Teachers of "theologies" could also refrain from indoctrinating their students.

It would be essential, in such a course, to include all the major religions of the day—the Moslem, the Buddhist, the Christian, the Jewish, the Taoist, and so on—so that none would be slighted. Just as teachers of science courses like biology would not be constrained by religious beliefs, teachers of courses in religion would not be required to include scientific theories like evolution. They would include, where relevant, the appropriate theories of creation. I would not call such a course "comparative religion," because I would not expect students to evaluate one religion against another—that's not the job of the public school.

Such a course would meet the logical arguments of those who protest that the teachers of science have a monopoly, would protect the right of students to be exposed to alternative views of the origin of species, and might alleviate the current conflict on "scientific" creationism.

—ARTHUR ADKINS
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TWO ACCOUNTS OF CREATION

Gerald Skoog's excellent article on evolution and creationism [November 1980] refers to "the Genesis account of creation," as if there were a single consistent story. More properly the phrase should be "the Genesis accounts of creation." Much of the general public and, in fact, many of those who advocate creationism are apparently unaware of the discrepancies in the two accounts.

To help clarify the matter, we have prepared a one-page outline describing the two stories and are happy to supply copies of it on request. (A 25¢ contribution is suggested to cover printing and postage.)

—WILLIAM H. YOUNG
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