

BOOK REVIEWS

The Culture of Education, by Jerome Bruner. Published by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1996 (224 pp.).

This is a book of nine essays by Jerome Bruner, one of the outstanding psychologists and educators today. His vast knowledge is not just confined to the theories of the mind and education but he also suggests paths along which some of the problems that schools face can be resolved.

In the first chapter he lays the foundation for the subsequent eight essays. His central thesis is that culture shapes the mind and also provides the toolkit with which we construct our world and give meaning to it. He believes that we cannot understand mental activity adequately unless we take into account the cultural setting with its rich resources and symbols. Education in turn has to do with understanding, set in a cultural setting and this is best accomplished through discovery where the teacher is the guide and enabler.

Bruner discusses two views of how the mind works and how we learn, which is basic to an understanding of education. The first view sees the mind as a computational device which is concerned mainly with information processing. If we can just improve the method of processing, how information is inserted, sorted, collated, and retrieved we could be considered as educated. Learning from computer technology and by improving the process we could come to the place where there would be no need for teachers. In contrast to this view, the second view states that the mind is developed according to culture and this implies an understanding of its symbolism. It is this symbolism that is passed on to succeeding generations via the medium of narration, myths and stories. Culture assigns meaning in its encounters with the world. Culture provides the tools for organizing and understanding our world. Without this symbolism and the material cultural tools that adhere in culture, man would only be an empty abstraction.

Education he believes is to fit people with the needed symbolic systems to do thinking about thinking. A system of education must help children find an identity within a culture and that schools as part of the culture must pass this culture on to its students. He states, "Education is risky, for it fuels the sense of possibility" (p. 43).

The eight succeeding chapters or essays touch on various education and psychological issues ranging from folk pedagogy to educational aims. It further contains an essay on teaching as well as the possible future development of psychology.

This book is intended for the serious reader who is interested in the broad themes and issues in education and psychology. It is very well researched and documented with the most recent developments in a number of fields. The references for each essay appear at the end of the book with an index for easy reference to many topics. Through these essays I believe Jerome Bruner has opened up a number of education issues but he has also suggested possible pathways to help solve some of the pressing educational matters of our changing times.

It is a book I can recommend for your own personal library and one that will bring rich rewards as you ponder its message and its relevance for today.

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Balanced Scorecard, by Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton. Published by Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA, 1996 (322pp.).

Balanced Scoreboard is a common sense approach to doing business in the information age. However, because common sense is not always used, even by individuals who possess it, Kaplan and Norton's latest book has been dubbed an "innovative management perspective" by such management greats as Chris Argyris. The accolades this book has received indicate that thinking broadly is apparently a rare quality in management today.

In Balanced Scorecard, Kaplan and Norton argue against concentrating only on the traditional financial measures to evaluate how business is doing and instead, insist that one "balance" out one's managerial views by concentrating on the intangible assets of the firm. For the authors, "balance" means managing through four functions:

1. **financial performance**, which includes the traditional financial measures such as return on investment, profitability, and other measures of increasing shareholders wealth;
2. **customer knowledge**, which includes customer satisfaction, retention, new customer areas, and market share;
3. **internal business processes**, which include the critical internal processes required to attract and retain customers and support growth;
4. **learning and growth**, which include processes for long-term growth and improvement such as reskilling employees and enhancing technology and systems.

The primary thrust of the argument, however, is that a good balanced scorecard is not just a measurement system, but a management system that provides for both the short-term and long-term strategy for the business unit. As a management system, the four functions mentioned above are not independent, but are related through cause and effect. For example, if enhanced employee skills (learning and growth) improve process quality and process cycle time (internal business processes) so that there is enhanced on-time delivery and customer loyalty (customer knowledge), the result will be improved return on investment (financial performance). Kaplan and Norton urge that management not forget what makes the financial numbers good in the long run. Remembering these common sense factors will aid the manager in resisting the temptation to take short cuts to high financial returns at the expense of the "balance" that is necessary for long-run growth and success.

Building on the concept of a management system (as opposed to a measurement system), the authors encourage business units to use the balanced scorecard to develop an integrated strategic-management system. Such an approach not only achieves a shared understanding of the organization's vision across the entity, but also creates a holistic model which helps the individuals involved in the organization understand how their performance enhances the organization's success.

To achieve this integration between the scorecard and strategy, the organization must link performance drivers (such as total quality management and reengineering) must be linked to specific financial performance indicators so that the actual pay-off of these programs can be determined. This allows for changing improvement programs in instances where there is no economic benefit.

The authors recommend between 15-25 strategic measures for an organization. While this may be startling to some managers who are used to hundreds of measures for their companies, Kaplan and Norton stress that the balanced scorecard is composed of strategic measures (rather than diagnostic measures) which focus on those factors expected to lead to competitive breakthroughs for the organization. The balanced scorecard should “tell the story of the strategy so well that the strategy can be inferred by the collection of objectives and measures and the linkages among them.”

Balanced Scorecard is based on a 1990 project sponsored by the Nolan Norton Institute in which a dozen companies from manufacturing and service areas met for a year to develop a performance-measurement model that was other than financial-performance based. While some articles about this project have been previously published in the Harvard Business Review, the development of the entire philosophy around the “balanced scorecard” concept drove the authors to write the book.

The book aims at accomplishing two tasks: to assist managers in building a balanced scorecard, and to show them how to use it. The first six chapters develop the theory and define the four functions mentioned above. Beginning with the seventh chapter, the authors turn their attention toward linking the scorecard to strategy. Finally, chapters 9-12 focus on showing how managers are using the balanced scorecard. Because the book is based on the Nolan Norton project, it contains many interesting and informative examples of the development and use of the balanced scorecard approach. Of particular interest to some will be the adaptation of the scorecard to government and not-for-profit enterprises in Chapter 8.

The book is timely, given the general fault of many U.S. companies to stress short-term financial results at the expense of long-term growth and stability. It is not surprising that the book would begin with a caution to U.S. business in general to avoid fixation on the “bottom line” and earnings per share, as this same theme was stressed in Johnson and Kaplan’s book, Relevance Lost: The Rise and Fall of Management Accounting. However, Balanced Scorecard seemed less “punchy” and more rambling than Relevance Lost, and therefore not as compelling. However, as a guidebook and an easily-followed example of balanced management strategy which includes several measures of the organization’s health, this book is very valuable.

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The Reformation of the Bible: The Bible of the Reformation, by Pelikan, Jaroslav. Published by Yale University Press, New Haven, & London, 1996 (197 pp.).

As a history professor at Yale University, Jaroslav Pelikan is an eminent authority in the field of the Protestant Reformation. This distinguished scholar has contributed enormously to the corpus of religious studies. He holds a number of honorary degrees from universities all over the world, as well as an award of highest honor conferred by the U.S. government on a scholar in the humanities. Pelikan has published a number of books including the work entitled *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New Haven, CT, 1993).

The book focuses on the topic of constructive interactions between the Bible and the Reformation. Just as the present Reformation was inspired and defined by the Bible, so the interpretation of the Bible was influenced by the intellectual, political, and cultural forces of the Reformation. This is

synthesis of his lifelong academic and scholarly work. Pelikan carefully defines the boundaries of his specialty. Although he freely quotes biblical Hebrew and Greek, he readily confesses: "I am not by training or vocation a biblical scholar: my lifelong scholarly preoccupation has been not with what the Bible *means* but with what it *has been taken to mean*, during, among other periods, the age of the Reformation" (p. ix).

The study begins with a discussion of the philological foundation of the "reformation" of the biblical text brought about by the revival of Greek and Hebrew language study. It is good here to remember that before the Reformation, it was the world of humanist scholars that challenged theologians to study the Bible in its original languages. In fact, the study of the Bible in the outstanding universities of Europe was "revolutionized" through the teaching of Greek and Hebrew by certain influential humanist scholars who were *not* in the ranks of the "authorized" interpreters of the Scriptures.

In the following chapter Pelikan deals with the main issues related to the interpretation of the Bible during the Reformation, as well as the times that preceded and followed it. The relationship between the authority and the understanding of the text, the questions regarding church tradition, the rejection of allegory by the Reformers, and the analogy of faith are the topics discussed in this chapter. The text is abundantly supplied with quotations from the original sources, both biblical and extrabiblical. The presence of footnotes on each page attests to the author's mastery of ongoing research that is being carried out in the field.

The impact of the vernacular versions of the Bible on various cultures, on the works of art, music, and literature of the world, is also dealt with in the book. Since the book is richly illustrated with examples of early printed editions of Bibles, commentaries, and sermons, it may well serve as a catalog of early Bible and Reformation texts which can be found in the libraries of some prestigious universities in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere. All of the illustrations at the end of the book are catalogued and have bibliographic information with complete references. Some of the photographs are printed in full color.

In the introduction to the book, the author recalls "a duet of sermons" preached by one of his professors some fifty years ago. The first sermon was entitled "What the Book Did for the Man," while the other "What the Man Did for the Book." The sermons were a tribute to the greatest Reformer, Martin Luther. At the end of this fruitful career, Pelikan deserves a similar type of honor to commend him for what he has done for the Bible during his academic career. This book is a fine example of the author's prolific writing skills in the field of the Reformation.

It looks obvious at first sight that the book is intended to target both a specialized audience and readers at large. While some parts of the book, including the illustrations, are presented in a popular way, a word of caution is appropriate here. A nonspecialist will find the reading of a good number of pages difficult and at times frustrating as he/she struggles to find the way through a veritable labyrinth of free and extensive Greek, Latin, Hebrew, German, or other quotations which are left untranslated in English. In despair, some readers may wish they could have one of the great Reformers by their side to help them find a way out of this philological darkness, so that they too can joyfully exclaim: "*Post Tenebras Lux!*" i.e. "After darkness, light!"

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