

to school and society. The lack of civic education in the school seems at first glance to be traceable to the absence of a national curriculum. But on closer inspection the reason is probably related to the country's history, the fact that Britain has been spared the political and military upheavals of other countries. She has not been invaded in modern times and has never experienced the trauma of a full-fledged revolution. As a result, the values and unique characteristics of Britain are not learned in the schools but "are absorbed unconsciously, simply through the day-to-day business of living in the country."

In the Nation's Image is a useful and interesting work. It largely succeeds because its contributing authors resisted the temptation to cast civic education in narrow, curricular terms. To their credit, they recognized that the school is only one of many institutions in society engaged in shaping the civil beliefs and behaviour of its citizens.

Roger Magnuson
McGill University

Roger J. Williams.
RETHINKING EDUCATION:
THE COMING AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT.
New York: Philosophical Library, 1986.
160 pp. \$15.00.

Rethinking Education is a panegyric on "unified education" (U.E.), its benefits and the necessity of adopting it at all levels of education. The author, Dr. Roger J. Williams, a renowned American Chemist, discoverer of the vitamin pantothenic acid and Professor Emeritus of Chemistry at the University of Texas, reflects on his long and productive career in research and teaching, and concludes that present education is incomplete, too fragmented, disjointed and compartmentalized, lacks coherence, assimilation and perspective, and does not really take into account "individuality": The education offered today "is an indigestible jumble" (p.21) with "many bare facts [and] far too little critical thinking about them and their relationship" (p.51). Thus, the many problems and ills in education and society. The solution – though not a quick-fix – is, according to Williams, not only in U.E. and its application. He therefore forcefully concludes: "There is absolutely no substitute for unified education, and it is so sound and so basic that there is little room for contrary argument" (p.130).

This book consists of 14 short chapters (with the exception of Ch. VI), a postscript and 4 appendices (brief selections from authors who,

according to Williams, share his vision). In the first 13 chapters, the author expounds on his notion of "unified education" and its expected outcomes which will ultimately lead to "true enlightenment". In the concluding chapter he briefly sketches ways of implementing U.E.

What is U.E.? According to Williams, U.E. is based on "digestion, assimilation and correlation of facts" (p.25). It is composed of non-controversial knowledge "on which all informed, educated people, regardless of their cultural background, will agree" (p.61). (In Chapter VI, "A Brief Compendium of Unified World-Knowledge", he gives several examples of "the coordinated knowledge (information)" (p.61) which everyone who is schooled ought to have. This "information" is arranged in 10 categories ranging from "About the Earth, Sun, Moon and Stars" to "About the Unseen"). This unified world-knowledge approach attempts "to bring several disciplines together" (p.39) and allows for specialization while insisting on co-ordination of all parts with each other. This will form the basis of a common understanding, which in Williams' view, will lead to treating each other more respectfully, will eliminate or reduce the illiteracy which results from the lack of co-ordination between human values and knowledge, will reduce the division between science and humanities, will help us learn "to understand ourselves and our fellow humans" (p.91), will produce "a new sense of balance" (p.114), will help us "to think straighter and use our minds" (p.115), will lead to "a non-sectarian, ecumenical religion" (p.117) and "prevention of war" (p.119). In a nutshell, as Williams himself puts it, "whether our problems are interpersonal, developmental, educational, health-maintenance, psychological, occupational, economic, interracial, international, or of any other kind, unified world-knowledge will help in their solutions" (pp. 36-37). This is Williams' idealism and the core of his justification of U.E.

This book deals with some crucial educational issues that have been dealt with by both philosophers and sociologists of education. However, the book lacks the rigour and depth that these disciplines demand; at times the reader is faced with platitudes and unwarranted repetitions. It is unfortunate that Williams does neither refer to nor build upon the contemporary work in these two fields.

While one has to admit the importance of U.E., one may seriously challenge Williams' opening remark: "It [this book] tells of simple truths not explored before which can lead us directly into a new age of enlightenment" (p.13). But, (i) have these "truths" really not been explored before? And (ii) does U.E. on its own lead to a solution of the problems Williams identifies? With regard to (i), Williams admits that "the roots of U.E. go back to . . . Montessori" (p. 127). But, for example, one may rightly ask, what about John Amos Comenius (so known for his "pansophism") and John Dewey (who incessantly wrote against dualisms in

education)? With regard to (ii), Williams seems to be assuming that changes in education will be enough to solve perennial human problems. He assumes a one-to-one relationship between education and the rest of the world, a controversial assumption that needs to be further explored and justified. But Williams never discusses such an issue at all.

From the philosophical angle, one might challenge Williams' quasi-identification of knowledge with mere "information" (although he admits that "all kinds of knowledge are of interest and we should not overlook any of them" [p.62]), and his overemphasis on the unity of non-controversial knowledge to the extent that one might get the impression that dealing with controversial issues is less educationally worthwhile.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, Williams' own criticism of contemporary education, his emphasis on "Gedankenstoffe" or "Mind-Stuff" and integration, and his critique of too technically oriented professionals (including educationists) are appropriate. His general proposal might be in the proper direction but such issues require a more thorough discussion, and hence, I doubt whether this book will arouse the kind of action and changes that the author hopes for.

John P. Portelli
Mount Saint Vincent University

Donald J. Weeren.

EDUCATING RELIGIOUSLY IN THE MULTI-FAITH SCHOOL.

Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Ltd, 1986.

103 pp.

"I want teachers to engage in educating and nurturing, in educating religiously and educating secularly, in educating religiously and educating morally, in informing and influencing." This statement introduces Weeren's offer to have us decide for ourselves, nevertheless, from the evidence he supplies, whether or not we may attempt and profit from educating religiously in multi-faith schools.

It is evident from the outset that terms call for definition and so, Weeren defines *religion*: the human endeavour to know and live in harmony with the ultimate purpose of existence; and, *a school committed to the all-round development of students* as: . . . not limiting itself to teaching skills for living, but also assisting students to acquire a sense of the fundamental value and purpose of living.