

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

As editor of the *Philosophy of Education: An Encyclopedia*, I am writing to tell you that I am dismayed by the review of that work published in volume 38, number 1 of the *History of Education Quarterly*. I find this to be one of the most carping, nit-picking reviews that has ever appeared in the *HEQ*.

Professor Luise McCarty begins her assault by writing, “Dead white males predominate” (in the entries on historical figures). She fails to point out that two of the five members of the Advisory Board who worked with me in determining the encyclopedia’s entry list are women. Nor does she note that thirty-eight of the authors or co-authors are women, who contributed a total of forty-seven articles. And their articles are not confined to entries that are “feminist” in nature, but range widely over the subject matter addressed, including “critical thinking,” “Comenius,” “mysticism,” “Nietzsche,” “epistemology,” “naturalism,” “moral development,” and “pragmatism.” It is interesting to note that when Professor McCarty offers her list of neglected entries, she does not name a woman or “feminist” topic.

Some of Professor McCarty’s complaints appear to be simply gratuitous. For example, she finds the page format to be “poor.” (Many readers have commented to me favorably on the readability of the work.) And she prefers running heads of entry titles to appear at the tops of pages rather than at their feet. In saying that “political correctness abounds,” Professor McCarty does not give examples of such articles, as if *saying* that political correctness abounds is sufficient evidence for the truth of the claim. And she finds that many entries “are given over to poorly characterized and ill-defined isms.” It simply is not self-evident why such subjects as “scientism,” “realism,” “positivism,” among others are “poorly characterized,” and she neglects to give examples of entries that she would put in place of them.

It is not my intention to respond to her criticisms one by one but to point to what I think is the most important difficulty with Professor McCarty’s review. It has long been my belief that the first responsibility of a reviewer is to review the work that has been written, not one that the reviewer thinks should have been written. Apparently Professor McCarty has not understood one simple thing: we presented a work in philosophy of education, not one in philosophy. While this should be clear enough from the nature of the entries in general, we have gone further in making explicit the aim of the encyclopedia in two articles in particular: (1) “History of Philosophy of Education” finds the origins of both philosophy and educational theory in Plato’s response to the Sophists and traces the relationships between the two down to the late nineteenth and early twentieth, centuries, when “philosophy of education” as a distinct study originated; (2) “Professional Organizations in Philosophy of Education” details the professional development of philosophy of education in the context of moral and social phi-

losophy evolving into the social sciences in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia. Yet Professor McCarty does not recognize, or does not acknowledge, our explicit efforts to examine philosophy of education in relation to philosophy itself, as well as to history, the social sciences, and other forms of literature. This failure to recognize what our encyclopedia is about is most apparent in Professor McCarty's closing lines, where she refers readers to the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* or MacMillan's *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* "for matters philosophical." Surely no one would refer readers to those encyclopedias if the aim is to study philosophy of education; rather one would refer those readers to *Philosophy of Education: An Encyclopedia*.

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J.J. CHAMBLISS

To the Editor:

I am disappointed that Professor Chambliss finds it necessary to misrepresent the content and character of my review. It neither begins with the words "Dead white males" nor adopts the goals of explicitly feminist critique. One goal it does adopt is to gauge the accuracy, logical cogency, and internal coherence of articles from *Philosophy of Education: An Encyclopedia*, to ask "Do the articles provide faithful reports and correct inferences? Would they be readily intelligible to the intended reader?" That Professor Chambliss, the encyclopedia's editor, denigrates such inquiries as undignified "nits" and "carping" may explain why the quality of many articles I examined fall so far and so resoundingly below reasonable expectations and why the answer to the above questions is, too often, "No."

Worse than disappointing is the professor's insistence that publications in philosophy of education not be measured against scholarly standards applicable to philosophy and elsewhere, but by some other, presumably less exacting, standards reserved especially for philosophy of education. One can (I suppose) ignore the implied insult to the discipline but not the disastrous policy so enjoined. Such 'double standards' can only force philosophy of education into intellectual isolationism, the final price for which is intellectual bankruptcy. Artificially reduced expectations always guarantee diminished results. This maxim binds the academic economy as tightly as it does the fiscal. I must wonder therefore whether Professor Chambliss has not constructed, with his *Philosophy of Education: An Encyclopedia*, a perfect, if unintended, object lesson in the maxim's general validity.

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