



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium by Giorgio Tagliacozzo
Robert McClintock

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obsessed with systems as systems. The educational problems they isolate are relevant to systems maintenance but not to the educational needs of the Malaysians, needs which produced non-official Malay, Chinese and Tamil schools. These needs are the source of educational change both in terms of innovation and in terms of subverting the official system. Until they and the schools reflecting them are included in our analysis we cannot hope to fully understand Malaysian educational change or development.

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Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium edited by GIORGIO TAGLIACCOZZO. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969. xxvi, 636 pp. \$15.00.

GIAMBATTISTA VICO (1668-1744) possessed the genius to absorb the knowledge of his day and to transform it critically into several vast and profound works which have been of recurrent inspiration to later thinkers. This symposium on Vico came about because Giorgio Tagliacozzo was convinced, as Vico's tricentennial approached, that Vico's influence on posterity was coming to fruition, ceasing to be a series of isolated influences on particular men like Coleridge, Michelet, and Croce, and becoming instead a pervasive influence on the basic outlook dominating inquiry at least into matters human. As an indication that Vico's work may indeed have reached this level of influence, the volume presents forty-one essays surveying the current state of scholarship about the great Italian thinker.

The book is long, very long, and most anyone interested in philosophy will find something among its diverse offerings to fascinate and provoke him. The text is divided into four parts, the first two essentially concern the influences on Vico and the influence of Vico up to the twentieth century, and the last two concern Vico's significance for contemporary social science, education, and philosophy. It is a book that few are likely to read from beginning to end, gripped by an unfolding argument, for the essays do not seem to have been commissioned in order to develop a common conception. Rather the editor seems to have drawn together as much available work in progress as he could, relegating each essay to whichever part it best seemed to fit.

Vico is rightly known, however, as a seminal thinker for his insistence that understanding of man and his work is essentially historical since the truths that man can grasp lie in the works that men have created, *verum = factum*. Yet in many of the essays the authors fail in a curious way to treat Vico in full historical rigor, lionizing him in a manner quite antithetical to the way Vico himself sought to understand Homer. Rene Wellek is the only contributor eager to demonstrate that certain influences ascribed to Vico were not attributable to him; most of the others are anxious to make the maximum

claim for the importance of Vico's work, as is natural with writers who believe their subject has yet to receive its due.

This hero-worship, however, becomes cloying and at times causes a writer to miss a real chance for illuminating our cultural history. It does not help our historical understanding of either the law or of pedagogy to assert on the one hand that Vico is "the greatest legal intellect between Grotius and Montesquieu" (p. 328) and on the other that Vico has a place in the history of pedagogic theory equal or superior to that of Locke or Rousseau (p. 554). Vico himself teaches that history is something far more important and profound than posthumous reputation. These dissatisfactions with the organization and tone of the book should not prevent a just appreciation of its remarkable content. Vico comes through as a protean thinker, profound and productive, a man to be reckoned with in most every area of inquiry, including that of comparative education.

The book includes two solid essays on Vico's pedagogy: "Critical Philosophy or Topical Philosophy?: Meditations on the *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*" by Ernesto Grassi, and "Vico's Pedagogic Thought and That of Today" by Maria Goretti. Grassi, in particular, shows how Vico's discourse *On the Study Methods of Our Time* was essentially a partisan comparison between two pedagogical traditions rooted in "rhetorical-pathetic and logico-rational discourse." Vico was the self-appointed spokesman for the value of the topical style of reasoning characteristic of the rhetorical tradition and he bitterly opposed the inroads being made in education by the deductive rationalism epitomized by Descartes. Two aspects of Vico's conviction in this matter merit particular attention from comparative educators.

First, Vico's partisan criticism was a mode of comparison, one which is perhaps too little used within our field. Thus, the general insistence on a *tertium comparationis* makes for a genteel discipline. But it mutes critical comparison in which a man who identifies with one thing uses it as a basis to praise or condemn another. By forgoing this mode of comparison, we avoid some of the obvious pitfalls of self-interested pleading, but we fall into others. For one, the strongly committed man is often more acute in perceiving the strengths and weaknesses of a matter than is his disinterested counterpart. Another, and perhaps more important problem is that by avoiding criticism as a mode of comparison, comparative educators may diminish the possibilities for the dialectical development of their field. For within the dialectical tradition the point of synthesis does not come at the beginning, but rather it is the point of culmination that men arrive at, if all goes well, after an opposition has been joined and developed to the full.

A second aspect of importance to comparative educators can be seen by trying to bring into focus a rhetorical-juridical tradition that might be associated with Vico and a deductive rationalistic tradition associated with Descartes, (as well as perhaps an analytical empirical tradition with Hume

and a critical speculative tradition with Kant). With this we make some progress towards comparing the substance of various modes of education rather than their external forms. As things now stand, many of us feel uncomfortable with the field because substantive work so rarely gets beyond comparing the extrinsic features of education, comparing the resources allocated to schooling, the extent of participation in education, modes of academic governance, levels of student unrest, achievements according to certain standard measures. Important as these matters are, they are not the essence of the education that particular people are receiving in various places around the world.

Perhaps, by working out certain ideal types, such as those mentioned above, each postulating the essential features of a discrete educative tradition, we can better understand how different educative experiences substantively affect people. If so, Vico will help us immensely, first because he himself so completely embodied one such tradition that stretches back to ancient Rome and that still flourishes today, not only in Italy but around the world, and second because his historical reflections will help us develop the power of abstraction to work out and prudently employ these ideal types. As a step in these directions, *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium* is an invaluable aid.

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Ein halbes Jahrhundert erlebter und mitgestalteter Vergleichender Erziehungswissenschaft by FRIEDRICH SCHNEIDER. Paderborn, Germany: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1970. 91 pp.

THE YOUNGER AMERICAN SCHOLAR, interested in comparative education, will find in Friedrich Schneider's professional autobiography names of many once important persons and international conferences of which, in all likelihood, the young scholar has heard little if anything. However, the present is not so recent as we sometimes think.

Even before 1900, the Dutchman, Lighthart, aroused wide interest by his emphasis on the main principles of education in which we now believe, especially his emphasis on the child's emotional participation in the learning process. The Englishman, Sir Michael Sadler, developed an ethics of education in his *Moral Instruction and Learning* (2 vols., 1908) which is still worth reading.

In Germany Wilhelm Rein of the University of Jena edited the ten volumes of the *Encyklopädische Handbuch der Pädagogik* (1903-1911), and other German authors such as Aloys Fischer, Ernst Kriek, Franz Hilker and Georg Kerschensteiner widened the until then narrow boundaries of the old "Seminarpädagogik" by pointing at the close interaction between personal